

'The Opole Recommendations' Set Out Vision for Strong and Supported European Theatre Sector

The new policy document, the result of the European Theatre Forum 2023, urges the European Union to continue direct dialogue with European theatre – and to address challenges posed by mental health, the climate crisis and AI.

The European Theatre Convention is pleased to announce the publication of [The Opole Recommendations](#), a significant policy document resulting from the in-depth exchanges during the European Theatre Forum (ETF) 2023. The high-level event by the European Commission took place from 11-13 May at JK Opole Theatre in Poland.

The Opole Recommendations present a clear vision for how European institutions should support the large and unique European theatre sector, with calls for changes by next year, by 2025, and by 2027. They are structured around three overarching challenges and policy areas, in line with the ETF 2023 event programme:

- **Democracy, International Collaboration, and the Power of Theatre**, encompassing Fragile Contexts, and Mental Health and Social Inclusion
- **Sustainability and Green Transitions**, which incorporates the EU Green Deal and the New European Bauhaus, as well as Mobility and Emerging Artists
- **Digital Readiness**, encompassing Artistic Freedom and Experiments, and Working Conditions of Theatre Professionals.

In so doing, they address the goals for the Forum to help the theatre sector remain relevant in the future, by addressing digital, geopolitical, social and climate-related challenges, and by developing and adopting “a comparable sustainability assessment tool for the sector to measure and reduce its carbon footprint.”

The publication of the Recommendations is also an important step in the ongoing work towards a permanent European policy framework for theatre, known as the [European Theatre Initiative](#).

[READ THE OPOLE RECOMMENDATIONS](#)

Voice of the theatre sector

The Opole Recommendations collect the concerns and priorities of the more than 200 attendees at the ETF 2023, summed up during the Forum’s final session. Recommendations to the European Union include continuing the regular dialogue with the sector by hosting the European Theatre Forum as a regular event, to build on and support the strong ecosystem that underpins theatre, and steps such as integrating theatre further into secondary education and healthcare to contribute to societal well-being.

In addition, the Recommendations call for the introduction of circularity plans in EU grant applications; the creation of a European Theatre Prize to improve the visibility and coherence of theatre at the European level; and the creation of an entity to monitor the impact of AI on the cultural labour market and working conditions.

The Opole Recommendations follow on from the policy document created as a result of the online European Theatre Forum in 2020, called [The Dresden Declaration](#).

Speaking about the Opole Recommendations, Georg Häusler, Director for Culture, Creativity and Sport, said:

“With the Opole Recommendations, the European theatre community affirms its cohesiveness and shared, strategic vision. It claims the major role it plays in fostering a sustainable, inclusive and forward-looking industry and stands up as a leading partner for the European institutions in achieving this aim. The European Commission hopes that, by bringing together all the segments of this broad community at the 2023 European Theatre Forum, it will help put theatre on the European policy map.”

Serge Rangoni, President of the European Theatre Convention (ETC), and General Manager & Artistic Director of Théâtre de Liège, a speaker at ETF 2023, said:

“It’s fundamental for European theatre to have direct dialogue with the European Commission, to ensure our needs are heard and to future proof the sector in the context of a polycrisis world. I am very pleased that the dialogue process that began with the online European Theatre Forum in 2020 has continued this year, and I am excited about the prospect of developing this dialogue further with The Opole Recommendations and future meeting events over the coming years.”

Heidi Wiley, Executive Director of the ETC, said:

“The Opole Recommendations are an important step towards fully unlocking European theatre’s potential, supporting its development as one of the continent’s most innovative art-forms and references for cultural heritage. They contain a roadmap for the way forward, anchored in the European Theatre Initiative -- and are a testament to our collective efforts to develop a more fair, diverse, and sustainable sector.”

Norbert Rakowski, Artistic Director of JK Opole Theatre, the host of ETF2023, said:

“For us at JK Opole Theatre, I think [the Forum] is a good opportunity to show that we have a really open theatre, open for dialogue, and in a sort of symbiotic way, comparing progressive and classical theatre. I think it’s a kind of window for Europe.”

Lotta Lekvall, CEO of Folkteatern Göteborg, another speaker at ETF 2023, added:

“I think that just gathering like this, with the whole sector, and from all different European countries, is actually an empowerment in itself. Because there’s a lot of dialogue, it’s a lot of exchange of

experiences, and also in these times that we live in, [it's important] that we can also share those experiences and try to find ways forward..."

–ENDS–

Notes

- The Opole Recommendations, along with the comprehensive roadmap, can be downloaded [on the ETC website](#).
- The Opole Recommendations were presented in a public event at the Festival d'Avignon, the [European Theatre Talks](#), from 14:30 – 16:30 on 7 July. The speakers explored a new guiding tool to 'green' European Theatre; the opportunities and challenges presented by a digital theatre platform; and how to promote the next generation of European theatre makers and artists. [Read more](#)
- [Visit the European Theatre Forum 2023 website](#)

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About ETC

Founded in 1988, the European Theatre Convention (ETC) is the largest network of public theatres in Europe. It is an arts organisation that promotes European theatre as a vital platform for dialogue, democracy and interaction that responds to, reflects and engages with today's diverse audiences and changing societies. ETC's programme of grants and events support networking, professional development and artistic theatre collaborations across Europe – championing theatre as *one of Europe's most innovative art-forms and references for cultural heritage*.

ETC has 61 members from 30 countries and is supported by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union.