



**THE LIVE PERFORMANCE CALLS
FOR A JOINT AND PROPORTIONATE APPROACH
TO REOPENING VENUES AND EVENTS TO AUDIENCES**

Brussels, 13 May 2020

Open letter addressed to:

Ms. Mariya Gabriel, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth

Ms. Nina Obuljen Koržinek, Minister of Culture of Croatia – Presidency of the EU

Ministers of Culture of EU Member States and EEA countries

As governments across Europe are allowing economic life to start again, several countries are already permitting cultural organisations to re-open and undertake cultural activities with a live audience, albeit under public health restrictions.

The live performance sector is well aware of the responsibility it holds in the fight against the Corona virus. The guidelines of the World Health Organisation and the European Centre for Disease Control are very clear on how to slow down the spread of the disease. It calls upon the responsibility of all citizens to respect physical distance of at least 1 meter¹, regularly wash hands and disinfect surfaces. Member States have set up guidance to respect those rules, including requirements for people to wear masks, employees to telework, etcetera.

Throughout Europe, the live performance sector is engaged and involved in drafting prevention plans and guidance in cooperation with health agencies and authorities, including ministries of culture, to allow people to go back to the workplace and to re-open for the audience.

A survey conducted by Pearle* in this regard learns that phased plans, if they already exist for the sector, to welcome a live audience differ considerably from one country to the next and miss a clear logic behind.

It was found that often no distinction is made between very small or big venues when it comes to the threshold of how many people are admitted to a live event. Rules in some countries (CZ, FI, NL, SW, IS, NO) based on absolute numbers allow 20, 50 or 100 people to attend a performance during the first phase, no matter whether this performance is shown in a small studio theatre with only 70 to 100 seats or a big venue with over 1000 seats. Apart from indoor performances, rules also differ between countries for outdoor events (first phase 1000 seated people in Italy, 200 people in Spain) if any have been applied at all. They should also compromise a common approach.

¹ Guidance WHO <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>



Pearle*-Live Performance Europe, the European federation representing over 10,000 organisations in the music, performing arts and live sector therefore **calls upon the EU, in collaboration with EEA countries, to take up a coordinating role** as expressed in the Communication of the Commission and the European Council of 15 April in the “Joint European Roadmap towards lifting COVID-19 containment measures”. This comes at a particularly timely moment as a large number of countries have not yet established guidelines regarding live events and audiences.

Concretely, this means **a joint and proportionate approach to the phased re-opening of cultural venues and events to allow a maximum number of people based either on their capacity or on available square meters** (see e.g. BG, SP), whilst social distance rules continue to be respected.

Communications to citizens and in our case audiences have to be clear and simple and once touring groups and artists are able to travel again, a shared approach ensuring a level playing field throughout Europe would allow for a predictable planning of events. It is the responsibility of the EU to be instrumental in this regard.

Ahead of the Culture Council of Ministers on May 19th we call upon the EU to urgently issue a common approach to re-opening venues as proposed above.

Audiences deserve to enjoy culture again in a live context based on a clear strategy and straightforward message across Europe.

It should be reminded that **support for establishing audience campaigns** is in this regard essential to build trust and to provide the necessary protection measures for artists, staff and audiences. Governments should also be aware of the **economic consequences** for sector dependent on earned income when not being able to perform for a full house. Governments should therefore work together with the sector to cover the loss of income when performing at a reduced capacity.

Morten Gjelten
President Pearle*

Anita Debaere
Director



The members of Pearle* are

Full members : Wiener Bühnenverein, *Association of Theatres in Vienna* / Theatererhalterverband Österreichischer Bundesländer und Städte, *Association of regional and city theaters in Austria* / Belgische Schouwspelvereniging - BSV/ *Association Belge du Spectacle – ABS, Association of performing arts in Belgium* / Overleg Kunstenorganisaties – oKo, *Platform for arts organisations* / Fédération des Employeurs des Arts de la Scène – FEAS, *Federation of employers in the performing arts* / Bulgarska asotsiatsia na rabotodatelite v oblata na kulturata – BAROK, *Bulgarian Association of employers in Culture* / Asociace profesionálních divadel České republiky - APD ČR, *Association of the Professional theatres in the Czech Republic* / Asociace symfonických orchestrů a pěveckých sborů České republiky – ASOPS, *Association of the Czech Symphony Orchestras and Choirs* / Dansk Teater, *Danish Association of Theatres* / Dansk Ensembles, Orkestre og Operainstitutioner – DEOO, *Association of Danish ensembles, orchestras and opera institutions* / Eesti Etendusasutuste Liit – EETEAL, *Estonian Association of Performing Arts Institutions* / Suomen Teatterit ry / Finlands Teatrar rf -STEFI, *Association of Finnish Theatres* / Suomen Sinfoniaorkesterit – SUOSIO, *Association of Finnish Symphony Orchestras* / Teatterikeskus, *Theatre center* / Association française des Orchestres – AFO, *Association of French Orchestras* / Fédération des employeurs du spectacle vivant public et privé – FEPS, *Federation of employers in the public and private live performance in France* / Les Forces Musicales, *Association of French opera houses, orchestras and lyric theatres* / Deutscher Bühnenverein - Bundesverband der Theater und Orchester – DBV, *German Theatre and Orchestra Association* / Magyar Szimfonikus Zenekarok Szövetsége, *Association of Hungarian Orchestras* / Magyar Színházi Társaság, *Hungarian Theatre Society* / Samtök atvinnuveitenda í sviðslist og tónlist – SAVIST, *Employers association for the performing arts in Iceland* / Associazione Generale di institute dello spettacolo – AGIS (on hold), *Association of performing arts organisations* / Vereniging van Schouwburg- en Concertgebouwdirecties – VSCD, *Association of Dutch Venues and Concert halls Directors* / Nederlandse Associatie Podiumkunsten – NAPK, *Dutch Association of Performing Arts & Music Organisations* / Vereniging Nederlandse pop podia en festivals – VNPF, *Association of Dutch Music Venues and Festivals* / Norsk Teater- og Orkesterforening – NTO, *Association of Norwegian Theatres and Orchestras* / Zrzeszenie Filharmonii Polskich – ZFP, *Society of Polish Philharmonics* / Associação para as artes performativas em Portugal – PERFORMART, *Portuguese association of performing arts* / Kolegij direktorjev slovenskih gledališč, *Association of Slovene theatre managers* / Asociácia Slovenských Divadiel a Orchestrov – ASDO, *Association of Slovak Theatres and Orchestras* / Federación Estatal de Asociaciones de Empresas Productoras de Teatro y Danza – FAETEDA, *State Federation of Associations of Theatre and Dance production enterprises* / Asociación Española de Orquestas Sinfónicas – AEOS, *Association of Spanish Symphony Orchestras* / Svensk Scenkonst, *Swedish Performing Arts* / Schweizerischer Bühnenverband-SBV/Union des Théâtres Suisses–UTS/Unione dei Teatri Svizzeri, *Association of theatres in Switzerland* / Fédération Romande des Arts de la Scène – FRAS, *Association of 'Roman' theatres in Switzerland* / Orchester.ch, *Association of orchestras in Switzerland* / The Society of London Theatre / UK Theatre Association - SOLT/ UK Theatre / Association of British Orchestras - ABO / Federation of Scottish Theatre – FST / **Associate members :** Live Performance Australia \Russian Union of Concert Organisations - RUCO \ Opera Europa \ ECA – European Circus Association \ EFA - European Festivals Association \ ETC-CTE - European Theatre Convention \ FEST – European Federation of Story-telling \ FEVIS Europe \ REMA - EEMN European Early Music Network \ Ancienne Belgique (AB) – Concert venue, Brussels \ Bozar – fine arts center, Brussels \ Sport Paleis – Concert venue, Antwerp \ Cyprus Symphony Orchestra Foundation – Nicosia, Cyprus \ Feld Entertainment - Netherlands