

Under the patronage of the European Parliament



#BC2015

Europe. Its Values. Its Citizens

The first Berlin Conference was organized by the civil initiative “A Soul for Europe” in November 2004. In her welcoming address Christina Weiss, Minister of State for Culture and the Media, said: “We need a change in mentality; a new way of promoting the idea of Europe. ... It is our responsibility to be more than mere administrators of Europe’s cultural heritage. Instead, we must enrich it with a vision of the future. For this, we need creativity in all its forms.”

Today, more than ten years after, while we are preparing the seventh Berlin Conference with several partner institutions who share our beliefs, this seems to be more urgent than ever. Europe has reached a critical moment, there seems to be even the danger of failure.

The initiative “A Soul for Europe” believes in the creative power of culture as basis for the common work in the EU. Europe will blossom with the cultural influence being vivid in European society and among political actors. From the beginning we therefore developed a continuous cooperation between young citizens from all over Europe and the members of the European Parliament. We brought together representatives of European politics and those from the arts and culture – not just for getting to know each other but for working together for a common goal – the development of the European continent.

We collaborate with local partners in many European cities, putting local challenges in a broader European context. The Berlin Conference – since 2014 as an annual event – assembles our pan-European efforts. After the Greek crisis the EU now faces the existential challenge of finding solutions for the unforeseen numbers of refugees and migrants trying to start a new life in Europe. This will change our societies in the near and far future, and we as European citizens have to accept our responsibilities in this process. European and national institutions have to create the political framework but it is in the cities and regions of Europe where the people will experience these new realities. Again, we have to understand, that it is not primarily governmental management that owns our common project “Europe”, it is us, the Europeans, who are in charge.

The next conference, named “Europe. Its Values, its Citizens” will take a new step into this direction with debates concentrating a) on the need for a European agenda for cities and b) on the important role of the “periphery” for the current and future existence of a united Europe.

For quite some time we have been confronted with aggressive populist reactions against Europe. We want to use the Berlin Conference “A Soul for Europe” to also demonstrate and highlight the existence of an impressive number of initiatives, institutions, projects, actions *for* Europe. They are not only reacting against these dangerous tendencies, but use their energy and experience to foster our common European ideals. Like us they believe in the creative power of culture for the process of a truly united Europe. The Berlin Conference would like to give those dedicated partners visibility through a common platform.

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We therefore will present here a list of some of these partners and give these activities a much broader visibility:

Partners

AltArt
Art Workshop Lazareti
Association of European Border Regions
Avrupa Kültür Derneği / European Cultural Association
Balkan Express Network
Bozar
Bunker Institute Ljubljana
Danish Cultural Institute, Brussels
Europa Nostra
Europäische Akademie Berlin
European Academy of Yuste Foundation
European Alternatives
European Cultural Parliament
European Festivals Association
GRAD - European Centre for Culture and Debate
Image Aiguë
internationales literaturfestival berlin
King's College London
Kryzowa Music
MitOst e.V.
n-ost
Pablo Casals Foundation
ReKult
Stichting Caucasus Foundation
Stiftung Genshagen
Studio Zeitgeist
The Budapest Observatory
The Red House Centre for Culture and Debate
The Shota Rustaveli Theatre and Film Georgia State University
VAULT