

PRESS RELEASE – 2014, MARCH, 07TH

Bilbao, 2014, March, 07th. After the 2nd [Forum d'Avignon Ruhr](#) (in Essen, June 2013, 27th and 28th), the 6th [Forum d'Avignon](#) (in Avignon, November 2013, 21th to 23rd), the 1st [Forum d'Avignon Bilbao](#) (in Bilbao, March 2014, 5th to 7th) is the third European scale event of the EU-funded project CATALYSE.

After three day of interactive and transnational collaboration in Bilbao, the **CATALYSE partners call to place the attractiveness of cities at the heart of the European elections.** Without more engagement for cities, the European vision cannot come alive - especially not for the European youth. Examples as Bilbao, the Ruhr, Avignon, Metz, Lens or Liverpool proved how culture revitalizes cities and thus **CATALYSE calls to European politics to mainstream the promotion of cultural and creative cities.**

Among the numerous perspectives sketched during Forum d'Avignon, Forum d'Avignon Ruhr and Forum d'Avignon Bilbao, CATALYSE - through their '**Manifesto 2014: Reinventing a new creative European urban space**' published on March, 7th - underlines **three action priorities** to strengthen the attractiveness **in our cities and societies:**

1. **To fight citizen scepticism about culture and change.** Change is inevitable for culture institutions if they want to continue to be a driving force for culture in the new user-driven public emerging today in the digital world. *"A culture of openness and curiosity, adopting an ethos which values debate, critical thinking and learning is essential to establish a collective 'thinking brain' for the city able to monitor the best initiatives of the world and trying to go beyond them"* states Iñaki Azkuna, Mayor of Bilbao. *"The commitment on the European 'cultural exception' has sense only, justifies Laure Kaltenbach, managing director of the Forum d'Avignon, if it favours the financing of the creation and the strengthening of the social cohesion"*.
2. **Culture as catalyser of urban cities and creative territories' energy.** They are ways to reinvest in culture in urban space when everything seems gloomy, in times of nourished individual and collective scepticism, to involve and bring citizens and politicians together. *"Today, we concentrate on the strategy and the strengthening of the processes of development - before funding single projects and having a return on investment. This increases sustainability - this increases support for culture."* underlines Bernd Fesel, senior advisor at ecce and Forum d'Avignon Ruhr. *"Cities with the right strategic focus, the skill of concentrating on the long-term future-oriented perspectives will be able to excel in spite of global dynamics"* adds Iñaki Azkuna. Make culture accessible to act more, closer to home.
3. **Finally, the importance of being earnest.** Collecting reliable cultural data constitutes an essential investment upstream to any coherent policy of development of a creative economy; by strengthening the environmental studies of 'the cultural footprint' (i.e. the

positive correlation between culture and local development), and on the capacities of the culture to transform creativity into sustainable prosperity for the urban populations.

Change is possible – even in the public budget crisis – if ambitions and concrete actions are embodied in an integrative manner on a local basis as well as on a European scale. The Catalyse network urges European decision makers to address the role of culture as a strategic necessity for the future of Europe and proposes in particular:

- **Personalities, charismatic in their national cultures and embodying the European culture, beyond the project 2020, should be chosen every three years** with the mission to advise the European Commissioners on a cultural strategy for Europe
- **Public symbols for change should be created** e.g. a “train for culture in Europe” could connect regions and cities and their citizens,
- **Open government methods should be introduced in cities in Europe**, supervised by a European civil society network, to make legal frameworks on “change-ready” and thus “investment-ready” local levels for culture and creativity – be it investment in creative ideas or in private funds,
- **Finally, simple and necessary, symbols in the everyday life** should appear, as icons of the European culture or history ; Mitterrand-Kohl, De Gaulle-Adenauer, Pessoa, de Vinci, Cecilia Bartoli,... on European bills and stamps chosen through an electronic vote among the Europeans citizens...

Let's rock the Europe of culture!

What is the Catalyse project?

This European project on cultural investment in cities is conducted by three partners: the think tank [Forum d'Avignon](#) – France, the [Forum d'Avignon Bilbao](#)/Bilbao Metropoli-30 representing the City of Bilbao/Bilbao, Spain and the [Forum d'Avignon Ruhr](#)/European centre for creative economy (ecce), Dortmund, Germany. Thanks to an EU-funding and based on the strong proven result the joint mission and message is: culture and creativity activates territories attractiveness.

Catalyse network successful cooperation confirms the appropriateness of this format mixing culture, economy and creative cities, leading to the next step: **expanding from cross-sector to cross-country**. Bilbao Metropoli-30, is a perfect match to our European collaboration, as the city of Bilbao has become an emblem of what urban and economic renewal through multiple means of culture and creative investments. Catalyse is therefore a result on an already existing and successful experience which justifies the willingness of the partners to **develop a more ambitious cross-European cooperation project**.

Through these goals, this cooperation project is meeting three specific objectives of the EU Culture Programme: to support the trans-national mobility of people working in the cultural sector, to encourage the trans-national circulation of artistic and cultural works and products and to encourage intercultural dialogue.

supported by



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