

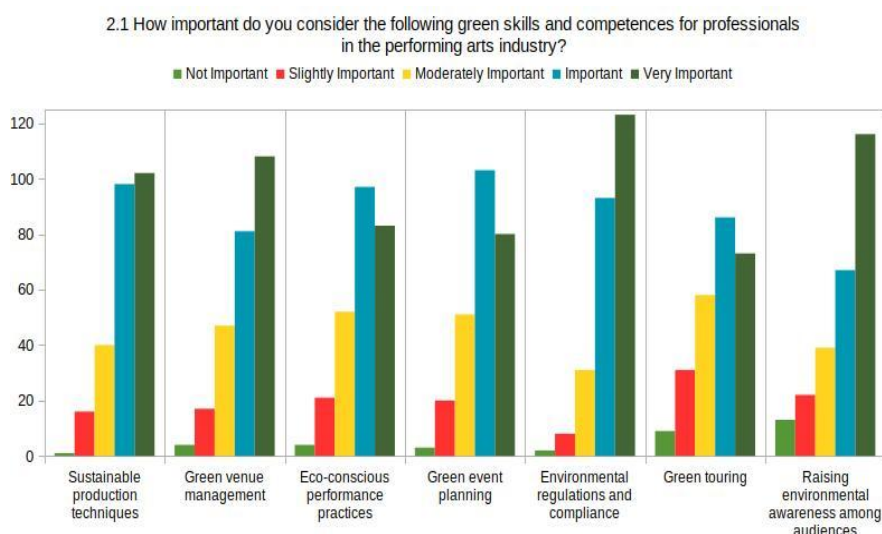
Facilitated by: Matina Magkou, Researcher, Lecturer and Consultant

Contributors: Tamar Brüggemann and Peter Florence, the initiators from the European Festivals Forest

Introduction

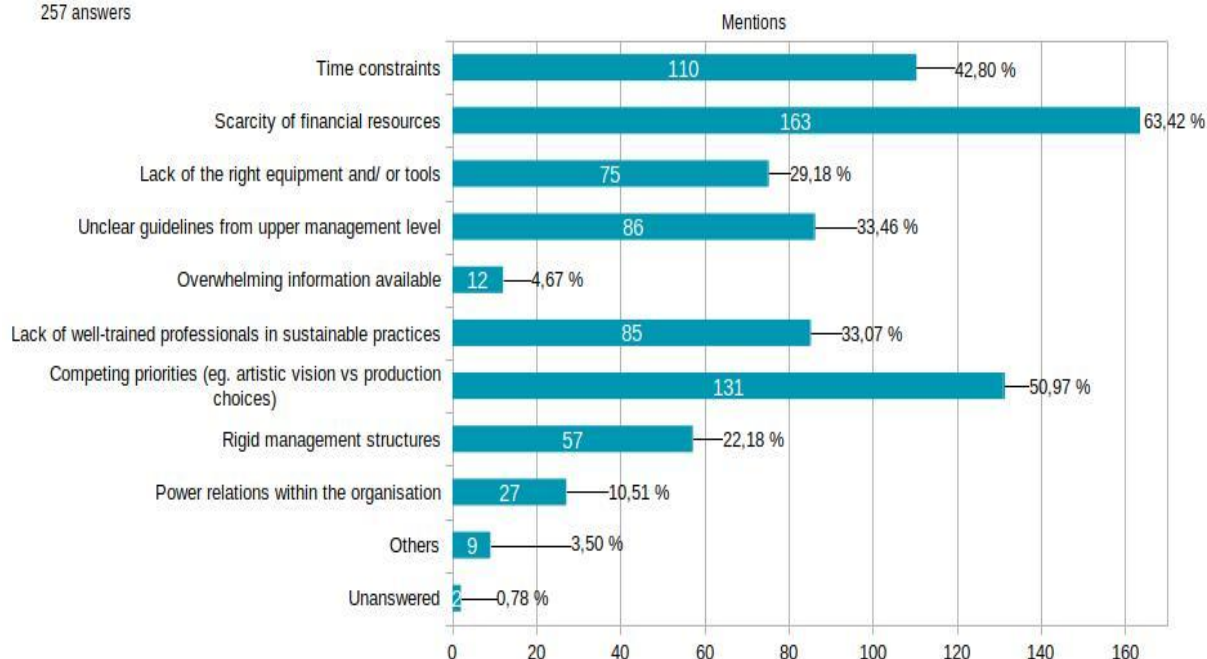
Matina Magkou introduced the collaboration between Pearle* and EFA. She also presented the Ultimate Cookbook for Cultural Managers on “The EU Green Deal and Live Performance Organisations” and its accompanying infographics that can be found on EFA’s website [[Download the Cookbook here](#)]. This booklet will be updated at the end of the year and will explain the principles of EU Climate Goals to help identify Green Deal initiatives that are relevant to the live performance sector.

Matina continued with some slides about the Inspire project, Alliance for a Net Positive performing arts sector. The INSPIRE training platform prepares Performing Arts professionals and students — from artistic and stage directors to designers, production managers, and technicians — with the skills, tools, and innovative practices to embed sustainability, digital, entrepreneurial and soft skills at every stage of live production, and become a more resilient arts professional. [[Download the labour market needs analysis report here](#)]



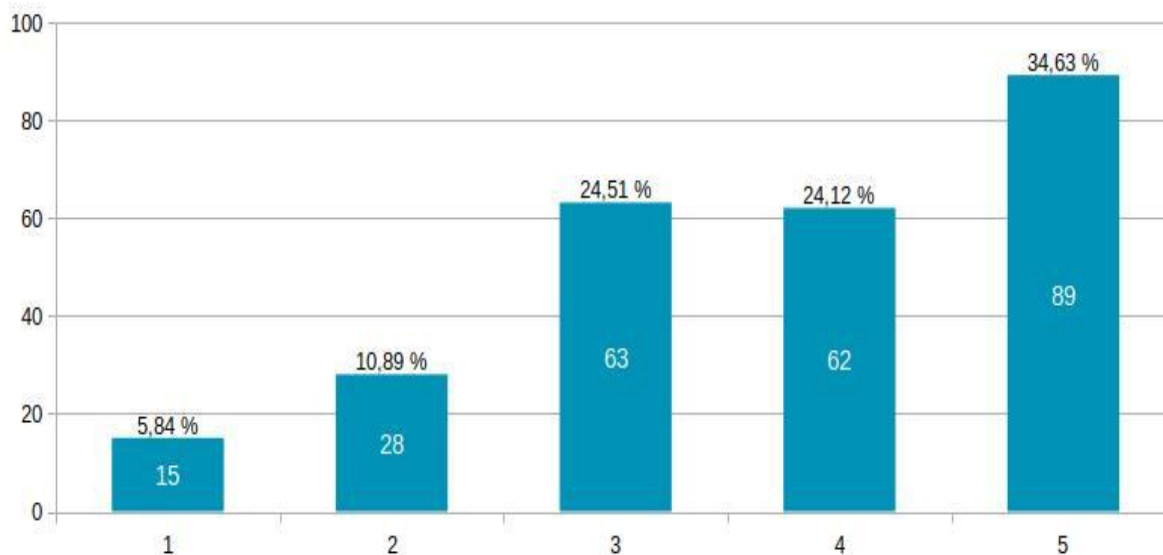
2.5 Which are in your opinion the main reasons for the difficulties in adopting sustainability practices in performing arts professions in your country?

257 answers



2.9 From your perspective, how significant do you consider the establishment of a new job position within your organisation or the organisations you are associated with, specifically for a sustainability manager?

257 answers



The European Festivals Forest

Tamar Brüggemann and Peter Florence presented the European Festivals Forest. The Festivals Forest is a carbon sequestration project that found its base in Iceland. It celebrates the power and creativity of the festivals industry coming together to lead a progressive call to climate action.



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They have contributors in more than 26 countries.

Join Arts Festivals Across Europe



Setting the stage

Matina asked participants several questions about what they do or don't do within their festivals.

Who has a sustainability policy?

Among the participants, these two festivals mentioned they have a sustainability policy: Avignon Off and Gümüşlük Music Festival. Gümüşlük Music Festival based in Türkiye is completely sustainable because the festival is happening on a beach that is in a protected zone.

How many measure environmental impact?

Three festivals in the room measure their environmental impact:

- Enjoy Jazz does it but it's complicated because they work in different venues and don't receive the info from their partners.
- Wonderfeel worked on this twice with Julie's Bicycle but it costed twice 2500€ so it's quite expensive.
- Avignon Off started measuring last year.

NB: the Onboard:earth app helps calculate carbon footprint regarding travels.

How many have (sustainable) mobility guidelines for audiences?

Guidelines for artists are easier to make than for audiences because festivals are more in control of artists' travels.

For example, Wonderfeel has an annual quota of flights for their team and their artists (maximum 20 flights).

Regarding audience travel, we often think that flights are the problem but it's actually the audience coming by car which pollutes the more. Tamar shared that there is a festival in Amsterdam that doesn't offer parking spots. Audiences are obliged in this case to rethink their transport mode.

Everything has to do with the context in which the festivals are taking place (island, countryside, city, etc.).

How many have a sustainability manager?

Two festivals have at the moment a dedicated sustainability manager: Enjoy Jazz and Avignon Off since two years.

Wonderfeel had someone responsible for collecting data around environment sustainability but for Tamar it's about shared responsibilities and she organises plenary sessions with the team to speak about it.

Dilemmas

Matina then invited participants to divide into two groups and work on dilemma. The following examples were shared in plenary afterwards.

Dilemma 1/ Funding requirements

You are applying for European funding together with other partners. Sustainability criteria are increasingly important. To comply seriously, you need to:

- ▶ switch to greener suppliers
- ▶ invest in carbon tracking tools
- ▶ redesign production processes

But your festival already operates with a fragile budget.

Do you:

- ▶ A: Invest in sustainability upgrades and risk financial stability ?

OR

- ▶ B: Maintain your current model and transition more slowly but lose the opportunity to apply for EU funding ?

Participants were more in favour of A than B. The dilemma is formulated in a way like if it is a financial question rather than human resources. Some have shared that they've had to mention to the funders that they have failed and needed to scale back on what has been announced. This is not a problem if it's done in transparency and honesty.

Dilemma 2/ Funding requirements

Your CEO/ Festival Director strongly supports sustainability and asks all departments to adapt. You are part of the programming team and for you this means:

- ▶ reducing international programming
- ▶ limiting air travel

Do you:

- ▶ A: Commit to radical transformation ?

OR

- ▶ B: Adopt gradual changes ?

The opinion of participants here was more diverse and they opted for a solution going in between as individual answers depend very much of the context in which festivals operate. Some solutions that have been brought forward are:

- Showing a piece several times.
- Changing partners and collaborators if they don't want to align with the guidelines.
- Reducing international programming. This can sometimes be perceived as a loss but if you see it on the other side it's an opportunity to see more artists from the region. Multicultural territories can build their programme on the diversity within their entity.

Dilemma 3/ Offsetting

Your festival decided to contribute €4. 000 annually to the Festival Forest initiative.

You are in the production team. Do you:

- ▶ A. Maintain offsetting as a key pillar of your sustainability strategy?

OR

- ▶ B. Shift focus toward reducing emissions directly within your festival?

Donations to the European Festivals Forest goes from 100€ to a few thousand euros.



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Participants pointed out that this is a green washing question. Offsetting is a part of the solution but doesn't entirely compensate your environment footprint.

The solution is to reduce emissions by consuming differently or less.

Dilemma 4/ Infrastructure inequalities

- ▶ You invite an artist from a neighboring country to participate in your festival.

However, sustainable transport options are limited:

- Train: 30 hours, multiple connections, medium cost
- Bus: 20 hours, long and tiring journey
- Plane: 2 hours, inexpensive and reliable

Do you:

- ▶ A. Insist on low-carbon travel, even if it means long, exhausting, and potentially exclusionary journeys for the artist

OR

- ▶ B. Accept air travel as the most feasible option in this context, despite its environmental impact

This dilemma comes along with the question of how much you want to show an artist / a company, to prioritise within your festival what is very important and what is less.

Transport infrastructure has a big impact on festivals' choices and production schedules can be very tight. These are things to take into account when making these decisions.

Dilemma 5/ Audiences

- ▶ Your festival is experiencing growing international visibility, and around 30% of your audience now comes from abroad, resulting in more carbon emissions.

This raises questions about how you define your public and your priorities.

Do you:

- ▶ A. Continue to prioritise international reach and visibility ?

OR

- ▶ B. Refocus on strengthening local and regional audiences as the most feasible option in this context?

The answer to this dilemma depends also on the audience. If the audience of the festival is already more international, it's different.

Dilemma 6/ Audience resistance

Your festival introduces a no-meat policy as part of its environmental strategy. Audience reactions are mixed and some people even publicly complain that "You cannot decide for me".

Do you:

- ▶ A. Maintain the policy as a clear environmental commitment, even if it creates resistance?

OR

- ▶ B. Withdraw the policy to preserve audience satisfaction and acceptance ?

Hessisches Staatsballett hosted the Spring Forward Festival and they served vegan food. Some people said that the chicken was fantastic so it's possible to serve food that is similar to meat but which isn't.

Stroom Festival in Belgium faces the same dilemma with its sponsors who want to eat meat.

New Dilemma

Festivals were finally asked to share some personal dilemmas. Because of time constraints, participants only managed to bring one forward:

- Audience mobility: the solution is to make transport part of the journey. Festivals can invite their audience to park somewhere or come to a specific meeting point to then take a boat. It creates a great experience.

Conclusions

Environmental sustainability is not an easy topic with easy solutions but what is important is to take actions and to start. Festivals are great platforms for experimenting new ways of doing things.

The European Festivals Association and the European Festivals Forest will launch soon a new version of the festivals roadmap to be greener.

Pictures



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Credits

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