

do you culture?

valletta creative forum



**Recommendations of the
Valletta Creative Forum
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Preface

The Valletta Creative Forum (VCF) took place at St James Cavalier from January to June 2007. Six monthly forums explored six major issues, involving the participation of more than 300 stakeholders from the artistic, political, business and governmental sectors together with more than 20 European speakers and contributors. The Forum not only served as a lobby group for cultural development but also offered an excellent networking opportunity for all stakeholders. The most successful and tangible outcome of the Forum was the inclusion of new measures in the 2007 Government Budget.

The issues covered by the VCF form the chapter headings in this publication:

- 1 Cultural Governance in Malta and Beyond
- 2 Arts and Health: The Wellbeing of Maltese Society
- 3 Arts, Heritage and Tourism
- 4 Creativity in our Local Communities
- 5 Show Business: Sustaining our Creative Industries
- 6 Cultural Identity: Endorsing Identity and Celebrating Diversity

The following are the recommendations made at the end of each session.
The full report is available on the St James Cavalier website www.sjcav.org

Cultural governance in Malta and beyond:

- speakers asserted that a strong cultural sector requires effective structures, policies and leaders to motivate, direct, sustain and nurture creativity;
- artists and decision makers voiced the need for cultural institutions to operate at arms-length from central government in order to create autonomy and transparency;
- the shortage of funding for institutions and cultural events is also stifling the potential growth of artists and cultural organisations;
- the three working groups stressed the importance of appropriate governance structures and action plans to be implemented by the Malta Council for Culture and the Arts;
- government appointed members require the necessary competence, training and knowledge to fulfil their role; and
- boards of cultural institutions were also encouraged to collaborate further and artists suggested the creation of a network to facilitate their development, share knowledge and lobby with one voice.

Arts and health: the wellbeing of Maltese society

- arts as therapy practices require appropriate accreditation by the Ministry of Health;
- arts therapy should become an inclusive method in the Maltese health sector;
- arts practices in hospitals should go beyond the placement of paintings in the new Mater Dei hospital;
- the Healing Arts Committee within the Mater Dei hospital should not cease to exist with the opening of the new hospital but establish an ongoing programme of arts therapy and arts practices;
- the Creative Arts Therapy Society, which is the only organisation in Malta seeking professional support and development in the arts and health sector, requires institutional support and recognition from the Ministry of Health, the Elderly and Community Care;
- government should utilise further the creative arts as a unique tool for health promotion campaigns which at times require a more innovative and creative approach; and

- Malta requires an appropriate arts and health policy with strong synergies between the Health Department, the Malta Council for Culture and the Arts and NGOs.

Arts, heritage and tourism

- cultural tourism should not be perceived as a sector exclusively related to cultural heritage but a focus should be placed on promoting and encouraging contemporary culture as a tool for generating tourism;
- museums should engage artists to develop innovative animation sessions for tourists with special emphasis on creating child-friendly environments;
- explore the potential of cultural tourism and the cultural life of each town as authentic experiences for visitors and allow artists to creatively explore such spaces;
- ensure that the national minimum curriculum addresses tourism and culture as cohesive processes for economic development;
- the Malta Council for Culture and the Arts should take the lead in training tourism personnel on Malta's art and culture. This would request tourism stakeholders such as concierges, taxi drivers, tourism operators and guides to attend exhibitions, performances and festivals in order to acquire the necessary knowledge to recommend to tourists; and
- create a network for arts, heritage and tourism organisations to initiate cooperation in the three sectors.

Creativity in our local communities

- the need for an artists' network to create community projects and develop work for children and young people;
- the need to develop a catalogue of ideas and best practices in community art;
- research the spaces available in each locality for the use of art as well as a catalogue of artists in each locality;
- having funds allocated in government budgets for artists within the local council's remit;
- encouraging local councils to actively engage in creative projects such as artist's residency programmes within their communities;
- the need to foster partnerships between local councils, businesses and arts organisations; and
- the need to train artists to work within the community.

Show business: sustaining our creative industries

- the setting up of a *Creativity Trust Fund* by government (managed by a bank or fund management company) for micro-loans to encourage innovative business start-ups and professional development;
- the creation of a *National Arts Fund*, funded through a yearly direct government grant (equal to the MTL 500000 currently budgeted for EPSO programmes), and additional funding from the National Lottery Good Causes Fund and private donations;
- income averaging over 3 years. This measure would enable self-employed artists to spread their income for tax purposes over a period of 3 years and pay the income tax over a period of another 3 years;
- tax exemption on grants, awards and scholarships;
- civil servants, who have studied, trained or currently work semi-professionally in the creative industries are allowed to take unpaid leave to develop creative projects. Cultural leave entitled to civil servants should also become more flexible and accessible;
- the reduction of VAT from 18% to 5% on objects of art, rental of space for creativity and entrance fees to museums, exhibitions, concerts, theatres and cinemas;

- individuals purchasing a work of art may apply for a VAT rebate;
- all arts training and education programmes are to be exempt from VAT through an exemption exercise which is currently only valid for ballet schools;
- 100% of the value of donations / sponsorships by corporate businesses can be deducted if the recipient is on the official list of registered Non Profit Cultural Organisations or the National Art Fund; and
- 1% of the capital budget of a newly constructed or reconstructed building or infrastructural project must be spent on public art within the site and surrounding community.

Cultural diplomacy: endorsing identity & celebrating diversity

- the need to create an agency for the promotion of Maltese culture abroad through effective collaboration between the Ministry for Tourism and Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- exploit the potential of bilateral agreements;
- encourage active participation in Euro-Mediterranean cultural projects;
- conduct research on cultural diversity in Malta and engage with all minority groups in the creative experience;
- facilitate artist mobility through specific Arts Council funding;
- create a network of all foreign representations in Malta and their cultural agencies to facilitate transnational cultural cooperation; and
- encouraging the strong presence of the Catholic Church to foster inter-religious dialogue.