

April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016

**Press release**

**Let's get involved. The two days of debates of the 8<sup>th</sup> International meetings of the Forum d'Avignon ended on April 1<sup>st</sup> with a double call from artists, political figures, entrepreneurs, civil society representatives, often with emotion and depth, and always with passion and commitment: reaffirming that culture is everyone's business, including the digital world, and putting back culture at the heart of the European political project.**

**"Culture is everyone's business, and we all have to take up the challenge.":** the call of **Hervé Digne**, Chairman of the Forum d'Avignon, took shape throughout this 8<sup>th</sup> edition of the Forum with concrete and targeted proposals: **Ouided Bouchamaoui**, President of the Tunisian employers and winner of the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize, reminded in a moving speech that *"culture is the antidote to obscurantism"*; she argued for a democratic culture, open to everyone, away from political power. *"The vitality of culture, added Didier Reynders, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of European and Foreign affairs (Belgium), is also the force of the resistance it opposes to barbarism"*. **Günther Oettinger**, European commissioner for digital economy and society, made Matteo Renzi's statement that *"1 euro invested in security must come along with 1 euro invested in culture"* his own. *"To give a new impetus to our creation, Alain Juppé, Mayor of Bordeaux, [...] identified three requirements: Defending. Supporting. Releasing. [...] Culture is for our country an investment, an investment that - like any investment - prepares the future, as education and research do"*. Examples abound: the promoter **Laurent Dumas** started the project *"a piece, a building"* – *to open our nation's contemporary creation to the public, and to debunk the idea that contemporary art is solely reserved to an elite class.* The architect **Massimiliano Fuksas** advocated *"Less Aesthetics More Ethics"* which also means less strategy and more emotions. The visual artist **Pascale Marthine Tayou** built on *"I was a student at the fall of the Berlin wall, when this wave of freedom arrived in Africa. [...] Is emptiness an existing entity in an environment where pleasure exists, and where comfort is fundamentally uncomfortable?"*. *"In corporate history"*, recalled **Nicolas Gaume**, CEO at Microsoft, *"the conception of a building followed an entrepreneurial activity as its functional reflection. Today, it precedes it. The organization of a space calls upon new forms of work management"*.

**The digital world, highlighted by startups and political figures during the Forum, must replace the human at his heart.** The artist **ORLAN** made a plea for artistic recognition of digital art. **Eric Scherer** of France Télévisions called out: *"Global high tech is about to hatch the new digital revolution."* *"Forget digital technology, everything becomes data, and data is in everything,"* said **Philippe Torres** of l'Atelier BNP Paribas. *Instead of falling into the worship of the data, you have to feed a culture of data: by educating yourself (back to school), setting goals (smart city). Without trying to imitate but by "disrupting the disruptors"* (ex. Juno). The omnipresence of smartphones will launch the beginning of a new and profound transformation of our lifestyles, contended **Gary Shapiro**, CEO of Consumer Electronics Association. **Pierre-Louis Xech**, a specialist of Artificial Intelligence at Microsoft, defended a narrow collaboration between men and the machine while future evolutions already interrogates our social contract. *"Society becomes more and more calculated thanks to the*

data we provide” according to **Dominique Cardon**, a sociologist and a researcher at Orange Labs. *“However, we are not the sum of our data traces”*. Building an algorithm is not a neutral process but is rather dependent upon the coder’s whim. Nonetheless, we must pull ourselves away from the *“illusion of the objective calculation”* which entails *“a democratization of data learning”* as well as *“the conception of a regulatory institution for a fair use of data”* according to the philosopher **Cynthia Fleury**.

**The propositions of those 8th international meetings were pragmatic:** *“we are looking for new initiatives and talents, in order to make them prosper”*, said **Hervé Digne**. *“Enterprising Culture, it means promoting the implication of everyone along with artists and creators: local governments, companies, associations, collectives or citizens. It means going off the beaten track to encourage the development of artistic practises, while respecting everyone’s cultural identity. We reaffirm that culture is not a privilege: it must be everyone’s business”*. As witnessed by the *“creative hubs”* coordinated by **Michel Magnier**, Director of the culture and creativity section of the European Commission. The editor **Leonard Anthony**, the entrepreneur **Sana Ghenima**, the architect **Manuelle Gautrand**, the stage director and actor **Michel Kacenenbogen** all forcefully showed that creation was essentially risk-taking, a necessary discomfort zone, just like entrepreneurial vocations. **Tonjé Bakang**, founding director of Afrostream, developed the specificity of cultural businesses: *“an energy which combines the audacity of the entrepreneur and the risk-taking inherent to artistic creations”*. **Stéphane Richard**, CEO at Orange, summarized the necessary qualities so that a large business keeps an entrepreneurial spirit: it has to *“be open to what happens outside, keep in touch with creators, be curious, take risks”*, and in a *“more and more risk-averse world”*, not be afraid. **Françoise Benhamou** and **Thomas Paris** then questioned the evolution of our social model by drawing a parallel between models of independence and wage models, convinced that the social model of tomorrow will be hybrid.

**“Put Culture at the heart of the political project, at the heart of the European Project”:** *“Enterprising culture, according to Alain Juppé, it means imagining new ways of action, liberating the entrepreneurial spirit, and seizing the digital opportunity to encourage the development of new practises, from which result a new issue of transmission and sharing”*. This commitment for the French and European cultural policies to find a new impetus was frequently referred to during those two days: if for **Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres**, former French Minister of Culture and Communication, *“it is urgent that Europe becomes a fraternity based on Culture; Europe cannot only be a crisis, a problem, barriers”*, **Isabel Botelho Leal**, Secretary of State for Culture (Portugal), reminded that Europe was based on an ideal of peace; **István Ígyártó**, Secretary of State in charge of cultural and scientific diplomacy (Hungary), **Dace Melbārde**, Minister of Culture (Latvia), and **Bertel Haarder**, Ministry of Culture (Denmark), insisted on the force of the European multiculturalism to create a more fraternal and cooperative society.

**Viviane Reding**, Member of the European Parliament, raised the issue of *“a true vision, a project from the European Commission that defends intellectual property”*. **Günther Oettinger**, European Commissioner in charge of digital economy and society, claimed that *“Culture is a lot more than an artistic expression, it is our only future, our way of surviving. We have to invest more in culture. The digital technologies are not an end in themselves, but a tool serving the creativity of our citizens. To be efficient, we have to ensure a fair field for all the players, and a fair distribution of added value between authors, producers and users. Intellectual property and copyrights are key stakes with two*

main goals: ensuring a fair income for artists, and encouraging companies to invest in new talents. Especially at a time when accessing financing is a major problem in the cultural sector. We have to make it easier, and make efficient propositions to coordinate national efforts of financing". **Hervé Digne** recalled in his final address, that the Forum fights for the defence of copyright, a pillar of the financial independence of creators, and recommended to approach with caution any changes even at the margin of its current foundations.

If **Michel Hazanavicius**, filmmaker, warned the audience that "*the single digital market can be destructive of value.*" **Christian Have**, Danish writer, recalled the need for "*an active role in the development of arts and culture as it is an essential element of our society, and a new partnership between artists and companies*". **Olivier Poivre d'Arvor** made an impression by stating that "*cows are 1,000 times more subsidized than artists in Europe*" It is still a long way to go. But this is a case of emergency.

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**For the first time, a Cultural start-up award was awarded.** The first winners were: **Jamshake**, an online musical collaborative platform which also enables to find musicians nearby or at the other end of the world, was awarded the Jury Prize by PrismaMedia, and **Delight**, a tool for conquering new clients in performing arts, was awarded the Public Prize by Chateau Dassault.

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#### **About the Forum d'Avignon :**

Association (law of 1901), created in March 2007, the Forum d'Avignon is both a **think-tank** and an **international meeting place** in the service of culture, cultural and creative industries, and their dialogue with the economic and digital world.

Based on a global network of creators, investors (companies from every sector, patrons, sponsors), entrepreneurs, international consulting agencies, professors, researchers (students or experts), politicians, and more than 30 public and private partners, the think-tank produces analysis all year long. It's the only opportunity of meeting and of public expression of cultural and creative industries' jobs in Europe.

#### Contacts:

Laure Kaltenbach, Managing director, [laure.kaltenbach@forum-avignon.org](mailto:laure.kaltenbach@forum-avignon.org)

Valérie Escaudemaison, Head of communications, media relations and media partnerships, [valerie.escaudemaison@forum-avignon.org](mailto:valerie.escaudemaison@forum-avignon.org)

Olivier Le Guay, Editorial manager, [olivier.leguay@forum-avignon.org](mailto:olivier.leguay@forum-avignon.org)