

## Press kit

### European Alliance of Academies

A conference of European cultural institutions  
8 - 10 October 2020  
at the Akademie der Künste, Berlin

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## Press Release

### **European Alliance of Academies Berlin Manifesto of the European cultural institutions released today**

At the invitation from the Akademie der Künste, over the last three days (8 – 10 October), around 70 representatives of European art academies and cultural institutions gathered for a hybrid conference to initiate a "European Alliance of Academies". The institutions involved come from almost every country in the European Union as well as Norway and Great Britain – a strong signal that demonstrates the need for a transnational alliance based on solidarity, especially in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic and its political consequences, national delineations and right-wing populist isolationist fantasies.

Today, the "European Alliance of Academies" presented a joint manifesto in Berlin, setting out the mission of securing the European Union as a cultural project for the future. New forms of cooperation are to be established that guarantee mutual support whenever there is a threat of political restrictions or the freedom of art is at risk.

Academy President Jeanine Meerapfel opened the conference on Thursday. This was followed by presentations by writers Robert Menasse and A. L. Kennedy and publicist Basil Kerski. The internal panels on Friday began with a greeting by Minister of State Prof. Monika Grütters, followed by perspective views of Europe by art historian Bénédicte Savoy and contemporary historian Philipp Ther.

Numerous well-known personalities – Wim Wenders, Ken Loach and Andres Veiel, among others – lent their support to the "European Alliance of Academies" and used their statements to highlight the need for offensive alliances.

The following are involved in the Alliance: The Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, the Royal Academy of Arts, Széchenyi Academy of Letters and Arts, L'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Real Academia Española and Académie Goncourt as well as the Centre Pompidou, the Onassis Foundation and many more.

Further information, programme and supporter statements available at: [www.allianceofademies.eu](http://www.allianceofademies.eu)

Sponsored by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and Media within the framework of the German EU Presidency



## Alliance of Academies Open Continent

### BERLIN MANIFESTO

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In some European countries we are currently experiencing cultural policies that understand art and culture only nationally and are increasingly regulating them. As a result, the autonomy of many academies, museums and cultural institutions is being jeopardized.

We would like to do something against this development: So far 60 art academies and cultural institutions from countries of the European Union, Great Britain and Norway, are joining to form an “Alliance of Academies” on the initiative of the Academy of Arts, Berlin. Together we stand up for the right to freedom of art throughout Europe, which is stipulated in Article 13 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

### What does the Alliance stand for?

- Art and Culture are essential for a functioning democracy and for social cohesion. We stand for the freedom of the arts as a prerequisite for our cultural, social and political way of life. The independence of artistic positions and institutions from political, national and religious prescriptions is the foundation of democracy.
- Being here in Berlin we are particularly aware – as a consequence of the disasters of the 20th century caused by Germany – of the responsibility to think of the EU as part of a transnational cultural (peace) project.
- We stand for cultural diversity in Europe and in our societies. We want to recall the “blind spots” that the European wars of conquest left in the world, of the colonial power structures that continue to have an impact in many countries today.
- We stand with the arts for a humanism that opposes all forms of racism, discrimination and violence. We also defend human rights for those who were not born in Europe but who seek a chance for survival and peaceful coexistence here.

# European Alliance of Academies

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## Our Demands & Measures

- We call for a unified solidarity between the art and cultural institutions in Europe. Only across all borders can art, culture and science develop in the spirit of the Enlightenment. Only together, we will succeed in maintaining and defending this free space for the future.
- We exchange information transnationally and directly on cultural policy developments in our countries and we disseminate the news through our own communication channels and in our own networks.
- We support the exchange of art and artists within our institutions, particularly those who may be experiencing socio-political restraints in the exercise of their artistic work or in their freedom of expression.
- We demand that art and culture become an integral part of European politics.
- We call on politicians throughout Europe to protect and defend the right to artistic freedom and the autonomy of the institutions in accordance with Article 13 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. And – wherever necessary – to support the art academies and the artists on the advice of our Alliance.

Berlin, 9 October 2020

## **Participating institutions (overview)**

### **Austria**

Akademie der Bildenden Künste Wien  
Academy of Fine Arts Vienna

Berufsvereinigung der Bildenden Künstler Österreichs  
The Austrian Association of Visual Artists

IG Kultur Österreich  
IG Kultur Austria

### **Belgium**

Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse Taal en Letteren (KANTL)  
Royal Academy of Dutch Language and Literature (KANTL)

Palais des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles (BOZAR)  
Centre for Fine Arts of Brussels (BOZAR)

Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van België voor Wetenschappen en Kunsten  
Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Science and the Arts

Académie royale des Sciences, des Lettres et des Beaux-Arts de Belgique  
Royal Academy of Science, Letters and Fine Arts of Belgium

### **Bulgaria**

Националната художествена академия  
National Academy of Art Sofia

Съюзът на българските художници  
Union of Bulgarian Artists

### **Croatia**

Akademija likovnih umjetnosti (ALU)  
Academy of Fine Arts

Hrvatsko društvo likovnih umjetnika (HDLU)  
Croatian Association of Fine Artists (HDLU)

### **Cyprus**

Cyprus Chamber of Fine Arts (E. KA. TE)

**Czech Republic**

Akademie múzických umění v Praze (AMU)  
Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (AMU)

Akademie výtvarných umění v Praze  
Academy of Fine Arts Prague

České literární centrum  
Czech Literary Centre

Institut umění – Divadelní ústav  
Arts and Theatre Institute

**Denmark**

Det kongelige danske kunstakademi, Billedkunstscolerne  
The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts

Det Kongelige Danske Kunstakademis Skoler for Arkitektur, Design og Konservering  
The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts Schools of Architecture, Design and Conservation

The International Center for Knowledge in the Arts

**Estonia**

Eesti Kirjanike Liit  
Estonian Writers Union

Eesti Kunstiakadeemia  
Estonian Academy of Arts

**Finland**

Suomen Taiteilijaseura – Konstnärsgillet i Finland  
Artists' Association of Finland

Frame Contemporary Art Finland

**France**

Académie Goncourt

Centre Pompidou

Académie des beaux-arts  
Institut de France

**Germany**

Bayerische Akademie der Schönen Künste  
Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts

Sächsische Akademie der Künste  
Saxon Academy of Arts

Akademie der Künste  
Academy of Arts

European Film Academy

Villa Aurora & Thomas Mann House e.V.

Universität der Künste Berlin  
University of the Arts Berlin

**Greece**

Onassis Foundation

ΕΠΙΜΕΛΗΤΗΡΙΟ ΕΙΚΑΣΤΙΚΩΝ ΤΕΧΝΩΝ ΕΛΛΑΔΟΣ  
Chamber of Fine Arts of Greece

**Hungary**

Széchenyi Irodalmi és Művészeti Akadémia  
Széchenyi Academy of Letters and Arts

Szépírók Társasága  
Society of Hungarian Authors

**Ireland**

Royal Hibernian Academy

**Italy**

Accademia delle Arti del Disegno  
Academy of the Arts of Drawing

Accademia Nazionale di San Luca  
Academy of San Luke

L'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei  
The National Academy of Lincei

**Latvia**

Latvijas Mākslas akadēmija  
Art Academy of Latvia

**Lithuania**

Vilniaus dailės akademijos

Vilnius Academy of Arts

Lietuvos dailininkų sąjunga

Lithuanian Artists' Association (LAA)

**Luxembourg**

D'Filmakademie Luxembourg

Luxembourg Film Academy

Institut Grand-Ducal de Luxembourg Section des Arts et des Lettres

Institut Grand-Ducal de Luxembourg Section of Arts and Letters

Institut Pierre Werner Luxembourg

**Netherlands**

Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen (KNAW)

Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences

**Norway**

Kunsthøgskolen i Oslo

Oslo National Academy of the Arts

**Poland**

Polska Akademia Nauk Komitet Architektury i Urbanistyki (KAIU)

Polish Academy of Sciences Committee for Architecture and Town Planning (KAIU)

Akademia Sztuk Pięknych w Krakowie

Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts

Willa Decjusza

Villa Decius

Europejskie Centrum Solidarności

European Solidarity Centre

Akademia Sztuk Pięknych w Gdańsku

Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk

**Portugal**

Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation



**Romania**

Academia Română  
Romanian Academy

Romanian Association of Contemporary Art (ARAC)

**Slovakia**

Slovenskej Akadémie Vied  
Slovak Academy of Sciences

**Slovenia**

Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti (SAZU)  
Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SAZU)

Zveza društev slovenskih likovnih umetnikov  
Association of Slovene Fine Artists Societies

**Spain**

Círculo de Bellas Artes (CBA)

Real Academia Española  
Royal Spanish Academy

**Sweden**

Kungl. Akademien för de fria konsterna (Konstakademien)  
The Royal Academy of Fine Arts

**United Kingdom**

Arts Council England

Royal Academy of Arts

Royal Society of Literature

Royal Scottish Academy of Art & Architecture

## Statements of the supporters

**Marion Döring**, Director of the European Film Academy e.V.

Who, if not us, should be able to forge alliances? Is not every academy itself an alliance of artists, cultural workers, scientists?

Artists may create great works for themselves. But works and values are best defended together.

Academies are often national institutions. Their social commitment, their dedication to promoting the arts, therefore, usually has an effect internally, in their own country. In this way they fulfil their mission, for which there are undoubtedly many good reasons, even if this mission often comes from a different time. Today, however, there are just as many good reasons to add a European dimension to their mission.

In the film industry, we have identified these reasons already 15 years ago and in 2006 we formed a European alliance between national film academies and the European Film Academy. „FAN of Europe – Film Academies Network of Europe“ started as a small network of six academies and now comprises 25 academies of film professionals across Europe. We meet once a year at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in Czech Republic, we exchange views on the situation of cinema in our respective countries, we talk about the freedom and possibilities of filmmaking and stand up together when these are threatened.

Our meetings are marked by friendship, curiosity and openness. We generously share our knowledge about new developments and our experience in dealing with special challenges – just as we are now, when a pandemic confronts us with a situation whose extent and complexity we do not yet know and which therefore makes us feel deeply insecure.

When the lockdown began, and none of us knew what would happen next, we got together in weekly video conferences. It was our need. We were united on the screen, each one for him/herself, alone and unexpectedly private in front of our computers at home – in London, Copenhagen, Vienna, Madrid, Rome, Lisbon, Kiev, Berlin, Moscow, Tel Aviv, Prague, Warsaw, Barcelona and many other places.

The Alliance of Film Academies still has no statutes, but it can build its cooperation on something that cannot be replaced by any set of rules – on grown trust and solidarity. We have probably never felt more closely connected than in these months of isolation, because we felt the power of our alliance across all borders and knew that only together can we master the tasks that lie ahead.

In these times, there is much at stake for all the arts, for culture and for democratic coexistence. So let us urgently tackle it together, the project „European Alliance of Academies“.

**A. L. Kennedy**, writer

We now see clearly that policies based on anything other than the preservation and improvement of life end are a fatal risk. Our planet is dying. Hundreds of thousands of us are dying needlessly. Anger and pain overwhelms populations and is weaponised by the enemies of shared democratic norms. Our restraints of power and protections of weakness were never perfect and are crumbling. Europe is shaken by forces eager to strip away all human rights.

The UK is abandoning democracy. Massive propaganda efforts seek to deny and discard our humanity. We are harried towards violence and the masochistic vandalism of our shared peace, our shared resources and our European home.

Across the world, arts and artists stand in the way of this drive to death. Before our media fail, before our politicians fail, before our law fails – before all that, art fails. In the UK art failed. Sometimes we surrendered, sometimes we were ignored and suppressed. The voice of all our people, the voice of joy and promise in unexpected places, the voice of the weak who challenge the strong – that voice died away. We no longer reminded ourselves why we thrive when we cherish life.

Let my country be another sad example to the world. Let my country show why arts activity and its international support and amplification is so desperately important. Let us demonstrate why solidarity, financial support, shared encouragement and inspiration and opportunities to create are key in functional democracies and transcend borders. They are our human inheritance. No work or art will stop a bullet. But it can and must stop anyone firing it.

**Ken Loach**, director, screenwriter

This conference embodies an important principle: the arts are not neutral. At a time of great existential danger, the ideas that lie behind our work can illuminate a way forward, and know the past in order to understand the present.

Politicians will make compromises, but artists should affirm lasting principles – tell the reality to undermine the propaganda.

The great American singer, Paul Robeson, was an artist who stood in solidarity with the working class across the world. He said: "Artists are the gatekeepers of truth. They are civilisation's radical voice."

I hope this conference will enable our radical voice to be heard loudly and clearly.

**Ulrike Ottinger**, director, camerawoman, photographer, screenwriter

We urgently need this European alliance of academies and cultural institutions in order to offer a quick-witted and powerful stand against the enemies of democracy, who have long since become internationally connected, even beyond Europe's borders.

**Kathrin Röggl**, writer

Art is a plural noun. It never exists as a singular, nor could it be understood if it were in singular form – it is also essentially multilingual, connected; it seeks out bridges, sometimes to demolish them, but mostly to cross them, to listen to how things might be. The producers of literature, fine art, theatre, architecture, audio art and music as well as the media arts have always been travellers and been in contact with each other, because art as a communication system seeks out conversation and is in part made up of it. In addition to this: The perspective from outside is often life-saving; we need each other. But maintaining this requires the possibility of contact, translation, and travelling to each other. I won't soon forget how exhilarating the first bilingual artist talk in a room was after the coronavirus lockdown. How did you get on in France? What did you do? What strategies have you been following? It was like a life insurance policy, because after all the home of artistic creation is, like Bohemia, a desert country near the sea.

**Aleš Sedmak** President of Slovenian Fine Arts Societies

Times are changing and we are changing with them. But within our living standards there are still some values, that will never change or modify and there is freedom, that must be self-evident and a necessity. But unfortunately, it is not always understood that way. There are different languages and different nations, especially in Europe, but fine art language can be understood by all of us. When the fine art is speaking, its multilingual. There are no limits and everyone can understand each other's work. Fine art is in a way a connection between society, art and science. The artists, are able through abstract vision, to see things that does not exists. They are also able to explain with their language, the worth of life, etc, beauty and aesthetic to the society of today. And most of all they are aware that, although fine artists are more or less lonely persons, they need loneliness, peace, isolation and freedom for creating process, but still they have to connect and unit them together with all kind of culture.

We are living in the time – century of changes in all fields of human existence, and, because of Covid-19, the globalisation is put on hold and freedom is no longer taken for granted. I think that only art, philosophy and science, together with the human society, could save this world in the future. Values of humanity that are with vulgarity dwindle away very fast into nothing, can be restored with culture, nobility of mind and generosity. The Alliance of Academies and important cultural institutions in Europe is a possibility of flourishing and uniting us all together in new prosperous Europe. I strongly believe in united Europe and support this initiative of Alliance of culture and art, as Europe is our home of centuries and we are responsible to save it also for our children and for tomorrow.

We suggest that Modern Europe, which has built a large part of today's civilization in the field of culture, incorporate art and nature into its strategic programs as a foundation that can help to build our confidence in the future. The Alliance of European Academies can be a start, maybe the first step.

**Klaus Staeck**, graphic artist, publisher

I wish an „Alliance of Academies“ had already existed when it came to protecting Chinese artist Ai Weiwei against his long house arrest, getting Ukrainian filmmaker Oleg Sentsov out of the prison camp in Yakutia and preventing the absurd show trial of Russian director Kirill Serebrennikov through international protests. Ai Weiwei was able to leave China after a show of global solidarity, Sentsov survived five years of a potential twenty years in prison despite going on hunger strike, Serebrennikov is supposed to pay 1.6 million euros to the state treasury and is not allowed to work as a theatre director during his probation period.

Of course, there was resistance. Our academy spoke to the Chinese and Russian authorities on several occasions and protested in front of the Embassy at Unter den Linden with the European Film Academy. But in the end, it was not the cultural institutions but the authority of artistic personalities, who spoke out in the media and even came to the attention of the despots.

If a network could be set up to help protect artists from persecution and imprisonment and to counter censorship in cultural policy, that would be a great success. The first condition for such an alliance is honesty. That means putting all our cards on the table. Is every member of the Alliance really concerned with fighting to preserve the cultural diversity of European societies and counteracting nationalist tendencies? So we don't delegate this test to the others, we should start with ourselves: The programme of the AfD (Alternative for Germany) party, which is the strongest opposition party in the Bundestag and in some federal states, promotes national hegemony in cultural politics, a stance that would subordinate the freedom of art to a „ethno-Nationalist“ concept of nation.

Are we ourselves ready and able to address this openly?

**Aleš Steger**, writer, translator, editor, journalist

We recently experienced it again when the pandemic broke out: When our backs are against the wall, there is no single, cohesive, supportive Europe. There are only pan-European fears, variations of European greed and Europe's seemingly elegant narrow-mindedness as it selectively turns a blind eye.

After slowly waking up from the torpor of COVID-19, the EU and its bureaucracies reacted with money. Lots of money. That probably isn't bad for the economy, but what we need to re-build a longer-term project – called Europe – are ideas, joint commitment and a Europe-wide change in thinking and action. It is clear that there is no Europe of equality and solidarity; perhaps such a Europe never even existed, but in any case it must now be re-sought, re-thought and re-created.

Academies have always been more a matter for social elites. When I think of all the different European elites who often became elites through systematic, inhuman, „classical“ colonial or – in its modern guise – no less colonial and exploitative thinking and action, it makes me shudder.

But when the old recipe for social change through bloody revolutions is no longer palatable, the only thing left is the much more laborious process of transforming institutions and modes of action internally.

Therefore, I do hope that the various vital academies of Europe will be able to generate new forces and clear, decisive impetus for our common future. No single individual or institution can accomplish this great work on its own. Fortunately, or so it seems at least, none of us are alone; we are many, all over Europe and the world, but to date we have been poorly connected or not connected at all. I am therefore very pleased about this first step to establish a European Alliance of Academies. It is a big step, a necessary one, because the road ahead is long and time – time is limited.

**Philipp Ther**, historian

Radical nationalism is haunting Europe again. The fact that right-wing nationalists are now ruling the former leading countries of the liberal West aggrandizes the dangers for the European Union. Several European governments have severely limited or even abandoned the freedom of the arts, the media and academia.

The advance of anti-liberalism and authoritarianism since the global crisis of 2008/09 makes the Alliance of the Academies all the more relevant. It is not only needed to counter right-wing nationalism, but also to keep up the spirit of European integration among the societies which are still believing in European solidarity.

The Alliance of Academies is also pivotal for acting against the national closures which we all have experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic. The arts and all other fields of culture will profit from more exchanges between societies and new practices of internationalism.

I also strongly endorse this initiative because European and global solidarity, and traditional and new forms of artistic expression, are deeply intertwined. Moreover, the Alliance will help to develop new ideas about how to spread the value and the practise of free arts across national and social boundaries.

**Andres Veiel**, writer, director

The statutory mission of the Akademie der Künste includes an advisory role to the government. Is this mission more than a long forgotten empty formula? In times when every crisis calls hundreds of experts who speak their piece via social media and other channels? In times, then, when the Academy no longer has privileged access to the public conversation, when a cacophony of voices sets the agenda?

How can the Academy reclaim its voice, its relevancy its mission? In times like these?

You don't have to buy into the prevalent dystopian world view to note: We're standing on the brink of an abyss. A deregulated out-of-control economic and financial system that needs growth as a necessary condition for its continued existence is no longer sustainable. The attempts to turn the economy green are too little too late. We have lost decades trying to contain climate change and its catastrophic consequences. The victims of this crisis are camping the gates and barb-wired fences of the industrialized nations, their bodies washing up on our shores.

These global challenges demand internationally coordinated responses. Yet they fail to reach the agenda. Instead, political action is dominated by national interests. In many EU countries voters, feeling overwhelmed by the complex challenges ahead, long for simple solutions and legitimize autocratic governments.

How can we stand up to this, raise awareness, create a level playing field, contribute to a broader, less divisive conversation? By making our voices heard as artists. Individually but also united across borders. In order to do this, we need to organize as artists, coordinate and unite internationally the work and outreach of national Academies of the Arts. A European alliance can have more impact and relevancy than one national academy alone. In the artist's penetration of reality lies the vantage point to observe the 24/7 news cycle from a distance to explore and reframe politics and the complexity of the world we live in.

This European Alliance of Academies could combine forces with science and civil society, contribute to the search search for the urgently needed solutions, enhance inclusion and participation to exert influence in the political arena.

By creating a solidary space to explore and experience the diversity of European history and culture, bridges could be built where the political conversation has broken down. In order to speak with one voice at least where state action dries up artistic polyphony through restrictive fiscal policy, censorship and open reprisals. That is why we need an Alliance of Academies, first on a European level, and – in a second step – in a trans-European context.

When, if not now.

**Cécile Wajsbrot**, writer, translator

At a time when the borders in Europe are not so much between the countries as within the countries themselves – between those who believe in democracy and culture and those who do not, those who despise them – a European Alliance of Academies would be an important symbol. It would be another step toward deepening the European Union, which today is still based almost exclusively on the economy.

**Wim Wenders**, director, screenwriter, photographer

All of us have just gone through a period of confinement that we couldn't have imagined in our wildest dreams.

It was an experience full of contradictions: Limits were imposed on us by a virus which itself did not respect any boundaries. "Social distancing" disconnected us more than ever, but also made us feel united in isolation and created a deep longing for a new togetherness.

Will this experience become a footnote, a missed chance, in the memory of mankind? Will we return to "normality", meaning: to our bad habits as soon as this pandemic is over?

Will we comfortably arrange ourselves with "business as usual" or accept this great opportunity for a complete make-over, for another normality where egoism, growth and greed will be replaced by empathy and awareness of the common good?

We don't know at this Point the sheer dimension of the damages resulting from the pandemic, but we have all reasons to be worried if we will ever be able to repair it.

However: if there is any chance for us to succeed, we need to build ALLIANCES!

This is the lesson we just learned in the lockdown:

What saved us in our isolation were our personal and social networks.

There has never been a better moment for creating "A European Alliance of Academies"!

An alliance supporting and conveying arts beyond national borders,  
an alliance defending the freedom of artistic expression and promoting culture as the ultimate and necessary ambassador for tolerance, equality and peace.

If we don't stand together now and take responsibility for shaping a sustainable future, we missed a unique and precious chance.

We then deserve, indeed, to become just a footnote in the memory of mankind.