

PRESS RELEASE

European festivals team up to plant first hectare of forest at Tumastaðir, Iceland

Through the European Festivals Forest, a carbon sequestration project in Tumastaðir, Iceland, the European festivals industry musters its creativity to lead a progressive call to climate action. Working with Skógræktin, the Icelandic forest service, gives the prime value climate action and will put the arts sector on a confident and shared path to Net Zero.

On 9 May, the first trees of the European Festivals Forest have been planted at Tumastaðir. Visitors from festivals in Italy, Belgium, Kosovo and the Netherlands have together donated 2,828 trees to sequester their carbon emissions and help the festivals work towards Net Zero.

By pooling resources with festivals across Europe we profit from economies of scale – while unit costs are low, sequestration rates are high. The group of participating festivals is expanding and currently consists of: Culturescapes (CH), ArtLink (SRB), ReMusica (XK), Noorderzon (NL), Rewire (NL), Schiermonnikoog Festival (NL), Usedomer Musik Festival (DE), Weissenhorn Klassik (DE), Reykjavík Arts Festival (IS) and Wonderfeel (NL). In a recent addition, the touring companies Brussels Jazz Orchestra (BE) and Flamenco Agency (ES) have also joined to offset their carbon footprint on the road.

Culturescapes director Jurriaan Cooman: “The Culturescapes is a festival about cultural landscapes and connections between various peoples, cultures and environments. Climate protection and cultural sustainability is as important for us as connecting artists and audiences from different regions of the world. Together with European Festivals Forest, we believe, we can reach a better future for all.”

Rewire deputy director Ingrid Beer: “As an international music festival we are aware of our impact on nature. We have a responsibility to make sustainable choices and joining the European Festivals Forest is one of these choices. With this partnership we want to contribute to a greener planet, of course together with our audience.”

Established in late 2021, the Dutch not-for-profit foundation European Festivals Forest is run by Tamar Brüggemann and Peter Florence, both seasoned festival directors with a huge drive to make the industry more sustainable. They believe that ‘forest thinking’ is like ‘cathedral thinking’ and conceive the European Festivals Forest as a long-term project intended to run for centuries.

Tamar Brüggemann: “we are taking the learnings from the 2022 pilot year and are now looking to roll out the sequestration scheme to as many of the 3,000 annual art festivals in Europe that we can reach”.

Tuesday 9 May, under the guidance of Þröstur Eysteinnsson, director of Skógræktin, the Icelandic forest service, and Trausti Jóhannsson, Skógræktin’s district forest manager, the first saplings went into the ground.

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Photos of the tree planting by Rán Bjargardóttir available on request.