

PRESS RELEASE

Immediate release

Writers' Centre Norwich receives European Union grant to allow young people to create their own literature festival

Young people in Norfolk with a passion for human rights and the creative arts will have the opportunity to travel to Poland and programme their own literature festival in Norwich, thanks to Creative Europe investment secured by Writers' Centre Norwich (WCN).

The £40,000 grant, awarded to WCN as part of a larger bid in partnership with PEN Català (Catalan PEN), Barcelona, and Krakow UNESCO City of Literature, will enable ten Norwich students from disadvantaged backgrounds to programme their own literary 'Festival in a Day'.

They will participate in a series of training sessions with experts from local arts organisations, before taking a research trip to Krakow (Norwich's partner UNESCO City of Literature in Poland) where they will observe other young people produce a poetry slam festival.

WCN will grant them responsibility for a programming budget and marketing campaign to create their literary festival, exploring freedom of speech in the global and digital world.

They will invite international artists, activists and organisations with links to the global International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN) to perform, speak and workshop to young audiences in Norwich and Norfolk.

This exciting opportunity will build significantly on the success of WCN's Young Ambassador scheme, which has allowed young people access to high-profile regional events such as Norfolk & Norwich Festival, Young Norfolk Arts Festival and the Festival of Literature for Young People (FLY).

Raffaella Salierno, Secretary General at PEN Català (Catalan PEN) said:

'Catalan PEN is a chapter of PEN International, founded in 1921 with the intention of building bridges among cultures through the dialogue between their writers. International working is in the DNA of our organization and we firmly believe that intercultural exchanges enrich our world, help us to have broader visions and understand better the world we live in.

'In today's world, even in countries where freedom of expression is considered as being well-established, we see that, because of new international scenarios, this freedom is challenged. It is essential, therefore, that young people understand and explore freedom of speech issues in order to safeguard fundamental rights in the future.'

Justyna Jochym, Head of International Cooperation at Krakow UNESCO City of Literature said:

‘International work widens our perspective and helps us to learn from our colleagues and their experience. The inspiration and ideas we draw from this type of collaboration are immensely valuable and educational. Young people must have the opportunity to come into contact with different worldviews and experiences from their own, so that they can develop understanding and empathy, celebrate diversity, and respect the rights of others, including freedom of expression and speech. Insularity is a great danger in today's world; dialogue and cooperation can challenge it.’

Jonathan Morley, Programme Director at Writers’ Centre Norwich said:

‘We are living in an age when barriers between nations and social groups seem to be increasingly promoted. For this reason, this investment from the European Union’s shared cultural fund into the education and life chances of young people in Norfolk is to be welcomed.

‘Through this project’s networked approach, reading and writing have the power to transform our young people’s lives by opening their minds to new, international perspectives – broadening their horizons and deepening their social awareness.’

All activity will be structured to enable participants to gain Silver and Gold arts awards, a nationally accredited arts award that carries recognition and weight for university entrance and further educational entrance requirements.

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Notes to Editors

1. Press enquiries to: Andrew Burton, Director of Communications, Writers’ Centre Norwich at andrew.burton@writerscentrenorwich.org.uk or 01603 877177
2. **Writers’ Centre Norwich**’s mission is to put literature at the heart of contemporary culture. Through pioneering and collaborative projects it explores the artistic and social power of creative writing and literary translation. www.writerscentrenorwich.org.uk
3. Writers’ Centre Norwich’s key stakeholder funders are Arts Council England, the University of East Anglia, Norwich City Council and Norfolk County Council.
4. Since its foundation, the **Catalan PEN** has been a platform for international literature and writers of the Catalan-speaking territories. This has been done internationally through its active participation with the objectives of International PEN , primarily the defence of freedom of expression and the fight for the release of persecuted writers. www.pencatala.cat/

5. **Krakow** was designated a UNESCO City of Literature in 2013. Krakow is the cradle of Polish language and literature, and is a city of Polish Nobel Prize-winners in literature. It contains some of the most beautiful and valuable scriptoriums and libraries in the world, and is home to two major literary festivals and a thriving book market.

<http://krakowcityofliterature.com/>

6. The **International Cities of Refuge Network** (ICORN) is an independent organisation of cities and regions offering shelter to writers and artists at risk, advancing freedom of expression, defending democratic values and promoting international solidarity.

<http://www.icorn.org/>