
Fair Stage

About the Pilot Project FAIRSTAGE

Current accusations about the abuse of power and racist incidents as well as the debate regarding payments for cancelled performances or contracts that were not extended during the COVID-19 pandemic have continuously offered occasions in the recent past to internally as well as publicly criticize the way theaters in Germany are run. In doing so, there is certainly no lack of suggestions for changes and initiatives.

In the cultural city of Berlin, thanks to the large number of stages that are organized in very different manners, there is a great deal of experience regarding organizational forms and work models. Numerous artists and those working backstage are interested in structural questions and have dedicated themselves to achieving change. In addition, the cultural policy associations and coalitions have already done remarkable work in terms of elaborating structural analyses of theater operation as well as measures for its improvement. A wide range of various position papers and lists of demands as well as internal know-how for working practices that are critical of discrimination exist.

In order to implement these suggestions and demands, specific levels of responsibility must be addressed and a process for finding consensus amongst all participants that is as broad as possible must be found.

First Phase of the Project - Elaboration of a List of Measures

This is where the Berlin pilot project FAIRSTAGE comes in, to effectively and sustainably incorporate the existing considerations and allow their implementation within the specific situation of Berlin. In the first project phase in the summer of 2021, institutionally funded theaters, flagship institutions of the independent performing arts community funded through the Konzeptförderung program as well as representatives of associations, initiatives and civic organizations initially worked together in a participatory process to create a list of measures. This clearly addressed recommendations for action to the various areas of responsibility: (1) Berlin's House of Representatives, (2) Berlin's Senate Department for Culture and Europe, (3) institutionally funded spoken word theaters, (4) theaters funded by the Konzeptförderung program as well as (5) associations, interest groups, initiatives and social partners.

The elaboration of the list of measures was based upon the publications and position papers of all of the structures involved as well as on specific interviews with experts. What problem areas were already identified by those involved and suggestions for solutions to these were developed? Are there interests that overlap and where are there contradictions? In addition, these topics were also discussed over the course of four participation forums and the results were incorporated within the assessment.

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In order to be able to have precise effects, the project is initially oriented to institutionally funded structure in the field of spoken word theater. Knowledge obtained from the process, however, should be assessed in such a manner that it can soon be used as a foundation for considerations in other fields, disciplines and forms of funding.

“Late to the Game?!“- First Conference of Experts of the Pilot Project FAIRSTAGE

To close out the first phase of the project, the first conference of experts of the pilot project FAIRSTAGE was held in February of 2022 under the title “Late to the Game?!“. Nearly 130 participants followed panel discussions and keynote speeches live via Zoom of specific examples of practice measures that it is possible to transfer to institutionally funded stages in Berlin.

Outlook - Continuation of the Pilot Project from the Summer of 2022

For the future work of FAIRSTAGE, a systematic approach on multiple levels of activity is planned. There is an urgent need for an accessible overview of data regarding the current situation on Berlin stages that also deal intersectionally with the various forms and incidents of discrimination. Existing studies, reports, examples of best practice, et cetera, will be consolidated and made accessible at FAIRSTAGE conferences and participation forums that also offer space for exchange between members of the community as networking formats. In addition, specific further education, qualification and exchange opportunities on topics such as the improvement of one’s own working environment or the further development of operational structures together with empowerment strategies for the strengthening of marginalized artists and members of the community will be conceived and realized.

The pilot project FAIRSTAGE will also continue to be a coordination center and interface between those seeking advice and the organizations and experts that provide advice, between those who have been affected and the information centers and aid opportunities, between the practical needs and the political processes as well as between the theaters themselves.

