Press release Eurofest XR Network
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Eurofest XR: Creation of the European association of XR festivals and marketplaces
Set up by several European events dedicated to immersion and innovation, Eurofest XR aims to be both a think tank and a professional, collaborative and participative organisation. The objectives are to share networks, highlight talents and support creation throughout the year by consolidating a European XR ecosystem.

The growing interest in XR from film festivals and other events in Europe and around the world has led several leading festivals and marketplaces to team up in 2019 to "*assess together the potential synergies to better support artists, share best practices, ensure the best possible distribution of European artworks and strengthen the European XR ecosystem",* explains Paola Gazzani Marinelli, Head of Digital and Professional Programs at the Geneva International Film Festival (GIFF), one of the founding members of the association. "*After our first discussions at GIFF in 2019 it was clear that there was a growing collective of exhibition organisations keen to find ways to collaborate and build a strong XR industry across Europe*", Rich Warren adds, director of the Encounters festival in the UK.
The **Eurofest XR Network** Association was officially launched in December 2020 at the online edition of Stereopsia.

Members of the network
In order to ensure a wide variety of event formats, as well as XR artists and producers, Eurofest XR Network brings together the following festivals and marketplaces:
-    **GIFF (Switzerland)**: Founded in 1995, the Geneva International Film Festival (GIFF) is the oldest film festival in Geneva. Every year in November, it offers 10 days of exclusive films, series and virtual reality works. The GIFF also hosts a popular event for audiovisual professionals, the Geneva Digital Market.
-    **VRHAM! (Germany)**: VRHAM! - Virtual Reality & Arts Festival Hamburg (VRHAM!) is the first international artistic virtual reality festival taking place annually since 2018. After two festival editions in Hamburg's creative centre Oberhafen and a third virtual festival edition due to the Corona pandemic, this year's VRHAM! Virtual Reality & Arts Festival will take place from 4 to 12 June 2021.
-    **Stereopsia (Belgium)**: Stereopsia is a yearly event featuring top-level conferences, panels with international experts, a scientific conference, XR showcases & demos, networking opportunities, coaching & pitching sessions for XR projects and start-ups, and a competition for the best XR contents produced in EMEA. Since 2019, it hosts the XR4ALL program funded by the EC to strengthen the European XR technology industry and to accelerate its growth. Stereopsia will take place on 8-10 December 2021.
-    **PiXii Festival (France):** PiXii Festival showcases the best of digital installations and narrative experiences created at the crossroads of documentary, culture and immersive technologies.

Conceived in full synergy with Sunny Side of the Doc since 2017, PiXii Festival is an undisputed meeting point for digital and creative cultures. PiXii Festival is associated with Digital Crossroads, a series of professional meetings for digital creation professionals, organised by the Institut Français.

- **Encounters Film Festival (UK):** Encounters is the UK's leading exhibitor of international Short, Animated and Immersive audio-visual storytelling through a year-round touring programme and the annual Encounters Film Festival. Encounters is a springboard for audiences to discover new content and for artists to progress, exchange knowledge, inform and learn within the evolving global industry.
- **Virtual Worlds Festival (Germany):** Founded in 2019, Virtual Worlds is an international competition for immersive works, networking space for industry professionals, B2B market and public exhibition. We embrace the future of storytelling and give visionaries a platform for their groundbreaking works.
- **Les Ailleurs (France):** The Les Ailleurs festival was born from the association between Fisheye and the Gaîté Lyrique to offer a new event dedicated to immersive experiences with artists, authors and thinkers who are exploring these new mediums.

A founding principle: collaboration at the service of XR creation

"Collaboration and networking are key for the growth of a European ecosystem that helps visionaries, creatives, artists and producers work in immersive media. It felt quite organic to continue the already strong partnerships between our festivals and join forces for the benefit of the creative XR industries. The Eurofest XR Network is a commitment of festivals to collaborate and support our artists. I am very glad to be part of this initiative that will take an active part to shape the future of XR in Europe", explains Astrid Kahmke, director of the Virtual Worlds festival.

For Rich Warren, *"Encounters is built on collaborations with like-minded individuals and organisations, as such we are excited by the potential of this new group and the opportunities it will create for practitioners in the future."*

Eurofest XR objectives

The founding members of the Eurofest XR Network association have identified several key objectives to be addressed in the coming months:

- To ensure the best possible distribution of European XR works;
- To explore possible collaborations with other members to better support XR artists and producers by improving their participation and visibility in as many European festivals as possible;
- To limit the costs of XR equipment for its members;
- To promote the exchange of knowledge and sharing of best practices within the association and support international collaboration and curation ideas;
- To develop frameworks and standards for the XR industry to strengthen the European XR ecosystem;
- To strengthen the European ecosystem with better visibility and publicity as an association;
- To highlight real world examples of year-round venues to learn exhibition practices and develop feasible distribution models for work beyond the festival circuit.

First initiatives: improving the dissemination of XR content, publishing a European study on audience engagement

At a meeting in March, the members of the Eurofest XR network agreed on a number of actions, all geared towards the same objective, which is to increase the visibility and distribution of XR content.

Eurofest XR will select an XR work from among the award-winning pieces from the various festivals and marketplaces of the associated members, which will be announced at the Geneva Digital Market in November 2021. This piece and its creators will then be invited to participate in all the events of the network's members in order to give them the widest possible international exposure throughout 2022.

"We also found it relevant to fund a study on how to engage audiences with online events and digital exhibitions to better support creativity in these challenging times for the industry", adds Alexandra Gérard, Chief Operating Officer at Stereopsia. This study will be carried out in partnership with universities from the European Union in order to raise maximum awareness when disseminated.

"At a time when the health crisis is having a major impact on our entire industry, from authors to broadcasters and producers, it seems vital to us to pool our skills, expertise and international networks to give XR works the greatest possible visibility and support creativity and innovation in Europe", says Stéphane Malagnac, PiXii Festival development manager.

Ulrich Schrauth, artistic director of VRHAM! concludes: *"We strongly believe in the power of networking and cooperation and with joined efforts we are putting XR art and immersive technologies on the agenda across Europe!"*.

For more information, please find below the contact details of the Eurofest XR Network members:

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