



REPORT OF THE EUROPEAN FOLK NETWORK ANNUAL CONFERENCE

MANRESA, CATALONIA, SPAIN

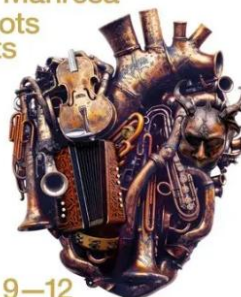
10 & 11 OCTOBER 2025

*in partnership with Fira Mediterrània de Manresa
generously supported by The Hungarian Heritage House*



28th Fira
Mediterrània
Manresa

Roots
Arts



9-12
October
2025

Organized by
FiraMediManresa
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**FIRA
MEDITERRÀNIA
MANRESA**



**HUNGARIAN
HERITAGE HOUSE**



6th Conference of the European Folk Network, Manresa, 10-11 October 2025

The conference was opened and welcomed by EFN Administrator, Nod Knowles, and Chair, Steven Vanderspoilden, with Lidia Hinojo from hosts, Fira Mediterrània de Manresa.

The theme of the 6th EFN conference, 'Diversity and Inclusion' was approached from a number of different perspectives, with examples drawn from members' work, analysis of the current situation, and some proposals for the role of the EFN.

*We should be open to all the sounds, colours
and vibrations of the universe – Kutay Kugay*

In her keynote speech, Angharad Cooper proposed some definitions: diversity, as the presence of difference, and inclusion as the activation of diversity – making people feel welcomed and able to participate. While Angharad emphasised cultural policy as the driver of inclusion, others complemented cultural policy with action on the ground. As Olivier Fontaine, Policy Officer at the European Commission, quoted by Angharad, put it, 'Diversity means nothing without discoverability'.

Angharad listed a number of examples of good practice, what she referred to as 'laboratories for diversity and inclusion' (See Appendix 2). In making the case she cited a number of actions relevant for the EFN: join networks and campaigns; write to national finance ministers; engage with ministers and civil servants; write to MEPs. In concluding she advised conference to complement these more mundane actions by being bold, experimental and adventurous in modelling possible futures.

In a lively session preceding the keynote, Peter van Rompaey prefigured this recommendation when he urged 'just do it, support more women artists, make the platforms'. Doing precisely that were his fellow panellists Kutay Kugay and Imed Alibi. Kutay outlined his strategy of finding unknown artists in their own communities and using his radio station in combination with well-produced live events to give them a platform.

*Music for and with the audience –
Peter van Rompaey*

Imed reminded conference of the challenges of integrating with the mainstream music industry (as panel chair, Araceli Tzigane put it, 'Iranian classical music will never have a mass audience) which ignores the complexity of cultural expression in a context of the mass movement of people, what he called 'the new diaspora'. Peter reminded us that diversity can often be a source of tension. Belgium has two indigenous languages, which makes for enough tension, but also a hugely diverse population in Brussels. Again, echoing Kutay's approach, it is important to provide a platform for locally-based migrant musicians, and to support them in marketing, music education, recording, and international touring.

Returning to the more policy-based approach Laia Canals emphasised that data collection is key. Data fuels advocacy which can never be properly effective without the data to back it up.

In discussion it was pointed out from the floor that, while EFN is sometimes criticised for its lack of diversity, diversity covers more than the visibilities of race. The point was also made that, while integrating with the mainstream music business may be challenging, we may want to consider that copying mainstream, commercial structures may not be the best approach.

*Only familiarity can bring
belonging – Mehdi Aminian*

The question of 'belonging' came up several times in discussion from the floor, in the break-outs, and explicitly in a panel devoted to the topic. Danny KilBride, the panel chair, proposed that the whole of Europe is a Europe of minorities and posed a question about the extent we feel we belong to a nation-state, or an idea of Europe, or perhaps more fundamentally, a feeling that we belong to each other.

Ioana Aminian pointed out that belonging is not static but fluid. For new arrivals in a host culture the appearance of belonging through assimilation can mean a concealment of identity, which can pose problems for second generations who can become unsettled in several contexts, not least linguistic security. Subsequent generations often come back to a sense of cultural identity through revivals and reauthentication, with music a powerful medium for the purpose. Mehdi Aminian, citing the experience of Afghans in Europe, also made the point that music is important for healing the trauma of displacement.

Displacement need not be the only cause of minoritisation. Jaume Asp, from our host community of Catalonia, outlined how the ties of belonging can become loosened. Only 32% of the population of Catalonia now speak the language compared to 90% ninety years ago. People have interiorised the idea the language is less important than the majority language. If language is invisible it then becomes perceived as being unnecessary, the result being a full-blown linguistic emergency.

*Diversity and Inclusion should be something we
aspire to. Perfection is unlikely – Suchet Malhotra*

Suchet Malhotra of Jeunesses Musicales Internationales explored the ways in which JMI's Ethno programme of intercultural exchange brought young people together. The emphasis at Ethno is on particular pedagogy founded on peer-to-peer learning, and on playing and learning by ear. There are challenges in trying to determine common standards for diverse groups, and in agreeing on a common

language, but the use of communication tools such Lewis Deep Democracy, nonviolent communication, and Forum Theatre helps to address these challenges.

The session on 'Creative Realities in the Balkans' considered the advantages and disadvantages of a catch-all term that disguises diversity. Rok Kosir mused that 'Balkan' is more of an imaginary term than a geographical one, especially since there is no widespread agreement on where the Balkans begin and end. As a marketing term it has limited usefulness as for a time it was becoming associated with one genre (gypsy brass), but, as Bogdan Benigar pointed out, increasingly people won't come to a gig just because of the label. They come for the artist.

Feedback from the breakout groups not surprisingly mirrored many of the points that were being made in the panels. One troubling notion that came out of the break-out groups was the idea that, unless people in host cultures care about their own traditions, there will be nothing left to share. How can you be inclusive in a dwindling culture? There is a tension between hanging on to particular traditions and evolving to meet contemporary realities. In terms of the way forward for EFN the following came from the groups:

- Model good practice – especially inclusive community work
- Remember that social circumstance, age, and language are also aspects of diversity
- EFN should be a platform for discussing uncomfortable issues
- EFN needs to be better at collecting data (e.g. from European Folk Day)
- A dance strategy
- Pairing festivals
- A system for putting people in touch with each other with as little friction as possible

*Tradition is not a monologue from the past but a
dialogue in the present – János Kovács*

A clear desire was that EFN's principal role should be to advocate for folk and traditional music in all its diversity at national and EU levels.

Huge thanks are due to Fira Mediterrània, who stepped up when original conference plans fell through, and also to the Hungarian Heritage House for their continued support.

David Francis, October 2025

EFN CONFERENCE 2025 - SPEAKERS

EFN Activities Report

EFN Chairman **Steven Vanderaspolden** - a brief overview of EFN's work and achievements during the past year.

Panel: Diversity and Inclusion

Kutay Derin Kugay is an expert in Central Asian and Middle Eastern music and a long-term producer of radio programmes, festivals such as the Black Sea Music and Arts Festival and the 7/8 Music Productions record label supporting immigrant and marginalized master artists.

Imed Alibi is a Tunisian musician and composer who has travelled the world working with diverse musical groups and traditional cultures as artistic director, consultant and advisor, contributing to UNESCO projects and others including Visa For Music and the International Festival of Carthage.

Laia Canals is the director of Tempi, the Danish national organisation promoting traditional and roots music. She has a personal commitment to the international Keychange programme promoting diversity and gender balance in music and to Denmark's Another Life Community with similar aims.

Peter Van Rompaey is the founder and general director of Belgium's Muziekpublique and has a long record of working with traditional music as well as with newly migrant artists, in his several roles as promoter, tour organiser, festival director and journalist.

Moderator: EFN board member **Araceli Tzigane** of Mapamundi Música and the radio programme Mundofonías is an agent and manager dedicated to working with an international diversity of musical artists, all of whom have deep roots in the traditions of their people.

Keynote: Diversity and Inclusion in Public Policy

Angharad Cooper is a professional consultant, producer and coach and personally immersed in traditional music. She is Director of Operations at the Centre for Music Ecosystems, the research-based NGO advancing policy at local and government level, and Vice-Chair of the European Music Council.

Ethno and JMI

Suchet Malhotra is a musician, producer and cultural professional who originally founded JM International's Ethno programme in India and now works in Belgium as JMI's worldwide Ethno Programme Director, overseeing the creation and development of artistic and organisational mentoring and training programmes.

Panel: Creative Realities in the Balkans

Rok Košir - president of the Slovenian Information Music Centre - is a director of the MOST Music Agency which exports Balkan bands from its roster and helps musicians from different parts of the world to get better presence in Eastern Europe.

Bojan Djordjevic writes and lectures about Balkan music and culture, broadcasts on radio about alternative and world music and is artistic director for festivals including Belgrade's Todo Mundo, Novi Sad's Pocket Globe and the new music festival Ring Ring.

Bogdan Benigar leads the programming of Ljubljana's International Druga Godba Festival and is a board member of Forum of Worldwide Music Festivals. In 2018 his work as the Artistic Director of Jazz Festival Ljubljana won the Europe Jazz Network award for Adventurous Programming.

Moderator: EFN board member **Daina Zalāne** is a director of the Latvian NGO Lauska, specialising in many aspects of cultural activity including running a traditional music record label, organising folk festivals and setting up music camps and workshops for young people.

Panel: Belonging – Minority Language and Culture

Ioana Aminian is a sociolinguist specialising in endangered minority languages and cultures at the Austrian Academy of Sciences and University, studying and working with diverse minority groups. As co-chairwoman of the Roots Revival Association she is active in the promotion of minority cultures.

Danny KilBride (contributor and **Moderator**) is a musician, EFN board member and Director of Trac Cymru, the national development organisation for the traditional music of Wales. He works with artists, schools, communities, festivals and international showcases, supporting Welsh music and multi-national collaborations with other minority groups.

Mehdi Aminian is an Iranian-born musician, composer, multi-instrumentalist, filmmaker, and ethnomusicologist. As the founder of the Roots Revival Association he has developed artistic dialogue and intercultural exchange projects, including an initiative exploring the role of Afghan music with displaced and exiled Afghan communities.

Jaume Aspa is a director of the Catalan organisation Col·lectiu l'Escambell, which contributes to changing sociolinguistic habits and reversing the convergence to the dominant language (Spanish and French) in Catalan-speaking territories

APPENDIX 1

Angharad Cooper: three main policy initiatives

1. Agora (EU)

There will be a shift away from Creative Europe towards integration with CERV. It is critical that we influence thinking about the development of this programme, which should make funding more flexible and easier to access

2. Creative Europe 2026

Cultural diversity will be a key element along with the usual EU priorities of democracy, resilience, rule of law, and cross-border co-operation

3. Culture Compass

This is the European Commission's cultural strategy, a road-map for cultural policy, weaving cultural policy into other policy areas. It will operate from the idea that culture is foundational to European life.

APPENDIX 2

Angharad Cooper: examples of good practice in diversity and inclusion

- Klew – traditional Breton songs performed in French sign language
- Greenland – artists' tax status
- Attitude is Everything – how disabled people are actually engaged with
- Tumo Creative Technology Centre (Armenia) – 10,000 children get free after-school creative work, where traditional music is the starting point for improvisation and songwriting
- English Folk Dance and Song Society – inclusive programming

APPENDIX 3

Open Mic sessions

Miklós Both and Laia Canals

Miklós and Laia are both members of EFN's General Assembly/Strategy Group. Looking for something beyond the annual conference they proposed the idea of Thematic Working Groups, which would engage members year-round and generate knowledge for the network. They could be incubators for projects, create a pipeline for their realisation and generate the data that would feed into policy. The guidelines were still to be developed, but the idea was met with a great deal of enthusiasm.

Rachel Elliott (English Folk Dance and Song Society)

Presentation on England's National Youth Folk Ensemble, and its aims of building relationship across the diverse traditions that are now present in the country.

János Kovács (Transylvanian Heritage House)

János spoke of the idea of cultural amnesia, and the need to counter this through use and not preservation. He sees the dance house as a social glue and a way to build living communities.

Tone Myrvold (Norwegian Centre for Traditional Music and Dance)

The Centre is a UNESCO-accredited, major archive of dance. It explores new models of facilitating participatory dance events through meetings in communities, fieldwork which lead to collaborative projects.

Francesca Goodheart and David Brookhouse (Beyond Borders Creative Consultancy)

Work with libraries, museums, archives, and schools, with a particular emphasis on taking children out of the classroom and fostering a sense of place.

Angharad Cooper (Music Policy Resilience Network)

Concerned with music policy in remote, rural and isolated towns and cities, and addressing shared challenges across the world.

Mete Seyman (Verdensfolk)

Verdensfolk organises indoor and outdoor experiences for Oslo people, highlighting cultural diversity.

APPENDIX 4

The 2025 EFN Conference facts and statistics in executive summary

The conference took place in partnership with Fira Mediterrània de Manresa and was generously supported by The Hungarian Heritage House

The conference was the 6th annual in-person conference of the European Folk Network and the second to take place in the ancient city of Manresa in the region of Catalonia.

73 delegates registered for the conference, representing 24 European countries. Fira Mediterrània's own separately invited 40+ international guests were also welcomed and invited to attend any conference sessions that attracted their interest. Each evening all delegates had the opportunity of enjoying the abundance of performances in the Fira Mediterrània's extensive showcase programme of contemporary roots culture.

The overall theme of the 2026 conference was Diversity and Inclusion. There was a Keynote address on the subject – concentrating on public policy – on the first morning of the conference, given by Angharad Cooper, Director of Operations at the Centre for Music Ecosystems. In the second morning Suchet Malhotra, Programme Director for the worldwide Ethno programme of Jeunesses Musicales Internationales, gave a presentation on how the programme brought young people from different backgrounds together from across the world to share folk and traditional music.

Two panel sessions directly considered issues of Diversity and Inclusion from a number of perspectives, in terms of minority cultures, minority languages, migrant communities and gender diversity. In total 9 panellist speakers took part across these two panels.

A third panel session, with speakers from 4 different nations, studied the reality of the creative cultures of the Balkan region.

In total the conference heard from 15 panellists and speakers from 14 different countries. In addition there were 9 speakers in 7 sessions of the 'Open Mic' sections of the conference programme, in which any delegate could make a short presentation of their own ideas or proposals.

Notable among the 'Open Mic' speakers were Miklós Both, Director of the Hungarian Heritage House and Laia Canals, Director the Danish national folk organisation Tempi – both recently appointed members of the EFN GA/Strategy Group – who outlined their proposal, already agreed in a meeting of the GA/Strategy Group, for the strategic development of EFN's work and impact.

All delegates had the opportunity of discussing and exploring the theme of the conference and the future potential plans for EFN in a series of small (8 in total) Breakout groups.

The conference was opened and closed by EFN Chair Steven Vandersapoilden and EFN Administrator Nod Knowles with Lidia Hinojo and Anna Vilanova of Fira Mediterrània.

APPENDIX 5 - EFN CONFERENCE 2025 - MANRESA - SUMMARY SCHEDULE

THURSDAY 9 OCTOBER	
<i>All day</i>	<i>Airport pick ups /hotel check in/Registration at hotel</i>
<i>17.30</i>	<i>Bus transfer from Terrassa hotel to Manresa</i>
<i>19.00 - 21.00</i>	FIRA & EFN WELCOME - WINE RECEPTION
<i>21.00 - 23.00</i>	FIRA MEDITERRÀNIA LIVE SHOWCASES
<i>23.00</i>	<i>Bus transfer from Manresa to Terrassa hotel</i>
FRIDAY 10 OCTOBER	
<i>08.45</i>	<i>Bus transfer from Terrassa hotel to Manresa</i>
<i>9.15 - 10.00</i>	Registration
<i>10.00 - 10.15</i>	WELCOME to EFN DELEGATES & FIRA MEDITERRÀNIA GUESTS
<i>10.15 - 10.30</i>	EFN ACTIVITIES REPORT
<i>10.30 - 12.00</i>	Panel: DIVERSITY & INCLUSION
	Peter Van Rompaey, Kutay Kugay, Imed Alibi, Laia Canals
<i>12.15 - 12.45</i>	Keynote: DIVERSITY & INCLUSION - PUBLIC POLICY
	Angharad Cooper
<i>13.00 - 15.30</i>	INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING MEETING & LUNCH
	with Fira Mediterrània guests, EFN delegates and Fira artists
<i>15.30 - 17.00</i>	BREAKOUT DISCUSSION GROUPS on EFN Diversity and Inclusion
<i>17.15 - 17.45</i>	OPEN MIC
	Members and delegates present their own ideas
<i>17.45 - 18.15</i>	PLENARY REPORTS FROM BREAKOUT DISCUSSIONS
<i>19.00 - 00.00</i>	FIRA MEDITERRÀNIA LIVE SHOWCASES
<i>22.00</i>	<i>Bus transfer Manresa to Terrassa hotel</i>
<i>00.00</i>	<i>Bus transfer Manresa to Terrassa hotel</i>
SATURDAY 11 OCTOBER	
<i>09.00</i>	<i>Bus transfer from Terrassa hotel to Manresa</i>
<i>9.30 - 10.00</i>	Registration
<i>10.00 - 10.30</i>	Presentation: JMI & ETHNO FORUMS
	Suchet Malhotra
<i>10.30 - 12.00</i>	Panel: CREATIVE REALITIES IN THE BALKANS
	Rok Kosir, Bojan Djordjevic, Bogdan Benigar
<i>12.15 - 13.15</i>	Panel: BELONGING - MINORITY LANGUAGE AND CULTURE
	Jaume Aspa, Ioana Aminian, Mehdi Aminian, Jaume Asp, Danny KilBride
<i>13.15 - 15.00</i>	EFN DELEGATES LUNCH
<i>15.00 - 16.30</i>	BREAKOUT DISCUSSION GROUPS - FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR EFN
<i>16.45 - 17.15</i>	OPEN MIC
	Members and delegates present their own ideas
<i>17.15 - 18.00</i>	BREAKOUT DISCUSSION REPORTS and WRAP UP
<i>19.00 - 00.00</i>	FIRA MEDITERRÀNIA SHOWCASES
<i>22.00 & 00.00</i>	<i>Bus transfer Manresa to Terrassa hotel</i>

APPENDIX 6 Attendee list EFN Conference Manresa 2025

<i>First name</i>	<i>Last name</i>	<i>Company</i>	<i>Country</i>
Rahmouni	Mustapha	Cooperative culturelle et artistique Sabrina	Algeria
Sabrina	Natouri	Cooperative culturelle et artistique Sabrina	Algeria
Ioana	Aminian	Roots Revival Association	Austria
Medhi	Aminian	Roots Revival Association	Austria
Roger	Bouwens	Toernee Mondial	Belgium
Suchet	Malhotra	JM International	Belgium
Stan	Reusen	The Celtic Art Gallery	Belgium
Tine	Theunkens	The Celtic Art Gallery	Belgium
Kristof	Van den Broeck	VI.BE	Belgium
Karel	van Poucke	Zoetegem	Belgium
Peter	Van Rompaey	Muziekpublieke	Belgium
Marc	Vandemoortele	Merodefestival 't Ey Cluster	Belgium
Steven	Vanderaspolden	Chair - European folk Network	Belgium
Jaume	Aspa	Col·lectiu l'Escambell	Catalonia
Jordi	Fosas	Fira Mediterrània de Manresa	Catalonia
Lidia	Hinojo	Fira Mediterrània de Manresa	Catalonia
Anna	Vilanova	Fira Mediterrània de Manresa	Catalonia
Sanne Grothe	Wiwe	Arkivet for Folk- og Rootsmusik	Denmark
Laia	Canals	Tempi: Roots Music Denmark	Denmark
Poul Henrik	Jensen	Tønder Festival	Denmark
Anne Grete	Kamille	Musik over Præstø Fjord	Denmark
Mette Kathrine Jensen	Stærk	Arkivet for Folk og Roots Musik, Tønder	Denmark
David	Brookhouse	Beyond Border Creative Consultancy	England
Rachel	Elliott	English Folk Dance and Song Society	England
Francesca	Goodhart	Beyond Border Creative Consultancy	England
Nod	Knowles	Administrator - European Folk Network	England
Anne-Mari	Hakamäki	Kaustinen Folk Festival	Finland
Imed	Alibi	Kamel Lazaar Foundation	France
Anastasie	Betron	Association MIMO	France
Angharad	Cooper	Consultant	France
Baltazar	Montanaro	Compagnie Baltazar Montanaro	France
Amélie	Vaudelin	Compagnie Baltazar Montanaro	France
Alexander	Walter	WOMEX	Germany
Miklós	Both	Hungarian Heritage House	Hungary
Angéla	Hont	Hungarian Heritage House	Hungary
Laura	Lauber	Hungarian Heritage House	Hungary
Andrew	Lambert	Kilfenora Traditional Irish Music Festival	Ireland
Rosario	Tribastone	Fare Musica APS	Italy
Eric	Van Monkhoven	Muisc4You	Italy
Katrina	Feldmane	Latvijas Nacionālais KLultūras Centrs	Latvia
Sandra	Lipska	Skaņumāja	Latvia
Ilmārs	Pumpurs	Skaņumāja	Latvia

<i>First name</i>	<i>Last name</i>	<i>Company</i>	<i>Country</i>
Inese	Roze	KasTe	Latvia
Rasa	Roze	KasTe	Latvia
Daina	Zalāne	Culture Management Centre "Lauska"	Latvia
Madara	Ziemele	Latvian Academy of Culture	Latvia
Vilius	Arauskas	Saulės Muzika	Lithuania
Leanne	Abela Grech	Festivals Malta	Malta
Kristina	Polidano	Festivals Malta	Malta
Toni	Sant	Festivals Malta	Malta
Aslak	Brimi	Folkorg	Norway
Ann Helen	Erichsen	Folkorg/ Folkelarm	Norway
Sølvi	Lien	Førdefestivalen	Norway
Claudia	Lucacel	Verdensfolk	Norway
Tone	Myrvold	Tone Erlien Myrvold	Norway
Mete	Seymen	Verdensfolk	Norway
Filipa	Pereira	Tradidaņas	Portugal
Jorge	Torres	Associação Musical e Cultural Xarabanda	Portugal
Janos	Kovacs	Transylvanian Heritage House Foundation	Romania
Attila	Vass	Transylvanian Heritage House Foundation	Romania
David	Francis	Board Member - European Folk Network	Scotland
Bojan	Djordjevic	Association Ring Ring - Sounds of Europe	Serbia
Bogdan	Benigar	Druga Godba	Slovenia
Rok	Košir	GA Most	Slovenia
Pablo	Camino Dominguez	Spain is Music Tours	Spain
Iró	Graonidou	Clasijazz	Spain
Laura	Poggio Lagares	Musica Creativa/AEC	Spain
Juan Antonio	Torres Delgado	Vigüela / Mapamundi Cultural	Spain
Araceli	Tzigane	Mapamundi Cultural	Spain
Eva	Omagbemi	Riksförbundet för Folkmusik och Dans	Sweden
Yassine	Rezk	We Love Management	Sweden
Kutay	Kugay	Apacik Radyo	Turkey
Danny	KilBride	Trac Cymru	Wales

