

Dinner speech by the Queen's Commissioner in the province of Groningen Max van den Berg on occasion of the EBBA (European Border Breakers Award) dinner on 11 January 2012

Ladies and gentlemen,

'EuroSonic is the house of European Music'.

This statement of music producer Ian Wilson appeared in last Saturday's regional newspaper and it markedly reminded me of the way I look and speak about Europe.

My Europe begins in the region.

In the region lie the foundations of the 'European House', that is the towns, villages and provinces within the states of the European Union.

Here, I gladly quote Sicco Mansholt, Groningen's former and outstanding European politician. Sixty years ago he described cooperation in Europe in the following metaphor: Each and every European state has its own house, but we live in the same street!

If we extend this metaphor a bit, each house has its own identity.

Obviously, the same applies within a nation itself.

Europe has a large cultural diversity.

A diversity, which will be displayed on numerous stages over the next days.

[Diversity]

Several studies have revealed that many Europeans (76%) find that it is precisely because of its diversity that Europe has a rich culture.

At the same time, 67% of the participants find that Europe, to a much greater extent than other continents, has a common culture.

According to 88% of the European respondents, cultural exchange is very important for a better mutual understanding of each others' culture and for enhancing mutual understanding.

The unity of Europe lies in bridging and uniting the cultural diversities. A cross-border culture of this kind is quite uniquely embodied in pop music. The EuroSonic pop festival perfectly reveals this unity in diversity to an international audience.

[Talent]

Today, the focal point in Groningen will be on new European talents: acts that are most promising in their home countries, but often not yet known beyond the borders. By presenting winners from ten different European nations the European Border Breakers Awards unmistakably show what Europe stands for. The EuroSonic/Noorderslag event means a great deal to Groningen. The festival fits perfectly with our efforts to encourage and stimulate talent and to be and remain the number one city and region of

talent. The main objective of the Eurosonic/Noorderslag festival is to be valuable to Dutch and European artists and music lovers. It provides an international platform for new talents. This makes EuroSonic the biggest showcase festival in Europe. The visitors' rating for the EuroSonic/Noorderslag festival from both professional visitors and event visitors is exceptionally high. Compared to average events visitors express far more favourable opinions and emotions about the EuroSonic/Noorderslag festival. The organisers, but also we ourselves, may be rightly proud of this. Besides, did you know that the first multi-day festival on the European mainland took place in the Netherlands in 1970? In 1970, modelled after the 3-day concert event held in the United States in 1967 from June 16 to June 18 at the Monterey County Fairgrounds in Monterey, the 'Holland Pop Festival' was organised in the wood of Kralingen near Rotterdam. This festival featured the world's most famous bands of that time like The Byrds, Santana, Pink Floyd and Jefferson Airplane.

[Pop culture]

The statement 'Culture is way ahead of the troops' most certainly applies to pop music. Larger social changes have always correlated with new trends in pop music. Such as the non-conformist Beat wave in the sixties. From the seventies emerged the Disco wave, marking a new

embracement of dance. Punk placed the individual in the centre and rejected overarching social ideologies. In the eighties New Wave gave expression to the feelings of dreariness and desolation among young people. And we remember the nineties for politically engaged bands that played Grunge music, but also for their House and the obstinate Rap and Hip-hop music. All these genres exist side by side until today. As a result, all which is often designated in the same breath as pop music, in reality consists of many, widely different music genres. It would be a misunderstanding though to think that pop music is only for youngsters. Pop music has meanwhile invaded all age groups. The rockers of old times are today's and tomorrow's seniors and pensioners. And still of great value! The international and cultural significance of pop music therefore must not be underestimated.

[Europe - that's us]

I greatly welcome the fact that the European Union is investing in culture and also specifically in pop culture. Cultural sectors such as the film industry, the music industry and the industrial art sector are important income and job creation sources. In the European Union, approximately seven million people are employed in these sectors. But to me, quite apart from the economic importance, the most valuable aspect lies in cultural exchange. Cultural exchange is of great importance for a better

understanding and appreciation of each other's culture and for further enhancement of mutual tolerance.

Europe - that's us! And this festival provides a vital contribution to this feeling. So let's enjoy together in this House of European Music Europe's great musical diversity .

Thank you for your kind attention