

PRESS RELEASE

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EUROPEAN ARENAS WILL BE THE HUB FOR LIVE MUSIC AND SPORT'S RETURN IN 2021

~ Virtual conference brings top names from music and sport together to discuss the impact on societal health and wellness and the need for a pan-European strategy for the return of indoor live events ~

The Covid-19 pandemic has devastated the live events ecosystem across Europe. With the closure of virtually all arenas and large event venues, the live music and sports industries have been amongst the hardest hit.

The Arena Resilience Alliance, a lobby group established by the European Arenas Association, will host a free virtual conference in December, which will explore the urgent need for the development of a pan European strategy for the return to live events.

The special event, named **'A Game of Two Halves'**, will take place on Tuesday 8th December 2020 and will explore why 'getting fit for purpose' will be essential to bringing live music and sports events back to Arenas and large-capacity venues across Europe.

The virtual conference will address the essential role of arenas as the central hub of the live event ecosystem across Europe, and as key partners to those who organise, promote, play and perform. Arenas are major local employers, hubs for freelance workers and third-party providers, in addition to centres for social gatherings, local communities, friends and families, fan groups, visitors and tourists 365 days a year.

Following the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in the spring, arenas and large music and sports venues across Europe have been forced to close their doors, leading to the cancellation of virtually all live events. It has been, without doubt, the most catastrophic year on record for the industry. The ARA estimates venue closures have resulted in the loss of more than 35,000 indoor live events, representing over 113 million ticket sale losses.

Through the event, the ARA hopes to open dialogue with Ministers, MEPs and Commissioners, working towards the development of a uniform regulatory framework throughout Europe for the mandatory requirements and measures that will help bring back live events, enable venues to re-open, and facilitate the return of live touring. A single framework will facilitate business continuity, provide job security and protect the wellbeing of all citizens, employees, freelancers, third party contractors, players, performers, visitors and fans.

The event will cover a range of panel discussions and addresses. Speakers will include: Sam Tanson, Minister of Culture, Luxembourg; MEPs, Tomasz Frankowski and Monica Semedo; Tamas Szucs, Director of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture; Jason Danter, Production Manager/Director for artists such as Madonna, Lady Gaga and Iron Maiden; Adrian Doyle, Board Member, European Arenas Association; Ole Hertel, GM, Mercedes Benz Arena, Berlin; Robert Fitzpatrick, CEO, The Odyssey Trust Company, Belfast; Luca Scafati, Director, Business Operations, Euroleague; Herman Schueremans, CEO, Live Nation, Belgium; Szymon Szemberg, CEO, European Hockey Clubs Alliance and Olivier Toth, CEO, Rockhal, Luxembourg.

The first session, focussing on sport will be a discussion around 'Aligning product and place: delivering a new fan experience.' Following a short break, the focus will turn to live music and will explore 'why a pan-European approach is crucial for live music's return.' Closing the event, Gordon Masson, editor of IQ magazine

will host a fireside style discussion with ARA co-founders, Oliver Toth, CEO, Rockhal in Luxembourg and Robert Fitzpatrick, CEO, The Odyssey Trust, owners of The SSE Arena, Belfast.

Commenting on the launch, John Langford, President European Arenas Association said *“This event will open important dialogue around why we need unified conditions that will allow music, culture and sports to return to arenas and arenas to re-open their doors for fans of live events.”*

Oliver Toth, CEO, Rockhal in Luxembourg said: *“We are at a pivotal moment in terms of the planning needed to protect and rebuild the live events ecosystem across Europe. Through this special event, the ARA hopes to open important dialogue between the industry and key EU decision makers to ensure we move forward with a single framework to facilitate the safe return of live events.”*

Robert Fitzpatrick, CEO, The Odyssey Trust, owners of The SSE Arena, Belfast added: *“Arenas are central to the cultural fabric of countries throughout Europe and are a key player in the national and regional tourism ecosystem. Without them, event promoters, artists, indoor sports teams and a host of third-party service contractors are at risk of going out of business. The importance of wellbeing for all venue staff and stakeholders cannot be underestimated; our industry is on the precipice of a major mental health crisis.”*

The Arena Resilience Alliance (ARA) is a special purpose group, created by the European Arenas Association (EAA) to demonstrate solidarity and the need for concerted action. The ARA is fully supported by Euroleague Basketball, the European Hockey Clubs Alliance, the members of the European Arenas Association and other European large capacity multi-event venues.

The ARA “A Game of Two Halves” virtual conference takes place on Tuesday 8th December 2020, between 14:00 - 16:30 CET/ 13:00 - 15:30 GMT and is free to attend. The conference will stream live on the [EAA YouTube channel](#) and is hosted in collaboration with the European Arenas Association and IQ Magazine.

For further information, visit <http://www.europeanarenas.com/news/>

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Notes to editors:

About the ARA:

- The Arena Resilience Alliance (ARA) is a special purpose group, created by the European Arenas Association (EAA) to demonstrate solidarity and the need for concerted action.
- The ARA is fully supported by Euroleague Basketball, the European Hockey Clubs Alliance, the members of the European Arenas Association and other European large capacity multi-event venues.
- The ARA was established by Olivier Toth, CEO, Rockhal, Luxembourg, and Robert Fitzpatrick, CEO, The Odyssey Trust in Northern Ireland (owners of The SSE Arena, Belfast), who both recognised the urgent need for arenas to unite and to raise awareness on the current difficulties of these venues and what impact their definitive closure would have on communities.
- The ARA is actively lobbying the EU to advance awareness of the importance of the physical infrastructure of arenas and their contribution to the wellness of every European citizen.

About the EAA:

- The EAA represents 33 arenas in 20 European countries that operate some of the world's most cutting-edge venues, hosting unrivalled programs with outstanding artists, productions, sports and corporate events. The association's member arenas host over 2,900 annual events attracting a total audience of 19 million people.
- Over the last years, the EAA has strengthened relationships with the EU governing bodies to ensure the inclusion of arenas as part of the policy-making decisions. EAA has been involved in a number of activities and projects in three key areas: live music, sports and education, training & research.

Role of European Arenas in the Live Event Ecosystem:

- Across Europe, arenas are the host for major live cultural and sporting events and partners to those who organise, promote, play and perform.
- In normal times, arenas are major local employers; a central hub for a host of third-party service providers; a key player in national and regional tourism ecosystems; a forum for business sponsorship and networking opportunities; and a centre for social gatherings, local communities, friends and families, fan groups, visitors and tourists 365 days a year.

Full programme, biographies/further details on speakers are available, on request.