



**Rome, Wednesday 18 September, 2013**

Good afternoon everyone. On behalf of the European Cultural Foundation a heartfelt congratulations to Teatro Valle Occupato for achieving this incredible milestone: *Fondazione Teatro Valle Bene Comune* — which attests to the creative power of culture that lies inside social, political and economic structures. By thinking radically about new models of cultural collaboration you have cast a light (and not just any light, but a strong theatrical spotlight!) beyond the precarious conditions felt in Europe and especially by the countries hardest hit by the financial crisis

The reason we, the European Cultural Foundation have the privilege of being here and being part of this significant moment today is because this is also the moment that we would like to make public the news that that Teatro Valle Occupato together with Zagreb-based cultural activist Teodor Celakoski will be the recipients of the 6th edition of the European Cultural Foundation's Princess Margriet Award.

Thankyou for this chance to say here a few words about the ECF and the Award: The European Cultural Foundation is an independent organisation based in Amsterdam dedicated to the role culture plays in an open and democratic Europe. Over the 60 years, the foundation has been working to build new bridges between citizens and institutions, policy-making and practice. Moreover, we believe that social and political change requires artistic and cultural engagement. Europe is a space of exchange, of experimentation and dialogue and we strive to to support and connect cultural change-makers whose work contributes to an ongoing debate for a genuinely transnational European culture and society.

Our annual ECF Princess Margriet Award, named after our former president Princess Margriet of the Netherlands, is given to artists and thinkers in Europe whose work

shows the potential of culture for an inclusive Europe. The international Jury came together in June this year and selected the Teatro Valle collective and Teodor Celakoski who is also with us in Rome today.

Teatro Valle Occupato in Rome and Teodor Celakoski working with ongoing grass roots mobilisations in Zagreb are very inspiring for all who are struggling against the wave of austerity measures and privatisation that have been threatening the sustainability of cultural institutions crucial for artistic and community life to flourish. We see once again that collective forms of action based on shared responsibility are presenting innovative and alternative models across many spheres, not only that of culture. This is what needs to be recognized, celebrated and upheld.

Thank you Teodor Celakoski and Teatro Valle Occupato for your outstanding energy in reclaiming public space as an open space for exploring, producing and sharing culture as a common good. May this signal the possibility of another Europe that can make the principles of democracy, equality and shared cultures alive!