Keeping Eastern and Central European community



Birmingham-based Polish Expats Association receive a £30,000 emergency grant to protect heritage in their community space and online.

Polish Expats Association is the leading advocate for Eastern and Central European heritage in the UK, and runs Centrala – an arts and communities space in Birmingham.

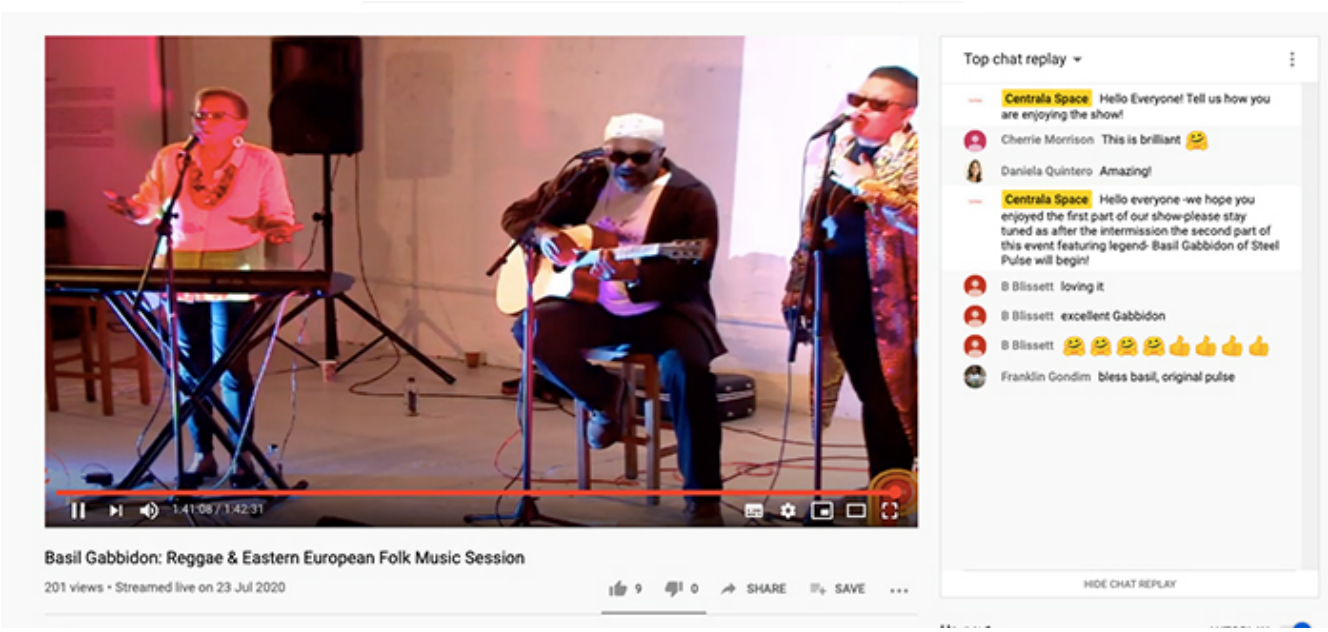
When the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic struck, the group had to close their centre and feared the stories, heritage and culture of Eastern and Central Europeans in the UK would be lost or forgotten.

They successfully applied to our Heritage Emergency Fund and were awarded a £30,000 grant to help them survive.

> “The funding will allow us to survive this difficult time and to continue to serve our communities.”
>
> *Alicja Kaczmarek, Director of Polish Expats Association*

Connecting communities

Polish Expats Association found the Eastern and Central European community was becoming increasingly isolated and vulnerable during the pandemic, and there was huge pressure to provide support. They helped by translating COVID-19 government communications and running small projects to tackle loneliness.



An online reggae and Eastern European music event run by the group.

Emergency funds will mean the group can now source additional IT equipment and software to help move their programmes online. They also plan to redesign some of their services to ensure they can continue to support their community while their physical space remains closed.

Reopening safely

National Lottery funding will also help the group to prepare for the reopening of Centrala, where they previously ran many of their programmes and events, as well as exhibiting Eastern and Central European heritage items and artworks.



Visitors at an exhibition at Centrala before lockdown.

Centrala was launched in 2012. Since then it has played a significant role in bringing diverse audiences together, and helping people to recognise and understand the arts, culture and heritage of Central and Eastern European communities.

The funding will enable Polish Expats Association to invest in extra cleaning and security, so they can open the building safely and encourage people to engage in their work.

A lifeline for Eastern and Central European heritage

Alicja Kaczmarek, Director of Polish Expats Association, said that without these funds, the organisation and heritage would have been at risk.

“The funding will allow us to survive this difficult time and to continue to serve our communities by adapting the space to improve safety and to move part of the programme online. We are grateful to The National Lottery Heritage Fund and National Lottery players for helping us get through this challenging time.”



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Virtual book club celebrates Punjabi heritage