



CONTRIBUTION TO THE EU 2020 CONSULTATION

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The European Festivals Association¹ – in the seat of the European House for Culture applauds the European Commission's initiative to launch a public debate on the post-Lisbon strategy. It is crucial for the European Union and its Member States to implement a new vision and action plan for its economic and social development. One which learns from the lessons of the past, refocuses on European values of equality, solidarity and openness, and paves the way for future societies where quality of life, respect for human rights and active citizenship prevail.

The significance and the role of culture in the process of European integration are aspects which can no longer be ignored. In this new social context, the different facets of the cultural identity of the individual and of the local communities are constantly subject to a process of renewal and revision.

Festivals have been playing a key role in this process, as they represent an ideal location where, in a joyful atmosphere, real *fora* of discussion and reflection can occur. They have always been powerful promoters of the protection of the fundamental rights of freedom of expression and access to culture and their programmes helped to boost the circulation of ideas and people, the creation of a more peaceful coexistence and the promotion of an active European citizenship.²

¹ The European Festivals Association (EFA) is the umbrella organisation for festivals across Europe. Over more than 50 years, the Association has grown into a dynamic network representing more than 100 music, dance, theatre and multidisciplinary festivals, national festivals associations and cultural organisations from about 40 (mainly European) countries.

² See European Festivals Association: Arts Festivals' Declaration on Intercultural Dialogue

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For the first time in EU history, a European agenda for culture is applied by the European Commission and the Member States, setting the basis for a first common 'European Agenda for Culture'. There seems to be a broad consensus also beyond 'cultural borders' about the fundamental role of culture and the arts in society as the agenda clearly sets objectives that reach out to all policy areas.³

Therefore, the Commission's proposal for the EU 2020 Strategy should include the Arts and Cultural dimension, so vitally important to the building of a European identity and the development of the European project, as stated often and again by the European Commission and its President since 2004. The EC President advocates that "the EU has reached a stage of its history where **its cultural dimension can no longer be ignored**... Europe is not only about markets, it is also about values and culture."⁴. "Economy is a necessity for our lives; culture is really what makes our life worth living."⁵

We have the opportunity to act upon paving the way to a solidified society: **only if we address them keeping in mind the cultural aspect**. It is a fact that in times of economic difficulties and the social problems that these bring, access to culture can function as an impressive and effective tool to bring Europe and Europeans back in the driving seat for sustainable development and to strengthen the sense of cohesiveness between citizens.⁶

We also concur that we must view the decisions taken as an opportunity for transformation and that we will only succeed if we design and implement **a bold policy response** so that the new approach can be the point of entry into a new sustainable social market economy.

This is indeed a time of deep transformation for Europe and delivering this sustainable growth requires agreement to an agenda that puts people and their responsibility first (see starting point of A Soul for Europe).

It is stated in the EU 2020 strategy document that in developing a new vision and direction for EU policy, we need to recognise that conserving energy, natural resources and raw materials, using them more efficiently and increasing productivity will be the key drivers of the future competitiveness of our industry and our economies. However we feel a fundamental issue is ignored in this reasoning: none of the above can ever be achieved without the most valuable resource we can ever possess: **qualified human resources and proficient qualified leadership**. These are the real key to achieve an efficient use of resources through innovative and efficient solutions to the challenges at hand. Since 2006 the Commission promoted this fact conveying the message that "we have decided to invest in Europe's nr 1 natural resource: people; human capital,

³ See presentation European House for Culture

⁴ November 26, 2004: Speech by José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, on "Europe and Culture" at the Berliner Konferenz für europäische Kulturpolitik (Berlin)

⁵ idem

⁶ See Access to Culture Platform Policy Guidelines <http://www.efaaef.eu/en/association/news/detail/873/Access%20to%20Culture%20Platform%20presents%20policy%20recommendations%20at%20EU%20Culture%20Forum/>

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research and innovation, the knowledge economy. This will help Europeans to put their talent to good use and adapt to the rapidly changing world in which we live.”⁷ Arts and culture contribute to the improvement of human resources in a myriad of ways, some of which, paraphrasing the Access to Culture Platform documents, are:

- Culture is a fundamental factor in people’s lives and access to cultural life is a major contributor to the well-being of people;
- Artistic creativity and creation allow for an understanding of personal situations from the others’ perspectives; they enable the comprehension of symbols, opening the way to new meanings as well as to understanding ourselves, one another, and the other. In today’s world, experience with contemporary art enriches and exercises the mind to be able to understand and live in complexity – a set of skills of crucial importance. Our heritage is both a source of contemporary creation to build into the future, and a manifestation of past creativity;
- Cultural activities can be effective tools in formal, non-formal and/or informal learning to ensure that citizens acquire the Key Competences for Lifelong Learning such as creativity, entrepreneurship, and cultural expression and awareness.

Furthermore in the “Political guidelines for the next Commission”, issued only a few months ago, the discourse clearly indicates that the aims and priorities will need to have **a fundamental cultural dimension** to them. The EU 2020 strategy should be a step further to deepen and concretize the essential contribution of taking arts and culture into account.

As stated in the “Political guidelines for the next Commission”:

- The crisis that we face is not just a financial or an economic crisis. It is also a crisis for the values of our societies.
- This is why we need a far-reaching reflection about the kind of society we want to live in.
- **What needs to be recognized** is that the European dimension, the European spirit, the European **culture in decision-making at all levels**.

Mainstreaming of culture, collaboration models between the EU-national-regional and local level, the cultural dimension in all aspects of policy making is a basis to achieve a European coherence in diversity as an essential vector for the EU 2020 strategy.

In the EU 2020 strategy document, when stating that there’s a need that new policies must demonstrably contribute to social cohesion, tackling unemployment and fostering social inclusion while securing well performing labour markets, the tools taken into account are rethinking education systems and labour markets, enhancing mobility and boosting Europe’s dynamism to unleash our innovative and creative potential.

⁷ in EFA Books *I Still so much to be done* (2006)

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We must here remind that several studies support the idea that offering **means and channels for participation** in public life, including its cultural aspects, adds to the sense of social cohesion and the development of common values. A society that takes into account the rights of its citizens to access cultural experiences (services, creation and ways of life) has a higher chance of success than a society in which the rights of citizens' participation have not been given a central role.⁸

Throughout the definition of the Key priorities for EU 2020 there are abundant references to the importance of knowledge and education:

- Prosper as a knowledge-based, connected, greener and more inclusive economy / knowledge is the engine for sustainable growth;
- Enhancing social cohesion in a world where innovation makes the difference in both products and processes, harnessing the potential of education, research;
- Empowering people in inclusive societies through the acquisition of new skills, fostering creativity and innovation;
- Achieving a major transformation cannot be done without investment in people and productive capacity;
- Strengthening **education** is one of the most effective ways of fighting inequality and poverty.

Yet again we must remind the Commission that Arts and Culture, and especially Access to Culture have a major role in the transfer of knowledge, acquisition of new skills and empowerment of people. Culture can provide **access to education** by helping people to develop a variety of skills that supports their ability to function in a knowledge-based society. Culture can play an important role in the implementation of the “Key Competences for Lifelong Learning” as defined by the European Parliament in 2006: participation in cultural activities can be a powerful tool to achieve several generic competences such as creativity, entrepreneurship and civic competences. Cultural experiences can also be an effective way for different groups of people with learning difficulties to achieve the key competences in ordinary educational processes. **Access to culture thus also means equipping people for lifelong learning and, as a consequence, will have an impact on economic progress.**⁹

Another fundamental and recurrent aspect of the EU 2020 strategy is the empowerment of people. Yet the strategy is rather limited in its understanding of what it is to “empower people”.

“Empowering people also means making markets work for people. Citizens must be empowered to play a full part in the single market. This requires strengthening their ability and confidence to buy goods and services cross-border, in particular on-line.”¹⁰

⁸ See Access to Culture Platform Policy Guidelines

⁹ See Access to Culture Platform Policy Guidelines

¹⁰ Consultation on the Future "EU 2020" Strategy (Brussels, 24.11.2009 COM(2009)647 final)

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Not only. And not in the first place: empowering people means empowering them to actively participate in the social, political and cultural life of their cities, their countries and Europe. It means create the conditions for an active citizenship, it means creating Europe of Europeans, not for Europeans.¹¹ And **Reinforcing EU citizenship and participation** is also one of the Key challenges identified in the *Political Guidelines for the Next Commission*.

Active citizenship, democracy and participation are fundamental basis for **social inclusion**. Societies which posses a **strong artistic and cultural life** also see an increase of civic engagement, and therefore, the strengthening of active citizenship. **Through participation and access to arts and culture, individuals and communities reflect on their views on societies, imagine the world they want to live in and elaborate individual and collective standpoints.**¹²

The EU has communicated the message that it is essential that we are “... a **Europe of values**”¹³. That we are more than just a market a Community of values, founded on human dignity, freedom, equality, and solidarity.”¹⁴

If Europe is to continue to be a role model, if Europe is to give every citizen the freedom and security to develop their potential to the full, free from discrimination, rejoicing in its rich diversity then Culture cannot be left out of any strategy.

Furthermore, if the EU declares that “We need to actively promote **human rights**, never hesitating to condemn violations of these fundamental rights.” then it should remember that as stated in Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948, “**everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts.**”

Too often this fundamental right is forgotten, an astonishing fact especially when most other human rights - equality and non-discrimination, freedom of expression, the right to information, freedom of assembly and the right to education - are strongly linked to access to culture. These are not only moral issues; they are legal obligations that should guide States in all areas of policy-making. Cultural policies should not be seen as a “charity” or as derived from voluntarism; they are based on rights of citizens and the legal obligations of states.¹⁵

The EU has the opportunity here to devise a long term strategy that, exactly because it keeps this particular Human Right in mind, will promote a sustainable development based on human values that will make Europe be indeed a role model. The EU should not let this opportunity go by.

¹¹ See A Soul for Europe Mission Statement www.asoulforeurope.eu.

¹² See Access to Culture Platform Policy Guidelines

¹³ EC President Barroso in “Political guidelines for the next Commission”

¹⁴ idem

¹⁵ See European Festivals Association and the 2010 European Year

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As is reminded in the EU 2020 strategy “The EU 2020 vision will need the active support of stakeholders such as the social partners and civil society”.

We must not forget that civil society needs to be motivated to participate in the discussions that concern us all and our future. It is essential to draw attention to the **contribution** that an **active, vital, thriving cultural sector** brings to the development of society as a whole. Participation in cultural life, exposure to artistic creation, access to artistic skills and knowledge enriches individuals and communities, and **strengthens the civic and social nets** that compose the fabric of our European societies.¹⁶

Therefore, the European Festivals Association and the European House for Culture invite the Commission to:

- Stay true to its own stated beliefs and incorporate the Cultural dimension in its strategies: only when arts and culture and the importance of audience development and participation is recognised and addressed properly by policy-makers will policies on creativity and innovation, arts and education, youth access to culture, intercultural dialogue, multilingualism and linguistic diversity, social inclusion and citizenship, achieve their full potential.
- Recognise the **contribution** that an **active, vital, thriving cultural sector** brings to the development of society as a whole and mainstream the arts and culture element in all levels of policy making to achieve **more cohesive, ground-breaking and specific policies that take into account issues such as representation, diversity and cultural impact, as well as signalling new trends.**¹⁷
- Develop and support processes as the structured dialogue with the sector which represent and foster genuine European public spaces and debates, share of knowledge between the sector and between sectors, are an exemplary show of civil society truly engaging to development a notion of European citizenship;
- Take into consideration the recommendations devised by the Access to Culture Platform when devising the EU 2020 strategy and subsequent policies and instruments pioneer and open the way to new reflections and policy development at European, regional, national and local levels;
- Recognize the opportunities of boosting the operational potential of networks as multipliers and civil society organisations in their respective fields, stimulating the dialogue and interaction, fostering collaborative relations and partnerships, creating synergies and strengthening power.

¹⁶ See Access to Culture Platform Policy Guidelines

¹⁷ See Access to Culture Platform Policy Guidelines