

CAE'S APPEAL FOR THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS 2019

21 September 2018

The May 2019 European elections will take place at a pivotal time for the European Union. After a harsh recession and fiscal consolidation, increasing social and economic disparities have led to a growing political disenchantment and eurosceptic attitudes.

Cultural arguments are being instrumentalised to divide Europeans and polarise societies in an increasingly divided political context. Instead, when political leaders choose to see culture as a source of unity, culture becomes a force for cooperation and mutual understanding.

As Europeans, we have come a long way united in diversity. Now is the time to move forward and assert that European diversity makes us stronger. **Culture Action Europe appeals to all political forces to approach cultural issues constructively and respectfully within the European elections.**

Culture Action Europe sees the 2019 European elections as a celebration and vindication of Europe's core values and democracy in times when both are under threat. We observe with concern increasing pressures on freedom of expression across Europe, including freedom of artistic and cultural expression, challenges to artistic independence in contemporary creation and a growing exclusion of underrepresented groups and their cultural rights. These trends run against fundamental European values.

The 2019 European elections represent a crucial juncture to propose a [new future of Europe](#) and a critical moment for European political parties to confront those challenging its foundations. In this shared endeavour, Culture Action Europe **defies Eurosceptic voices, and stands side by side with political initiatives that recognise culture's contribution to Europe as a necessary force for unity, equality and inclusive cooperation.** In the 2019 election, Culture Action Europe appeals to all political forces to defend dialogue against hate and proudly support cultural diversity as a key European asset.

New global challenges require a bold and decisive Europe. Ambitious and purposeful cultural policies at the European and international level are a fundamental part of a strong Europe, one that the cultural sector will support and defend.

Navigating the digital transition is chief among these challenges. In front of global actors, only coming together at European level will enable effective action. Europe must strive to build a digital governance respectful of its fundamental rules and values, applicable in all other spheres of social life, including fundamental freedoms, social rights, fair economic relations, and ensuring access to culture through fair and ethical digitisation, taking into account diversity criteria.

Therefore, Culture Action Europe appeals to all participants in the European elections:

TO THE EUROPEAN POLITICAL PARTIES AND GROUPS:

- To explicitly **recognise the fundamental role of culture for the progress of the European Union in their programmes, including a clear definition of their strategic guidelines for cultural policy at EU level.** Voters must know in advance where each party stands, at a minimum, on support for culture, cultural diversity and cultural rights, freedom of artistic and cultural expression, as well as their proposals regarding welfare regimes and labour conditions for vulnerable cultural workers;
- To **propose candidates with cultural awareness.** As a prerequisite for strong leadership, candidates must be able to assess policies from a multifaceted perspective, including social, economic and cultural considerations. We must transcend traditional frameworks only taking into account legal and economic factors that have shaped European action in the past and increasingly shown their limits;
- To **recognise creation** as the origin of cultural value, which will later inspire social and economic impact, and accordingly merits initial public investment. To recognise **artistic research and experimentation** as key for generating new knowledge and critical thinking, developing new approaches towards emerging technological, environmental and social challenges and in the production of contemporary culture, including digital cultures;
- To **devote at least 1% of the EU budget to culture and to double the financial allocation for culture in the Creative Europe programme.** Creative Europe must be endowed with sufficient resources to guarantee impact and accessibility. At the same time, the mainstreaming of culture requires prior dedicated fund allocation in all programmes to be effective.

TO THE PARTIES, THE CANDIDATES AND THE FUTURE MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT:

- To **build upon the growing institutional recognition of culture**¹ achieved during the 2014-2019 European legislature and **commit to defend European values**, in particular freedom of artistic and cultural expression, cultural rights, as well as cultural diversity as a fundamental component of European societies;
- To **promote new models of governance for the cultural sector**, by:
 - Enabling multi-level coordination between the cultural sector and relevant actors in other fields, the European institutions, Member States, as well as local and regional authorities, and international organisations;
 - Setting up a cultural intergroup in the European Parliament to promote the mainstreaming of culture across policy areas, guaranteeing the equal treatment of all cultural sectors and for-profit and not-for-profit actors. This would be particularly relevant in the areas of research, skills and education, external relations, cohesion and migration, health and well-being, innovation, growth and jobs;

¹ Culture has been increasingly recognised as a key strategic asset in the Rome Declaration from 25 March 2017, in the Gothenburg Summit, November 2017 and the 24 May 2018 Council conclusions

- To **devote sufficient resources to the mobility of cultural workers and cultural works for all sectors within Europe and beyond**, given its indisputable EU added value and the contribution of cultural mobility to the strengthening of shared cultural understanding, market development, innovation and sustainable cultural practices;
- To promote legislation conducive to a digital landscape where for-profit, not-for-profit, public and community-based initiatives can coexist, both for the cultural sector and society as a whole. To defend through a new set of legislative principles fundamental EU values in the digital sphere, particularly freedom of artistic and cultural expression and fair remuneration of creators;
- To **facilitate a fair and ethical digitisation of culture and cultural heritage**, taking into account diversity and inclusiveness, recognising the contribution of underrepresented groups to our shared past and equal access to digital cultural content through curation and multilingualism. The role of private artificial intelligence (AI) in mediating our collective memories and shared heritage should be urgently addressed, as well as guaranteeing access, creation and diversity of interpretation in contemporary creation. Collaborative frameworks between public institutions, civil society and private developers must emerge to co-design AI that reflects societal and cultural objectives enabling diverse and equal societies to thrive;
- To **encourage the emergence of welfare systems and employment practices** supportive of discontinuous workers, common in the cultural sector and increasingly in the wider economy, as a prerequisite to rendering new economic models socially sustainable and minimising political disenchantment and social tensions.

Without the explicit recognition of its cultural dimension, the future of the European Union as a common endeavour is difficult to imagine. CAE encourages all its members, partners and friends to actively participate in the 2019 European elections and in turn to encourage others to celebrate democracy at this crucial time for Europe. We invite all cultural workers and organisations to join us in spreading the message that a united Europe in its diversity is a strong, beautiful project worth fighting for, worth voting for!

CULTURE ACTION EUROPE (CAE)

Culture Action Europe (CAE) is the major European network of cultural organisations, artists, activists, academics & policy-makers. CAE is the first port of call for informed opinion and debate about arts and cultural policy in Europe.

As the only cross-sectoral network, we represent all sub-sectors in culture: from performing arts, literature, visual arts, design and cross-arts initiatives to community centres and activist groups.

Culture Action Europe aims to put culture at the heart of public debate and decision-making by raising awareness of the contribution of culture to the development of sustainable and inclusive societies.

To achieve this aim, Culture Action Europe organises cross-sectoral conferences and workshops, online debates and offline high level panels. We explore, aggregate and disseminate cross-sectoral knowledge, build the capacity of cultural operators and advocate for a better cultural policy for EU citizens and the cultural sector.

Culture Action Europe members recommendations have inspired the contents of this manifesto.² CAE wishes to thank its members, who contributed to the formation of these points.

²See : Priorities for Museums - NEMO Recommendations for the European Parliament Elections in 2019