

## Culture Action Europe reflection on a future-proofed Agenda for Culture

Ten years after the adoption of the Agenda for Culture in 2007, a new European reality calls for its urgent revision. There is a growing recognition by Member States and European institutions of the contribution of culture to the progress of the European Union, as reflected in an increasing number of initiatives<sup>1</sup>. In times of accelerated economic and social change, culture can play an important role in overcoming common challenges and allowing Europe to stride into the future.

### Towards a new agenda for culture: New realities, challenges and emerging trends

A future-proofed Agenda for Culture must respond to a new cultural, economic and social landscape, while offering a flexible framework capable of adjusting to emerging trends. In particular, a new approach to EU cultural action must take in to account the following developments:

- **Europe hosts an increasingly culturally diverse population.** If we are to remain “United in Diversity”, we need to progress towards a new cultural framework. This must be capable of including newcomers and old diasporas, embracing the complex cultural makeup that stems from European mobility and enabling dialogue between the rich cultural traditions of peripheral regions and the cosmopolitan outlook of international European cities. Culture has a demonstrated impact in fostering social cohesion, enhancing life satisfaction and wellbeing and thus, can make a unique contribution to easing the pressure of increased diversity on traditional social articulations. Ultimately, an equal and cohesive society is a precondition for talents and ambitions to flourish, leading to greater creativity and innovation and more equitable growth and jobs.
- **Democratic principles and European values are being increasingly challenged** as a result of growing polarisation, both within Europe and at a global level. This calls for a strategic approach anchored on the respect of cultural rights, freedom of artistic expression and the right to freely participate in cultural life<sup>2</sup>, which are increasingly perceived as being under threat. In contrast, cultural participation has been shown to correlate positively with democratic attitudes and principles.
- **As the digital revolution unfolds, sustainable and equitable social and economic models need to emerge in the cultural economy.** The digital shift has redoubled the pressure on the already strained working conditions under which many cultural actors operate. Concerted efforts by public institutions at all levels of governance will be required to accompany the digital transition. This will necessitate the revision of legal frameworks (e.g. social security and taxation) and revisiting foundational cultural policy principles, such as the respect and protection of cultural diversity within the network economy. Equally, the safeguarding of common heritage through digitisation, the development of new frameworks enabling native digital production to thrive, as well as ensuring copyright protection and digital accessibility to our common cultural goods are among the areas that require a new generation of cultural policies.
- **Cultural and creative skills, as well as human-centred competences, are increasingly needed** to face the digital shift and to navigate diversity and complexity. We must build synergies between education and culture and transition from STEM to STEAM<sup>3</sup>. It is imperative that we prepare young generations for a future that is not fully known. Yet, the pace of change is already impacting Europeans today, thus calling for a lifelong learning approach. This also applies to cultural practitioners who need to hone their skills in face of growing internationalisation and rapid technological change.

Against the background of the challenges and new conditions described above, recognising the substantial progress achieved under the current Agenda for Culture, in full respect of the principle of subsidiarity, and with a view to complement and support cultural policy at a national level, **Culture Action Europe calls on the European institutions and Member States to:**

1. Future-proof the Agenda for Culture **by providing a flexible framework taking into consideration the cultural ecosystem as a whole**, moving beyond narrow dichotomies such as for-profit and not-for-profit, digital and analogue or heritage and contemporary creation.
2. **Ensure a balanced approach between priorities**, giving equal importance to the social, economic and cultural domains.
3. **Foster synergies across cultural sectors and policy fields** given the multidimensional nature of the challenges ahead, the increasing hybridisation of practices and the blurring of boundaries in favour of cross-sectoral cooperation and exchange.
4. Recognise the relevance of the objectives included in the 2007 Agenda for Culture and the emergence of new cross-cutting developments that require urgent and ambitious action. In particular, the new Agenda for Culture should strive to:
  - 4.1. **Safeguard cultural rights and freedom of artistic expression** as principles of EU action in the cultural field and promote cultural participation given its recognised impact on democratic attitudes and values;
  - 4.2. **Enhance synergies between education and culture** in formal and non-formal domains for European citizens and cultural actors alike, including a lifelong learning approach to develop cultural and creative skills and the human-centred competences necessary in the future, especially as a result of the digital shift;
  - 4.3. **Give a holistic response to the emergence of new cultural diversities** by retaining and enhancing intercultural dialogue and mobility of cultural actors and works within Europe and beyond; and pursuing a fresh approach to cohesion policy focused on social innovation and community actions;
  - 4.4. Promote the anchoring of culture as an integral part of the European Research and Innovation policy due to its contribution to tackling societal challenges, inform the digital transition, and fostering innovation, growth and jobs;
  - 4.5. Advance on the implementation of the 'Strategy for international cultural relations' in response to the growing global polarisation, promoting mobility of cultural operators through adequate visa systems and schemes;
5. **Facilitate access to** European cultural programmes for cultural organisations of all sizes, particularly **small cultural operators**.
6. **Ensure sustainable and increased financial support for the new Agenda for Culture** in the post-2020 MFF in order to guarantee that the EU added value of culture can be realised.
7. Foster new approaches to data collection given that a new divide is emerging between the public sector, increasingly poor in data and information, and the information-rich digital operators.

Culture Action Europe thanks its members, who contributed their ideas to the formation of these points.

The Culture Action Europe [‘Value and values of culture’](#) impact review offers a comprehensive set of evidences substantiating the European added value of culture and the role of culture in the policy fields referred above.

<sup>1</sup> Key Initiatives underpinning the European Commission and Member States’ commitment to support culture:

- Culture Ministers meeting in Sofia “Culture – inclusive value of the EU”, 28 February 2018.
- The European Council conclusions, 14 December 2017, the Gothenburg Social Summit and Leaders’ agenda on Education and Culture, 17 November 2017
- The launch of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 in Milan, December 2017
- The Communication of the European Commission on “Strengthening European Identity through education and culture”, 14 November 2017
- State of the Union speech on 13 September 2017 by the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker.
- The European Consensus on Development, May 2017
- The Rome Declaration, March 2017
- Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council “Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations”, June 2016

<sup>2</sup> European and International legal frameworks signed by EU Member States including an obligation to support and uphold cultural rights and freedom of artistic expression are:

- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
- UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity (Article 5)
- Treaty of the European Union (Article 2)
- EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (Article 11 and Article 13)

<sup>3</sup> STEM stands for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. STEAM, includes the Arts to the former.