European agenda for culture in a globalising world

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This Commission report concerns the implementation of the European Agenda for Culture.

The adoption of the European Agenda for Culture in 2007 opened a new chapter of cooperation on culture policy at European level. For the first time, all partners – European institutions, Member States and culture civil society – were invited to pool their efforts on explicitly defined shared goals, which were endorsed by the Council:

1) promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue;

2) promotion of culture as a catalyst for creativity;

3) promotion of culture as a vital element in the EU's international relations.

This report examines progress at European and national levels towards the three objectives of the Agenda and assesses first experiences of the new working methods, drawing upon the national reports submitted by Member States and the work of the OMC groups and platforms. In the light of this analysis, the Commission has drawn the following conclusions.

The main conclusions may be summarised as follows:

First experiences: since 2007, the structured dialogue between the Commission and the sector is taking place through two main structures; thematic platforms of European associations and the European Culture Forum. Each platform has developed first policy recommendations and presented these to the broader sector during the European Culture Forum in 2009. One main benefit reported by the Platforms is deeper and broader dialogue within the culture sector. The structured dialogue has been an invitation to players in the very heterogeneous culture sector to **search for common ground**. The sector is better informed of policy processes and is more open to engaging with policy.

But depending on the roll out of priorities, the sector may struggle to identify the most relevant interlocutors and policy initiatives on specific topics. A closer articulation of civil society dialogue with the work of the Commission, OMC groups and Member States in Council would give a clearer picture of when and where to input recommendations.

Challenges for the future: in the light of suggestions by the Platforms and by Member States in national reports, the Commission proposes the following ways to reinforce effective cooperation:

- thematic Platforms should each "mirror" and be connected to an OMC policy field with the goal of concerted reflection and debate on priority themes. The Commission will continue its **bilateral contacts with Platforms** and propose an annual meeting with Platform Boards;
- the biennial European Culture Forum remains a major opportunity for dialogue between civil society and policy makers. The 2009 Forum highlighted progress on mainstreaming culture in related European policies and attracted over 1000 participants. **But smaller-scale events are also needed** to provide space for discussing specific issues. Future Platform-led discussion and dissemination events should unite participants from the sector, the "mirror" OMC group, Member State and European policy makers. Alternatives to operating grant funding will be explored;

experience of the pilot phase indicates that project grants may be better suited to supporting Platform activities;

- in some Member States, a positive development of structured dialogue with culture civil society has emerged. In Hungary, the Cultural Sectoral Policy Council brings together representatives of government, culture professionals, funding bodies and trade unions. In Romania, a pilot dialogue platform has grown into a department for Stakeholder Engagement in the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. A more **focused dialogue** with culture civil society will contribute to better articulated common efforts towards policy priorities. Thematic platforms which "mirror" the topics addressed through the OMC will make it easier for civil society practice and knowledge to transfer into policy making.

The way forward: experience since the Agenda was adopted has clearly shown the potential of cooperation on culture policy at European level, be it through exchange of experience between Member States with a view to best practice-based policy adaptations, greater input by culture civil society into the policy making process, or a more coherent approach to culture in related policies.

The current broader context makes it all the more important to reinforce cooperation. The "Europe 2020" strategy proposed by the Commission aims to put Europe back on a long-term growth path, with measures to promote smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Within this framework, culture can play a fundamental role, including in flagship initiatives such as Innovation Union (creative ecologies, non-technological innovation), the Digital Agenda (media literacy, new environment for creation and access to culture) and New Skills for New Jobs (intercultural competences and transversal skills). The role of culture in regional and local development should also be emphasised in the framework of cohesion policy (creative and intercultural cities and regions). Beyond EU borders, the role of culture in the enlargement policy and external relations should be further developed (branding Europe as the place to create, promoting balanced cultural exchanges and cooperation with the rest of the world). **By reinforcing effective cooperation, the proposals presented in this report are intended to help ensure that culture makes its full contribution to a smart, sustainable and inclusive Europe**.

In conclusion, the European Parliament, the Council, the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee are invited to react to this report. The Commission proposes to report thematically on progress towards the agreed topics, drawing upon OMC outputs, the work of structured dialogue platforms and voluntary contributions by Member States.