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BUREAU OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE  
FOR CULTURE, HERITAGE AND LANDSCAPE  
(CDCPP)

REPORT OF THE 4TH COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
PLATFORM EXCHANGE ON CULTURE AND DIGITISATION

ZKM | CENTER FOR ART AND MEDIA  
KARLSRUHE, 19-20 OCTOBER 2017

Secretariat Memorandum  
prepared by the  
Directorate of Democratic Citizenship and Participation  
Culture, Nature and Heritage Department

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## Introduction

The 4<sup>th</sup> Council of Europe Platform Exchange on Culture and Digitisation was successfully held on 19-20 October at the Center for Arts and Media in Karlsruhe, Germany. The event brought together some hundred participants from policy making /research/ practice and advocacy in media, culture, arts and science to reveal the underexploited potential of these areas as a strong resource for empowering democracy for culturally competent citizens.

## Progress

The exhibition “Open Code – Living in Digital Worlds” on 19 October preceded the conference on 20 October and showcased artistic and scientific digital works in an experimental setting. Participants were treated to an inspiring key note on “Democracy as Pseudonymy” by well-known German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk. He showed how pseudonymy is inherent in democracy and stated that we live in a fear-driven democracy (phobocracy) which prevents authentic democracy to flourish. German artist, writer and theorist Hito Steyerl<sup>1</sup> offered a remarkable and ironic key-note on the meaning and implications of digital competence at a time where the users of technology are not always master of the exercise.

The innovative conference format worked well with keynote-speeches preceding interactive panels. Twelve impulse lectures show-cased various digital cultural tools used by artists, cultural practitioners and scientists to address populism, fake news, xenophobia and undemocratic ideological political movements in Europe, as well as demonstrated the power of European cultural, arts and scientific networks vis-à-vis undemocratic political or ideological movements. It emerged that everybody ought to be a critical engineer, able to master their digital devices to avoid a new tool-imposed serfdom, to change digitisations’ power dynamic and to overcome risks of “artificial stupidity”. The conference underlined the importance of using technologies such as blockchain to enhance a digital tool-assisted democracy and allow for maximal transparency and participation. Community-based transformation processes and securing a non-monopolist public sphere -and thus diversity- were deemed key. Science/art and data journalism seem to be becoming ever more important, not least to develop convincing counter arguments to populist claims. European cultural, arts, technological and scientific connections that have grown over the past centuries were seen as an infinite resource, outliving current challenges.

Social Media moderation of the Platform Exchange generated strong results with 405 posts with the #COECD hashtag, 90 unique users mostly from Europe and a total reach of the posts at an estimated 550 000 people, with a total of four million timeline deliveries. In addition to the live stream of the conference, two live sessions were added on Facebook and Twitter. #COECD was number 2 trending topic in Germany and number 6 in Europe. The Internet of Citizens’ Twitter account gained over 800 new followers for a total of 2089 as of the end of the meeting.

## Next steps

A detailed conference report and a film on the Karlsruhe event are available and will be presented to the CDCPP Bureau. An ad-hoc expert working group, including a number of conference participants and the Chair of the CDCPP, has started to analyse the

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<sup>1</sup> In an article in ‘The Guardian’ published two weeks after the 4<sup>th</sup> Platform Exchange on 3 November, it was stated that Hito Steyerl had been voted most influential person in contemporary art in 2017.

conference findings with a view to the possible preparation of policy guidelines. This could be a text on principles and values relevant for cultural engagement online. Other possible follow-up action based on the conference findings includes the production of a film on the afore-mentioned text, school learning materials (i.e. ten questions for classroom debate) and possibly, the creation of a network on "Internet as Culture". Any draft text produced will be circulated for consultation to the CDCPP Bureau in spring 2019, with a view to its discussion and finalisation by the CDCPP Plenary in June 2018.

As for the 2018 Platform Exchange on Culture and Digitisation, the Croatian Government is considering hosting this event -possibly in Rijeka- in June in the framework of the Croatian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The newly set-up Institute for Media and Communication Studies at the Free University of Berlin may also partner a future Council of Europe Platform Exchange.

#### Action required

The Bureau is invited to:

- take note of the reporting on the 4<sup>th</sup> Council of Europe Platform Exchange on Culture and Digitisation;
- welcome the follow-up activities to the 2017 Platform Exchange, including the preparation of possible policy guidelines;
- take note of the plans to hold the 5<sup>th</sup> Council of Europe Platform Exchange on Culture and Digitisation in the framework of the Croatian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers in June 2018 in Croatia.