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Creative cities – managing the cultural activity of cities

Committee on Culture and Education

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Summary

Cities and towns have a huge creative potential in the cultural field, which can be a catalyst of positive change and growth. They function as centres of culture, where people can meet together and explore their multiple identities, while being entertained and invigorated by the contributions of others.

Culturally creative cities can become a driving force for their regions, stimulating economic development and social cohesion.

To make best use of this potential, the involvement of all parties concerned is essential. A thorough evaluation should be carried out to identify the specific cultural identity of the city.

The cultural programme needs to involve all age, language and ethnic groups. Cultural pluralism can be a source of strength and vitality.

¹ L: Chamber of Local Authorities / R: Chamber of Regions
ILDG: Independent and Liberal Democrat Group of the Congress
EPP/CD: European People's Party – Christian Democrats of the Congress
SOC: Socialist Group of the Congress
NR: Members not belonging to a Political Group of the Congress



A. DRAFT RESOLUTION²

1. In the European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009, the role of cities as centres of cultural creativity is in the spotlight.

2. Cities and towns function as centres of culture, repositories of knowledge and places where people can meet together and express themselves in the public space, learn and explore their multiple identities and at the same time be entertained, stimulated and invigorated by the contributions of others.

3. Cities which are culturally creative can become a driving force for their regions. By tapping into the huge reservoirs of the talents of their diverse populations, they can stimulate economic development and social cohesion and act as magnets for tourists and investors alike.

4. To make best use of this huge potential, the right policies need to be put in place, carefully drawn-up and supported by all parties concerned, the city authorities, the local artists and creative industries and the different sectors of the population. The policies can only be drawn up after a thorough evaluation has been carried out to identify the specific cultural identity and profile of the city.

5. The Agenda 21 for culture, adopted in Barcelona in 2004, is a valuable resource in this respect, and can serve as a key reference document for the cultural policies of Europe's cities.

6. The cultural programme is a key element for the cultural development of the city. It needs to accurately reflect the diverse characteristics and cultural needs of the population and at the same time package and promote cultural activities in order to reach a wide public.

7. *In the light of the above, the Congress, bearing in mind the Council of Europe's White paper on Intercultural Dialogue, calls on local authorities to:*

a. seize the opportunity of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation to undertake a thorough review of their cultural policy, with a view to releasing and harnessing the creative talents of their populations;

b. adopt the "Agenda 21 for culture" and use it as a reference document for cultural policies and activities and ensure that it is implemented by the municipality;

c. ensure that their cultural policies encourage creativity and are based on the understanding that cultural pluralism can be a source of strength and vitality and that cultural activities can effectively contribute to social cohesion;

d. take into consideration the lessons learnt by the Council of Europe's "Intercultural Cities" programme, notably Resolution 280 (2009) of the Congress on Intercultural cities;

² Preliminary draft resolution and preliminary draft recommendation approved by the Committee on Culture and Education of the Chamber of Local Authorities on 18 September 2009.

Members of the Committee:

I. Demchenko (Chair), A. Botnari (alternate: *E. Stahii*), *A. Bryggare*, A. Cook, R. Della-Bianca, *K. Dombrowicz*, V. Eble, A. Erzen, *D. Ghisletta*, J.A. Heddegaard, *R.A. Hughes*, A. Juhas, T. Kedziora, JP. Klein, A. *Koopmanschap*, V. Gebel, S. M. Luca, S. Medvedev, A. Nemcikova (alternate: *I. Babicova*), *J. Nilsson*, *H. Richtermocova*, *P. Russo*, W. Schuster, M. Sidukhina, G. Spartanski, (alternate: *A. Taner*), JL. Testud, C. Tovar Rodriguez.

NB: The names of members who took part in the vote are in italics.

Secretariat of the Committee : A. Bartling and T. Lisney

- e. take measures to brand their towns and cities, exploring and promoting the unique identity of each and ensuring that this identity fully reflects the diversity of its population;
- f. take into consideration the models used by the successful applicants for the "Capital of culture" label, ensuring that cultural policies are properly managed and involve public participation, proper evaluation and impact assessment;
- g. make full use of local consultative bodies, in line with Congress Recommendation 115 (2002), to ensure that all age, language and ethnic groups participate in the municipal cultural programme, and that special attention is accorded to increasing participation among groups which tend to be marginalised;
- h. work closely with regional authorities to ensure that the cultural programme serves the needs of the wider region;
- i. support local artists and provide incentives to encourage individual artistic creativity in a broad range of cultural activities;
- j. support the development of artistic neighbourhoods and recognize their role in urban regeneration.

B. DRAFT RECOMMENDATION³

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe convinced that towns and cities have a huge creative potential in the cultural field, which can be a catalyst of positive change and growth;
2. Recognising the contribution that the Council of Europe's intergovernmental sector makes in the field of cultural policy development, developing cultural capital and promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue;
3. Welcoming the readiness of the Council of Europe to engage with towns and cities in this work and recognising that a number European towns and cities have been involved over the years in these cultural projects;
4. Convinced that the Council of Europe continues to have a crucial role to play in Europe's cultural development, and that the activities of the Congress have a vital contribution to make in this respect;
5. *Therefore invites the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to:*
 - a. ensure coordination between the various Council of Europe sectors working on cultural issues, and in particular to ensure that CultureWatchEurope works closely with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities to provide European cities with the appropriate tools to develop dynamic and creative cultural programmes;
 - b. encourage the development robust and dynamic cultural management at the local level in the implementation of it various cultural programmes.
6. *The Congress invites the Committee of Ministers to ask member States to:*
 - a. take note of the above resolution;

³ See footnote 2

- b. recognise that arts programmes require sustained public funding and that, far from being a luxury, they are a vital component of a society's harmonious development;
- c. ensure that national cultural policies are consistent with the Agenda 21 for culture;
- d. ensure that cultural subsidies programmes are both consistent and compatible with this policy and that they encourage cultural policies which stimulate artistic creativity among all sectors of a city's population.

C. EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

Why is culture important to cities?

1. The designation of 2009 as the European year of creativity and innovation has put the focus on the value of creativity and innovation for transforming and regenerating societies. While creativity covers all sectors of human activity, the emphasis in this report is on culture, which lies at the heart of the creative process. The individual's capacity for innovation is closely linked to their cultural skills and ability to participate in the cultural life of the wider community⁴.
2. In times of economic hardship, there is a temptation to dismiss culture, and more particularly the creative arts, as a luxury. However, culture lies at the heart of a city authority's concerns.

What is culture?

3. There are many definitions of culture, ranging from the very narrow ("high" art forms) to the very broad, such as T.S. Eliot's "The whole life of the people". The Council of Europe, which established cultural cooperation as one of its core activities soon after its foundation, has long argued for a broad definition of culture, not restricted to the activities that the ministries of culture of its member states were traditionally concerned with.
4. For the purposes of this report, culture is understood in a wide sense, referring to arts and related activities, encompassing not only the "high" traditional forms of art also more popular forms of expression (popular music, photography and amateur arts).
5. The 1982 World Conference on Cultural Policies maintained that culture was a major source of intellectual renewal and human growth: "It is culture that gives man the ability to reflect upon himself. It is culture that makes specifically human, rational beings, endowed with a critical judgement and a sense of moral commitment. It is through culture that man expresses himself, becomes aware of himself, recognises his incompleteness, questions his own achievements, seeks untiringly for new meanings and creates works through which he transcends his limitations."⁵
6. Culture can create space for people to think, to express, discover and redefine themselves, to be stimulated and entertained. Culture can strengthen social cohesion, increase personal confidence and improve life skills, improve people's mental and physical well-being, strengthen people's ability to act as democratic citizens. In cultural expression people discover, explore and develop their identities and relations with each other. The arts have a function of maintaining and developing the vitality that is central to a healthy modern urban identity.

⁴ Explanatory Memorandum presented by the European Commission for the European Year of the Creativity and Innovation 2009: http://create2009.europa.eu/index_en/documents_of_the_year.html

⁵ World Conference on Cultural Policies: final report, Unesco, 1982

7. However, culture does not exist in a vacuum, it is also an economic activity, which needs to be planned, funded, managed and promoted.

What is a culturally creative city?

8. Innovation should be applied not only by the artists to the artistic processes and productions. Innovation is also needed by cultural managers and administrators. A culturally creative city is one which is finding new ways to make use of the artistic talents of its citizens and also to attract artistic talent from outside the city.

9. To do so it needs to put itself on the map, to become known and recognised for its cultural activities and programs. Creative culture has to address and interact with the variety of cultural output, using the range of cultural traditions, combining the old with the new, reinterpreting, learning to look at and experience the world in new and fresh ways.

How to do it

10. How does a city become a creative city? Much of the answer lies in the municipal authority. To make a city creative requires vision, strong policies, good planning and consultation, sound financial management and coordination. Above all the city authority needs to consult, to include the major players, and bring together not just the actors engaged in cultural activities and industries, but to involve all the neighbourhoods of the city and ensure the participation of a wide range of groups and associations.

11. Who can do it? There is a popular model of the creative city as a place that attracts huge amounts of private investment and by creating attractive conditions for young creative entrepreneurs - Richard Florida's "creative class" ⁶ - to live, rather like applying the Google corporate spirit to a whole city. However, this American model does not necessarily translate to a European context, where there are a very difference economic and social conditions and a very different regulatory framework.

12. However, since the essence of success lies in good management and planning, becoming a successful creative city is within the reach of every city even from the poorest and most deprived areas, as the experience of Huddersfield in the United Kingdom demonstrates⁷.

Vision and policy

13. To succeed in building a creative city, a municipality requires a strong vision and a clear cultural policy and strategy. There are no short-cuts to developing these. They require careful preparation, based on a very broad consultation. A variety of consultation forums should be considered, from enabling citizens to contribute their views online to organising information meetings in neighbourhoods.

14. The cultural policy document should form the reference text for the city's cultural vision. The drafting of such a document, even for small and medium-sized towns, should be done with the help of professional cultural administrators. The text needs to define the city's identity, its contemporary and past cultural profile, its tangible and intangible heritage and its vision for the future.

15. The drafting process needs to involve political decision makers, community leaders, city administrators, the media, educators and arts practitioners.

16. The formulation of cultural policies and strategies can also benefit from the shared experience and lessons learnt by other cities. The Council of Europe's recently launched CultureWatchEurope could be a valuable resource in this respect.

⁶ Florida, Richard "The rise of the creative class": <http://creativeclass.com/>

⁷ Bradford, Neil "Creative cities: structures policy dialogue background": <http://www.culturalpolicy.org/commons/announcedetail.cfm?ID=231>

Agenda 21 for culture

17. The first Universal Forum of Cultures, held in Barcelona in May 2004 approved a document known as "Agenda 21 for Culture". It was adopted later that year by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), who have since assumed the role of coordinator of the implementation of the agenda. It forms part of the United Nations "Agenda 21" programme, which was set out at the 1992 Rio Summit.

18. The Agenda 21 for Culture serves as a reference document for cultural policies worldwide. It is specifically geared to Cities and Local Governments, and has since proved itself as a key policy tool in over 120 countries.

19. The Agenda sets out a number of principles, focusing on the importance of cultural diversity and the key role of local governments in promoting and developing culture. Cities are invited to commit themselves to a set of undertakings in order to protect and to promote cultural expression and to develop the cultural capacities of their citizens.

20. As the main Europe-wide forum for local authorities, the Congress could provide a valuable impetus to this process, by encouraging members to sign up to the Agenda and exploring how it could successfully be implemented.

Creative cities and identities

21. Each city has its own unique culture and identity, specific to its own geographic position, history and the composition of its population. A city's cultural identity is the sum of its parts. Far from being static, it is constantly evolving, the product of its own melting pot, the result of ongoing cultural exchanges and developments and the contributions of its increasingly diverse population. The Council of Europe Intercultural Cities Programme demonstrates how the combination and interaction of very diverse elements of a city can generate cultural and civic vitality⁸.

22. This identity is a combination of past and present, just as the population comprises older more established populations and recent arrivals. The ethnic mix of a city is constantly in flux as each generation relates to the traditions of its forebears in new ways, combining elements of their own backgrounds and the different cultural aspects to which they are exposed, at school, in the workplace and in civic life.

23. Contemporary cultural identity is very much a composite affair. It is more accurate to speak of cultural identities or "multiple cultural affiliations". It is a feature of modern democracies that the individual is free to integrate very diverse cultural affiliations. The Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue shows that cultural pluralism is fundamental to the human rights and mutual respect that European societies are built on⁹. The inclusive nature of this identity is an essential aspect of it. It derives its vitality from embracing different minority interests, languages and religious backgrounds.

24. A city's image naturally includes a sense of place. It has a unique location and also defines itself by its proximity to other cities, regions and landscapes. Closely connected to this is an awareness of the past. However, this sense of history itself is not static. A city's past, like its present situation, was a constant ever-changing flux of cultural currents. A sense of place will also involve a sense of connections with other locations that individuals identify with and have historical links with.

25. Each person has a cultural identity, irrespective of their educational level and socio-economic status. A city's cultural identity is forged by combining all these individual identities. The municipality therefore needs to keep in mind a broad interpretation of cultural activity, which embraces cultural expressions in all sectors of its population.

⁸ Council of Europe Intercultural Cities: <http://www.coe.int/interculturalcities>

⁹ Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue: <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/>

26. A city needs to be aware of its identity and to use this to market itself and ensure a high level of participation in its cultural activities. In order to successfully brand itself, the city needs to conduct a thorough review of its cultural profile, to identify the features that make the city special and build this into its corporate image. The Capital of Culture programme provides many examples of how this can be done.¹⁰

The cultural programme

27. Closely linked with the city's cultural policy will be the cultural programme. The choice and balance of activities will depend very much on the vision that has been defined above. It will set the balance between professionals and amateur productions, between high art and low art, between the cosmopolitan and the local, national and traditional productions and world arts.

28. When devising the programme, attention needs to be given to the leisure aspects of cultural activity, the importance of consumerism and socializing in cultural activities. The close links between culture and education also require careful consideration. The involvement of local arts schools, drama classes and dance groups in cultural programmes can contribute significantly to the success and popularity of a cultural programme. Each city will have its own pool of local artists to draw on, each with their own agendas, which need to be taken seriously.

29. Arts festivals play an important role in branding the city, making it known for special activities, drawing in people from outside the area. The phenomenon of success attracting success is evident in the example of the Edinburgh festival, which has mushroomed to combine several festivals that run concurrently, the most famous being the alternative arts festival known as "The Fringe".

30. Specialization and continuity are key features of arts festivals. The city of Bydgoszcz in Poland, for example, has acquired an international reputation for its annual music festival, attracting performers and visitors from all over the world. Other cities build on their association with famous artists, such as the Russian city Yasnaya Polyana as the home of Tolstoy.

31. A cultural programme should take account of the importance of immigrants, and cultural minorities, as components of the diversity of the population. Immigrants bring new ideas and traditions, enriching the life of the city. Some immigrant communities are dominated by economic migrants, who settle in the poorer neighbourhoods of a city. Some cities, such as Lyon in France, have tailored special arts programmes to such neighbourhoods, using culture as a tool for urban renewal¹¹.

32. Cultural programmes need to be inclusive, to reach out to all groups of the population, devising specific activities for children and youth and the elderly. There is an essential educational element to many cultural activities. Lifelong education classes are a natural component of the urban cultural programme.

33. Municipal authorities tend to be responsible for a wide range of cultural institutions. Imaginative use and good coordination of these institutions can enrich cultural programmes and at the same time generate interest and greater use of those institutions themselves. The venues for cultural events can be diversified, with greater use being made of institutions such as museums and libraries and historic buildings not normally used as venues for the performing arts.

The economics

34. The biggest challenge facing a municipality with regard to its cultural programme is how to fund it. The prerequisite for a well-funded programme is sound financial management. A cultural programme should be overseen by a management team, which includes a senior financial administrator.

¹⁰ Richards, G & Wilson, The Impact of Cultural Events on City Image: Rotterdam, Cultural Capital of Europe 2001 in: Urban Studies, Vol 41, No. 10: 1931-51 (2004)

¹¹ For Lyon's Cultural Cooperation Charter, see: http://www.polville.lyon.fr/polville/sections/fr/les_thematiques/culture/la_charte_de_coopera

35. Cultural projects require proper budgetary planning and auditing and evaluation. Cities need to maintain detailed reliable information and accounts, how much they expect to obtain from sponsors and how much from regional and national authorities. They need to know exactly what their operating expenditure is, the promotion and marketing costs. They should set income targets, from ticket sales, sponsorship, advertising etc. The budget will also need to include capital expenditure, such as for the construction, maintenance and upgrading of arts venues and other cultural buildings and the provision of related services, such as upgrading public spaces and providing appropriate transport for festivals.

36. Once targets have been set, they need to be followed through, to be regularly evaluated, with the outcomes analysed to identify the reasons for any divergence between actual and expected results.

37. How should cultural activities be financed? Although there is increasing pressure to seek private sponsorship of the arts, public sector funding remains the prime source of finance for the arts in Europe and its importance cannot be underestimated. Therefore good communication with the regional and national authorities is essential. The decision-makers at these levels need to be persuaded of the merits of supporting particular programmes. Political lobbying is becoming an increasingly specialised activity and city authorities should consider seeking professional assistance in this matter.

38. Regional authorities should be given special consideration when looking for financing, since cities often function as regional hubs for the arts and can therefore claim to be major actors in promoting arts at the regional level. People living in the countryside and small towns often travel to the city for cultural activities.

39. Raising money for the arts through local taxation requires careful planning and marketing to maintain voters' support. In some member States, the powers of cities to raise extra funds through local taxation are severely limited by central governments.

40. Sponsorship is an often underutilised source of income. It also requires careful planning. Potential sponsors will need to be supplied with detailed information to persuade them that their investment is well-placed. The presence of local business leaders in the management team for a cultural programme can help to ensure good communication with the local business community. There also exist professional cultural consultancies which can advise municipalities on their strategy for attracting investment.

Benefits

41. There are a variety of economic benefits resulting from strong cultural programmes. Cultural activities generate employment and investment. More and more people are working in the creative industries. Culture attracts business and large companies often prefer to be located in cities with a rich cultural life, since this helps them attract staff.

42. There is a growing awareness of the role of the arts in urban regeneration, the use of the arts to improve the urban environment and to attract tourists. The European Urban Charter II makes the link between artistic creation and urban vitality, recalling the role of the city as a cradle of civilisation¹². The recent Congress report on cultural tourism¹³ highlights the role that the historic built heritage of European towns can play in ensuring sustained and balanced development.

¹² European Urban Charter II: Manifesto for a new urbanity: <http://www.coe.int/t/congress/files/themes/urban-charter/>

¹³ The future of cultural tourism, towards a sustainable model, CPR(16)4 REP, 2009

43. A number of European cities have proven the benefits of re-using industrial buildings and turning derelict sites into vibrant artistic neighbourhoods. The example of the dock site in Cardiff shows how such transformations can revitalize the city centre, while preserving the industrial and economic heritage of the city¹⁴. The practice of developing cultural quarters in cities to concentrate artistic activities has been shown to have a positive effect on the health of a city¹⁵.

44. The experience of the European City of Culture programme has shown that there are substantial economic benefits to be gained from producing a coherent and comprehensive and well-managed cultural programme¹⁶. The case of the city of Liverpool demonstrates how proper planning and well-coordinated management of an ambitious cultural programme can transform a city's image and attract considerable new investment. It also highlights the long-term nature of this process: the results are not to be seen in a matter of a few weeks. A successful bid takes many years in the preparation and implementation.

45. It makes financial sense for cities to invest in their arts infrastructure. Creative cities are leading the growth of the knowledge-based economy. Local cultural amenities attract tourists who spend more and stay longer in the places they visit.

46. Cultural activities attract visitors, not only first-time tourists but also people from the surrounding region. The pull factor has a knock-on effect. Visitors not only contribute to the success of cultural programmes by buying tickets and filling seats, but ensure the vitality of related industries, tourist facilities, shops, restaurants and hotels. Developing the arts contributes to the "evening culture" of a city, making the city centre safer.

Conclusion

47. Europe's cities are rich in their past and rich in their current diversity. They have a huge potential for creative capacity and innovation. Their cultural activities are the life-blood of the city and the surrounding region. They are places where cultures meet and interact, constantly generating new forms of expression.

48. To harness this potential, they need a robust cultural programme and cultural policy. This needs to be properly managed, with professional cultural managers and administrators. They need sound financing, which requires proper public sector investment and strong support from national and regional authorities. They also need strong financial models, auditing and monitoring tools.

49. Cultural activity must not be seen as a luxury. Only when it gains its rightful place at the heart of a city's activity will the city be able to realise its true potential as a creative city.

¹⁴ Avery, Patricia: "Born again: from dock cities to cities of culture" in *Tourism, Culture And Regeneration*, ed. Melanie K. Smith, 2006

¹⁵ Roodhouse, Simon: "The role of cultural quarters in sustaining health in cities": *International Healthy Cities Conference, Proceedings*, Taipei, 2005

¹⁶ Palmer-Rae Associates "European cities and capitals of culture", 2004