
Resolution “The cultural and creative sectors undermined by COVID-19”¹

Adopted by the Conference of INGOs on 16 December 2020

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The Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to the UNESCO 2020 report entitled “Culture in Crisis: Policy guide for a resilient creative sector”;

Having regard to the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions;

Having regard to the UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist (1980);

Having regard to the OECD report entitled “Culture shock: COVID-19 and the cultural and creative sectors”;

Having regard to the new Strategic Agenda for the European Union 2019-2024 adopted by the European Council in June 2019;

Having regard to the European Commission's Communication of 14 November 2017 entitled “Strengthening European identity through education and culture” (COM(2017)0673), and that of 22 May 2018 entitled “A new European Agenda for Culture” (COM(2018)0267);

Having regard to the European Parliament resolution of 17 April 2020 on coordinated EU action to combat the COVID-19 pandemic (2020/2616(RSP) and its consequences and that of 17 September 2020 on the cultural recovery of Europe (2020/2708(RSP);

Having regard to the European Council Regulation (1295/2013) of 11 December 2013 establishing the Creative Europe Programme (2014 to 2020);

Having regard to the European Council Conclusions of 11 May 2012 on fostering the creative and innovative potential of young people (2012/C 169/01);

Having regard to the European Council conclusions of 15 November 2018 on the Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022 (2018/C 460/10);

Having regard to the Manifesto of the Council of Europe's Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape (CDCPP) on the Freedom of Expression of Arts and Culture and the Digital Era;

¹ Presented by the Education and Culture Committee

Having regard to the Recommendation of 22 February 2017 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to Member States on the European Cultural Heritage Strategy for the 21st Century (CM/Rec(2017)1);

Recalling that European cultural and creative industries and sectors represent almost 4% of European Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 3.7% of total employment;

Considering that the cultural and creative industries and sectors bring benefits to other sectors such as tourism and transport;

Noting that, according to European Commission estimates for the first quarter of 2020, the cultural and creative industries and sectors are likely to have lost 80% of their turnover in the second quarter of 2020 as a result of the COVID crisis and measures to limit the spread of the virus;

Considering that the particular nature of the cultural and creative sectors makes them particularly vulnerable in times of crisis, as these activities mainly involve SMEs and the self-employed;

Recalling that in these sectors, like so many others, women are victims of negative stereotypes, wage inequalities, inequalities in access to management, executive positions, technical or creative professions, inequalities in access to decision-making processes, technical or entrepreneurial training; that in the cultural and creative sectors in particular, working hours in the evening, at weekends or during holiday periods constitute yet another significant inequality, jeopardising the link between private and professional life, and consequently the construction of women's personal lives and professional careers;

Recalling also that the cultural heritage which today constitutes our legacy has been forged, preserved and transmitted according to the criteria defined by those in power over the centuries, i.e. mostly men; and that art, cultural heritage and culture are decisive in shaping the attitudes and roles of men and women;

Convinced that the entire European cultural landscape is strongly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and that the sources of income for artists and the cultural sector are considerably reduced as a result of physical distancing or containment measures;

Believing that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the cultural and creative industries and sectors is only just beginning to be experienced, as the real extent of its medium and long-term impact remains unknown at the moment;

Aware that culture is a strategic sector for Europe, not only for its economy, but because it contributes to inclusive, free and sustainable societies while reflecting our values, our history, our diversity, and our fundamental rights and freedoms;

Believing in particular that arts and culture strengthen the social capital of societies, foster creativity, innovation, well-being and critical thinking and encourage integration and cohesion by promoting equality and pluralism;

Recalling that arts education and the encounter with arts and culture develop the ability to love, discover and reach out to others;

Recalling that artistic practice promotes self-confidence, reduces anxiety and fears, helps to modify sensory deficits (sight, touch, hearing...) and strengthens social cohesion by promoting interaction between people;

Recalling also that access to culture is essential in many indoor settings such as hospitals, residential institutions for elderly dependants, prisons, etc.;

Considering that culture and artistic education constitute an important instrument in the fight against all forms of discrimination, including racism and xenophobia, and that it contributes to the promotion of linguistic diversity in Europe;

Noting that, despite the lack of evidence that cultural events increase the risk of infection, cinemas, theatres, concert halls, museums, heritage sites and other artistic venues are among the first to close as a result of measures to limit the spread of the virus; and that many artistic and cultural events such as festivals, exhibitions, concerts and performances have been cancelled or postponed;

Considering that, despite the growing online cultural offer, inequalities in access to and use of digital tools hamper the exercise of the fundamental rights of access to culture, cultural participation and artistic expression;

Expresses its solidarity and support to artists, creators, performers, authors, publishers and all professionals in the arts and culture sector affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Encourages the allocation of a significant part of the economic stimulus package to cultural and creative actors, to enable them to continue working in the coming months and thus survive the deep crisis they are going through.

Invites Member States to ensure that all professionals in the creative sector, including those in non-standard employment, have access to social benefits.

Calls on Member States to consider the cultural and creative industries and sectors as strategic and priority sectors in the framework of the EU Recovery Plan; to define a precise budget, and to develop concrete and prompt initiatives for the benefit of all stakeholders in these sectors.

Encourages Member States and the European institutions to actively support actors and initiatives that reflect Europe's linguistic, artistic and cultural diversity, including minority languages.

Welcomes the elaboration by the European Commission and the European Council of the "Next Generation EU" recovery plan and calls for culture to be integrated into all components of this plan.

Emphasises the crucial role of the Creative Europe programme in ensuring cooperation at European level and stability in this sector.

Calls for increased funding for the Creative Europe programme, in particular in the framework of the Next Generation EU Recovery Plan, and for the Erasmus+ programme, which encourages creativity and innovation through projects for young people.

Welcomes the creation of REACT-EU, a €55 billion direct action plan to provide additional funding to hard-hit regions and economic sectors; proposes that Member States use these funds to support cultural and creative sectors.

Encourages the European Commission to increase the part dedicated to the funding of educational and cultural programmes in its next EU budget proposal.

Recognises the importance of new technologies for the creation, production, dissemination and accessibility of cultural and creative works.

Encourages initiatives broadening access to these digital tools for actors in the cultural and creative sectors and those promoting access to digital cultural and creative resources created for all citizens.

Supports the implementation by the European Commission of two collaborative platforms to respond to the health crisis affecting the cultural and creative sectors:

- The Platform for EU Member States, launched on 24 April, which enables representatives of European ministries of culture to exchange good practices;
- The “Creatives Unite” platform, launched on 5 May, which enables all individuals and organisations working in these sectors to share information and solutions more easily. It also provides access to a multitude of relevant resources, organisations and networks, and offers a space for co-creation and exchange aimed at designing common solutions.

Stresses the important place and fundamental role of civil society organisations in the cultural and creative sectors, and therefore calls on the Member States and the European institutions to give them increased support in this period of crisis.

Invites Member States to recover from the 2005 UNESCO Convention, which promotes equal opportunities between women and men in the cultural and creative industries by encouraging legislation that promotes gender equality, including the adoption of policies and measures that support women as artists who create, produce, distribute and have access to cultural goods and services.

Urges Member States to take into account the recommendations of the UNESCO report entitled "Culture in Crisis: A Policy Guide for a Resilient Creative Sector" which recommends three priority areas of action:

- direct support to artists and cultural professionals;
- support for the cultural and creative industries sectors;
- strengthening the competitiveness of cultural and creative industries.