

Council conclusions on the role of culture in combating poverty and social exclusion

(2010/C 324/03)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to Decision No 1098/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2008 on the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010) ⁽¹⁾,

Having regard to the adoption by the European Council on 17 June 2010 of 'Europe 2020', a strategy for jobs and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth ⁽²⁾, especially its commitment to promote 'social inclusion, in particular through the reduction of poverty, by aiming to lift at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty and exclusion',

Welcoming with interest the European Parliament resolution of 15 November 2007 on social reality stocktaking, which states that strengthening social cohesion and the eradication of poverty and social exclusion must become a political priority for the European Union,

Whereas:

- everyone has the right to have access to cultural life and to participate in it, to aspire to education and lifelong learning, to develop his/her creative potential, to choose and have his/her cultural identity and affiliations respected in the variety of their different means of expression,
- the cross-cutting dimension of culture justifies the mobilisation of cultural policies to combat poverty and social exclusion,
- access to culture and participation in and education in culture can play an important role in combating poverty and in promoting greater social inclusion in that they can encourage, amongst other things:
 - individual personal fulfilment, expression, critical consciousness, freedom and emancipation, enabling people to take an active part in social life,
 - the social integration of isolated groups, such as the elderly, and groups experiencing poverty or social exclusion, and raising awareness of and combating stereotypes and prejudice against particular social and cultural groups,
 - the promotion of cultural diversity and inter-cultural dialogue, respect for differences and the ability to prevent and resolve intercultural challenges,

- access to information and services with regard to cultural spaces which offer access to new information and communication technologies, in particular the Internet,
- the development of creative potential and skills acquired during non-formal and informal learning which can be put to use in the labour market and in social and civic life,

CONSIDERING therefore that it is important for a cultural dimension to be incorporated into national and European policies against poverty and social exclusion,

With this in view, INVITES THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION, acting within their respective remits, with due regard for the principle of subsidiarity and taking into account their institutional structure, to:

- A. Take a comprehensive, coherent and participative approach in order to promote the cross-cutting contribution of culture by:
1. incorporating the cultural dimension into strategies on combating poverty and social exclusion and promoting social inclusion through cultural policies;
 2. pursuing policies which aim to promote effective access to and the participation of all in cultural activities;
 3. involving stakeholders, including people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and their associations, in the definition and implementation of strategies and policies;
 4. encouraging the preparation of specific local projects linking programmes for social inclusion with cultural programmes;
 5. encouraging collaboration, joint projects and the sharing of experience and good practice among the different levels of public authorities, including at European level, among those involved in social, economic, cultural, educational and youth work, and between them and public authorities;
 6. promoting research and analysis of the role of culture in combating poverty and social exclusion.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 298, 7.11.2008, p. 20.

⁽²⁾ EUCO 13/1/10 REV 1.

B. Strengthen links between education, training, economy, employment and culture by:

1. encouraging, especially with the participation of cultural institutions and artists, cultural activities within social, educational and youth services in order to increase cultural and intercultural skills and stimulate the potential for creativity and innovation, especially among children and young people;
2. recognising the importance of cultural mediation⁽¹⁾ in increasing participation in cultural life and the need to develop suitable training and to improve the skills of cultural mediators;
3. promoting the use of skills acquired in the cultural sector as a route into employment and into social and civic life;
4. pursuing policies in favour of media literacy as well as policies to develop digital competence and to teach vulnerable groups or groups experiencing poverty or social exclusion how to use new information and communication technologies which can make it easier to access culture and develop cultural expression and artistic creativity;
5. promoting greater awareness of those involved in cultural, social, economic, educational and youth work of the specificity of relationships with people experiencing poverty or social exclusion, intercultural dialogue, the role of culture as a means of social inclusion and the civic dimension of culture.

C. Mobilise the potential of culture to combat stereotypes and prejudice against particular social and cultural groups experiencing poverty or social exclusion by:

1. promoting programmes and measures which highlight cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue with special regard to fostering cultural exchanges between these groups, such as groups with a migrant background, and society at large;
2. highlighting the positive role the media can play in this context;
3. encouraging measures for children and young people, at school and outside school, especially by youth associations and movements,

INVITES MEMBER STATES, taking into account their institutional structure, to:

A. Remove obstacles to access to culture by:

1. promoting greater awareness within the cultural sector of the need to welcome all types of public and recognise their different needs;

2. circulating suitable and easily accessible cultural information and putting in place specific methods of informing and raising awareness in order to reach out to vulnerable people, paying particular attention to the situation of people with disabilities;
3. improving access to new information and communication technologies, in particular the Internet, and in this context strengthening and renewing the role of public libraries, local cultural centres and Public Internet Access Points (PIAPs) as essential components of the digital knowledge landscape and as an area for cultural meetings and activities open to all;
4. pursuing policies designed to cut the cost of access to culture for specific target groups;
5. improving and diversifying a local cultural offer accessible to everyone.

B. Enhance participation in cultural life and cultural expression by:

1. highlighting the cultural participation, cultural expression and artistic creativity of those experiencing poverty or social exclusion, in particular by stepping up activities on cultural education, cultural mediation and artistic practice;
2. pursuing policies in the field of literacy, including digital literacy, basic skills and learning national languages;
3. encouraging projects, including artists' residencies that promote collaboration between artists and people experiencing poverty or social exclusion;
4. optimising the potential of the education sector and youth work and encouraging the efforts of cultural institutions to promote children's and young people's participation in cultural activities and cultural expression,

Accordingly, invites THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION to:

1. make better use of EU cohesion policy instruments to support cultural initiatives combating poverty and social exclusion;
2. emphasise the contribution of culture to development and to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals;
3. take account of these conclusions in the achievement of the objectives of the 'Europe 2020' Strategy.

⁽¹⁾ Cultural mediation is a discipline aiming at creating links between the public and culture.