



Structural Barriers to Accessing Culture

Barreiras Estruturais de Acesso à Cultura

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ABSTRACT

As Europe, we need to reach a commitment with Culture. The first commitment should be to guarantee greater investment and differentiated cultural mobility for the ultra-peripheral regions. This implies having direct financing to schools for cultural visits, as well as study or internship scholarships in cultural institutions.

On the other hand, no less important, we need tax justice in the cultural area so that there is no double taxation and there is a reduction in taxes for private entities that finance Culture. The former President of the European Commission, Juncker, stated that artists and creators were the “crown jewels” of Europe. The President of the European Parliament stated that “culture, more than the economy, is what unites us.”

I would like to see this Union as concerned with cultural tenths as it is with tenths of the banking and financial system. I would like to see what that other Europe would be like, one that chooses to invest more in culture. Investing in Culture is investing in Democracy. It is investing in human dignity and memory. In our memory.

This implies, I insist, the political courage to geographically decentralize the investment made in Culture and to bet on cultural mobility. The mobility of European and third-country artists is a way of promoting peace, sharing visions, and deconstructing stereotypical social and cultural representations.

Keywords: Culture; Europe; Investment; Barriers

RESUMO

Enquanto Europa, temos de assumir um compromisso com a Cultura. O primeiro compromisso deve ser o de garantir maior investimento e mobilidade cultural diferenciada para as regiões ultraperiféricas. Isto implica ter financiamento direto às escolas para visitas culturais, bem como bolsas de estudo ou de estágio em instituições culturais.

Por outro lado, não menos importante, precisamos de justiça fiscal na área cultural para que não haja dupla tributação e haja uma redução de impostos para as entidades privadas que financiam a Cultura. O antigo Presidente da Comissão Europeia, Juncker, afirmou que os artistas e criadores eram as “jóias da coroa” da Europa. O Presidente do Parlamento Europeu afirmou que “a cultura, mais do que a economia, é o que nos une”.

Gostaria de ver esta União tão preocupada com as décimas culturais como com as décimas do sistema bancário e financeiro. Gostaria de ver como seria essa outra Europa, uma Europa que optasse por investir mais na cultura. Investir na Cultura é investir na Democracia. É investir na dignidade humana e na memória. Na nossa memória.

Isso implica, insisto, a coragem política de descentralizar geograficamente o investimento feito na Cultura e de apostar na mobilidade cultural. A mobilidade de artistas europeus e de países terceiros é uma forma de promover a paz, de partilhar visões e de desconstruir representações sociais e culturais estereotipadas.

Palavras-chave: Cultura; Europa; Investimento; Barreiras

1. Introduction

As Europe, we need to reach a commitment with Culture. The first commitment should be to guarantee greater investment and differentiated cultural mobility for the outermost regions. This implies having direct financing to schools for cultural visits, as well as study or internship scholarships in cultural institutions.

On the other hand, no less important, we need tax justice in the cultural sector. This means no double taxation and reduction of taxes for private entities that finance Culture. The former President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, in 2016, stated that artists and creators were the “crown jewels” of Europe¹.

With a budget of around (€2.44 billions) de euros the Creative Europe 2021-2027 program strengthens support for cultural and creative sectors, considering the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 crisis and growing global competition.

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I would like to make some observations about the importance of Culture in European Union Policy.

In January 2014, the European Commission launched Creative Europe, a programme that brings together the former Culture programme and MEDIA programme, with a €1.47 billion budget for the 2014-2020 period (9% higher than its predecessors) and which will support Europe’s cultural and creative sectors. It represented about 1% of the European Union budget. This program includes several objectives, such as strengthening the common European heritage by supporting cross-border cultural projects, the funding of national projects for the promotion and film distribution, the improvement of competitiveness in the audiovisual sector and intercultural dialogue, among many others.

In 2018, Jill Cousins, Executive Director of Europeana Foundation said that “Europe is world-leader in access to Cultural Heritage, and in encouraging its re-use in Education, Research and Creative Industry”, in https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/139229/COUSINS_Structural%20and%20Financial%20Barriers%20in%20the%20Access%20to%20Culture.pdf

The European cultural and creative sector contributes to economic growth, employment, innovation and social cohesion. Only in the European Union is responsible for more than 7 million jobs. 30 million worldwide.

Available data indicate that 8.4 million people are employed in the cultural sector in the EU (representing 3.7% of total employment) and that its important in terms of economic development but is still far below its potential.

The potential of Culture in terms of economic

¹ <https://www.politico.eu/article/commission-sides-with-artists-over-tech-giants-in-radical-reforms/>

growth and job creation is indisputable. This is a perspective on Culture that cannot be neglected. But this cannot be the only aspect of Culture to be considered.

European Union budget for Culture is a meager budget. Always is. All of us would like it to be bigger and we must join efforts for this to happen. But today I am concerned about the use we want to give to this budget. Without questioning the right of each Member State to decide its own priorities in cultural investment, we must think the role of the European Union in this area. Where we invest and which projects we should support? What kind of Culture we want for Europe and for its citizens?

2. Culture, Human Rights and Democracy

We need a cultural policy that serves to structure and develop a true democratic culture that will not be based exclusively on a cultural “industry”. The existence of “creative elements” is not enough for us to speak of Culture.

There was a time when “Culture” meant a set of disciplines that, according to a more or less consensus, defined a heritage of ideas, values, art and knowledge.

I think that the success of a cultural policy will pass by leave a cultural paradigm subordinated to consumption and to the politically correct. Culture should not be a “permanent festival”. While it may include it, the Culture cannot be reduced to entertainment.

At the risk of being accused of defending an elitist kind of culture, which is not at all true, I would say I don't like the lack of ambition of contemporary culture. We have an obligation to do better.

And we should do this reflection: Today, this “new culture” that we want the most comprehensive and accessible as possible, runs out in the fun and entertainment of its consumers. It is a “mass culture” or “Culture-World”, as Lipovetsky said, which includes everything and where everything is equivalent, without any criterion to rank. A “mass culture” that does not allow the development of independent individuals and able to judge for themselves. Culture does not mean quantity, but quality and sensitivity in the aesthetic sense.

A solid Culture is what underlies the defense and promotion of human rights, gender equality, democracy, the rule of law and, of course, intercultural dialogue.

Access to Culture and opportunities for creative expression are important for ensuring a democratic society, as a guardian of freedom of expression and equality.

I understand Culture as confrontation of ideas, as creativity and possibility of change. Culture will only make sense if it is committed to its time if it keeps us lucid and awakes society from lethargy and indifference cultivated by this other “spectacle culture”. Or else we risk having a world without people, only spectators.

In fact, Culture, for me, means freedom. Or at least, the complaint for lack of it. And the political mission is the privileged space to ensure that freedom of being. Today we can say that the new policy requirement is not so much the question of equality but the right to recognition. The right of being recognized. And it makes all the difference. It not enough to ask for equality. We want to be recognized.

Inclusion and diversity must be an integral part of cultural programming, organizational develop-

ment and recruitment in the cultural sector at national and regional level. That is why, in 2018, Member States were encouraged to carry out systematic monitoring of measures aimed at this objective.

3. Gender Dimension of Culture

In general, the desire to be recognized is a requirement for minorities. In the case of equality between men and women it's absurd because women represent 54% of the European population. And our role is fundamental in a new Europe. And when I write "our role" I mean men and women. Our fight is not against men. It's against preconceptions and common sense.

I really believe that education plays a fundamental role in changing this.

Essentially, power relations, discrimination and the guarantee of equality are defined through education. It can be used as a tool to form prejudices that lead to discrimination, or we can teach students to understand a multicultural and diverse society in which men and women are equal.

Women lead the number of students who completed higher education in the EU. 58% against 42% of men (Beck-Domžalska, M., 2011²).

Men were just ahead of 72.8% in the engineering, manufacturing and construction, compared with 27.2% in women (Beck-Domžalska, M., 2011³).

In the sciences, mathematics and computer science also have the majority, but in other areas

were women who were in greater numbers.

Cultural field employs 48.9% of women. 46.1% are men in EU (Beck-Domžalska, M., 2011⁴).

However, in case of Culture, we need measures to encourage the specific promotion of women in the fields of Culture and the production and dissemination of artistic and intellectual works, combating the structural and widespread discrimination experienced by women, fostering a balanced representation of women and men in public artistic and cultural activities, and providing for financial support and positive actions to correct situations of inequality in these areas.

And education plays an important role in empowering girls and women.

4. Culture and Education

I defend that cultural and artistic education must be guaranteed in school programmes and curricula in collaboration with regional and local authorities, and through funding/subsidies, ensuring, for example, performative art training in public education institutions.

In 2018, it was requested, in the European Union, "the financing of schools for visits to museums and other cultural institutions, thus promoting, at the same time, interest in culture, the participation of young people and additional resources for cultural institutions" and that "systems of public education should introduce children to the diversity of the cultural universe" (European Parliament, 2018, A8-0169⁵).

National, regional and local authorities should

2 <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3930297/5967138/KS-32-10-374-EN.PDF/07591da7-d016-4065-9676-27386f900857?version=1.0>

3 <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3930297/5967138/KS-32-10-374-EN.PDF/07591da7-d016-4065-9676-27386f900857?version=1.0>

4 <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3930297/5967138/KS-32-10-374-EN.PDF/07591da7-d016-4065-9676-27386f900857?version=1.0>

5 https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2018-0169_EN.pdf

support cultural education programmes “out of school” for all, in particular for “disadvantaged children and young people, through programs that aim to introduce these young people to different artistic expressions or that facilitate familiarization with the existing cultural heritage” (European Parliament, 2018, A8-0169⁶)

Thus, the collaboration and exchange of experiences between traditional arts, cultural institutions and the various multicultural or minority institutions, as well as between professional and amateur cultural sectors will be a unique opportunity for a cultural identity in which all knowledge is important.

5. Conclusions: The Role of Local Policies for Culture in a Global World

Culture has a strong impact on promoting, understanding and developing solidarity between European and trans-European communities. It is what allows European citizens greater possibilities in the development of personal, social, creative and intercultural skills.

Through Culture it is possible to reduce social and economic inequalities as long as the promotion of an inclusive society where everyone can participate. Therefore, we need a strong, dynamic and diversified cultural sector that creates that fundamental feeling that is the feeling of belonging.

The construction of a social identity is closely linked to participation in cultural activities. It serves not only self-esteem, but also quality of life, especially for people who experience some kind of marginalization.

⁶ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2018-0169_EN.pdf

A society is democratic if the political power strives to guarantee the same opportunities “to participate and develop their creative skills, regardless of their socio-economic, cultural or religious background or of any disability” (European Parliament, 2020: 89).

In this sense, new digital technologies “can have” a fundamental role “on the management of the cultural sector, in the dialogue and in the creation of new audiences and in the dissemination of cultural activities” (European Parliament, 2020: 89)].

We also should give space for people from third countries to express their identity, expanding access to culture and developing it. I am referring to migrants. That is why the development of platforms for sharing and exchanging experiences should be a commitment of governments. All of them.

In case of EU, the “Member States” can reinforce the “synergies between the ERDF and other cultural support funds, including programs aimed at Research and Innovation” (Official Journal of European Union, 2022: 8⁷). Boosting creativity and innovation is promoting regional and local development.

But it is still worrying that the percentage of participation in cultural activities is unequal between the Member States and that it is also dependent on the different socio-economic conditions of the citizens.

We know that participation in most cultural activities increases proportionally with the increase of the income and the level of education. Access to cultural events should be ensured for children and young people belonging to low-income

⁷ <https://www.era-learn.eu/documents/synergies-guidance-eu-commission>

me families.

Barriers to accessing Culture “manifest themselves more clearly at the local level, so investment in differentiated cultural mobility projects should be reinforced in order to allow the development and cohesion of these localities” (European Parliament, 2018, A8-0169⁸). The mobility of European, especially from the outermost regions, and third-country artists should be seen as an added value in promoting peace and sharing visions for present and future. And those who do not invest in Culture do not know what this world is made of.

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