



Culture and the Policies of Change

2nd CultureWatchEurope Conference
EESC, Brussels, 6-7 September 2010



Conference brief

Introduction

On 6 and 7 September 2010 the conference entitled "Culture and the policies of change" will be held at the headquarters of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in Brussels, Belgium.

The conference is part of a series of annual events being organized within the Council of Europe CultureWatchEurope Initiative. The conference partners for this particular event include: the European Commission; the Communauté française de Belgique; the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC); European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC); the Budapest Observatory; the International Federation of Arts Council and Culture agencies (IFACCA); Culture Action Europe and Allianz Cultural Foundation. The event is also supported by the Ministry of Culture of Slovenia and the European Cultural Foundation (ECF).

The overall purpose of the conference is to launch a process of re-examining current approaches to cultural policy and cultural practices in the light of major world changes – including the impact of economic restructuring and the reduction of public spending in culture, but also other shifts that are occurring in relation to demography, issues connected with diversity, the impact of new technologies, and preoccupations with environmental change and security. Such changes are provoking widespread discussion about the role of government and the private sector in culture in European countries, but also how cultural institutions function, the type and scale of support required for artists, and new forms of partnerships and multi-stakeholder approaches to address the challenges facing European cultural policy in its widest sense, at local, national and pan-European levels.

Background

There has been limited debate on the practical implications for national and local cultural policy makers and practitioners that take into account fundamental economic and societal changes. The financial restraints are evident in certain countries where plans exist to drastically diminish cultural budgets and subsidies of cultural institutions. Public opinion and values are also being influenced by environmental challenges and other priorities. The conference will, from a wide intellectual angle, focus on a possible new approach to culture and cultural policy that can be mainstreamed across many different sectors and interests. In addition the conference intends to propose key practical measures and proposals that may be usefully implemented in the future by governments, policy-makers and civil society organisations.

Target Participants

The conference targets senior policy makers, practitioners and researchers who operate at national, regional and local levels. The rationale is to actively involve those who are responsible for the content, management or implementation of cultural policies.

Methodology

Both days of the conference will adopt the following structure: short opening sessions with one key note speaker followed by debate; and a more substantial time allocated to deliberations by working groups. Within each of the three groups, thematic sub groups will elaborate upon relevant issues in much greater detail. Each working group and sub group will have one moderator and one rapporteur based upon three main themes for the working groups: mainstreaming culture; cultural diversity and resources for culture. Concluding the two days of discussions the working group moderators will exchange on key points and insights from the conference with all participants.

Jeremy Rifkin, the Founder and President of the Foundation on Economic Trends will be the Keynote speaker on the first day of the conference. Following his discourse there will be an opportunity for debate.

The overriding question designed to provoke a structured debate within working groups on day one will be: What are the opportunities and dangers that Policy makers need to understand so that European cultural life can flourish and fulfil its potential in the next 20 years?

Stojan Pelko, State Secretary for the Slovenian Ministry of Culture will be the Keynote speaker on the second day of the conference. There will be two overriding questions structuring the second session of the working groups: What immediate steps should governments and public bodies take to protect the creativity, vitality and diversity of European culture in the next three years and what are the priority actions recommended?

Desired outcomes and follow-up

The desired outcome for all participants of the conference is to engage in a stimulating and practical outlook for the future of European cultural policy. It is beyond the scope of the conference to produce an exhaustive list of answers to all questions raised. The follow-up given to the event will be critical for furthering and eventually, implementing suggestions generated during the conference. It could include ad-hoc thematic working groups led by individual conference partners and building on the set of conclusions derived from the event and its distinct working groups. To conclude the conference, partners and participants will be asked what they can do to ensure follow-up to and development of conference themes.



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