

## **Art and culture are worth more than an economic exception**

### *Arguments for a proactive European policy for culture*

In the collective imagination of the countries of which it is composed, the European Union is a real political and economic entity, but the feeling that a society has been created seems to be missing. Art and culture are the means by which people look into their deep roots and involve them in the movements that history and progress set against them. Through reasonable sharing of the world and its contingencies, they bring out what is individual and what is collective. They are the essence of every civilizational construction.

The Union needs a strong policy for developing the arts and culture on the European level to face all the challenges where art can provide meaning, for example: art has value for itself, it is a factor in territorial development, it nourishes public policies of human development, it is a right and a condition for fully exercising the Charter of Fundamental Rights and it is a social and economic resource.

The existing legal framework allows and requires the European Union to support this ambition. The future 20-30 strategy must translate this major challenge in European construction into proactive, binding and inspiring policies.

If the values of the European Union are the guarantee of human rights, the preservation of democracy as a political organization, the choice of sustainable development that is respectful of men and the planet, the economic and social vitality of the common area and dialogue with the nations of the world, then it cannot continue to deny the essential role that art and culture play in this project.

Most of all, we strongly believe in the intrinsic value of art regardless of its (huge, as a matter of fact) impact in the European GNP. And this cultural value - also measurable - is represented by the aesthetic, spiritual, social, symbolic, historical and authenticity qualities of the work done by artists. Because art and culture are the essential drivers of the creation and appropriation of meaning. They make it possible, through the diversity of their intellectual and emotional experiences, to teach individuals about complexity. They contribute to the constructive experience of otherness. They are the only possible response to the cultural, ideological, social, economic and religious tensions that are now at work on the planetary level.

But there is still much more: Art and culture have the ability to nourish a global project of public community policies, from the local level to the global level. The benefits of cultural policy impact all areas of public intervention: education, social cohesion, territorial attractiveness, economic benefits, living together and ecology. They allow for collective projections and the sharing of an imagination that contributes to support of a broad common project.

Art and culture are essential to the transformation of innovative answers to be brought to the social and economic challenges of the 21st century. Their transversality with all human activity is an unexploited resource: social innovation, appropriation of technological and technical innovation, ability to nourish research and development processes, ability to represent new knowledge and new visions of man and our environment.

**Ambitions that can be desired for a European cultural policy (in the current state of the treaties)**

- *That the EU act as a guarantor of fundamental rights. As a fundamental right, the freedom of creation only exists if its affirmation results in the implementation of conditions that make it possible for creation to flourish.*

- *That the EU ensure the development of ambitious cultural policies of Member States (for example, in the agreements signed with each State in application of the future 20-30 strategy); in all of its policies (cohesion policy as well as the Common Agricultural Policy), that the EU take on the role of recognized pillar of culture in the European construction (in the treaties of the Union, in Agenda 21 for Culture);*

- *That the perspective of the specific cultural policy implemented by the EU should not be primarily economic or oriented to the structuration of an economic sector. The diversity of European cultural actors does not necessarily make it possible for them to consider large-scale cooperation projects or the creation of platforms. What should be developed in agreement with the treaties is the contribution of citizens of the Union to the flourishing of culture as well as the cooperation between States, and between the various actors, regardless of the scale of the cooperation. Otherwise, the actors who are the most fragile economically will continue to be excluded from policies implemented by the Union. The theoretical uselessness of art must be assumed on the basis of the positive externalities that it is observed (and measured) to have on the blossoming of an open and creative democratic society.*

- *The EU must develop a humanist vision of techniques for an alliance between artists, scientists, industrial actors and educators: a policy that promotes old and new professions in order to meet the planetary challenges of climate change, the change in mindsets with regard to the environment and with regard to common goods (water, earth, air, living things) and in the sharing of riches and of new knowledge. In the 21st century, culture will be artistic, scientific and technical.*

- *That the EU encourage the circulation of works and their creators. Europe must create a European legal framework favorable to the development of artistic and cultural activities and to the mobility of artists. As it recognizes the supreme value of culture, we expect the European Commission to use its force for proposals to help reduce legal, fiscal and social obstacles to the circulation of artists and cultural professionals.*

- *We ask that the resolution of the European Parliament of 1999, which recommends the improvement of the social status of artists by drawing inspiration from the most protective*

legislation, be applied. The Commission could encourage Member States to look into the legal, fiscal and social situation of artists and cultural workers during this period of radical changes – in the East as well as the West – and to preserve and encourage any initiative intended to provide creators with the means to make a living in this sector of activity in the best possible way.

- We also recall that the freedom of creation only exists if its affirmation results in the implementation of conditions that make it possible for creation to flourish. Defining conditions for the compensation of authors and performers in our digital era is therefore a necessary condition for the freedom of creation to flourish.

Therefore, it is not just about a short, isolated paragraph in the 20-30 strategy that mentions culture, but rather an affirmation by the European Union of the urgent necessity of making culture a priority. The more dynamic and alive it is, the more it will irrigate related policies with which it is in constant dialogue.