



## Resolution 2117 (2016)<sup>1</sup>

# Promoting city-to-city co-operation in the field of culture

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly considers that cities have a key role to play in Europe, not least through their co-operation in the field of culture. Within nations, this process assists democracy, as it also increases the well-being and stability of regions and localities. Between cities, cultural and working synergies represent a further dimension, one which can clearly build upon existing foundations, such as those recognised by the Europe Prize of the Parliamentary Assembly.

2. Such initiatives include economic activities. The more cities or different centres have direct trade and financial dealings with one another, the more likely it is that both culture and the quality of life will be improved in each place as a result. The term “city-to-city co-operation in the field of culture” thus covers a wide area embracing many aspects of daily life. These comprise economic and financial activities, the contentment of people and families, their education and the variety of their aspirations and opportunities. Working synergies between cities address those aims and produce valuable results, promoting culture, education, apprenticeship and employment.

3. Governments and institutions are advised not to be prescriptive or to interfere; this would stifle and undermine the creative energies of cities. Yet, on the other hand, they need to guide cities on how to proceed, if they wish to do so, on how and why good practice is built up, not only within cities but also within nations, and on how restricted budgets and economic downturns need neither impede nor totally prevent action.

4. The Assembly also notes the opportunity for re-energising national democracy at grass-roots levels. This opportunity is offered by city-to-city co-operation in the field of culture. An emphasis on democratic values at the local level does not upstage or threaten those values at the national level. On the contrary, such an emphasis helps to restore trust and confidence in European governments and democratic values. And because working synergies occur at local levels between different cities in different countries, it will be all the easier for their endeavours to help support a much healthier political focus in 21st-century Europe.

5. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Council of Europe member States:

5.1. work with national associations of local authorities to support new city-to-city co-operation models in order to develop better strategies for financing, pooling information and sharing expertise;

5.2. encourage initiatives which establish cultural connections between small and medium-sized cities across borders;

5.3. create conditions for schools and other educational institutions to seek and form international partnerships in the field of culture and to support children from less privileged families and neighbourhoods to enable them to participate in activities undertaken within such international partnerships.

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1. *Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 27 May 2016 (see Doc. 13995, report of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, rapporteur: The Earl of Dundee).*



6. The Assembly recommends that European cities and European organisations of local authorities:
  - 6.1. review bilateral and multilateral municipal relationships, seeking to: renew commitments and redefine objectives; bring in new and younger people for the management of co-operation activities; explore more sustainable ways of financing these activities; and involve a wide range of partners, including cultural and educational associations, artists and other cultural stakeholders, media, chambers of commerce and the private sector;
  - 6.2. develop local strategies for cultural heritage which take into account the principles laid down in the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (CETS No. 199, "Faro Convention") and adopt supporting methods for promoting city-to-city co-operation, taking note of best practice to date and of successful measures from the Council of Europe Intercultural Cities Programme;
  - 6.3. mobilise competent local associations which have already established international relationships with other European cities to share their experience and know-how with relevant parties, particularly those in less privileged neighbourhoods, so that international co-operation becomes more inclusive;
  - 6.4. invite local media to cover city-to-city co-operation, by employing techniques developed in the Council of Europe/European Union SPARDA (Shaping Perceptions and Attitudes to Realise Diversity Advantage) project;
  - 6.5. develop stronger arguments, based on proper evidence, in order to improve national campaigns in favour of city-to-city co-operation.
7. The Assembly pays tribute to the important role played by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and encourages it to continue to promote co-operation in addressing the challenges facing the cultural and democratic life of cities. For its part, the Assembly resolves to continue to promote such co-operation, notably in the framework of the attribution of the four awards which make up the Europe Prize.
8. The Assembly invites the European Union, in partnership with the Council of Europe and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and in co-operation with European and international city networks and associations, to promote the value of city-to-city co-operation in the field of culture and democracy. To this end, partners should disseminate examples of good practice to assist cities in developing city-to-city co-operation activities, taking account of principles laid down in the Faro Convention and in Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)1 on intercultural integration, and of the pioneering best practice of the Intercultural Cities programme.
9. The Assembly also invites the European Union to consider whether existing funding programmes (INTERREG, URBACT, Creative Europe, etc.) might be reviewed in order to strengthen connections between them so that the funded projects could serve as best-practice examples for other European cities.