Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 2123 (2016)[1]

Culture and democracy

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Economic and social difficulties, exacerbated by terrorist attacks and the consequences of political instability in neighbouring regions, are deeply affecting the lives of people in Europe. People's fears and lack of confidence correlate with the erosion of social bonds and the deterioration of established values and create fertile ground for anti-democratic and xenophobic movements to further radicalise and divide society.

2. In this context, the Parliamentary Assembly urges much stronger recognition of the role that culture can play in upholding democratic principles and values, and building inclusive societies. It stresses that democratic institutions and laws will not work effectively unless they build on a democratic culture.

3. Culture is a source of intellectual renewal and human growth. Active participation in cultural activities helps people to acquire a critical mind, to develop a broader understanding of different world views, to interact with others, to have a voice and to define their role in society.

4. Education policies generally focus on providing professional skills and knowledge targeted at economic needs, while personal development has been to a large degree neglected in recent decades, even though it is a key element for personal and societal well-being. The Assembly considers that education policies should be reviewed and used as a driving force in today's world of rapid change and increasing complexity. Cultural education should play an important part in this process, in particular to promote dialogue and mutual understanding, and to strengthen solidarity and respect for human rights.

5. The Assembly insists that sustained investment in education and cultural activities must be given equal priority with investment in the economy, infrastructure, security and all other areas seen as crucial to Europe's global economic competitiveness and stability.

6. The Assembly therefore recommends that the parliaments and governments of the member States of the Council of Europe:

6.1. uphold the right of everyone to participate in cultural life as a core human right, seeking to offset barriers which hamper the access to culture for women, young people, minorities, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable groups;

6.2. promote the diversity of cultural expressions and cultural pluralism as positive factors for innovation and development;

6.3. secure sustainable funding for cultural policies and develop strategic thinking at the interministerial level on ways to mainstream culture into other policy areas such as employment, research and innovation, social services and welfare, health, prisons and penitentiary rehabilitation schemes;

6.4. foster partnerships between the cultural sectors (cultural institutions and individual artists) and the education system, including formal education and lifelong learning, to promote the understanding of freedom of expression, respect for diversity and the development of intercultural competences from a very early age;

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1. *Assembly debate* on 23 June 2016 (25th Sitting) (see Doc. 14070, report of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, rapporteur: Ms Vesna Marjanović). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 23 June 2016 (25th Sitting).
See also Recommendation 2093 (2016).

6.5. strengthen the role of local authorities in promoting and implementing cultural policy and pilot initiatives, by reviewing the existing mechanisms (allocation of powers, legal structure, co-financing, etc.) to bring decision-making processes regarding culture as close as possible to the citizen, and ensure co-ordination between different levels of government in the implementation of cultural policy;

6.6. support innovative urban policies by investing in the cultural infrastructure of cities, especially in disadvantaged urban areas;

6.7. increase public participation in the definition of cultural policies and involve interested citizens and non-governmental organisations committed to promoting inclusion, non-discrimination and democratic values in the management of cultural institutions;

6.8. measure cultural vitality and evaluate its impact on the democratisation of society and the appreciation of human rights, as a way to evaluate policies, making use in this respect of the Council of Europe's Indicator Framework on Culture and Democracy (IFCD);

6.9. in co-operation with the Council of Europe and the European Union, seek partnerships to develop shared cultural and diversity strategies and pilot projects which stimulate cultural exchange;

6.10. actively support and financially contribute to the implementation of the Council of Europe Action Plan on Building Inclusive Societies (2016-2019).

7. The Assembly recommends that the Steering Committee of the World Forum for Democracy devote one of the next forums to "culture and democracy" in order to promote innovative policies and the exchange of good practices in this field.