

The right of everyone to take part in cultural life

Recommendation 1990 (2012)¹

1. The Parliamentary Assembly notes that the right of everyone to take part in cultural life presupposes equal and free access for all to a variety of cultural resources. This participation may be more or less active, depending on whether one is a member of an audience, practises an activity as an amateur or engages in artistic or creative activities on a professional basis.
2. The Assembly believes that it is the responsibility of states and local public authorities to ensure the conditions which are necessary to “develop to the fullest the talents with which nature has blessed Man and thereby to establish among all citizens an actual equality and make a reality of the political equality recognised by law” (Condorcet, 1792).
3. Common cultural wealth is a matter for all public and private stakeholders, but the state must assume its crucial role. As the major cultural agent, the state not only has a responsibility to ensure a wide supply of cultural services, through all its public institutions, but also acts as an initiator, promoter and regulator of interaction between public institutions and organisations in the non-profit and private sectors which contribute to the protection and promotion of cultural heritage, to artistic creative endeavour, and to the public access to the full range of cultural and artistic resources.
4. The state likewise has a duty to take account of the radical changes in the way we access culture, with the boom of digital culture and the internet, to facilitate the emergence of new artists and new forms of expression and to further develop new ways of disseminating cultural content in order to make them accessible to all.
5. In a robust democracy (guarantor of diversity), the obligations to respect, protect and realise cultural rights should be interpreted as an integrated obligation to produce results in terms of cultural democratisation, paving the way for equal access to the arts. This integrated obligation to achieve results involves creating an open-ended environment that allows everyone to achieve personal fulfilment and to participate in cultural, social and political life.
6. Access to the arts allows all human beings to balance the realm of the mind with the realm of feeling. The two should complement and enhance one another so that every individual can realise their full potential, leading to a fresh approach to others. Through cultural ties and intercultural dialogue, access to the arts thus helps to promote a “harmonious living together” within a society, a country, and even between peoples, fostering relationship between the citizens of the world through enhanced mutual understanding. Moreover, access to the arts and free artistic and cultural expression contribute to the development of critical thinking and therefore to reinforcing democratic citizenship.
7. Access to the arts is especially important for young people, in particular those aged between 15 and 25 years who are at a critical time in their lives when they are building a future for themselves as adult citizens. Introducing them to cultural resources is a process that draws on their subjective sensitivity and creative imagination, and gives them considerable freedom of initiative (of a kind not sufficiently accorded to members of this age group).
8. Standing as they do at the crossroads between childhood and adulthood, young people are a key means of transmitting cultural resources and values within society. From an intergenerational and social cohesion perspective, one of the main responsibilities of policy makers is to cultivate, especially among young people, the “desire for culture”, without which, however good the cultural offer and whatever the conditions of access may be, young people will not feel engaged. In order to encourage them, policy makers need to involve them more directly in cultural activities, promote ground-breaking initiatives and raise the profile of any practices that create cultural, social and

political bonds.

9. In this context, it is important to favour artistic and cultural resources that enable encounters (between members of the public, artists and/or creators): the performing arts (theatre, opera, concerts, circuses, etc.) and the visual arts (exhibitions, performance art, etc.) provide these opportunities for encounters. Special attention also needs to be paid to the ways in which young people access artistic and cultural activities, which greatly help to build their self-confidence by enabling them to discover the many facets of their personality.

10. Participation in the arts serves to enhance our societies' artistic and cultural heritage, thanks to the many and varied creations that it generates. Support for innovative young creative talent is vital therefore because without it, our future heritage would be sadly diminished. Policy makers have a duty to boldly embrace innovation in order to secure for future generations what they will, in time, come to see as a classic heritage of universal value, as bequeathed to us by our forbears.

11. The Assembly notes with regret that, beyond the constant talk in favour of cultural rights, material, financial and human resources and the information, mediation and artistic and cultural education systems in place still do not make it possible to translate effectively and fairly (national and international) professions of faith and declarations, despite the wide variety of initiatives and projects and the professionalism of the people who work in these areas.

12. The right to take part in cultural life is pivotal to the system of human rights. To forget that is to endanger this entire system, by depriving human beings of the opportunity to responsibly exercise their other rights, through lack of awareness of the fullness of their identity.

13. The Parliamentary Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

13.1. formally endorse the "Guidelines for developing policies to ensure effective participation in cultural life" attached to this recommendation, of which they form an integral part;

13.2. forward this recommendation to all the member states, so that they can be guided by it when framing their national policies;

13.3. forward this recommendation to the intergovernmental committees and the secretariat of the intergovernmental sector of the Organisation responsible for programmes relating to culture, education, technological innovation, youth and equal opportunities, asking them to:

13.3.1. duly incorporate the promotion of the right of everyone to participate in cultural life into current projects (such as, for example, projects on education for democratic citizenship and human rights);

13.3.2. duly incorporate the promotion of the right of everyone to participate in cultural life into any initiatives that might be launched in the framework of the reflection on "living together" and of the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth policy, research and youth work;

13.4. set up a committee of experts or a transversal working group and instruct it to:

13.4.1. consider what could be done to facilitate co-ordinated political action at European level in order to promote the right of everyone to participate in cultural life;

13.4.2. consider what could be done to improve co-operation between the Council of Europe, the European Union and other international bodies in implementing targeted programmes to encourage youth participation in cultural life and to support innovative creative endeavours, in particular those related to the technological revolution;

13.4.3. collect and assess examples of national good practice with a view to preparing practical proposals, which the competent intergovernmental committees would then examine, approve and submit to the Committee of Ministers for adoption;

13.5. invite the European Union and UNESCO to this committee of experts or transversal working group and to closely involve in its work the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations of the Council of Europe and the Advisory Council on Youth;

13.6. in the light of the conclusions and practical proposals submitted to it, take appropriate measures to develop specific plans for co-operation between the Council of Europe, the European Union and UNESCO aimed at supporting the implementation of the right of everyone to take part in a variety of cultural activities and to increase, in particular, young people's participation in cultural life, both as spectators and as practitioners;

13.7. in the framework of the programme on "Democratic governance through educational, culture and youth policies", instruct the CultureWatchEurope Platform to establish a set of indicators on the participation of different groups, in particular youth, in cultural life and to monitor developments in this field.

14. The Assembly invites the European Conferences of Ministers responsible for culture, education, youth and digital technology (media) to take this recommendation into account and to include in their respective agendas the issue of more effective promotion of cultural rights, including the right of everyone to take part in cultural life, both as spectators and as practitioners, in the European area.

15. The Assembly, recognising the increasingly important role played by local and regional government in promoting and implementing cultural rights, invites the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe to take this recommendation into account and to incorporate it into its work programme.

16. The Assembly is of the opinion that greater consideration should be given to the right of everyone to take part in cultural life in the work of the Council of Europe's European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity (North-South Centre); the Assembly therefore invites the Centre's bodies to include in its projects discussions on the effective implementation of this right and on the contribution it can make to the harmonious development of civilisations through greater creative diversity and multi- and intercultural dialogue.

Guidelines for developing policies to ensure effective participation in cultural life

I. General guidelines

1. Recognise cultural rights as rights that permit each person, alone or in community with others, to develop all his or her abilities to be a thinking and feeling being and all his or her capacities for creative imagination. Recognise that these rights are primary needs for the entire human race, which is designed to live in society: essential levers for cultural interchange and intercultural dialogue, cultural rights are also key to our ability to live together in societies thanks to common cultural and artistic references that provide access to all the humanist values handed down in democratic, liberal societies.

2. Affirm the right of everyone to take part in cultural life as the right that encapsulates the full set of cultural values for, if properly guaranteed, it will pave the way for equal access for all to national and international cultural resources and the right to participate therein as authors or performing artists.

3. Develop integrated policies to promote participation in cultural life and introduce joint strategic

planning across the various governmental sectors concerned, including the ministries responsible for culture, education, enterprise, research and digital technology, together with those responsible for youth and equal opportunities. Involve in the task of designing and executing these policies regional and local authorities, according to their powers and responsibilities in the relevant areas.

4. Stabilise the implementation of government policies in the cultural sphere by ensuring the long-term viability of tried and tested projects. This is so that, with the changes of political power that are an inherent feature of any liberal democracy, each new government does not seek to impose its stamp, periodically jeopardising high-quality cultural projects.

5. When framing integrated policies for cultural democratisation, take into consideration the paralysing effect of multiple sources of discrimination (such as economic circumstances, where people live, social status, problems arising from various disabilities, but also the specific situation of young people) in order to identify the types of support required so that participation in cultural life can be tailored to these specific contexts.

6. Make the obligation to achieve results in terms of cultural democratisation, with frequent interaction between operators, central to the mission of every public institution that contributes to cultural activity, education and mediation.

7. Create networks of public and private cultural operators to enable them to share experiences and develop partnerships, whilst pooling resources. Consider the transfrontier aspect of cultural initiatives, with joint projects with various countries.

8. Make public funding to private cultural operators conditional upon their contribution to cultural democratisation and to cultural partnerships. Encourage, through fiscal measures, any forms of sponsorship that support democratic approaches to culture and assistance in setting up other private cultural institutions.

9. Update and significantly expand the mediation role played by the major cultural institutions and place the following at the heart of their programmes:

9.1. the practice of tailoring mediation to particular target groups (the young, the elderly, disadvantaged groups or people who have little access to cultural resources), whilst avoiding focusing purely on one-off activities whose sole purpose is to occasionally attract as many people as possible to cultural places;

9.2. the development of “participatory projects” where members of the public are invited to participate directly in the creative process via workshops, in order to involve them personally in artistic practice;

9.3. the use of information and communication technologies (screens, internet, virtual reality and augmented reality, etc.) for multi-faceted, multi-disciplinary projects with navigable environments that are likely to encourage active participation by the public.

10. Rethink the role of the school as an institution essential for arts education and cultural development, as a place for teaching the skills needed to make the right to take part in cultural life both effective and attractive, and as a place of freedom of artistic expression and extensive contact between pupils and cultural works, with artists, in artistic institutions or theatres and concert halls.

11. Better integrate a mandatory course on artistic and cultural practices in national education systems. Encourage practices that seek to foster creativity and sensitivity and that emphasise the link between the cultural life of the region and the education system.

12. Provide induction courses in the arts for all student teachers, thereby helping to remove the barriers between traditional teaching, by highlighting the artistic dimension of all subjects: for example, the various pictorial representations of relief in geography, sculptors’ mobiles as an application of the laws of physics and history of art to accompany the teaching of historical events. Obviously, learning to read, write and count is essential; learning to see, hear and feel is equally

essential.

13. Extend the pedagogical methods used in arts education to other subjects by introducing interactive dialogue with pupils, and taking care to let them speak so that they can ask questions and explain their own individual actions as pupils.

14. Support projects that aim to establish within schools places for artistic creation that allow contact between pupils, cultural works and artists and afford pupils an opportunity to learn about free expression and artistic creation.

15. Encourage the development of amateur pursuits in extracurricular and out-of-school settings, taking care to offer a range of choices, tailored to different groups of people.

16. Draw on local non-profit networks, with facilities for fostering new talent thanks to the support of skilled professionals, thereby enabling people to discover their own inclinations previously overlooked. In particular, give young people access to spaces for creative work, allowing them every freedom to pursue their activities or develop their projects, drawing on youth organisations, encourage them to pool their resources, to share their creativity by forming networks with other associations in order to devise joint projects.

17. Support, in particular financially through multi-annual objective-setting contracts, cultural associations that provide opportunities for local cultural mediation for young people but also for people of every generation.

18. Encourage cultural and artistic expression which, through a critical view on political, social, economic and cultural conditions of today's society, contributes to the development of critical thinking and to reinforcing democratic citizenship. Encourage public access to these expressions.

19. Take firmly into account the new forms of creative activity and ways of disseminating artistic and cultural content that the technological revolution has made possible, by abolishing geographical and temporal boundaries, and creating an essential space for freedom of expression and sharing. The idea is also to encourage the emergence of, and to identify, new ways of consuming and creating culture made possible by new technologies, particularly when it comes to reaching young audiences.

20. Promote multi-disciplinary creations designed via and for the internet (e.g. Net Art) combining several modes of expression and which use interactive digital technologies as a means of creation.

21. Ensure that there is a system in place to protect creative endeavour, not least in order to give effect to the intellectual property rights that are part of human rights, thus making a career in the arts an economically viable option for young creators. The digital revolution has brought drastic changes with positive effects on cultural democratisation, but it has also seen the emergence of large-scale pirating of cultural works, posing a serious threat to future creative work. If everyone is to be able to take part in cultural life, ways need to be found of addressing this harmful phenomenon for the sustainability of cultural diversity.

22. For cultural development strategies to succeed in promoting participation in cultural life and provide support for creative endeavour, make use of the following principles of interconnection and factors for mutual enhancement: inter-artistic and -cultural, inter-spatial, inter-temporal and inter-institutional.

II. Specific guidelines concerning the use of the principles of interconnection

Inter-artistic and inter-cultural

23. Together with a thorough understanding of each artistic discipline, develop an approach to arts education and training that emphasises connections between the arts, not only so that everyone can acquire a comprehensive grasp of the multi-faceted and multi-disciplinary forms of artistic expression but also so that each discipline can benefit from other artistic approaches.

24. Promote arts education projects which emphasise interaction between the arts, between the arts and other fields, and between artists and the public. For example, artistic activities that create connections between plastic arts, music, sound and light arts and a creative dialogue with the public through computers in areas not dedicated to the arts (for example, industrial wastelands, areas in social housing estates for street arts).

25. Provide more sustained ongoing political and economic support, with multi-annual contracts setting out aims, for theatres and concert halls, exhibition centres, companies of performing and visual artists, as these provide opportunities for contact between all sectors of the arts and, through them, between all the various cultural sectors. They also help to bring together and actively involve a variety of young people, amateur and professional artists.

Inter-spatial and digital arts

26. Promote creations produced with local residents (participatory forms) and initiatives where the arts and people can meet in settings capable of linking artistic, philosophical and environmental thinking, thus giving real meaning to the notion of citizenship: reorganise existing covered public spaces (such as railway stations) or open-air public spaces (such as parks) in order to turn them into places of creative participation for local residents.

27. Encourage local cultural initiatives that seek the cultural, historical, social and economic promotion of a given area, through ties between creators, the public and the various professionals involved in these initiatives.

28. Implement national programmes to digitise the cultural heritage, one of the goals adopted by the European Commission when developing Europeana, which provides multilingual access to the full range of cultural heritage and contemporary cultural content.

29. Connect virtual spaces to public spaces and support ground-breaking digital services projects with in situ facilities (3D, augmented reality, immersive virtual reality systems, mobile phones, podcasts, etc.) or web-based facilities that can be accessed remotely (virtual visits, thematic routes, online services).

30. Make use of the new methods of disseminating virtual cultural content, by transferring for example visual arts to virtual galleries and museums where works could be displayed in online exhibitions.

31. Adopt a policy of supporting innovative cultural digital services in order to facilitate experimentation with new uses for digital technology and encourage new partnerships between cultural operators and the business community and private and/or public research institutions.

Inter-temporal aspect

32. Revive traditional local skills, sources and examples of the artistic creation of the past.

33. Work with “collective memory” artists (for instance archaeologists) and conversely, construct a vision of the urban environment of the future that one wishes to pass on (prospective art).

34. Encourage initiatives that create a long-term territorial dynamic (festivals, celebrations, theme days).

35. Promote activities related to the collective memory and also develop along these lines the role of museum institutions, theatres and concert halls (heritage works, artists from previous centuries and classical theatre, for example), thereby highlighting the heritage and enabling young people to familiarise themselves with their own national culture and that of other countries.

Inter-institutional

36. Encourage the setting-up of co-ordination bodies to ensure that cultural policy and education policy are mutually supportive, with permanent committees of professionals that can be renewed at regular intervals.

37. Build closer links between schools and local and national cultural institutions, not only in order to facilitate pupils' access to these institutions, but also in order to bring the skills and experience of these institutions and their staff to arts teaching in schools, for all pupils, from a very early age.

38. Encourage inter-institutional partnerships (between national governmental authorities, and between national and local authorities) and public-private partnerships, right from the strategy development stage, for designing projects and planning, in order to ensure the highest possible level of co-ordination and interaction.

¹ *Assembly debate* on 24 January 2012 (4th Sitting) (see [Doc. 12815](#), report of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, rapporteur: Ms Marland-Militello). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 24 January 2012 (4th Sitting).