

Up-date on Culture Sector Platforms

From 8-10 June 2009 the European Commission hosted plenary meetings of all three Culture Sector Platforms that introduced a first set of recommendations at this stage.

Background

In 2008 the Directorate General Education and Culture (DG EAC) of the European Commission invited the culture sector to engage in the so-called “Culture Sector Platforms”. The platforms were installed as a first step to implement the “European Agenda for Culture” and to form part of the overall communication strategy of the agenda. The aim of the platforms is to strengthen the voice of the culture sector and to enhance the structured dialogue between the culture sector and the political field (EU institutions and member states). Parallel to this dialogue between culture sector and political field, the member states among themselves use the tool of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). The Platform for Intercultural Europe was already installed in 2006 as „Rainbow Platform“ upon the initiative of Culture Action Europe and the European Cultural Foundation. The platforms “Access to Culture” and “Potential of Creative and Culture Industries” were installed by inspiration of the platform for Intercultural Europe and both platforms started their work in summer 2008. The main aim of the work until now for each of the platforms was to formulate recommendations that may be presented to the political sector in the frame of the “structured dialogue”, as such the recommendations should preferably address all levels from member states to European Union.

The European Music Council (EMC) actively participates in all three platforms and also took part in the plenary meetings from 8-10 June 2009.

Platform for Intercultural Europe (PIE) – 8 June 2009

This platform follows a cross-sectoral approach, i.e. it also includes organisations concerned with migration, refugees, asylum seekers, inter-religious dialogue and other. The platform has finalised its recommendations in 2008 and is now working on the implementation of the Rainbow Paper. Organisations and individuals have the opportunity to endorse the Rainbow Paper online at <http://rainbow-paper.labforculture.org/signup/public/signup>. Key areas of the Rainbow paper are:

- Educating
- Building capacity by organisations
- Monitoring for sustained policies
- Mobilising across boundaries
- Resourcing Intercultural Dialogue

The meeting focused on the “role of arts in intercultural dialogue”. Further, as the Platform for Intercultural Europe has been established as an independent membership association, it held its first constituting general assembly. At the general assembly the work plan of the platform was adopted as well as a new steering group was elected. The focus of the platform for the coming year will be on capacity building in organisations and on the role of the arts in intercultural dialogue.

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The newly elected steering committee consists of:

- Tarafa Baghajati (European Network against Racism/ ENAR, Initiative of Austrian Muslims)
- Eli Borchgrevink (Du store verden! / the DSV network)
- Mercedes Esteban Villar (European Foundation Society and Education and Director of Educational and Social Studies)
- Guido Orlandini (The Intercultural Communication and Leadership School)
- Niels Righolt (Nordic Forum for Interculture)
- Guillermo Ruiz Torres (ERIO)
- Isabelle Schwarz (ECF)
- Chris Torch (Culture Action Europe and Intercult)
- Gidon van Emden (A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe)

Access to Culture – 9 June 2009

As "Access to Culture" is a very broad field different aspects of "access" have been discussed in three working groups:

- Creativity and Creation
- Audience Participation
- Education and Learning

Each working group has prepared a set of recommendations according to which a final document was prepared (synthesis of the working group papers) by two external experts (Annamari Laaksonen and Yvonne Donders). The final document was presented during the meeting and discussed by all platform participants. The general recommendations are:

- Increasing the role of culture beyond sectorial borders
- Breaking from voluntarism to highly qualified professionalism in the cultural sector
- Advancing mobility and learning from others
- Improving funding and procedures
- Overcoming linguistic barriers
- Promoting cultural use of new technologies and e-learning
- Understanding the needs of all publics and public in general
- Stimulating the use of culture in learning of key competence through access to cultural experiences (will be reworded)
- Awareness-raising of the (international) legal framework on access to culture

During the plenary the participants had further additions and comments, thus it was agreed to streamline as much as possible what was said about each recommendation. In general it was agreed to sharpen the text (e.g. to avoid conditional tense).

The final policy document will have two different versions:

1. the full version, 200 pages (including papers of the working groups and good practices)
2. a policy document of approx. 10 pages including an executive summary.

A communication strategy how to proceed with the recommendations was presented and it was agreed by the platform members to have a website where the recommendations as well as the working group recommendations, a tool kit and an executive summary will be available. It was also discussed that a printed version possibly translated into as many languages as possible (at least of the executive summary) will be very useful and desirable.

Platform on Culture Industries – 10 June

Likewise the "Access to Culture" platform, working groups were installed to prepare specific working group recommendations to feed into the overall policy recommendations of the platform. The following working groups were installed:

- Regulatory environment
- Support for the development of SMEs (small and medium enterprises)
- Exchange and export in a globalised world
- Circulation of artists and cultural products and the European dimension
- Interface of artistic creation and the cultural industries

The outcomes of the working groups fed into the overall recommendations that were prepared by the Board of the platform. The overall recommendations have the following main issues:

- Recognise the specificities of cultural industries and in particular SMEs
- Protect intellectual property rights
- Improve market access
- Facilitate access to finance
- Enhance working conditions
- Promote the circulation of artists and works
- Develop international promotion and exchange
- Stimulate education and training

The paper calls upon the European Commission to consider the creation of a specific programme focusing on cultural and creative SMEs. It furthermore addresses the "Green book on cultural industries" that is currently being prepared by the EU and which will probably be published in 2010.

It was stated that the paper is a consensus paper which success lies in the wide range of participating organisations. Therefore, all participants are invited to use this paper and to bring it forward to the local, regional and national level.

Joint session of all platforms – 10 June

As the platforms have been an initiative of the European Commission to enhance the structured dialogue, it was decided to have a joint meeting during which the future of the platforms and a joint strategy were discussed.

It was decided to have a look at the policy papers of all three platforms and to define common points of interest. Xavier Troussard, Head of the Cultural Policy and Intercultural Dialogue unit of DG EAC recognised the successful work of all three platforms and stated that a good working relationship between the platforms and DG EAC is well established and working. He committed to feedback to the platforms on their policy papers.

European Culture Forum – 29-30 September 2009, Brussels, Belgium

In the frame of the European Agenda for Culture, a bi-annual culture forum is envisaged. The first edition took place in 2007 in Lisbon. This year the second edition will be held in Brussels in the Flagey building. The European Commission that is preparing the programme has asked the platforms for its input on speakers to the programme. The culture forum will focus on the three objectives of the European Agenda for Culture, i.e. cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, culture as a factor for growth and culture in the external relations of the EU.

The platforms will have the possibility to present their work in so-called "flash-info-sessions" that will give each platform the possibility to present its work in approx. 20 minutes.

One day prior to the Culture forum, on 28 September, DG EAC will organise a valorisation conference that will give EU funded projects the opportunity to present its work and the participants the possibility to ask questions to the beneficiaries.

Registration for both events will be available on the EU website in the coming weeks.

Short review

The European Music Council participated in all three platforms during the last year and to attend all plenary and working group meetings had been rather time consuming. But it was a very interesting exercise to be part of a process where individuals and organisations that represent different and sometimes even completely opposing directions sat together to formulate a joint paper in order to strengthen the voice of culture within Europe. Therefore the "mainstreaming" idea to make culture relevant in all other policy areas had been the focal point for all participants, apart from the concrete ideas of each of the platforms. And of course the dynamics in each of the platforms were very different. The platform for Intercultural Europe has been in place since 2006 and the work on the policy paper was already finalised when the two other platforms only started to define their scope and working groups. "Access to Culture" represents a very broad field and therefore the definition of concrete political recommendations was more challenging than the formulation of recommendations for the culture industries. Moreover, efforts had been made to contact similar working groups on member state level (the OMC groups) with different responses. A successful exchange has been established to the OMC working group on education and culture.

The policy papers of the platforms "Access to Culture" and "Potential of Culture and Creative Industries" will be finalised in the coming weeks. The next important step will be to make these recommendations heard – by the European Union and by the member states. The European Music Council will continue to follow the process of the platforms and start to advocate for the policy recommendations at all political levels – together with its members.