

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FROM SOCIAL INCLUSION TO SOCIAL COHESION –
THE ROLE OF CULTURE POLICYREPORT OF THE OMC (OPEN METHOD OF COORDINATION)
WORKING GROUP OF MEMBER STATES' EXPERTS**1. Introduction**

We see significant challenges for the European Union, its value system and its Member States regarding social inclusion and cohesion, human rights, diversity and intercultural dialogue. Poverty, segregation, polarisation, an ageing society and disparities in living conditions between urban and rural spaces are some of the more pressing challenges. This report aims to show the important role that culture can play – in combination and cooperation with other sectors – in addressing these challenges, and how relevant actors can be better equipped to promote this. This is, of course, an enormous task, and in need of limitations as well as critical review.

2. What is behind this report?

This report reflects the work and views of experts from 24 European countries, nominated by their governments to collaborate over a 2-year period in an OMC (Open Method of Coordination) group on the topic of *fostering the contribution of culture for social inclusion*. Cross-sectoral cooperation has been a particular priority, given the mandate's focus on partnering with other sectors. The report frames the issue of culture and social inclusion, and also contains recommendations for policy-makers and cultural institutions.

3. What exactly are we addressing?

It might seem hard to talk about *social inclusion* without stigmatising those one feels should be included. And included into whose norm? *Social exclusion* is a process running through the whole of society and concerns us all. To work against social exclusion is to remove barriers. In order to take on a more societal and relational view, with questions about how we can all live together peacefully and respectfully, we also consider the issue of *social cohesion*.

In this report, we focus on practices related to culture, the arts and heritage. One cannot assume that the arts are a panacea for effective social inclusion on their own. However, in partnership with other sectors, and with respect for its intrinsic value, culture can deliver a robust response to exclusion and the compound challenges of poverty and marginalisation.

When working with social inclusion, cultural institutions and organisations may take a non-structural approach with short-term initiatives focused on 'reaching out', but it may also be a matter of justice and realising that one has been part of institutional practices that exclude certain groups from access. Although not the main focus of this OMC group, we argue that in order for different actors to promote social inclusion in their cooperation with others, they themselves need to critically review their own structures and systems.



4. What do we want to achieve with this report?

This report is aimed at policy-makers and cultural institutions at local, national, regional and EU levels that are responsible for the planning and implementation of cultural, economic, employment, justice, security, social, health, well-being, education, urban and regional development, and cohesion policies. It strongly advocates a cross-sectoral approach between cultural institutions and policy-makers in these other sectors to promote social inclusion and cohesion.

The main purpose of this report is to highlight the importance of culture in facilitating social inclusion, for example through showcasing existing good practice in policy and concrete initiatives. The examples in the report may serve as an inspiration, even if they cannot always be copied. We believe that disseminating this report through channels such as seminars, conferences or other strategic meetings will give leverage beyond the recommendations we make, ultimately contributing to the ongoing important discussion and critical review in this field.

5. General recommendations

The general recommendations we want to make to policy-makers stress the need to show clear political commitment to fostering the role of culture for social inclusion. This can, for example, be facilitated by adopting transversal policy programmes or creating long-term support frameworks for bottom-up initiatives. Funding is of course crucial, not least when it comes to promoting smaller-scale projects, allowing for experimentation. We also advocate for further knowledge production and knowledge sharing on the role of culture for social inclusion, e.g. through the new OMC group on culture for social cohesion.

The general recommendations to cultural institutions and funding organisations address both internal structures (such as reflecting diversity in your organisation and involving relevant actors in planning, in evaluation and in reviewing calls for proposals) and the external role these cultural actors can play, for example through partnerships with stakeholders at local and regional level.

In general, we recommend that all actors at all levels approach their counterparts in other sectors, such as other entities in national governments, local administrations and NGOs, and institutions in other relevant fields. Apart from these general recommendations, the group has given several specific recommendations.

6. Specific recommendations

To put a workable structure on this vast topic we decided to divide the recommendations according to different approaches: one general people-centred approach that applies to all encounters with people at risk of exclusion, two cases of partner-centred approaches – cooperation between culture and another field (health and education respectively), one place-centred approach and one approach for a specific cultural sector – heritage. A selection of the report's recommendations is provided below.

People-centred approaches – culture for, with & by people at risk of exclusion

In different contexts, our vulnerability may differ. To be able to meet people where they are, we consider questions of culture for social inclusion under two pillars – *empowerment*, to strengthen the voice of the individual, and *combating prejudice and discrimination*.

Policy-makers should:

- acknowledge the right and ensure the possibility for artistic expression for everyone through identifying the barriers that still prevail;
- promote long-term financing and place more focus on programmes than on projects.

Actors in the cultural sector should:

- build continuity and possibilities for the target groups to stay linked with art-projects after they are finished;
- consider mentoring programmes to help networking among artists and employees in cultural institutions from under-represented groups.

Partner-centred approach I – culture and health

A paradigmatic shift in thinking would be required for governments to give full recognition to the arts and culture as a legitimate form of 'health spend', yet there are a few early indicators that some visionary steps are being taken in this regard.

Policy-makers should:

- invest dedicated resources in testing a cross-disciplinary/cross-departmental approach to utilising arts and culture in public health programmes;
- encourage and incentivise investment from other sectors (philanthropic, private sector) in this area of practice.

Actors in the health and cultural sectors should:

- make initiatives such as *Arts on Prescription* increasingly available;
- develop roles for individuals to take responsibility for increasing the recognition and use of the arts in healthcare services.

Partner-centred approach II – culture and education

Arts and cultural education and its methods help to overcome the fear of the unknown on an individual and social basis. They offer a joint space for common learning and creating, and promote understanding and respect for other people's backgrounds and learning experiences. There is also clear evidence of the positive impact of cultural participation on the emotional, cognitive and skills development of children.

Policy-makers should:

- involve both cultural and educational professionals in designing and implementing early years' curricula, to include arts and culture, including collaborative projects.

Actors in the education sector should:

- incorporate cultural awareness and expression (an EU key competence for lifelong learning since 2006) across curricula and teaching approaches;
- incorporate the arts and socially engaging cultural practices in teacher training courses.

Actors in the cultural sector should:

- provide training in the latest educational methods and procedures in relation to culture for social inclusion, including specific methods for working with vulnerable groups.

Place-centred approach – urban and rural communities

Both urban and rural areas have their own cultural characteristics, and it is in the most diverse spaces of these territories that social and cultural dynamics and practices happen. Any challenge is met with creativity and innovation.

Policy-makers should:

- create conditions that facilitate the development of bottom-up medium- or long-term community initiatives, rather than project-based approaches;
- favour approaches centred on mixed financing models to enable an improved mobilisation of existing resources.

Actors in the cultural sector should:

- act as mediators – reinforcing your organisation's competences in mediation, facilitation and co-design of projects.

Local networks should:

- recognise that resource needs aren't always financial, and that sometimes financial resources generate competitiveness among stakeholders.

Cultural sector approach – heritage

Heritage can be bridging and bonding, but it can also exclude. Debates and interaction about cultural heritage can help people understand more about themselves and others, enabling them to develop stronger connections with their local communities.

Policy-makers should:

- always be ready to challenge and re-evaluate what heritage means and ensure it is approached critically as a dialogue between past and present;
- ensure that heritage is for all people, through engaging civil society and other groups (discussions about the past lead to more active citizenship).

Actors in the cultural heritage sector should:

- be self-aware, self-critical and ambitious in assessing where cultural heritage has the capacity to target social inclusion factors;
- aim for your organisations to be more representative of the diverse communities you engage with by planning and allowing time to embed and develop relationships.

The full report is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/culture/library/index_en.htm

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