

## Background Note to Culture Action Europe Reflection on Structural and Financial Barriers to Access to Culture

### Rights

Participation in culture is a human right enshrined in Article 27 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits”, a statement reinforced by the Council, who emphasised that “everyone has the right to have access to cultural life and to participate in it”.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore an obligation to ensure that this right is upheld. The presence of multiple and varied cultural opportunities for citizens corresponds with a healthy society, encouraging creativity and freedom of expression.<sup>2</sup> Cultural engagement has been found to improve critical thinking and empathy, empowering people to be active citizens, to understand social issues and to work for the betterment of society.<sup>3</sup> This, too, has been supported by the Council of Europe’s Indicator Framework on Culture and Democracy (IFCD), which establishes a link between cultural participation and democratic health.<sup>4</sup>

### The European Dimension

Cultural participation forms an integral part of people’s exposure to other cultures and heals social divisions through development of mutual understanding.<sup>5</sup> Because of this, it is essential that the cultural offering available promote a broad range of European artists and performers. If we are to preserve freedom of movement as a fundamental EU pillar, it is of systematic importance to the future of Europe that Europeans feel at ease living in multicultural societies. European citizens must be invited to explore diverse corners of the continent with the aim of generating transformations in people’s views, so that EU citizens see each other not as foreigners, but as fellow Europeans.

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<sup>1</sup> Council of the European Union (2010) *Council Conclusions on the Role of Culture in Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion* [https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/117797.pdf](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/117797.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Jagland, T. (2017) *Report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe 2017* <https://edoc.coe.int/en/index.php?controller=get-file&freeid=7345>

<sup>3</sup> Access to Culture Project (2011) *Access to Culture: A fundamental right of all citizens – Policy Guidelines* <http://www.houseforculture.eu/beta/upload/Docs%20ACP/ACP-PGPartofIV-PolicyGuidelines.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Anheier, H. K., List, R. A., Kononykhina, O., Cohen, J. L. (2016) *Cultural Participation and Inclusive Societies* <https://rm.coe.int/cultural-participation-and-inclusive-societies-a-thematic-report-based/1680711283>

<sup>5</sup> Anheier, H. K., List, R. A., Kononykhina, O., Cohen, J. L. (2016) *Cultural Participation and Inclusive Societies* <https://rm.coe.int/cultural-participation-and-inclusive-societies-a-thematic-report-based/1680711283>

Support of mobility for artists and cultural professionals and the facilitation of the exchange of ideas and expertise are crucial in this endeavour.<sup>6</sup>

## Participation

Around two-thirds of Europeans are demonstrably interested and participate in cultural activities. Eurobarometer 469 (Cultural Heritage, 2017) found that 61% of respondents have visited a historical monument or site in the last year. Cultural engagement more broadly was measured in Eurobarometer 399 (Cultural Access and Participation, 2013), which found that high and very high levels of engagement had dropped from 21% in 2007 to 18% in 2013, alongside a single percentage point drop for medium levels of cultural engagement from 49% to 48%. It has been suggested that this adverse impact on participation levels after the crisis reflects a reduction in the amount of money or time available to EU citizens to spend on cultural activities.<sup>7</sup> Yet, the main reason cited for not participating in cultural activities is lack of interest, which is strongly correlated with education level.<sup>8</sup>

## Education

Evidence consistently demonstrates that the role of education is fundamental to a person's participation in culture. Firstly, the level of education attained correlates with level of interest in culture, and secondly, education results frequently in higher incomes that permit greater cultural consumption.<sup>9</sup> Those with higher education levels most frequently cite lack of time as a barrier to cultural participation, while those with lower education levels cite lack of interest.<sup>10</sup> This demonstrates that culture is a skill to be developed.<sup>11</sup> This is reflected in the European Parliament recommendation on *Key Competences For Lifelong Learning*, where cultural awareness and expression are identified as horizontal skills that promote active citizenship, social cohesion and employability.<sup>12</sup> In light of the

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<sup>7</sup> Special Eurobarometer 399 (2013) *Cultural Access And Participation*  
[http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_399\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs_399_en.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Special Eurobarometer 399 (2013) *Cultural Access And Participation*  
[http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_399\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs_399_en.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Prieto Rodríguez, J., Pérez Villadóniga, M. J. and Suárez Fernández, S. (2018) *Cultural consumption: a question of taste or of price?* [https://observatoriosociallacaixa.org/en/-/el-consumo-cultural\\_cuestion-de-gusto-o-de-precio](https://observatoriosociallacaixa.org/en/-/el-consumo-cultural_cuestion-de-gusto-o-de-precio)

<sup>10</sup> Special Eurobarometer 399 (2013) *Cultural Access And Participation*  
[http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_399\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs_399_en.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> EPRS (2017) *Access to Culture in the European Union*  
[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2017/608631/EPRS\\_IDA\(2017\)608631\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2017/608631/EPRS_IDA(2017)608631_EN.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32006H0962>

Commission communication on *Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture*, strong synergies between culture and education for all ages must be developed to give people the necessary footing to nurture their own cultural interests, with the corresponding beneficial outcomes in terms of personal achievement, mutual understanding, social engagement and cohesion.

## Geographical Barriers

In geographical terms, access to culture varies according to the location an individual lives in, namely whether it is urban or rural. Levels of cultural offerings in rural areas tend to be lower, reducing ease of access and thus participation levels.<sup>13</sup> However, countries with high overall cultural participation show lower imbalances between urban and rural areas, suggesting that forward-thinking cultural and education policies can have an impact on levels of participation.<sup>14</sup> This brings to the fore the second geographical divide in cultural participation between northern and southern/eastern European countries.<sup>15</sup> Tackling this double divide requires policies of decentralisation and collaboration – such as those implemented in the UK<sup>16</sup> and Sweden<sup>17</sup>. Building upon existing soft infrastructure, traditional festivities, local and regional festivals, and non-cultural spaces allows touring organisations to reach audiences where they are in order to achieve a more balanced participation level.

## Financial Barriers

Those who face financial difficulties find the expense of cultural offerings to be a serious barrier to participation<sup>18</sup>. Where experiments with free entry to museums have been carried out, the result has

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<sup>13</sup> Access to Culture Project (2016) *Access to Culture – Policy Analysis (Final Report)*

[http://www.irmo.hr/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Final\\_Report\\_Online\\_with-Annex.pdf](http://www.irmo.hr/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Final_Report_Online_with-Annex.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Anheier, H. K., List, R. A., Kononykhina, O., Cohen, J. L. (2016) *Cultural Participation and Inclusive Societies*

<https://rm.coe.int/cultural-participation-and-inclusive-societies-a-thematic-report-based/1680711283>

<sup>15</sup> Special Eurobarometer 399 (2013) *Cultural Access And Participation*

[http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_399\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs_399_en.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Arts Council England (2015) *Written evidence submitted by Arts Council England for the APPG for Reform, Decentralisation and Devolution in the UK's inquiry into Better Devolution for the Whole UK*

[http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Written\\_evidence\\_submitted\\_for\\_the\\_APPG\\_devo.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Written_evidence_submitted_for_the_APPG_devo.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> UNESCO (2016) *The Collaborative Cultural Model*

<https://fr.unesco.org/creativity/policy-monitoring-platform/collaborative-cultural-model-0>

<sup>18</sup> Special Eurobarometer 399 (2013) *Cultural Access And Participation*

[http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_399\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs_399_en.pdf)



been substantial increase in visits across the socio-demographic spectrum and all age groups.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, where there is greater development of the CCS, there is also greater cultural participation. It therefore behoves policymakers to create an “enabling environment” to create the necessary conditions both for access to culture despite people’s financial constraints and for the development of the CCS.<sup>20</sup>

## Digital

With over half of Europeans using the Internet for cultural purposes (30% more than once a week) and only 11% putting their own content onto social network sites and 7% creating their own blog or website with cultural content,<sup>21</sup> the potential of digital culture has not yet been fully realised. Digital access to culture carries the distinct advantage of overcoming physical and geographical barriers, but relies on the necessary infrastructure being in place so that everyone is able to get online and has the skills to be able to benefit from doing so. Furthermore, the Internet puts up further barriers in addition to opportunities, with the dominance of English limiting the full benefits to those with higher educational attainment and language skills, and the risk of control of the cultural space lying in the hands of a few multinational companies.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, evidence is emerging that digital cultural participation shows limits in terms of the social and wellbeing impacts associated with in-person cultural participation,<sup>23</sup> and must therefore be understood as a complementary part of a broader policy strategy.

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<sup>19</sup> IPSOS MORI (2003) *The Impact of Free Entry to Museums*

<https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/publication/1970-01/sri-the-impact-of-free-entry-to-museums-2003.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Anheier, H. K., List, R. A., Kononykhina, O., Cohen, J. L. (2016) *Cultural Participation and Inclusive Societies*

<https://rm.coe.int/cultural-participation-and-inclusive-societies-a-thematic-report-based/1680711283>

<sup>21</sup> Special Eurobarometer 399 (2013) *Cultural Access And Participation*

[http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_399\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs_399_en.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> Access to Culture Project (2016) *Access to Culture – Policy Analysis (Final Report)*

[http://www.irmo.hr/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Final\\_Report\\_Online\\_with-Annex.pdf](http://www.irmo.hr/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Final_Report_Online_with-Annex.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> Shakya H. B., Christakis N. A. (2017) Association of Facebook Use With Compromised Well-Being: A Longitudinal Study

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28093386>