



CULTURE AND DECENTRALISED COOPERATION: THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

An exchange workshop between professionals, politicians and donors

Background notes

General Context

Culture is a common good of humanity. Its role is fundamental in both the identity and stability of societies, but also concerning economic development: cultural industries have a significant potential effect on employment, wealth creation in both developed countries and partner countries, all the while remaining a vector of creativity that extends to other sectors.

Culture was included as an integral part of the cooperation strategy in the partnership between the African, Caribbean and Pacific States (ACP) and the European Community through the **Cotonou Agreement** (2000 and revised in 2005). As a result, the need to take culture into account in domestic public policy and thus making it a vital element of external relations, including development policies, was the focus of international negotiations in the cultural field in recent years. This resulted in the emergence of a new policy framework at the European level.

In 2005, the **UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions** was adopted establishing for the first time a cultural pillar in global governance. At the same time, the **European Consensus for Development** identified culture as integral part of EU development policy and within the framework of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Today, 96 countries worldwide and the European Community have ratified the UNESCO Convention. European and ACP countries are especially numerous.

Based on the objective of implementing the European Consensus and the UNESCO Convention, the European Commission launched a **European Agenda for Culture** in 2007. The Agenda proposes the systematic integration of the cultural dimension in all public policies, projects and programmes concerning external relations and development with the objective of rendering culture a vital element of international relations.

The Conclusions of the Council of the European Union in November 2008 on the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue in the external relations of the Union and its Member States strengthened the role of culture in foreign relations and cooperation programs. The aim was to strengthen the contribution of culture to sustainable development and to promote cooperation and solidarity with developing countries in a spirit of partnership in order to increase the capacity of these countries to protect and promote the cultural diversity including cultural industries and contemporary creativity.

Thus, the European Commission gives an important place to culture in development cooperation, particularly regarding:

- mainstreaming of cultural aspects in all its measures, projects and programs;
- funding for major projects for the preservation of cultural heritage and the creation and strengthening of sustainable cultural industries;
- taking into account living cultures and cultural heritage, two important elements for growth, employment and cultural identity;
- encouraging its partners to include culture in their strategies for poverty reduction and their respective national development plans.

In this context, the **International Colloquium "Culture and Creativity as Vectors for Development"** will examine the opportunities and challenges arising in relation to public policies for culture at national, regional and international cooperation levels, particularly in the EU and ACP countries.

The **thematic workshops of expert meetings** will help to illustrate the potential of culture and creativity, as well as some of the existing challenges.

The **political workshops** will allow for an exchange of experiences and best practices among professionals and policy makers. The goal is for professionals to convince policy makers of the role of culture in development, and to ensure that they are listening to their concerns.

Culture and decentralised cooperation: the role of local governments and civil society in cultural development: themes and issues

Decentralised cooperation, that is to say any form of cooperation between local authorities or non-state actors, **has greatly expanded since the 1990s. Decentralised cooperation is varied and diverse**, in their scale, in their fields of activity, in the type of actors that are involved... The fields of activities of decentralised cooperation are numerous: infrastructure, health, education ... The forms of decentralised cooperation are also multiple. This is not just a North-South phenomenon, but also North-North and South-South. These exchanges, often regional or cross-border, are

powerful vectors for cultural dialogue, stability and peace and for regional integration at local levels.

This diversity is a source of wealth and is a **real potential for the exchange of good practices**. In this context, the federation, or at least the coordination of initiatives within trade platforms may have an important added value, mutually benefiting all stakeholders.

In the cultural field, local actors, particularly non-state actors, are particularly active. It even seems that **decentralised cooperation is often a stronger supporter of culture than of national policies**. Cultural networks across borders and language and ethnic barriers are increasing. Local decision makers also seem to have understood the economic potential of culture: thus, cities and municipalities, associations, and private individuals who are carriers of the projects, create funds for cultural activities and support cooperation activities through twinning or other forms of cooperation.

The development of decentralised cooperation allows **local actors to gain international or cross-border experience** on the basis of exchanges between individuals and increases in exchanges particularly in the cultural field. Decentralised cooperation involves **capacity building of local actors** and local civil society. Thus, training of local staff, particularly in cultural project management, in this respect is crucial.

In addition, decentralised cooperation can enable a **more participatory development policy**, taking into account the needs and initiatives of people and facilitating the enhancement of citizen participation in policies that affect them. Therefore, the strengthening of local capacities, particularly that of local authorities, must be conceived as a **democratizing process** promoting the active involvement of civil society and local populations and strengthening the accountability and responsiveness of local authorities concerned.

Finally, if decentralised cooperation is undoubtedly positive for the proliferation of cultural exchange and for local development, the challenge of **linking these with policies set at the national level** should not be underestimated. Too often, an important part of local activities remains little known and supported by national authorities who are losing sight of important levers and experiences for national policy.

Questions for debate:

- How should best practices be exchanged? In particular, beyond the traditional cooperation between North-South, what lessons can be learned from cross-border cultural cooperation North-North in terms of best practices to be used by the South? What are the examples of South-South cultural cooperation that are vectors for peace and/or regional integration?

- What is the potential of local cultural policy and decentralised cooperation, and what are its limits?
- What are the economic and political gains that we can really expect?
- How can we ensure an inclusive and democratic process in functioning of decentralised cooperation?
- How can we support and strengthen decentralised cooperation? With which partners and what objectives?
- How can we ensure the development of sufficient management capacities at local levels in order to meet the needs created by new cooperation?
- What role is there for decentralised cooperation in future European development policy in the field of culture?

Panel objectives and speakers

This workshop is designed to show, through the diversity of its participants, the contribution of decentralised cooperation in cultural cooperation, to analyse opportunities that enhance the positive impact but also the constraints, limitations, and challenges.

The interventions from speakers address local cultural cooperation, from different angles and in different contexts.

Subject to change: please consult the program for the latest updates.

Moderator: **Mr. Ferdinand Richard**, Director of the Centre for the Development of Emerging Music (AMI), France

- **Art as a factor in urban development: the role of local governments and development partners**
Ms. Marilyn Douala Bell, Director of the Doual'art Centre, Cameroun
- **Culture in decentralised cooperation: The role of North-South partnership**
Mr. Antonio Nicolau Martí, Director of Cultural and Scientific Relations, Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Spain
- **Decentralised cooperation in the South : the Djibouti festival as an element for peace in the region**
Mr. Ali Abdi Farrah, Minister of Communication and Culture, Djibouti
- **Trans-border cultural cooperation and European integration**
Mr. Horia Patapievici, President of the Romanian Cultural Institute
- **Creating culture networks as a contribution to economic and social development**
Mr. Hans Georg Knopp, Secretary-General of the Goethe-Institut, Germany