

Doc. 10971
24 June 2006

Follow-up to the Third Summit: priority for cultural co-operation

Report
Committee on Culture, Science and Education
Rapporteur: Mr Lluís Maria de Puig, Spain, Socialist Group

Summary

Attention is drawn to the political relevance of intercultural dialogue in facing situations of conflict, of education for democratic citizenship, of cultural diversity in sustainable development as also to the need for constant debate on cultural and religious values in response to scientific and technological change and for the active participation of civil society and in particular of young people. Such cultural issues are indeed central to the long-term mission of the Council of Europe alongside democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

The Third Summit coincided with events marking 50 years of co-operation on the basis of the European Cultural Convention. This report reviews the references to culture (in the broad sense) in the many related texts, contrasts these with continuing cuts in resources and concludes on the need to reassert the importance of culture in the activity of the Council of Europe.

A. Draft recommendation

1. The Parliamentary Assembly points out the political relevance of cultural values and intercultural dialogue in facing situations of conflict and terrorism. It stresses the importance of education for democratic citizenship and of cultural diversity in sustainable development. It insists on the need for constant debate on cultural and religious values and their place in democratic society and in response to the challenges of scientific and technological change. It wishes to encourage the active participation of civil society and in particular of young people in such dialogue.
2. The Assembly believes that such cultural issues are central to the long-term mission of the Council of Europe alongside democracy, human rights and the rule of law. It regrets, however, the lack of priority in terms of budgetary and other resources that is given to this field. Despite continued emphasis on the importance of culture in the broad sense, continuing cuts in budgetary provision and other resources are seriously jeopardising the competence, credibility and influence of the Organisation in this field.
3. This position was last set out in Recommendation 1566 (2002) on European cultural co-operation where the Assembly reaffirmed its long-standing support for European cultural co-operation as carried out in the Council of Europe and in particular on the basis of the European Cultural Convention.
4. The Assembly was pleased to be actively involved in the series of ministerial conferences held to mark the 50th anniversary of this Convention in Wroclaw (December 2004), Strasbourg (September 2005) and in Faro (October 2005). It notes the stress placed by these conferences on the importance of cultural co-operation in promoting the core values of the Council of Europe and welcomes the significant steps made to identifying key lines of action for a Europe without dividing lines and the launching of a programme of intercultural dialogue.
5. The Assembly also welcomes the attention paid to European cultural co-operation by the Third Summit (Warsaw, May 2005). Both the Declaration and the Action Plan give ample space to this area and reflect most of the concerns transmitted before the Summit by the Assembly in its Rec. 1693 (2005). This has already been recognised in the Assembly's first reaction to the Summit in Rec. 1712 (2005), paras 16-21.
6. The texts of the Third Summit mention most areas of cultural co-operation. The Assembly believes that the Council of Europe should maintain a working presence across the board (including coverage of science and media) even if it may not be possible to sustain priority activities in every area. It is concerned at evidence of cuts in the sports and youth sectors and hopes that these can be corrected.
7. Considerable emphasis has been placed in the recent texts relating to cultural co-operation on the possibilities of joint programmes or projects in the broad cultural field with other organisations (EU, OSCE and Unesco). The Assembly is aware that this may be a way of increasing resources for action by the Council of Europe. It would like to have confirmation from these potential partners.
8. The development of intercultural dialogue has been identified as one of the major areas of future Council of Europe activity. The Assembly supports this dialogue both within Europe and, in line with its own Rec. 1590 (2003) on cultural co-operation with the southern Mediterranean, with neighbouring regions outside. It will itself be making a contribution to the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue.
9. The Assembly welcomes the new Europe-wide youth campaign to promote diversity, inclusion and participation in society that the Summit proposed. It looks forward to playing an active role in this campaign.
10. It also recognises the role that culture can play in situations of conflict. The Assembly has already contributed itself (Middle-East Peace Process, former Yugoslavia) and wishes to support on-going intergovernmental activities (for example with regard to the cultural heritage in the South Caucasus).

11. More generally, the Assembly reiterates its belief that its contribution to the work of the Council of Europe in the field of cultural co-operation lies in initiative, in complementarity and in interactivity. It regrets that it too lacks the resources necessary to fulfil its potential contribution.

12. The Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

12.1. recognise culture in the broad sense - including the arts, cultural heritage, media, science, education, youth and sport - as part of the central mission of the Council of Europe alongside democracy, human rights and the rule of law;

12.2. provide the appropriate and necessary resources to carry out the priorities for action in these fields as identified by the Third Summit, while at the same time maintaining a working presence in all areas of cultural cooperation and the possibility of reacting to new proposals where this can be worthwhile;

12.3. promote in particular the role of the Council of Europe in intercultural dialogue (both within Europe and with neighbouring regions) and cultural diversity;

12.4. continue to develop education for democratic citizenship with programmes for teacher-training and extension into non-formal education;

12.5. maintain its unique cooperation between governments and representatives of independent institutions of higher education;

12.6. maintain and develop the exchange of information and networking in the fields of cultural policy and cultural heritage;

12.7. promote the democratisation of access to culture through such activities as the European Heritage days, the European cultural routes and corridors, the Council of Europe art exhibitions and the European Museum Forum;

12.8. continue its work on language learning with particular reference to the diversification of linguistic understanding and to the maintenance, where viable, of minor languages;

12.9. re-evaluate the future of sports co-operation in the light of the conclusions of the informal Conference of European Ministers for Sport in Moscow in October 2006;

12.10. guarantee funds for the upkeep of the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg in order to permit the continuation of youth activities and secure funding for the new Europe-wide youth campaign to promote diversity, human rights and participation;

12.11. encourage member states that have not yet done so to ratify the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the value of cultural heritage for society (Faro 2005);

12.12. develop the monitoring of standards and the implementation of international instruments relating to the cultural field (notably with regard to cultural heritage, education, sport, media and bioethics) and associate the Assembly with this;

12.13. seek support from other governmental organisations (such as EU, OSCE and Unesco) for closer institutional co-operation in the cultural sector with the Council of Europe;

12.14. invite the EU, pending its becoming a member of the Council of Europe, to accede to the European Cultural Convention.

B. Explanatory memorandum, by Mr de Puig

I. Introduction

1. Since my last report on European cultural co-operation in 2002 (Doc 9473 and see Assembly Recommendation 1566 adopted in June 2002) there have been many declarations on the subject, action plans and other relevant statements. The present report will briefly review the texts in question and then conclude with a number of comments. There is a need to reassert the importance of culture in the activity of the Council of Europe at both intergovernmental and parliamentary levels.

2. As in past, I continue to treat culture in the broad sense, to include the arts, heritage, media, science, education, youth and sport, but in no order of priority. The cultural committee of the European Parliament shares this same perspective.

II. Intervening events

3. I should like to begin by referring to the report I presented to the Assembly in 2003 on cultural cooperation between Europe and the south Mediterranean countries (Doc 9626 and Rec 1590). This led to the invitation to representatives from these countries to attend ministerial conferences of ministers of culture and has resulted in the Faro Open Platform for intercultural dialogue.

4. Ministers from all fields covered by the European Cultural Convention were convoked to the Conference held in Wroclaw in December 2004 to mark the opening of celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Convention. In her statement to the conference, Baroness Hooper insisted on the Convention as the basis for cultural cooperation and on the cultural rather than political objectives behind such cooperation. The Wroclaw Declaration confirmed the importance of a cultural Europe without dividing lines and laid down seven strategic lines of action (European identity and democratic citizenship, cultural diversity and cohesion of society, intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, participation in the knowledge and information society, mobility, sustainable development, partnerships). It failed however, despite attempts from certain specialised ministries, to recognise cultural co-operation as a core activity of the Council of Europe, concluding simply by stressing its importance in promoting the core values of the organisation.

5. An Assembly debate was held in January 2005 on the role of the Council of Europe in advance of the Third Summit. In his opinion for the cultural committee (Doc 10421), Mr Legendre emphasised the strategic importance of cultural cooperation alongside political and economic concerns. Calls for freedom of expression, for education for democratic citizenship, for cultural cooperation and the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, for cooperation with Unesco, for cooperation between European countries and other regions of the world, giving priority to the southern Mediterranean, and for thematic monitoring were included in the text adopted by the Assembly (Rec 1693). More generally that recommendation stated that "the core mission of the Council of Europe cannot be dissociated from important areas such as social cohesion and culture in the broad sense --- as well as migration and demographic change and environmental protection" para 6.

6. A Youth Summit was held in Warsaw in May 2005 immediately before the Third Summit itself. Lord Russell-Johnston participated in his capacity as Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Youth and Sport. The holding of the Youth Summit underlined the significance of the youth sector in the activities of the Council of Europe. A proposal for a new youth campaign was forwarded by the young people to the Summit.

7. The Third Summit (Warsaw May 2005) produced two related texts. The Declaration contained commitment to the common values and principles rooted in Europe's cultural, religious and humanistic heritage and openness to cooperation with Europe's neighbouring regions. It mentioned respect for our common heritage and cultural diversity and the fostering of intercultural and inter-religious dialogue. It insisted that all Council of Europe activities must contribute to the fundamental, core objective of preserving and promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

8. The Action Plan set out the “principal tasks” of the Council of Europe. With regard to our broad cultural field these included bioethics (II.6) and education and culture as “essential enabling factors for the effective implementation of council of Europe core values” (III.3-7) – education for democratic citizenship, youth cooperation (including the launch of a new campaign), cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue (including the appointment of a coordinator, commitment to a new dialogue between Europe and its neighbouring regions and recognition of the role of the North-South Centre), and sport (continuation of reference activities).

9. The Assembly's first reaction to the Third Summit was in a debate on a report by the Political Affairs Committee in June 2005 but to which the Cultural Committee was able to submit a number of amendments that were incorporated in the text adopted Rec 1712. This asserted cultural cooperation as a statutory activity of the Council of Europe, insisted on cultural heritage and sport, on freedom of expression and the need to monitor the media situation in member states, on inter-religious and intercultural dialogue and its development with Europe's neighbours (paras 16-21).

10. In the course of this debate Mr Legendre made a strong appeal for support for cultural cooperation in the Council of Europe. The Secretary General assured him that there would be no cuts in culture.

11. The ministerial conference held in Faro in October 2005 to close the 50th anniversary of the European Cultural Convention was (unlike the earlier conference in Wroclaw) limited to ministers responsible for cultural affairs. The Declaration focused on intercultural dialogue, emphasising the political will of the Summit for a new dialogue between Europe and its neighbouring regions. Council of Europe action is related to that by the UN (Alliance of Civilisations), Unesco (Convention on the diversity of cultural expressions) and the EU (2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue). The Declaration proposed strategies to manage and promote cultural diversity. The instruments identified are the European Cultural Convention (reinforced by Eurimages and the Framework Convention on cultural heritage), the Human Rights Commissioner, ECRI, youth activities (the new campaign and the Euro-Med activities carried out with the EU), the North-South Centre and increased cooperation with Unesco, Alecso and the Anna Lindh Foundation.

12. In his statement to the conference, Mr Legendre expressed concern that European cultural cooperation should not be limited to intercultural dialogue; he insisted on the cultural mission of the Council of Europe and its links to the other core elements of the mandate of the organisation, namely democracy, human rights and the rule of law; he referred to the Third Summit and the ongoing open discussion of whether culture should serve political aims or be regarded as an objective in its own right; he welcomed intercultural dialogue between Europe and the south Mediterranean and Middle East, but pointed out that “where human rights are concerned, there can be no cultural exception”.

13. Four further processes in 2006 complete this survey.

14. On the Assembly side, the Bureau finally adopted in April 2006 a paper setting out the priorities for the Assembly for 2006 and which reflects the five main tasks set out in the Action Plan of the Third Summit AS/Inf (2006) 5. The sole reference to culture in a first draft in January 2006 was to intercultural dialogue. The final version has added freedom of expression, cultural diversity, and education for democratic citizenship. But it makes no reference to the fields of science, heritage, youth or sport.

15. On the intergovernmental side, guidelines for the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue have been adopted and the Assembly invited to contribute (AS/Inf (2006) 7). Budgetary cuts were introduced in the cultural sector in 2006 (sun-setting of all sports cooperation with the exception of convention-based activities). No funding was made available for the new youth campaign. With regard to the 2007 work programme, budgetary cuts have been confirmed with regard to sport and heritage, no funding is foreseen for the new youth campaign and doubts have been indicated as to the future of the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg AS/Inf (2006) 3 paras 26, 42-3 and 53.

16. On the question of relations with the EU, the report by Mr Juncker, Prime Minister of Luxembourg, presented to the Assembly on 11 April 2006, identified a shared aim of a Europe without dividing lines and called for this to be achieved through joint action in the fields of youth,

education and culture and intercultural dialogue (pp 2 and 19-22). Particular emphasis is placed on the higher education sector; the sole reference to media is related to audiovisual production; the role of the Council of Europe in intercultural dialogue is to be limited to intra-European dialogue and all external dialogue (Euro-Atlantic or Euro-Mediterranean) left to the EU.

17. The latest draft of the Memorandum of Understanding on the strengthening of cooperation between the Council of Europe and the EU (16 May 2006) mentions as areas of shared priority: intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity (both organisations are to support the Unesco Convention), education (in particular education for democratic citizenship) and youth. The Assembly has already suggested that the EU use ministerial conferences in the fields of education and culture to increase cooperation in these areas and make use of the Council of Europe as a forum for intercultural dialogue (Rec 1743 (2006) paras 9.4.1. and 9.5.10).

18. Finally it is interesting to note the emphasis the present Russian presidency places on cultural cooperation.

III. Comments

19. Cultural cooperation remains a fundamental part of the Council of Europe's role. It is based in the Statute and the European Cultural Convention which remains the main framework for cultural cooperation.

20. One question which is often discussed in this context is the struggle for control of this field between the specialised ministries and the ministry of foreign affairs (Committee of Ministers) and by disagreement over whether cultural cooperation is an end in itself or a means to a political end. The Assembly has argued in favour of both positions, but these are not in fact incompatible and it is not necessary to decide between them. However the Assembly should not accept that either alternative be ruled out. Thus we should continue to insist on culture in its broad sense as part of the core mission of the Council of Europe (as in Rec 1693 and alongside other key areas of activity). We should for the same reason also question the position maintained in the Third Summit Declaration that all activities must contribute to preserving and promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Of course all activities must be compatible with them. But that does not mean that culture should be regarded as a secondary priority.

21. Indeed the problem that has now very much come to the fore is that of the budget. In the Council of Europe this is controlled by the ministries of foreign affairs. Not all ministries of foreign affairs give culture strategic importance in terms of foreign policy nor do all politicians see the practical impact of the Council of Europe to lie as clearly in the cultural field as in that of human rights and the working of the Court. In practice there might be more funding available for cultural cooperation by the Council of Europe if matters were in the hands of the specialised ministries directly interested; and that is one reason for seeking offers for voluntary funding or partial agreements.

22. Another solution is to press the political case for the Council of Europe's activity in the cultural sector. This has been fairly well done in the conferences surrounding the 50th anniversary of the European Cultural Convention and in the preparation of the Third Summit. Let us not disparage window-dressing as it helps sell goods. Presentation can help persuade politicians to fund activities; it can also help put over a message more effectively. A good example is "education for democratic citizenship".

23. The Council of Europe's work in the cultural field nevertheless has a practical as well as political significance. It should not be overlooked. And for this reason the basic funding of a broad-based intergovernmental programme of cultural cooperation should continue to be assured. It cannot survive further pruning. The stand now being proposed by the Secretary general to seek further funding for the European Court of Human Rights from other sources is not only courageous - it is vital. The credibility of the Council of Europe's continuing work in several sectors is already strained; with further cuts it cannot reasonably be maintained. And that the Assembly must forcefully resist.

24. Economies can be sought through prioritising and this is a prominent characteristic of the Third Summit Action Plan when it is applied to the intergovernmental work programme. But priorities are, and should be, essentially ephemeral. One pernicious aspect of prioritising activities is that those activities that are not priority are in fact excluded. The question is for how long. This may not be serious as long as priorities are continually revised; however in terms of longer-term management (and the maintenance of networks, contacts etc), fields not kept in view, revisited or covered from some angle may be dropped altogether and taken over by another body. This is the case of sport in the Council of Europe where the dropping of sports activities accompanies the departure of long-experienced staff. The term “sun-setting” is an attempt to suppose that they may return. Action – a realistic presence if not a major project – must be maintained in every sector.

25. There seems a general and very healthy agreement that the Council of Europe should not be involved in promotion of the clash of civilisations. I have however misgivings over the prescriptive interpretation that is sometimes given to intercultural dialogue (as for example in Mr Juncker's approach “The purpose of intercultural dialogue is to make all the members of our societies share the fundamental values which give Europe its identity and unity” p 22) and over the insistence on European identity and cultural unity. The point of dialogue is that it should be a conversation not indoctrination. I also fully agree that standards such as freedom of expression are not negotiable.

26. It is also important that the Council of Europe be free to engage in dialogue without geographical boundaries (within, without or between). This is the immediate result of globalisation, of the new possibilities of communication, of the Internet. The challenge of the Danish cartoons issue is how to relate European and other values on a planetary level. Having long promoted the extension of cultural cooperation to the southern Mediterranean, the Assembly cannot accept the exclusion of the Council of Europe from any dialogue with its neighbouring countries. This is moreover in flat contradiction with the proposals emanating from the Third Summit, from the Faro Conference and from subsequent discussions within the Council of Europe including declarations by the Secretary General. To limit responsibility for such dialogue moreover to the EU is to confuse economic and political considerations with those of cultural dialogue and cooperation.

27. More detailed comments could be made on specific current intergovernmental activities. For example no new funding has been provided by governments for the new youth campaign called for by the Summit. Doubts cast on the continued existence of the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg are another reason for concern in this sector; the Assembly was closely associated with the setting up of this centre (as also its counterpart in Budapest); to put in question the continuation of youth activities because of the costs of refurbishing the EYCS is a caricature of budgeting in the Council of Europe. The closing down of sports cooperation is not reflected by Assembly interest in the field; indeed the values of sport (sport for all, fair play, team spirit etc) seem to be core values that the Council of Europe should be promoting. More attention could be given to monitoring (hard and soft) the implementation of the many conventions in the cultural sector (heritage, language etc). There is surprisingly little said in the texts reviewed above about the Council of Europe's important work for languages, freedom of expression or the mass media. Room should always remain for new initiatives and innovation (such as the projects on “Creating cultural capital” and on “The image of the other in history teaching”), etc.

28. But the general conclusions of this survey of European cultural cooperation can be more optimistic and should insist on the positive elements that have emerged over these years. The various texts cited do underline and in general promote the role of the Council of Europe in European cultural cooperation. Governments recognise the importance of better coordination between the Council of Europe and other organisations, in particular the EU, the OSCE and Unesco. It will however be important to know that these organisations (as well as the desk officers responsible for them in our national capitals) also share the views expressed by our Heads of State and Government and will respond positively.

29. What has been said so far refers primarily to the intergovernmental activity of the Council of Europe in the cultural field. The Assembly is to a certain extent involved in these activities (and is represented on all the steering committees involved). But some comments should also be made in this report on the place of culture in the Assembly's own activities.

30. A basic principle is that the Assembly as a parliamentary body should be free to fix its own priorities, conduct its own activities and arrive at its own positions independently of a plan of action drawn up by governments for intergovernmental activity. For some reason committees are being asked to revise their work programmes in order to bring them into line with the Summit's priorities (Recommendation 1712 para 30) and the Assembly's own priorities have been related to the main tasks of the Action Plan. It is not clear what this artificial symmetry of intergovernmental and parliamentary activity may achieve.

31. On the contrary one of the main roles of the Assembly in the context of the Council of Europe should be to initiate, to interact with and to complement the intergovernmental side (see Rec 1566). Thus for example the Assembly is not happy with the suppression of sports cooperation. This was stated clearly in Rec 1712 para 18. We have since held a debate on trafficking in women and the FIFA World Cup, we may soon be involved in the start of the Tour de France and our President is pressing hard for cooperation with UEFA. This difference between Assembly and intergovernmental priorities is essential.

32. When it comes to the priorities for Assembly debates greater awareness should be shown of the political relevance of the cultural sector. Important debates have been held on Islam, on religion and democracy, media and terrorism, and more recently on religion and education and we are preparing debates on such key subjects as blasphemy or on the precautionary principle. Such debates are not easy to prepare and call for more resources and time. Too often subjects in the cultural sector are regarded as technical and relegated to the Assembly Standing Committee or not even referred for report.

33 Not enough attention is paid either to the importance of interaction between the parliamentary side and the intergovernmental bodies in the Council of Europe (where there are some ten of them) and other organisations (beginning with Unesco, OECD and the EU).

34. Priorities for cultural cooperation in the Assembly include the need for appropriate resources and more involvement at both secretariat and parliamentary levels.

Reporting committee: Committee on Culture, Science and Education

Reference to committee: Doc. 10555, Reference No 3095 of 06.06.05

Draft recommendation unanimously adopted by the committee on 22 June 2006

Members of the Committee: Mr Jacques **Legendre** (Chairman), Baroness Hooper, Mr Josef Jařab, Mr Wolfgang Wodarg, (Vice-Chairpersons), Mr Hans Ager, Mr Toomas Alatalu, Mr Emerenzio Barbieri, Mr Rony Bargetze, Mrs Marie-Louise Bemelmans-Videc, Mr Radu-Mircea Berceanu, Mr Levan Berdzenishvili, Mr Italo Bocchino, Mr Bořidar Bojović, Mr Ioannis Bougas, Mrs Anne Brasseur, Mr Osman Cořkunoęlu, Mr Vlad Cubreacov, Mrs Maria Damanaki, Mr Joseph Debono Grech, Mr Stepan Demirchyan, Mr Ferdinand Devinski, Mrs Kaarina Dromberg (Alternate: Mrs Sinikka **Hurskainen**), Mrs Åse Gunhild Woie **Duesund**, Mr Detlef Dzembitzki, Mrs Anke Eymer, Mr Relu **Fenechiu**, Mrs Blanca Fernández-Capel, Mrs Maria Emelina Fernández-Soriano, Mr Axel Fischer, Mr José **Freire Antunes**, Mr Ian Gibson, Mr Eamon Gilmore (Alternate: Mr Paschal **Mooney**), Mr Stefan **Glăvan**, Mr Luc Goutry, Mr Vladimir Grachev, Mr Andreas Gross, Mr Kristinn H. Gunnarson, Mrs Azra Hadžiahmetović, Mr Jean-Pol Henry, Mr Rafael **Huseynov**, Mr Raffaele Iannuzzi (Alternate: Mr Giuseppe **Gaburro**), Mrs Halide İncekara (Alternate: Mr Murat **Mercan**), Mr Lachezar Ivanov, Mr Igor Ivanovski, Mr József Kozma, Mr Jean-Pierre Kucheida, Mr Guy Lengagne, Mrs Jagoda Majska-Martinčević, Mr Tomasz Markowski, Mr Bernard Marquet, Mr Andrew McIntosh (Alternate: Mr Robert **Walter**), Mr Ivan Melnikov, Mrs Maria Manuela **de Melo**, Mr Paskal Milo, Mrs Fausta Morganti, Mrs Christine Muttonen, Mrs Miroslava Němcová, Mr Jakob-Axel Nielsen, Mr Edward **O'Hara**, Mr Andrey Pantev, Mrs Antigoni Pericleous Papadopoulos, Mrs Majda Potrata, Mr Lluís Maria de Puig, Mr Anatoliy Rakhansky, Mr Johannes Randegger, Mr Zbigniew Rau, Mr Zoltán Rockenbauer, Mrs Anta Rugăte, Mr Piero Ruzzante, Mr Volodymyr Rybak, Mr Pär-Axel Sahlberg, Mr André Schneider, Mr Vitaliy Shybko, Mr Yury Solonin, Mr Ninoslav Stojadinović, Mr Valeriy Sudarenikov, Mr Mehmet **Tekelioęlu**, Mr Ed van Thijn, Mr Piotr Wach, Mrs Majléne Westerlund Panke, Mr Emanuelis **Zingeris**.

N.B. The names of those members present at the meeting are printed in bold

Head of Secretariat: Mr Christopher Grayson
Committee secretariat : MM. Ary, Dossow