

Culture Action Europe*'s appeal for the European Elections 2014

Europe faces challenges today that cannot be compared with earlier decades: people live longer, natural resources fade, jobs are scarce – and there is no going back.

Since 2008, Europeans have been told that we are living a crisis, the worst since 1929. Each year, we have been told that it will get better. Each year, reality proves differently.

The reality in Europe is not appropriately described as a crisis. Rather it must be seen as a transition, from one world order into another one. Either this transition will lead Europe to growing inequalities or to a **new social agreement** based on sustainability and the fulfillment of human rights for the current and future generations. The shape it will take **depends on choices we make now**. Europe has all necessary assets, tangible and cultural, to build a sustainable future: we must invest in them now!

Social, not economic, growth must be the priority for contemporary Europe. Enhancing people's cultural competence, our capacity for cooperation and critical thinking, our openness to diversity, our curiosity: all of this is essential to develop a sustainable society where rights, responsibilities and shared well-being can grow. The Arts and Sciences powerfully contribute to such capacities, as does accessible education for all and the scrupulous fulfillment of all human rights.

It is time for decision-makers and citizens alike to form a broader discourse on the **future of Europe**, underlining **cultural development as a strategic necessity**.

The **democratic gap** in decision-making must be filled. The 2014 elections are an opportunity to **reconnect institutions with European citizens**. Only 33% of EU citizens trust the European institutions, according to a recent opinion survey led by [eurobarometer](#). This is a crisis of legitimacy. It is a failure.

People's hopes, fears and priorities deserve answers that cannot be subordinated to the demands of the financial markets. We must develop a political project based on culture and learning, an appropriate response to a political, social, cultural, and economic, emergencies. It is not more consumption that we need in Europe. We need ethics and quality in all aspects of life.

Europe faces rising nationalism, even racism. The European project must not fail to meet this challenge. An attractive and serious alternative must be formed to engage Europeans. A narrative of inclusion and shared space must be designed. This is a cultural mission. **Local governments** are in the frontline and major allies in this endeavour: their voices must count in the decision-making of a fully democratic Europe.

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Therefore, Culture Action Europe appeals to all participants in the European elections:

To the European political parties and groups:

- To present, through their programmes, a **real vision for Europe and a credible political project**.
- To **integrate civil society into the drafting process of their programmes**, encourage wide **participation at conventions** where campaign strategies are adopted and propose **candidates** with ethical and cultural engagement, including expression of the civil society.
- To make their affiliation to the European parties or alliances clear. This is necessary information so that voters to understand the European positioning of the parties and candidates.

To the Candidates and future Members of the European Parliament (MEPs):

- To offer a long-term strategy and political vision that goes further than a restricted economic approach.
- To **clearly state their affiliation to the European parties** during the campaign.
- To **address the role of culture** in particular during the campaigns, insisting on **its necessary contribution to sustainable development** and to commit to actively fostering an ongoing debate on the cultural factor.
- To personally commit to **defending values that impact the citizens' lives directly as key to sustainable and democratic societies**, Among others, future MEPs must work to ensure freedom of expression, the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits, realize equality between men and women, fight against all sorts of discrimination, place social inclusion and cohesion as a priority, play a responsible role for a more healthy and just world, ensure equal access to education and public health services, invest relentlessly in environmental protection and green economy.
- To create an **Intergroup** of the European Parliament dedicated to Culture in order to cultivate cross-sectoral synergies and debate as well as to promote the **integration of culture** as a primary resource for sustainable development in all relevant policy and programmes - from external relations to cohesion, from education and learning to economy and labor - as well as in the revision of the treaty and all relevant political and legislative processes.

To the parties, the candidates and the future MEPs:

- To promote the institution of a **cultural impact assessment** to be performed prior to the adoption of policies in fields such as education and learning, urban planning and architecture, civil and economic rights as well as naturally arts and heritage.

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- To **take measures necessary to implement international engagements** in the domain of culture and heritage (e.g. the UNESCO convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions – 2005).
- To **integrate civil society in the process of the European institutions decision-making processes**, by ensuring a higher level of transparency, informing them at an early stage in the legislative process, consulting them regularly and building stable relationships with all citizens.
- To operate for the good of all European citizens and in order to do so, when necessary, show **independence** from the national interests
- To **push for a revision of the Europe 2020 strategy, putting well-being and development of social capital at the centre of a strategy** for a sustainable Europe
- To **support** the cultural and artistic circulation throughout Europe (**‘Erasmus for the arts’**) and to **remove all barriers** to it, including byzantine visa regulations and taxation/welfare conditions impossible to reconcile. In general to further promote the coordination of European social protection systems to guarantee the **wellbeing of citizens and decent conditions of work and production for all.**
- To adopt the necessary regulation to **recognize the economic rights of creators and producers** with respect for those of distributors and intermediaries.
- To actively oppose any **erosion of the role of the public sphere**, especially in the fields of **culture, arts, education, science/research, citizenship, and human rights** - all fundamental European values to be invested in.
- In particular, to ensure that the negotiations on a **US-EU trade agreement (TTIP) do not water down our environmental and social standards, lead to the reduction of the public sphere in our societies or the relinquishing of the creators’ rights.**

** Since 1992 Culture Action Europe (CAE) is the leading European network in the field of culture and today CAE gives voice to more than 80,000 organisations brought together by its 115 members active in all cultural and artistic domains: from museums to public libraries, from architects to writers associations, from festivals to opera houses, from research institutions to cultural centers, from theatres to associations for social promotion and education, from orchestras and conservatories to music councils, from performing to visual arts and from organisations representing employers to organizations representing workers. CAE aims at putting culture at the heart of the public debate and decision-making at every level – both local and European - as an essential component for sustainable societies based upon respect for universal human rights and to the benefit of present and future generations and to encourage the democratic development of the European Union, as the first and most ambitious attempt to establish a new form of democracy based on respect for human rights and the will to organize cultural life around a complex identity and not the hegemony of a single language, culture or religion.*

With the support of the ECF:



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