

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - REPORT ON THE FIRST CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM¹

2005 Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions

The 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (hereinafter “the CDCE” or “the Convention”) underlines the fundamental role of civil society² in its implementation. Since 2014, the Parties to the CDCE and the CDCE Secretariat have been actively working to establish a “roadmap of activities to further promote cooperation between the Convention’s governing bodies and civil society organisations”³. An assessment of the participation of civil society in the implementation of the Convention was conducted between 2014 and 2015 and presented at the 9th ordinary session of the CDCE Intergovernmental Committee (IGC) in December 2015. Based on the challenges identified in the assessment and proposals made by civil society to the Secretariat and the IGC, the latter issued Decisions 9.IGC 9 and 10.IGC 6 to foster the increased contribution of civil society to the implementation of the Convention. Among other things, it invited civil society to present activity reports and called for a biennial civil society forum preceding the meetings of the CDCE Conference of Parties.

The First Civil Society Forum took place on 12 June 2017 and gathered very diverse civil society organisations, as well as observers from governmental delegations. Approximately half of the participants were present in discussions around the CDCE for the first time and had the opportunity to introduce themselves, their work and their interest in the CDCE implementation. The event, organised by the Secretariat with civil society representatives working on a voluntary basis, aimed to foster networking opportunities and provide space for civil society both to give global visibility to its work and to identify common actions to implement the CDCE. It also intended to facilitate the preparation of the first civil society activity report, to be provided to the IGC at its eleventh session in Paris (12 to 15 December 2017). A significant part of the debates was devoted, therefore, to the concrete steps for the preparation of this report.

The Forum reaffirmed the essential role of civil society in the implementation of the Convention and the importance of cooperation between civil society, the CDCE Secretariat and the CDCE Parties to achieve its principles and objectives. It provided the opportunity for civil society to contribute to the reflection process around its implementation, by expressing

¹ Prepared by Lilian Hanania, based on the *Report on the First Civil Society Forum*, held on 12 June 2017 at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, before the Sixth ordinary session of the Conference of Parties to the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. The Report and its Executive summary are based on notes taken by different civil society representatives who kindly volunteered to serve as moderators and rapporteurs during the Forum and to lead follow-up actions (*in alphabetical order*: Serhan Ada, Oana Barsan, Giulia D’Errico, Cornelia Düemcke, Diego Gradis, Valeria Marcolin, Giacomo Mazzone, Richard Polacek, Lilian Richieri Hanania, Anupama Sekhar, Ole Reitov and Sara Whyatt, Wafe Belgacem).

² According to the [Operational Guidelines on article 11 of the CDCE](#), civil society is defined as “non-governmental organisations, non-profit organisations, professionals in the culture sector and associated sectors, groups that support the work of artists and cultural communities”.

³ Please see *Item 9 of the Provisional Agenda: Assessment of the participation of civil society in [the] implementation of the Convention*, CE/15/9.IGC/9, p. 2.

their main topics of concern, challenges, priorities and suggestions, which are summarized below. The morning debates were dedicated to exchanging knowledge on the Convention and on the roles of civil society in its implementation. This awareness raising step allowed to address the new tasks expected from civil society, in particular its abovementioned activity report. The afternoon sessions were organised in World Café format around the four monitoring goals put forward in the CDCE First Global Report, [Re/Shaping Cultural Policies](#).

MAIN TOPICS OF CONCERN, CHALLENGES, PRIORITIES AND SUGGESTIONS

Morning sessions

- The need for **geographically-balanced representation of civil society**.
- **Obstacles to civil society participation in CDCE meetings** should be addressed - there is a lack of resources and insufficient awareness of the relevance of the meetings and of decisions adopted at the international level.
- The importance of a long-term **exchange forum for civil society**, allowing to identify challenges and to move forward together, including in connection with other existing fora, such as other intergovernmental organisations.
- The role of **reports prepared by civil society on the CDCE implementation** in completing or challenging in a constructive way, if needed, the information provided by the Parties to the CDCE in their quadrennial reports.
- The **need to take the CDCE language to people and their actual practice**, also allowing for comparison to other UNESCO treaties and greater understanding of the CDCE specificities compared to those other treaties.
- Regarding the fear expressed by some CDCE Parties that the acknowledgement of cultural diversity might hinder social cohesion or security, there is a **need to raise awareness and better understanding of the CDCE and its importance for social peace and democracy**.
- The **need to remain active and vigilant in the future, notably regarding international trade agreements** - attention to concerns enshrined in the CDCE is required when negotiating such agreements in the digital era.
- The **role of traditional media and broadcasters** to spread information on the CDCE and works produced via the International Fund for Cultural Diversity (IFCD).
- The **need for greater professionalization** in the presentation of projects submitted to the IFCD - **capacity building** is essential for fund raising, project management and advocacy.
- The **mobility of artists**, including with respect to visas, may be hindered by nationalist policies. The difficulties in this topic are not exclusive of North or South countries.
- The need to promote **freedom of expression, artistic freedom and freedom in expression of faith** was also highlighted.
- The **status of the artists and employees of the cultural sector** deserves greater attention.

World Café sessions

Goal 1: Support sustainable systems of governance for culture

- **The digital shift and the need for appropriate regulation** at all levels;
- The need to find the right **balance between access to knowledge and culture**, on the one hand, **and the protection of intellectual property rights**, on the other, to ensure the sustainability of cultural industries;
- The challenge in terms of **skills development of the workforce in the cultural sector** regarding digital skills, but also financial reporting and project management;
- The way the increasingly reduced remit and funding and the growing (economic and political) pressure on public service media, as well as the increased concentration in the media sector, threaten **media pluralism, freedom and diversity**;
- The **need for sustained social/structured dialogue between employers' and workers' organisations** to make the cultural sector sustainable;
- The need for civil society to raise their capacity to engage in more **evidence-based advocacy work** in favour of the cultural sector at the national, regional and local levels;
- The good governance of culture includes **accountability and transparency** of civil society organisations;
- The need to ensure **better coordination** and encourage **more cooperation between UNESCO, WIPO and the ILO**.

Goal 2: Balanced flow of cultural goods and services & increased mobility of artists and cultural professionals

Balanced flows of cultural goods and services

- The possible **threat / impact of new international trade agreements** on cultural diversity and cultural exceptions **at the digital age**;
- How to orient **behaviour of new actors in the digital environment**;
- The **need to implement article 16 of the CDCE on preferential treatment** (*e.g.* the experience of the European Union with Protocols and Agreements on Cultural Cooperation negotiated in parallel to international trade agreements);
- **Reports and conferences organized by civil society and notably the academia** on this topic in recent years should serve as tools for the CDCE Parties.

Mobility of artists and cultural professionals

- **Increasingly restrictive visa policies** make it more and more difficult for artists and culture workers to travel;
- **Intra-African mobility remains expensive and complicated** due to the lack of infrastructures and transport connections between African countries;
- **Forced mobility in the context of armed conflicts and climate change** has a negative effect on cultural diversity;
- The **need to limit possible negative impacts of mobility in the form of social dumping**. The huge disparities in social protection schemes for artists and cultural workers is a growing challenge in the context of cross-border mobility. Social protection and decent work

opportunities are necessary to protect local artists and cultural workers. **Collaboration between UNESCO and the ILO** on this matter should be reinforced.

Goal 3: Integrate culture in sustainable development frameworks

- The existence of **different meanings and understandings according to different sustainability frameworks**;
- The **need for a stronger position of the CDCE in debates on sustainable development**;
- The **need for the CDCE to be re-interpreted** in the light of the decreasing support for the humanities – and not just the arts - in many parts of the world;
- **The impact of culture on every political activity** (article 13 of the CDCE) - culture should be integrated into all decision-making processes;
- The **role of civil society in awareness raising** and advocacy before governments;
- The **contribution of culture to the economy** needs to be accompanied by **freedom of cultural expression and cultural diversity objectives**;
- The importance of cooperation towards development and the need for civil society to focus on **developing countries, youth** (link with education policies, including targeted at audience development) **and cultural infrastructure**.

Goal 4: Promote human rights and fundamental freedoms

- The important divide between rhetoric support for fundamental freedoms and human rights, including the freedom of artistic expression, on the one side, and **concrete actions for the implementation of international instruments**, on the other;
- Artistic freedom should be seen not only as rights of individuals, but also as a **collective right affecting the whole community**;
- **Threats by non-state actors** (*e.g.* right-wing extremists, religious fundamentalist groups across all faiths, and some civil society organisations) may lead to self-censorship. **Censorship boards** may play a role in suppressing arts freedom and government control of the press also represents a general threat to freedom of expression;
- **Digital media may impact artists' socio-economic rights**, including through loss of remuneration for their work;
- The **need for awareness-raising and training on the freedom of artistic expression**. Attention should be drawn to children (school materials, education programs) and young cultural professionals;
- The **need for networking**;
- The **importance of collaboration with the United Nations, the Special Rapporteur on culture and other mechanisms**;
- The issues of **gender equality in the arts and artists' mobility** were highlighted as an artistic freedom issue;
- **Trade unions** are essential for collective action towards arts freedom.

THE WAY FORWARD - AXES OF WORK

During the Forum, the following axes of work for civil society were identified for the months and years to come and will require further discussion among civil society representatives, the CDCE Secretariat and the CDCE governing bodies. Those axes, based notably on IGC decisions, require building coordination and information sharing strategies, improving governance and developing work processes on a long-term basis within civil society, in order to ensure that its diversity is also taken into account (*e.g.* geographical representation, type and size of organisations, sectors involved, etc.).

1. Prepare an **annual report by civil society**;
2. Contribute to the definition of an **item in the IGC agenda on the participation of civil society** and take part in the IGC Bureau meeting before the IGC session;
3. Propose **amendments to information documents** presented for each point of the agenda;
4. Assist the CDCE Secretariat in building **indicators to better assess the involvement of civil society**;
5. Support the Secretariat in the **dissemination of information on meetings of the CDCE governing bodies** to facilitate broader participation of civil society;
6. Contribute to the **preparation of a biennial Civil Society Forum**.