



Girona Declaration of the European Cultural Parliament, ECP, 1 November 2015

The European Cultural Parliament thanks for the hospitality and warm welcome received in Girona and expresses its admiration for the aspirations of the Catalan Nation to promote and develop the culture and language of the Catalan people.

The European Cultural Parliament, in order to unlock the possible value of culture for Europe and its societies, states that

- The nations of Europe have undergone a series of crises during the past years. The unprecedented influx of refugees and migrants in combination with financial constraints, have strained the political and social fabric of the continent. ECP strongly advocates a European policy of openness towards refugees fleeing from conflict areas. This policy is rooted in European history and values of humanism.
- ECP acknowledges the challenges ahead in integrating the many newcomers. It maintains that a diversity of cultures must play a decisive role in the meeting between European societies and the newcomers. The influx of refugees and migrants poses no existential challenge for Europe. With its 500 million inhabitants, this challenge is surmountable.
- Culture is an important basis for integration. The ECP calls upon those active in culture and the arts to use their means and competencies to actively stimulate mutual integration between the newly arrived and their local communities. A deepened awareness, respect and appreciation of each others cultural background and values are necessary and cannot develop unilaterally. Culture may and should contribute to giving the newcomers a face and voice, forging new links through engaging in cultural activities and sharing stories.
- The development of Europe is a unique project based on the desire of peace between nations and citizens. Culture and European values of human rights and democracy, as designated in the statutes of the Council of Europe, are essential forces towards the future Europe. To realize its contribution it is important to look beyond the language of crises and create inspiration, innovation and hope.
- Individual citizens of the European Union have gained unique rights through the Lisbon treaty that defined Europe as a union of both states and individual citizens. The new strength of individuals is a growing opportunity, yet creates challenges for cultural professionals and institutions. Cultural organisations, public, private and voluntary, and their activities may and should raise the cultural horizon of children, empower citizenship and improve the quality of life in society.
- The strength of Europe lies in its cultural diversity. Its educational system should encourage diversity to flourish and make it possible for creativity and artistic excellence to develop everywhere on the continent.

- The future of Europe may require fundamentally new forms in quality of living and working. However, the innovation required has to be based on European values and traditions. A creative balance between tradition and innovation should stimulate a living cultural practice and prevent 'museification' of our past, while avoiding the risk of the instrumentalization of the Arts.
- Diversity and cultural exchange are vital prerequisites for the future of Europe. Therefore Europe should be an open space for culture. Artists and other cultural professionals should be allowed to travel freely.
- According to ECP, culture is the core of society and thus an essential element in the dialogue between nations and individuals. In some European nations culture is severely suffering from budget cuts and in some cases outright neglect. The social conditions, including health and unemployment insurance for artists are non-existent or declining in many countries and the ECP urges governments to take action in order to restore the legitimate status of culture.
- Both the European Union and the Council of Europe are based on values involving human rights and duties that are not negotiable. Citizens in today's European Union have been given a unique right to be the bearers of those values. Culture comes into action through citizenship.

The members of ECP regret the fact that the Spanish authorities have not granted fellow ECP members from the Republic of Kosovo visas to participate in their 2015 session in Girona.

The members of ECP, recalling relevant resolutions of the Council of Europe and the Final Act of the Helsinki agreement 1975, again express serious concern over deteriorating conditions in human rights, gender equality, freedom of artistic expression, including politically and religiously motivated censorship in European countries, especially Russia and Turkey.