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## **2006 – Turku**

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**The overall theme of the session was “*Can Culture help dissolve the European Stalemate?*”**

This general theme was addressed by several speakers, including the Finnish sociology Professor Risto Alapuro, the EU Commission Representative in Finland, Mr Paavo Mäkinen and several new ECP Members. The Deputy Mayor of Turku, Kaija Hartiala, presented her City, which has been nominated Cultural Capital of Europe 2011. The President of the City Council of Turku, Mr Pertti Paasio, gave a reception in the Turku City Hall.

The ECP Lisbon Agenda Research Group, led by Simonetta Carbonaro, Italy, Bert Mulder, Netherlands and Joe Friggieri, Malta, presented a report “Culture, the heart of a knowledge-based economy – the strategic use of culture in the European project”. The report was officially handed over to the EU representative in Finland.

Download the report here: [ECP EU strategic use of culture 030906 final](#)

After introductions by Laura Freixas, Barcelona and Mikael Kosk, Helsinki, an intensive debate followed on the theme “How to accommodate the need for cultural freedom with religious values”. As a continuation of this debate Kathinka Dittrich van Weringh, Chairman of the Board of the European Cultural Foundation, introduced a discussion on possible ECP contributions to the “European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008”. Mercedes Giovinazzo, Barcelona, moderated both discussions.

Two famous Finnish politicians and cultural personalities, Jörn Donner and Heidi Hautala, introduced the important theme “Politics and culture – can and should they ever meet”. After an intensive discussion one conclusion was – “politicians: hands off culture! – artists: hands on politics!”

The joint ECP and Åbo Akademi University project “NUROPE”, “Nomadic University for Arts, Philosophy and Enterprise in Europe” had its first course (“oasis”) in Turku on the days before the ECP session.

About 80 ECP Members from 39 countries participated in the Turku session.

Karl-Erik Norrman  
Secretary General

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The 5th session of the ECP was held with the generous support of:

- The Finnish Ministry for Education
- Svenska Kulturfonden
- The City of Turku and
- European Cultural Foundation

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## **Programme**

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Fifth Session 15-17 September 2006 in Turku, Finland  
Preliminary Programme

About 90 cultural personalities from almost 40 European countries will participate in the fifth session of the ECP.

### **Thursday 14 September**

#### **Afternoon/ evening**

Participants arrive. In the evening a relaxed come-together with participants in the NUROPE session

**ECP Session Report  
15-17 September 2006 in Turku**

in the Pub "Päivekoti". Meeting of the ECP Senate at  
20.00.

**Friday 15 September**

- 09.00** Registration in Åbo Akademi University.
- 10.00** Opening – the Deputy Mayor of the European Capital of Culture 2011 – Turku, Ms Kaija Hartiala, and the Representative of the EU Commission in Finland, Mr Paavo Mäkinen.
- 11.00** Key-note speech by Professor Risto Alapuro, Helsinki: "The first and the second degree: a cultural dimension in Europe".
- 11.20** Introduction of the main theme of the session: "Can Culture help dissolve the European Stalemate?" (Pär Stenbäck, Helsinki and Karl-Erik Norrman, Berlin/Stockholm).
- 11.45** "The Mozart Project", presented by Maja Mirkovic and Dusan Muric, Belgrade.

## **ECP Session Report 15-17 September 2006 in Turku**

- 12.15** Presentation of the ECP Report on the Contribution of Culture to the Lisbon Agenda 2000, Simonetta Carbonaro, Italy, Joe Friggieri, Malta and Bert Mulder, Netherlands.
- 13.00** Lunch and press conference
- 14.15** General Debate on the main theme of the session. New Members present themselves:  
Dino Mustafic, Sarajevo, Laurent Gerverau, Paris, Kari Immonen, Turku, Dorata Ilczuk, Warszaw, Helle Juul, Copenhagen, Fred Kelemen, Berlin, Julia Bardoun, Kaliningrad, Jan-Erik Andersson, Turku, Iara Boubnova, Sofia, Ralf Richardt Ströbech, Copenhagen, Nelly Bekus, Minsk, Pekka Vapaavuori, Turku, Denisa Comanescu, Bucharest.
- 16.00** Coffee break
- 16.30** Continuation of the general debate and summary by Leonidas Donskis, Kaunas, Lithuania.

**17.45**

Video presentation by Maria Korosteleva, St. Petersburg.

**18.15**

Reception in the Turku City Hall

**Saturday 16 September**

**09.00**

Presentation of the ECP/Åbo Akademi University project NUROPE (Nomadic University for Art, Philosophy and Enterprise in Europe), which holds its first “Oasis” in Turku 11-14 September (Pierre Guillet de Monthoux, Geneva, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Italy, Bengt Kristensson Uggla, Turku and Mona Nylund, Turku).

**09.45**

“Music Mind Spirit Trust” – a presentation by Paul and Chika Robertson, United Kingdom.

**10.00**

“How to accommodate the need for cultural freedom with religious values?”. Introduction by Mikael Kosk, Helsinki and Laura Freixas, Barcelona. General debate. Moderator Mercedes Giovinazzo, Interarts, Barcelona.

- 11.00** Coffee break
- 11.15** Continuation of the debate and summary by Leonidas Donskis.
- 12.45** “Europudding vs Art – Experiences on a European TV co-production”, Eduard Habsburg, Austria.
- 13.00** Lunch
- 14.15** “A European Intercultural dialogue”. Introduction by Kathinka Dittrich van Weringh, Bonn. ECP and ECF plans for the European year 2008. General debate. Moderator Mercedes Giovinazzo.
- 16.00** Coffee break
- 16.30** Continuation of general debate on the theme of the session.

**18.15**

Concert – Flutist Gunilla von Bahr and Friends, Sweden.  
After the concert a reception in Arken.

**Sunday 17 September**

General debate on the theme of the session and on the sub-themes. The Messages of the Turku meeting.

**10.00**

“Open doors – living in Europe”, presentation by the architect Verena Huber, Switzerland.

**10.15**

Coffee break

**10.30**

“Politics and Culture – can and should they ever meet?”  
Introduction by Heidi Hautala, Finland (ex MEP) and Jörn Donner, Finland (author, ex MP, etc). Concluding debate

**13.00**

Information about the next ECP session.

**13.30**

End of session

The ECP expresses its gratitude to the following partners:

- Foundation for Swedish Culture in Finland, Helsinki
- City of Turku
- Ministry of Education, Helsinki
- Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation, Stockholm
- European Cultural Foundation, Amsterdam

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## **Cultural freedom and religious values – M. Kosk**

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How to accommodate the need for cultural freedom with religious values?

Introduction held by Mikael Kosk at the meeting of European Cultural Parliament in Turku September 16th 2006 Ladies and Gentlemen, the heading of this discussion is Religion and cultural freedom. The heading seems to suppose that religion and cultural freedom are in contrast to each other. Religion is conceived as a closed system of values and articles of faith that are incompatible with freedom in the sense that individuals and groups themselves choose their values and the guiding rules of their lives. Religion is supposed to require obedience whereas cultural freedom in a pluralistic and secular society is supposed to give the right and power of decision on where one belongs to the individuals and the groups themselves. There is no obligation of commitment to any faith.

First I want to examine the concept of freedom a bit closer. Freedom is a kind of ideological slogan that does not say much about what the conditions and the import of freedom are. In a political and cultural context there are many different senses of freedom that have to be separated from each other.

Freedom and democracy are often confused. Democracy is a specific form of freedom where a voter in political elections independently decides what person or party he wants to see as his deputy in political institutions.



Religious liberty concerns the matter of whether the individual is able to choose the religion and the religious community he wants to commit himself to, or to choose a renouncement of any commitment to religious faith. If he chooses to commit himself to a religious community he has in a state of freedom accepted a limitation of his freedom. Any religious community is based on some kind of limitations of individual freedom and on obedience of a collective authority. In general a child is baptized into a religious community in which he is supposed to stay, and it may later on be difficult to make a personal choice at this point because of social pressure.

Freedom of the market is another sense of the concept of freedom and is often confused with freedom of people. Freedom of the market is a model for economical efficiency and revenues and is as such perhaps more a freedom of a system than a freedom of human will and conscience. The paradox of freedom of the global market is that it seems to stereotype human life more than diversifying it.

And then we have the very general, contradictory and difficult concept of cultural freedom. The concept of culture is only an overwriting of a variance of phenomenons in human life: social order, religion, way of life, values, nationality, locality, ethnicity, family, environment, arts, science and so on. The question of what cultural freedom means gets different answers according to the sense and meaning that is given to the concept of culture.

No one, for example, can choose his own ethnicity. The freedom of choice lies in the import and impact one is giving one's own ethnicity. Then it is a much more difficult task to choose the importance and impact that other people are giving one's own ethnicity. This is in turn a reason that cultural freedom is transformed into cultural conflicts in a lack of freedom. The difficulty of choosing or even having an influence on what one's own ethnicity means in the eye of the other may make a genuine choice of who one is or wants to be impossible.

On another level there may be a similar conflict between different religions. The way in which one religion is seen in the eyes of another religion may not at all correspond to the self-esteem of the faithful themselves. The conflict gets stuck in a deadlock or stalemate when one religion wants to conceive itself as superior in relation to another religion, and when it wants to see the believers of this other religion as lost and inferior and in need of conversion to the right faith. The faithfulness of one's own religion is not compatible with the faithfulness of the other religion.

Nethertheless is every religion upholds values which bear an insight into what the conditions of human life are and what the consequences of a violation of them are. In this space between the eyes or the gaze of the other, and the collective the individual belongs to, there is a place for individual freedom, if the individual freedom exists. The individual freedom may be narrower than one wishes to believe in the individualistic and secular society; the coercion may be more of an invisible than a pronounced kind. Yet individual freedom has a profound and essential meaning. It concerns the possibility of choosing one's outlook on life and to choose or not to choose a religious commitment. It also concerns the right of questioning political, ideological, religious and cultural ideas and practices without badgering or persecution.

Here freedom of speech is at stake. The so called caricature war started after the newspaper Jyllands-Posten had published some disdainful drawings representing the Prophet Muhammed. But what was this war about, was it a kind of religious war where the secular society with its own sacrosanct principles of freedom of speech came to blows with a theocratic social order that forbids any reproduction of the Prophet and any insult to what is conceived as holy. Was this sharpened and politically constructed conflict on some level about a tension between freedom and coercion?

There is a distinction between the freedom or the right to do something and the content and significance of what has been done. Freedom of speech is not the same thing as the content of what is being said and to an even lesser extent the same as the responsibility for it. When one is saying something about religious faith the question is even more complicated because faith is not an argument. Faith cannot be an issue of debate in the same way as it is possible to argue on whether the invasion of Iraq was right or wrong, or to discuss some other hot-spiced political issue that certainly divides opinions. A faith has a starting point that cannot be questioned without abandoning the faith in itself at the same. It is not possible to be a Christian or a Muslim without believing in God or Allah, otherwise there should no longer be any conception of what is meant by being a Christian or a Muslim.

When a dialogue between different religions or between a religious and a secular point of view is being asked for there is a crucial question of what the subject of that dialogue should be. Endless controversies on what the right faith is, or whether God exists or not have been carried on along history, but this kind of disputes do not give much help to

increase the understanding of others' conviction, view of life, values and faith. Freedom of speech delivered indeed the right to criticize, question and deny whatever articles of faith, and both the idea that God is almighty and the idea that faith in God is an expression for an antiquated authoritarian system may go into the pocket of the same society, that has the ability to handle mutually incompatible ideas and conceptions. But in order to get a bit further there is most of all a need for a proper understanding of who the other is, and indeed a proper self-understanding.

There is no shortcut to such a dialogue. First of all, some obstacles must be overcome. The first of them is the deeply rooted division into sameness and otherness. When otherness furthermore in a primitive way is identified with the evil there is a deadlock that makes all discussion impossible. Prejudices are deeply inscribed in the mental space that constitutes the conception of otherness. Prejudices are fictivising the other in a way that makes a dialogue in terms of understanding impossible. The fiction of the other must as a starting point be broken.

When prejudices are blended with hard conflicts of interest, big differences in material and economical conditions, and political and territorial struggle of power they are also used as arguments in these conflicts and are thus made even more explosive. When cultural, religious, ethnic or national groups are hunting their symbolic property the conflicts also transgress to a symbolic level that in a way cannot be negotiable. There is a paradox in the fact that the most rancorous battles are fought around the meaning and impact of human symbols. Rather abstract things as symbols may arouse the most passionate emotions and insurmountable dissension among people.

If the caricatures of the Prophet Muhammed are to be conceived as political satire or blasphemy of the holy is a question that cannot be solved on the level of arguments. It concerns two different and mutually incompatible symbolical interpretations of the same drawings, and those who interpret them in some certain way have no other choice than being responsible in a moralic sense for the content and significance they want to give them, and that concerns drawers, writers, speechmakers and publishers who want to initiate a debate, and indeed those who in a state of humiliation want to take the right in their own hands.

Mere tolerance and respect are not sufficient to confront the question of responsibility. It is the same thing with tolerance and respect as with freedom of speech regarded only as a right one has, that it is possible to say anything and to listen to anything without ever confronting what is being said. In order to give respect, tolerance and freedom of speech a sense one has to meet the other and regard that other person as different and equal. Even at that point there may of course still remain unsolvable differences in the points of view and in the very way in which these differences of opinion are conceived. One problem with arguing is that there is not always even a starting point where the issue on which there is a disagreement should be conceived in the same terms.

People who do not have a strong identity and are uncertain of where they are belonging may have difficulties with confronting other people. A position of power and strength is not either the best starting point for a dialogue; the one who wants to execute power in relationship to other people and advocate his own interests is not necessarily regarding others as equal, regardless of how much use there is being made of ideological notions as democracy, freedom and justice.

The simplified ideological guidelines are a pitfall there is reason to be cautious with. The difficulty of talking about freedom lies in the fact that there is no common conception of what freedom means. When such a common conception of what freedom means is presupposed it is not possible to come forth to the stage of a dialogue, it remains at the level of an ideological phrase. There are a row of preconditions that must be fulfilled before a genuine dialogue is possible, and one of the most important of these preconditions is to make yourself aware of what presumptions and motives one is starting from when use of valuative and ideologically loaded words is made. There is no common language to start from and the valuative words are not always the best starting point. It is a slow and toilsam task to work out a language in which a mutual understanding is possible.

The most obvious example of this is human rights. The United Nations declaration of human rights has been a guideline for the global society for more than half a century, but still there is a lot of work to do in order to go ahead with a common understanding of what these rights are meaning and how they are to be implemented.

A thin universalism may be the most that is realistic to expect, an universalism that is just enough to uphold a language where a mutual understanding of what is at stake is possible.

And every genuine and constructive dialogue presupposes an ability to live with ambiguity, uncertainty and intractable conflicts. There is no neutral, objective and universal stance.

In order to come back to the question I started from, if there is a contradiction between religion and cultural freedom, I want to say that there is a deeper lack of freedom in the very way in which conflicts between religions and cultures are exposed, and loaded up with political and economical struggle of power, and in the worst case also fear, prejudices and stereotypes.

The most important thing is that the will to a dialogue exists, and that will is a precondition for freedom in a deeper and more essential sense. When the will to a dialogue exists it is also possible to discuss what is meant by freedom and what is meant by commitment.

The call for an intercultural dialogue starts from an individual level, not as much from the level of political, religious or cultural order. The right place for that dialogue is the communities where people from different cultures are living together and not always understanding each other. The dialogue is a task for the civic society.

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## **Concluding remarks**

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Concluding remarks by the Secretary General, Karl-Erik Norrman.

1. It was a great pleasure to hold the session in the Cultural Capital of Europe 2011 – Turku. Thank you, City of Turku and Åbo Akademi University for making it possible to convene so many interesting people! Thank you, Pär Stenbäck for mobilizing and coordinating the Finnish supporters to the session!
2. We are proud of the ECP Lisbon Agenda Research Report on the strategic use of Culture in the European project. We will continue to present the messages of the

report in the EU Commission, as well as in National governments.

3. We congratulate the organizers of NUROPE for the successful start of the new Nomadic University for arts, philosophy and Enterprise in Europe. We will follow and participate in the coming “oasis”.
4. We have started a discussion on the conditions for Cultural freedom in Europe. This debate must continue. We are possibly in the middle of a shift of environment for Culture. One informal conclusion from the last debate on Politics and Culture was: “Politicians: Hands off Culture! – Artists: Hands on politics!”
5. The ECP will start preparing for the European year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008. Many projects are already there, the inter-artistic dialogue is there. But we have to see how this intra-artistic dialogue can also contribute to an inter-cultural dialogue. One interesting contribution may come from the architects/members of the ECP.
6. Inspired by the EU-Representative, Mr Mäkinen, the ECP will look into the possibilities of helping to communicate the European Idea.
7. The ECP will open an Internet Forum for continued discussion. The forum will be linked to the ECP website
8. All ECP-Members are invited to present the ECP and its messages, notably the Lisbon Agenda Report, in their home cities/countries, through interviews, press conferences or other media briefings. Every member is an ambassador or press attaché of the ECP.
9. The next session and other continued activities of the ECP will be discussed and prepared in the new ECP Internet Forum and also at meetings of ad hoc programme committees.
10. The Deputy Mayor of Sibiu, Romania, extended an invitation to the ECP to hold its sixth session in Sibiu, Cultural Capital of Europe 2007. The session is likely to be held in October.

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## **Cultural freedom and religious values – L. Freixas**

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How to accommodate cultural freedom with religious values?

By Laura Freixas

The question we are supposed to answer is, in my opinion, a tricky one. It seems to take two things for granted. First, that culture, not religion, needs freedom. So far so good: it is true that in present-day Europe, religious freedom is protected, while cultural productions are sometimes threatened, not by religion, but by religious fanatics. But what makes me uneasy is the second assumption: namely, that values are somehow connected with religion, rather than with culture. It is true that globally considered, religion (under whatever denomination) offers important values. To the individual, it gives a sense that life has a meaning and a purpose. It provides rules and commandments, illustrated by the lives of gods, saints or prophets, whose examples are there for us to follow. It also contains another wonderful gift: the beauty and mystery that one finds in a cathedral, or mosque, or small chapel, or in any sacred text, and that is so desperately rare in our modern world.

The usefulness of religion to the community is also beyond doubt. By means of festivities, rituals and symbols, customs and traditions, with the help of characters and stories, religion gives the members of the community a set of references which provide them with a sense of identity and belonging. Finally, religion promises justice in the other world, immortality as a reward to the righteous, and by doing so, it encourages good behavior in the earthly life.

But let us now ask: are not these values contained in culture as well?

We find beauty and mystery in Bach's Cantatas, but no less in Purcell's *Dido & Aeneas* or, why not, in the bloodcurdling record of Janis Joplin singing at Monterrey Pop Festival. Or in a Romanesque church, but not in those modern convents that are as uninspiring as youth hostels.

What about a good life? Certainly, culture cannot compete with religion in this respect insofar as novels, plays, pictures or films do not give any set of rules, nor do they pretend to hold any absolute truth. Religion gives answers, while culture leaves questions open. But for those of us who do not believe in Jesus, Buddha or Mahomet, Don Quijote, or Mathilde de la

Mole, or the narrator of Proust's novel, or the characters created by Chekhov, or even Saint Theresa of Avila read from an earthly perspective, are as good an example as saints' lives, the only difference being that here there is no obvious moral message nor happy ending guaranteed in the other world.

And since we speak of the other world, we must certainly recognize that not believing in its existence is an awful disadvantage for culture as compared to religion, although those of us who have no faith would argue that is simply realistic. But, in a sense, culture, art, is a form of immortality too, if only in the sense that images and stories exist by themselves, outside time and independently from their material support. And being handed from one generation to the next, they also ensure a continuity that escapes destruction by time. Eternity does exist for art and culture – if only in the minds and hearts of people who have been illuminated by them.

I hardly need to point out that art and culture have a wonderful advantage over religion, which is that they do not foster violence. In my country, Spain, the fans of Cervantes may detest those of Quevedo, or Valle-Inclán's followers may be bitterly opposed to enthusiastic readers of Galdós, but none of these disagreements has kindled any civil war yet, in a country that has known a good number of them.

Until not so long ago -maybe one century-, there were two foundations to all of our European culture: the Greek and Roman classics, on one hand, and the Bible on the other. For good or bad, the fact is that the classics are no longer taught at school nor revived in new cultural productions, and as for the Bible, in a multicultural, multireligious Europe, it cannot be, nor should it be, the source of our identity, morals and way of life. How can we, then -and I suppose this is the most relevant question in an European Cultural Parliament-, create a common, meaningful foundation for our identity as Europeans? Only, in my opinion, by culture. A culture which deserves its name -which is not made of reality shows and gossip magazines-, and which integrates religion not as religion but as history and literature.

Therefore, to the question: how to accommodate cultural freedom with religious values? I would answer: let's rather accommodate religious freedom with cultural values.