ECP 22nd Session in Oulu, Finland 15 - 17 August 2025

Theme: "Cultural Climate Change in Europe"

Report

ECP Oulu Report 2025

This report serves as the official and extensive summary of the 22nd Session of the European Cultural Parliament (ECP), held in Oulu, Finland, from August 15 - 17, 2025. The session convened approximately 60 distinguished cultural personalities from 24 countries. The central theme of the conference, "Cultural Climate Change in Europe," mirrored Oulu's designation as the European Capital of Culture 2026. Throughout the three days, members deliberated on critical issues such as the multifaceted consequences of climate change for the arts and culture, the potential role of culture in mitigating this global crisis, and how profoundly the ongoing conflicts, particularly the Russian war against Ukraine and the Israel - Hamas war, impact artistic expression and cultural life in Europe and its wider neighbourhood.

Each point below is also a link to the corresponding bookmark in the report!

Friday, 15 August

- Introduction to the Oulu Session by Secretary General Karl-Erik Norrman
- Opening of the Session by Chair of Oulu City Executive Board
- Welcoming words by Minister Pär Stenbäck
- General Debate moderated by Peter Hanke
- Presentation of Oulu – European Capital of Culture 2026 by CEO

Saturday, 16 August

- Presentation of new ECP Members
- General Debate on Session theme moderated by Bengt Kristersson Uggla
- General Debate on War and Peace in the 2020s moderated by Karl-Erik Norrman
- Workshops:
    - Culture in times of Climate Crisis. Moderator: Tuuli Lähdesmäki
    - Culture in times of War and Conflict. Moderator: Stelios Virvidakis
- General Debate moderated by Peter Hanke

Sunday, 17 August

- ECP Transatlantic Program, TAD – by Francois Carbon
- General Debate moderated by Judith McKimm
- Janis Garancs' Presentation: Digital Sovereignty and Cultural Climate Change
- Final Debate including adoption of **Oulu Declaration**, moderators Pär Stenbäck, Peter Hanke and Karl-Erik Norrman

Social and Cultural programme

- Welcome Reception offered by City of Oulu and Musical contribution: Concert Pianist/ECP-Member Mr. Rimantas Vingras
- Musical performance: Cellist Francesco Bartoletti and violinists Alexandra Richardson, Johanna Leponiemi, Osmo Leponiemi
- Evening at the Swedish School (Dinner, discussions and music)
- Guided Sightseeing Tour in Oulu by bus

Press, Participants and Editorial Team

- Press Release
- List of Participants
- Conclusion
- Impressum

A 10 min pod about the session can be found at:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PTKX6WzbJehiLNtIqjyks022uPWIwHj-/view?usp=sharing

A 5 min info video at:

https://youtu.be/BfNpVJmXjec

Introduction by Karl-Erik Norrman, ECP Secretary General

The 22nd Session of the European Cultural Parliament (ECP) was held in Oulu, Finland, on 15 - 17 August 2025 upon the generous invitation of the City of Oulu, European Capital of Culture 2026, and local sponsors. The theme of the session was *"Cultural Climate Change in Europe".* This is also the theme of Oulu 2026, which reflects, in a dual sense, the main challenges for European Culture today.

The session was initiated by the President of the ECP, Minister Pär Stenbäck, and was prepared and organized in close cooperation between ECP Secretary General Karl-Erik Norrman and the Secretariat of Oulu 2026.

About 60 ECP members from 23 European countries and a couple of international observers participated. The session was also attended by some 10-15 local artists and cultural personalities, which resulted in fruitful and promising contacts with ECP members. The session was held at the premises of the Oulu City Hall.

The session was opened by Jarmo Husso, Chair of the Oulu City Executive Board. The former Minister of Culture, Suvi Lindén, presented a message from today´s Minister of Science and Culture, Mari-Leena Talvitie. Piia Rantala-Korhonen, CEO of the Oulu Culture Foundation, provided a comprehensive overview of program plans for Oulu 2026, the European Capital of Culture.

Pär Stenbäck challenged ECP Members by asking how European culture and its practitioners and professionals can contribute to the future of European civilization. This future is under siege, he underlined, because the institutions and states which uphold our values, freedom of expression, creative freedom and other freedoms, are being challenged by authoritarian and totalitarian forces. The issue of how to defend European values in times of war, conflict, and increased authoritarianism became one of the main themes of the Oulu session.

ECP Senator Peter Hanke introduced a novel debating procedure by asking members to discuss matters in small 4-5-person groups before joining the general debate. The day concluded with ECP Member Rimantas Vingras playing piano compositions by Lithuanian composer Čiurlionis and the City of Oulu holding a generous welcome reception.

The second day included the introduction of new ECP Senators and Members. The general debate focused on the consequences for the cultural sector by the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine. Ukrainian Member

Viktor Ruban made a strong statement via video call and inspired the debate. A string quartet led by ECP Member Francesco Bartoletti performed. Two workshops were held:

1)Tuuli Lähdesmäki led a group on *Culture in Times of Climate Crisis*.

2) Stelios Virvidakis led a group on *Culture in Times of War and Conflict.*

The evening was spent at the Swedish School of Oulu, where a buffet dinner was hosted. Interesting discussions took place on the challenges for Swedish as a minority language in Finland. Students gave a musical performance.

The third day started with reports from the working groups and a presentation by ECP Member François Carbon on further plans for the ECP Transatlantic Dialogue (TAD). After a final debate, the participants of the 22nd Session agreed upon a comprehensive **Oulu Declaration.** They also expressed their gratitude to the Oulu hosts for the friendly reception and well-organized event. Members were encouraged to distribute the declaration to politicians, the media, and the cultural community in their home countries.

In the afternoon, participants were invited to a sightseeing bus tour of Oulu and its surroundings.

It is still an open question where the ECP will meet in 2026. Explorations of possible venues are ongoing.

Karl-Erik Norrman, Secretary General

Opening Session: Friday, August 15, 2025

The 22nd ECP Session commenced in the Oulu City Hall, a historically significant venue.

Welcoming Remarks

Jarmo Husso, Chair of the Oulu City Executive Board, extended a warm welcome to the "esteemed members of the European Cultural Parliament, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen," expressing great pride that participants had journeyed to Oulu, Finland, which is considered to be the "happiest country in the world" for the eighth consecutive year. He highlighted Oulu's status as the European Capital of Culture in 2026, emphasizing the city's unique history and spirit of progress. Jarmo Husso recounted that the Oulu City Hall, built in 1886, was a "miracle" for the small village at the time, for being the second building in Finland to be lit by electricity. He humorously noted the historic funding sources: "dog taxis and the distillation of alcohol". Oulu's leadership role in innovation was underscored by a staggering "3 billion users of smartphone technologies developed in Oulu, as well as the city's position as a world leader in 6G research, ranking as the "third most innovative city in Europe". Jarmo Husso also mentioned the hosting of the Air Guitar World Championship in Oulu, an event that promotes "world peace" since "while you're holding an air guitar, you cannot hold a gun". He reiterated that Oulu and the ECP share the premise that "Culture is the core of society. Creativity is the source of human existence". He concluded by stressing the importance of such meetings to strengthen European cooperation through ethical and artistic values.

Suvi Lindén, **former Minister of Culture**, in representing **Finland's Minister of Culture, Mari-Leena Talvitie**, conveyed her greetings, and expressed her full agreement with the ECP's mission statement that "culture is indeed the core of society, and creativity is the source of human existence". In her message, the Minister outlined the Finnish government's white paper on cultural policy, which aims to strengthen democratic societies through the arts and culture, viewing culture as a force that "strengthens and unites the nation and inspires the building of a more sustainable, viable and humane future". Furthermore, the Minister highlighted the objective of ensuring that "culture is and remains everyone's right," akin to the universal right to enjoy nature in Finland. She also noted the Council of Europe's significant work on the links between culture and democracy, stating that empirical evidence shows a "strong link between culture and democracy. When there is a lot of culture, there is a lot of democracy". Furthermore, she mentioned the European Commission's "Culture Compass", an initiative for a more strategic policy approach to culture, and the proposed "Agora EU" programme, which would combine "Creative Europe" with "democracy, citizens, equality, rights and values", therefore "doubling the budget". This combination could create "a useful synergy between culture and democracy". Despite current difficulties, Minister Talvitie's message conveyed optimism, stating the need for "understanding that culture is part of the solution to our pressing problems, such as the eroding of trust and the democratic backsliding which are both gaining ground".

Following this, **Minister Pär Stenbäck, the ECP President,** delivered his opening remarks and then officially declared the 22nd Session of the European Cultural Parliament opened.

ECP Oulu Session, opening remarks by ECP President Pär Stenbäck

Dear Parliamentarians,

Today, I would like to ask a most tricky question:

How can European culture and its practitioners and professionals contribute to the future of European and Western civilisation? This is a pertinent question because this future is under siege, because the institutions and states which uphold our values, freedom of expression, creative freedom, freedom of movement are challenged by authoritarian and totalitarian forces.
I very well understand that the terms I use are disputed: Can we gather around a European, Western civilisations, some of you may ask? Well, we could start by agreeing that the concept of a global world uniting around common values with strong institutions upholding them has become a dream, an illusion. Even if we continue to believe in and hope for a functioning world order, we must admit that it is breaking down, day by day.

The reality is that we Europeans find ourselves increasingly abandoned, side-stepped when it comes to decisions about war and peace, about the rules of the international community. We are told that the time of applying our models and doctrines is over and we are dwelling in self-criticism over our colonial past and our sins of the past and the present. Our decision-makers are fumbling, trying to get a common European act together.

1945 and onwards, Europe, with the considerable support from the US, was able to save the continent from the totalitarian onslaught. During the Cold War, culture played a decisive role in the victory which secured the freedoms which are the prerequisite for all culture activity. Today, we realise that the US is looking increasingly inwards and even killing institutions that facilitated the dissemination of Western culture to the Eastern Europe nations, such as radio stations broadcasting to oppressed nations.

We may hesitate to speak about a Western civilisation as it sounds boastful and out of touch. However, let me remind you that Chinese leaders do not hesitate to speak about a Chinese civilisation, Indian ones about a Hindu one. Europeans have been blamed for economic and military imperialism, but those days are over and will not return.

We should bravely revert to influencing trough culture, to export the soft values in culture, in the same way as US has dominated the soft power market through culture. America won many battles and hearts

with Hollywood films, Elvis Presley, Nobel prizes in literature and Jackson Pollack. What can we offer the world when our political and economic power is waning?

Well, we try, but is the European Song Contest the best we can offer the world? I urge you to imagine more powerful moves and initiatives to strengthen the European cultural readiness to meet the challenges of a world in turmoil. The dominating public discussion about arms and armament, unavoidable as such, must be accompanied by a brave and creative debate about the role of culture as a primary defence line in our battle against the dark forces that try to submerge those freedoms and traditions that is the basis for a European and Western civilisation.

General Debate Moderated by Peter Hanke

Peter Hanke introduced a novel debate format, aimed at fostering greater participation and discussion among members. This format involved alternating discussions in small groups (2 - 4 people), and plenary debates. He noted that "every member of this European Cultural Parliament could be a keynote speaker in some way, there's so much skill, brain power and experience".

Initial discussions revolved around Pär Stenbäck's provocation, exploring how to "enhance European values" and finding a "larger common denominator than the European Song Contest". The idea of a "spiritual armoring" for Europe was floated, seen as a way to enhance cultural matters without veering into "dirty nationalism".

Jakob Dahl Rendtorf, a philosopher, shared three key takeaways: the pessimistic vision of a world with contradictory powers in conflict, yet the imperative to maintain the "hope of cosmopolitanism"; the paradox of Europe's post-colonial past, hindering its adherence to cosmopolitan values, suggesting a need for "dialogue combined with an idea of humility"; and the future of culture, where culture is "something else than power," creating a paradox of maintaining strong pride.

Luis Tavares Pereira highlighted that "war is on the mindset of our leaders in the European Union," and emphasized the vital role of culture in fighting the "hybrid war," particularly "disinformation".

Marie Louise von Plessen recalled Churchill's 1947 speech which founded the European movement, and how culture "tends to be exploited and abused by many, many extremist parties," warning against "segregation" and the "traps of other people's frame of mind". She stressed that Europe today "is born out of the war", implying that the declarations after WWII shaped the current European identity.

Paula Birnbaum, a guest, drew attention to a report on the state of media in the US, which served as a "big red flag for Europe, indicating where not to go," noting how media outlets ranked, based on their susceptibility to "authoritarian leadership". She praised the use of "humour and art to digest the harsh reality".

Elena Mindrutrunen (observer) questioned the concept of "Western civilization," advocating for "multiculturalism" as the "beauty of Europe," and urged to defend democracy "outside the European borders as well", rather than focusing solely on internal fears.

Pär Stenbäck, clarified that the ECP does not aim to create a single "European culture", but rather celebrates the diversity of national cultures, united by shared values like "democratic freedom, freedom of expression". He argued that defining oneself against what threatens these values (e.g., Russia's claims of its own civilization being based on different values) is necessary.

The debate concluded with **Karl-Erik Norrman** emphasizing the need for "European self-confidence," noting that while Europeans are a small part of the global population, Europe consistently ranks highest in democracy, human rights, freedom of speech, and media freedom. He asserted that it's "almost in the European soul to be humble," but there are "limits for how humble we should be," advocating for pride in Europe's democratic achievements.

Presentation of Oulu – European Capital of Culture 2026

Piia Rantala-Korhonen, CEO of the Oulu Culture Foundation, provided a comprehensive overview of Oulu 2026, the European Capital of Culture. She stated that the "Cultural Climate Change" theme aims to elevate "art and culture ... to a completely new level in urban development and also in everyday life". The foundation, with a budget of €50 million, coordinates a vast programme involving about 1000 different kinds of cultural institutions, artists, etc., is expecting 2.5 million visitors. A key principle is doing everything "together with the residents," who are seen as participants, not just as audience.

Rantala-Korhonen detailed the three sub-themes: "Brave Hinterland" (winter, ice, snow, Sami culture, new Sami opera), "Wild City" (outdoor events, food festivals), and "Cool Contrast" (combining art and tech). She explained Oulu's ambition to transform from being a "high-tech city to a creative and vibrant region," offering new opportunities for creative people in the north.

A significant project that was highlighted, was the "Peace Machine," inspired by AI researcher Timo Honkela's book. The Helsinki-based Eco Collective will create a media art installation in the City Hall, allowing the audience to contribute their ideas on peace and conflicts, an artwork that became "even more powerful and important" after the war in Ukraine began. Other planned exhibitions include Tallinn Photography and media art from Kiasma, transforming the City Hall into a media art museum. The programme also includes public art pieces, murals (with global artists working in dialogue with local residents), the renovation of Alvar Aalto's industrial building "AaltoSilo" into a cultural centre, and events like "Delta Life" and "Underground Clash". "Beyond the Sky" will combine music and astro-photographic works, and the "Lumo Light Festival" will brighten the darkness in November. The "Arctic Food Lab" involves local enterprises and a unique collaboration with Oulu's twin city, Hangzhou, China, for a one-kilometer table event. Rantala-Korhonen invited everyone to participate through the open call "we are culture" and to stay informed via newsletters and social media.

ECP Session Day 2: Saturday, August 16, 2025

New ECP members

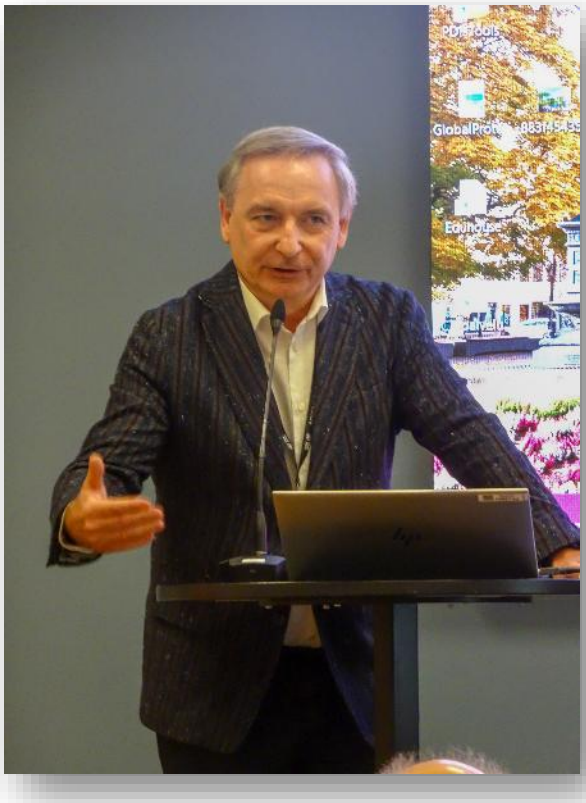
Suvi Lindén, introduced as a new "Senator" of the ECP, shared her background in digital policy and cultural leadership. As a former Minister of Culture, she noted that while her term 20 years ago felt challenging due to financial caution, the current economic state is "even more demanding". Finnish cultural policy has evolved from simply funding institutions to strategically shaping the cultural sector's societal role, emphasizing culture as a "fundamental right and a driver of innovation and well-being". She highlighted a shift towards "mixed financing models," including private sponsorship and EU support. Lindén reiterated that Finland, having been an EU member for almost 30 years, understands that there is "not one single European culture" but rather a "very multicultural continent". She also touched upon the expanding definition of culture to include "gaming design, digital media," and the increasing support for "multiculturalism, minority languages, immigrant cultural expression," noting Finland's shift from homogeneity to more diversity through immigration. Efforts to make cultural services more inclusive, “physically, economically and digitally" were also mentioned.

Veikko Kotila, also a new Senator, introduced himself, noting that his name, "Veikko" (or "Veko"), means brother in Finnish, and his last name, "Kotila," means home or a farm name. He jokingly mentioned that he was a farm boy and that his attempts at milking cows led his mother to tell him to "go back to your books," which he seemed to love. He described his professional background, which includes primarily architecture. He mentioned working on a challenging retailing project in Helsinki, related to Stockmann, where the cost estimate rose significantly (from 90 million to 250 million). He also shared details about his various "four homes," including two in Oulu, a 100-year-old villa by the Siikajoki River, and an apartment in Budapest. He noted that this connection to Budapest led him to be asked to serve as a deputy board member of Finagora, the Finnish Institute for Culture and Science in Budapest. He also acts as an honorary consul of Greece in Oulu.

Tanja Prusnik, an architect and artist from Austria, expressed feeling honoured for being accepted as a member. She is the first female president of the oldest artists' association in Austria, the Künstlerhaus, founded in 1861, which is undergoing a "process of change". In order to reflect diversity by fostering the inclusion of female expression, it is envisaged to refer to it as "KünstlerInnen Haus", which encompasses male as well as female artists. Prusnik emphasized her artistic work, often with a "political historic background," including a focus on feminism and memorial projects, such as a 10km installation in southern Austria related to her family's history of resistance during World War II.

Beate Engelhorn, an architect and Director of the House of Architecture in Graz, shared her passion for the "diversity of architecture as a discipline". She cited Vitruvius, who believed that architecture included fields such as astronomy, mathematics, philosophy, medicine, and law. Engelhorn highlighted the "building culture" (Baukultur), which encompasses not only buildings but also "spaces between them, cities and villages, the environment and climate, as well as social and societal issues," serving as the "stage and the backdrop to our daily lives". Her work aims at improving the living space and promoting the "sustainable development of cities and regions", as well as "social inclusion".

Witold Wolny, Director of Global Education at the University of the Pacific in California, presented himself as someone who has dedicated his life to "cultural diplomacy, crossing boundaries, crossing borders". He feels like "family now" within the ECP. He has cooperated with the Transatlantic Dialogue (TAD) conference since 2014 and was pleased that the ECP took TAD under its wings. He shared a video of a song he composed, dedicated to COVID victims, sung in four languages, which symbolizes the shared "basic human feelings, basic human suffering and basic human hope" that unite humanity.



Fulvio Macciardi, a musician who has worked as a violinist for 30 years and as a general manager of major Italian opera houses, including the Teatro Comunale di Bologna and the Teatro di San Carlo of Naples, emphasized music as "one of the best medicines against hate, and for difficult relationships". He acknowledged the "big debate" on whether it is right to engage artists from Russia and shared a difficult personal experience of a Ukrainian music director having to conduct Tchaikovsky during the war.

Maija Kuusisto, General Manager of the Oulu Symphony Orchestra, highlighted the orchestra's international character with "13 different nationalities" among its 61 permanent musicians, making it "the most international art institution" in Oulu. She noted Oulu's collaborative spirit and announced the upcoming Sami opera "OVH" and the "Beyond the Sky" production (a combination of music and astro-photography) as part of Oulu 2026.

Virpi Räisänen, an opera singer from Oulu, expressed her strong connection to the Oulu 2026 theme "Brave Hinterland," where creativity "blooms the most when we are pushed to search our limits". She suggested that Finland could improve in "marketing this far edge of Europe". Räisänen suggested that the ECP consider gathering "both cultural and business professionals to start discussing more closely how to market culture, or vice versa, how to use culture for marketing business".

General Debate on the theme of the Session, moderated by Bengt Kristersson Uggla

Bengt Kristersson Uggla (Professor of Philosophy, Culture and Management at Åbo Akademi University, Finland) opened the session by recalling key quotes from the previous day: "culture is the core of society," "where there is culture, there is a lot of democracy," and Pär Stenbäck's provocative question, "European Song Contest, the best we can offer the world?". He set the current global context, noting that following the "meeting in Alaska," "Russia is back as one of two superpowers," and China is "growing in power," while Europe faces a "continuing de-centring". Uggla highlighted the "wars in Ukraine and Gaza, eroding the distinction between war and peace," the "hybrid war" eroding a "rule-based world order," and the "moral deficit of European values". All this, he stated, is happening "within the horizon of rapid climate change and a rapid climate crisis that makes it impossible to separate culture from nature". The central question for the debate was: "how does an appropriate cultural agenda look like in an era of cultural climate change in Europe?".

The debate continued with the experimental small group format.

Stelios Virvidakis, a philosophy professor, emphasized the "negative aspects of culture," noting that national cultures are "very easily used by reactionary forces, by fascist politicians" like those supporting Putin, who "invoke their intellectuals in Russia to speak in the name of Russian culture". He stressed the need to prevent the "misuse of culture" by "destructive and very dangerous" forces.

Brigita Stroda, said that it is imperative for artists and cultural industries to "continue being creative, even in small ways," in the face of threats. She offered a concrete example from Riga, where a street, housing the Russian embassy was renamed, and an "unflattering, three-storey high portrait of Putin" was erected next to the embassy. She provocatively suggested " using a part of the defence budget creatively," recalling how the Finns won a war against Russia with a "creative solution: white uniforms".

Elena Mindrutrunen, representing a discussion group, questioned whether there should be "any separation between culture and nature," noting that "artistic processes are already changing at the same time as the climate changes". She concluded that "it feels like Europe may be confused about its values".

Steve Austen provided a 10-minute presentation, giving a short flashback to a proposed European platform by Günter Grass in 1985. He noted that this platform, founded under the title "Gesamteuropäische Kulturstiftung", was vetoed by the US government, which implied that American hegemony over European cultural activities countered the interest of an independent European platform.

Karoly Mehes reported on the Pécs Writers' Programme, detailing how the small Hungarian project became strongly linked to the ECP. He explained that the programme, established in 2007, was spurred by reports of the difficulties Eastern European writers faced when traveling abroad. His cooperation with the ECP began when ECP Member Nelly Bekus came as a resident writer in 2008, and he later helped host the Pécs ECP session in 2011. He considered this literature cooperation to be a good example of informal action and collaboration among ECP members.

General Debate on War and Peace in the 2020s, moderated by Karl-Erik Norrman

This session delved specifically into the complex interplay between war, peace, and cultural dynamics in the current decade.

Gintautas Mazeikis, presented on the "Reactionary Enlightenment in the US, EU and Russia". He described "neo-reactionary Enlightenment" or "Dark Enlightenment" as the "real ideology of Trump's Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement". Mazeikis proposed that the ECP should discuss "bloggers' and podcast activism" as a "new sort of creative industries" that are increasingly "influential on the political and cultural scene". He distinguished these from traditional media, labelling their content as "info-tainment," or "pop-culture in the informational area", that competes for audiences and can be directed "like a rock star". He noted that "the contemporary age is, first of all, the age of free market for bloggers".

Mazeikis explained that these bloggers often rely on "para-history or historical mythology" rather than factual information, illustrating his point with Russian propagandists who spread narratives about Alaska being Russian land. He highlighted a disturbing trend: "people who read this kind of joke, accept this even more than factual information. It's not interesting to listen to factual information". He posed critical questions: "Why do large groups of voters oppose democracy? Why do people freely vote against democracy in democratic elections?". He pointed out that the "neo-reactionism, first of all, fights against the Enlightenment," challenging its ideals and seeking to "demolish everything".

Comparing the US' and Russian "reactionary positions," Mazeikis detailed the US vision as that of a country divided into "poor cities, like big corporations with a leader, a so-called Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who should be the small president of all feudal countries". In contrast, the Russian case envisions "only one legitimated empire. Not by the constitution ... but by religious ideology, by God". He starkly criticized the Russian view of "garbage people" who can be sent to the front line to be "utilized" by the military forces, in order to make the country "more and more clean," offering criminals and alcoholics "a chance ... to die with dignity". He noted that these movements are "proactive," they seek to "challenge democracy" and require "a big will for power". He added that Trump "doesn't respond to the needs of such ideologues" as he is "too spontaneous, too chaotic," which leads them to look for more "proactive and more strong-willed" leaders like Yarvin or Peter Thiel. He underlined that these figures are fighting "against humanism in general," by equally

rejecting "biological and genetic" differences, and using AI as "an instrument of power". He attributed the popularity of right-wing narratives to their attack on the "cathedra", of official policies and institutions.

Judith McKimm, corroborated Mazeikis' points, noting that in Austria, the right-wing party "used social media the most prolifically," directly communicating with followers and avoiding traditional media. She urged other political currents to "start using this platform," acknowledging social media as a "two-edged sword".

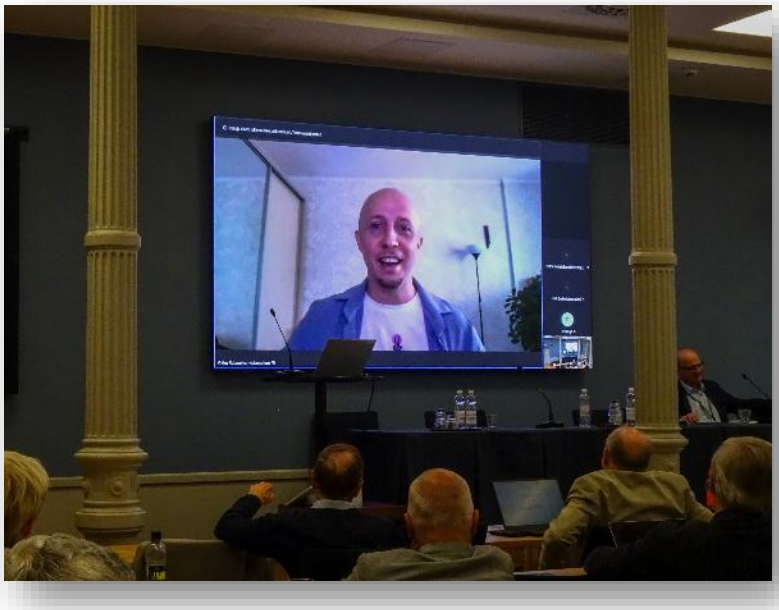
Peter Hanke questioned the contradiction in the term "Dark Enlightenment," asking how the "Enlightenment can be dark" and whether it signifies the "death of the reviving Enlightenment," which is the "whole reason why Europe has anything to say".

Pär Stenbäck emphasized that this "new school of totalitarian philosophers" (like Nick Land and John Gray, who predict the "end of democracy ... and the end of humanity") fight against "humanism in general". He explained that these movements consider the presumption of equality by humanism as flawed, advocating for a "racial, biological, Darwinist approach" and using AI as a "major power source" for their goals.

Stelios Virvidakis raised a philosophical question about how "Enlightenment values have been undermined from the inside," leading to "nihilistic, extremely relativistic, postmodern views," and a practical question about whether Mazeikis sees any hope, despite his very dark presentation. Mazeikis responded by citing Horkheimer and Adorno's "Dialectic of Enlightenment," which suggest including "mythology or magic, or a pop-culture" into the Enlightenment for a balanced approach. He acknowledged that liberals are also learning to use the "same methods which were hijacked by the ultra-right, but for liberal purposes".

Luís Tavares Pereira, brought the discussion back to the media, contrasting bloggers with stand-up comedians and late shows, asking how these "very effective" shortcuts operate in the current situation. Mazeikis responded that there is no "president of the bloggers" yet, but that the "dangerous instruments" of "post-truth" (which doesn't care about facts) will be used by skilled individuals to "prove their authoritarian expectations," likening it to a "new nuclear weapon in the area of soft power".

Viktor Ruban (Ukrainian Choreographer and ECP Member) joined remotely and lamented his physical absence but appreciated his virtual line. Ruban emphasized that force can only be "counter-balanced by culture, the arts, philosophy, science and education" to bring some kind of stillness into the aggression. He connected radicalization and populism to "economic reasoning" insofar as the "creative economy concept made comfort a main value" and "made culture and the arts serve the economic reasons of profitability". He warned that "technocratic societies are first of all aiming to kill the arts, culture, education, and really corrupt the political process". He described how wars are driven by "economic reasoning, trading others and gaining power," leading to compromised "democratic values, endangered sovereignty and human rights," and "freedoms ... replaced by libertarian slogans". He urged for a fight back to maintain "peaceful times" and protect "freedom and democracy," which require "culture and the arts and education and innovation and thinking and prosperity," alongside a "certain stoicism" and a systemic view of society. He stressed the challenge of balancing militarization with preventing soft power from being "instrumentalized by AI, by algorithms, by propagandists, by different kinds of political forces". For Europe, this "most dense continent in terms of identities and the diverse cultures coexisting together," culture, the arts, and education are essential to fostering synergy and creating a "multicultural identity".



Responding to **Karl-Erik Norrman's** question about the damage to Ukrainian culture, Viktor Ruban stated that the war is explicitly about “de-Ukrainization," with practices like burning Ukrainian books, torturing people for speaking Ukrainian, looting museums, and terrorizing and killing people. He spoke of brainwashing and taking children to "repatriotization”, Russian-patriotism kind of camps. He stressed the long-term work needed to recover and "raise even the little grains of cultural identity".

Peter Hanke asked how to avoid or counter this brainwashing, suggesting exchanges or visits to Ukraine.

Viktor Ruban advised that the "best would be really to come and discover, and also to establish ... different initiatives upon reflection on the consequences". He highlighted Russia's "very, very present" influence in Germany through cultural events, promoting narratives that confuse, manipulate, and "make of Russians the victims". He explained how Russia's use of KGB methods since Soviet times, employs culture for "propaganda and for subversion". He urged for cooperative efforts with Ukrainian experts and cultural workers, emphasizing the need for funds and solidarity events to support Ukrainian artists, especially in smaller, less visible communities. He noted that a direct experience in Ukraine, with "air alerts and also spending time in

the bomb shelter," would offer profound insights into "the real situation about security in Europe, because the balance is so frail". Viktor concluded by emphasizing the critical importance of solidarity among democratic societies: "If we don't remain in solidarity, if we don't join our efforts, and if we don't discuss our differences, like in a very open way, and debate and really find stillness, stillness with the intention of staying together, no matter what ...Then we are doomed".

Karl-Erik Norrman shared Winston Churchill's alleged quote during WWII, when confronted with cultural budget cuts: "What are we defending when we don't have any lively culture anymore?". He noted reductions in public cultural budgets (e.g., a €130 million reduction in Berlin), and the inability to rely solely on marginal private sponsorship.

Vivek Arunachalam (Observer) presented the work of Indian composer Ganesh B. Kumar, whose internationally acclaimed symphonic poems address peace, human values, and the deep resilience of compassion in the face of war. Kumar's *The Journey - From Despair to Hope* (dedicated to the Indian rescue of Polish orphans during WWII) was highlighted as a poignant example of the transformative, healing power of art.

Workshop: Culture in Times of Climate Crisis (Moderator: Tuuli Lähdesmäki)

This is a summary report on the discussions that took place at the workshop.

The interactive workshop provided a lot of food for thought. Since only 11 ECP members participated in the discussions, the workshop relied solely on a joint general discussion.

The workshop began with a discussion about how "hot" the climate debate is in our countries and how high it is on the political and media agendas. Participants came from Luxembourg, Austria, Germany, Denmark, Finland, and Portugal. They noted that these countries share a similar political trend: their governments are increasingly emphasizing security issues and national defense (for good reason), with climate issues and green values competing for attention and budget. However, these countries have many recent laws and regulations, including EU directives, that support sustainability and climate action.

Several architects participated in the workshop, so the participants discussed building culture extensively. For instance, they noted that the building industry produces a significant portion of global emissions. Regarding this issue, the participants noted that there are many unnecessary standards in the building industry that increase construction costs and make the preservation and re-use of old buildings more difficult. However, the participants provided many positive examples of renovating, re-using, and revitalizing old buildings. One example is Alvar Aalto's former silo in Oulu, which was transformed into a cultural space as part of Oulu's preparations for its designation as the European Capital of Culture in 2026.

Many of the participants' home countries have taken various smart steps to promote sustainability, such as improving recycling programs, planting trees in urban areas, and supporting public transportation. These steps have a greater impact when taken together.

The workshop also discussed the extent to which people from the arts and culture are involved in climate discussions in our countries. Based on the contributions, it can be concluded that the arts and culture community is highly aware of the climate crisis, and many artists and cultural institutions are involved in addressing it. This includes raising awareness through events, demonstrations, and artworks that explore climate issues, as well as climate activism. Participants noted that climate activists often receive negative media attention. They emphasized the media's responsibility to provide accurate information on climate issues.

In conclusion, the discussion revealed that the European cultural community is deeply concerned about the climate crisis and is actively participating in the fight against it in various ways, both individually and institutionally. However, this work is challenged by societies' expectations of endless growth. Instead, societies need "mental growth," as was discussed in the workshop: growing awareness of climate issues and advancing new mindsets. We must find the right balance between our current standard of living and zero consumption. The solution is not to stop living, working, or making art.

Tuuli Lähdesmäki

Workshop: Culture in Times of War and Conflict (Moderator: Stelios Virvidakis)

The workshop focused on the ways in which ongoing wars (in Ukraine and in Gaza) are affecting cultural life and artistic production, as well as on the potential contribution of culture and the arts to the promotion of peace. More particularly, we discussed the extent to which artists and, more generally, intellectuals involved in cultural activities, may remain neutral and avoid getting involved and taking sides in wars such as the ones we are witnessing.

After a brief elucidation of the main concepts employed in current debates, the participants offered specific examples, both from the contemporary context and from armed conflicts in the past, also referring to the attitude of artists in various political circumstances, especially when confronted by the oppression of totalitarian regimes. Moreover, it was pointed out that audiences and the wider public of Western democracies do not remain unaffected by recent events at the war fronts, such as the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, or the bombing of civilians in Gaza by Israel. As a result, there are all kinds of protests in our countries. Events with artists and writers from Russia and Israel are often boycotted and related cultural products restricted or totally banned, even if the individuals who suffer from such measures or from spontaneous reactions may in fact oppose the aggressive policies of their governments. It is clear that this is very unfair and counterproductive. In any case, the reactions of the public are not consistent and vary due to misinformation or ideological prejudices. A member of our group who is an artist herself, expressed her ambivalence when performing a composition by Shostakovich, with a particular significance and implications connected to memories of the Winter war in Finland.

There was a lively debate on the views expressed by some participants in the workshop, especially pertaining to the correct construal of the nature and function of art and the reception of its output. Thus, it was reminded by philosophers in the group that, according to Kant, aesthetic and artistic experience is "disinterested" and related to freedom. Nonetheless, it was emphasized that good and important art cannot be just a formalistic play but is related to human values and to a wider conception of the good. Art can create a peculiar "semiosphere" facilitating communication and mutual understanding of those who join the "artworld". Indeed, it would be wrong to say that art can remain indifferent to what is happening in the world and be totally separated from broad ethical concerns, but this doesn't mean that art should serve the goals of political propaganda.

The freedom of art clearly implies that totalitarian attempts to make cultural expression and artistic creation serve so-called "national interests", or even the promotion of a narrow objectivist construal of the good, should be condemned. Moreover, art doesn't necessarily try to pursue an objective notion of beauty, as it may have been thought in the past. Art can criticize the *status quo* by upsetting us and by causing a certain discomfort. We understand its dynamic character when we study the evolution of its many forms, and we seek more refined criteria for its appreciation and the quest for new styles and kinds of expression. Finally, it was observed that we should distinguish between high culture and avant-garde art, appealing primarily to an elite of critics and to an ideal audience and popular art addressed to the masses. It was argued that, in any case, artists coming from countries at war, when not blinded by nationalism, may find a common language of creativity, originality and

perfection, sharing the aspirations of fellow artists, and thus working closely with them. They could sustain morale at a time of confusion and, at the end of the day, enhance empathy at various levels. Hence, they could contribute to a mutual rapprochement, bringing people together and helping them overcome their oppositions, and, when in conflict, be eventually reconciled through the pursuit and the realization of common values.

Most of the members in the group participated actively in the discussion. The exchange of interesting ideas made everyone agree that it was quite successful. A further analysis and elaboration of the conclusions may prove very fruitful.

Stelios Virvidakis

General Debate continued. Moderated by Peter Hanke

The General Debate focused on the cultural and artistic responses to conflict and the broader themes of resilience and European identity in troubled times.

Key points from the discussion include:

• **Culture and Conflict:** The debate emphasized the **positive impact of art on civilians during war**, stressing the preservation of an **inner life** and communication within a country during conflict.

• **Artistic Role in Reconciliation:** Art was highlighted as a tool to help **deconstruct the opposition between "enemy" and "friend"** and to preserve diverse cultural perspectives and identities during times of war. It offers a virtue into a world not defined by violence and destruction, and a voice against the loss of intellectual capacity.

• **Identity of the European Union:** Participants discussed the European Union in terms of being both a **peace project and a war project**, emphasizing the need for **resilience and preparedness** in cultural fields.

• **Social Media and Society:** The discussion addressed the **aggressive environment of social media** and its impact on societal cohesion. Suggestions were made to develop **mental health techniques and regulation** to address the addictive nature of these platforms.

• **Need for Compassion:** The overall conversation concluded with a call for the European Union to demonstrate greater **compassion and vision** to foster resilience.

• **Cultural Concepts:** The concept of a **cultural purgatory** was introduced, described as a stage of consent or tolerable conditions.

ECP Session Day 3: Sunday, August 17, 2025

The final day focused on another General Debate, a presentation on the Transatlantic Dialogue, and the drafting and adoption of the Oulu Declaration.

The ECP Transatlantic Dialogue Programme (TAD) - by François Carbon

François Carbon provided an update on the Transatlantic Dialogue (TAD) programme, an initiative that began in 2008 on a three-year cycle, aiming to "bridge differences through culture". He emphasized the deep historical ties across the Atlantic, acknowledging "distinct social, political, and cultural realities". TAD focuses on culture as a "powerful tool to connect people, foster empathy, and build mutual understanding" in a time of polarization and shifting global power. The upcoming May 2027 conference in Luxembourg will feature a unique mix of scholarly presentations and an "eclectic programme of performances, exhibitions and presentations by visual artists, musicians, writers and other creatives," representing "cultural diplomacy and cross-national dialogue". Themes discussed have included "Re-Imagining the Tower of Babel" and "Soft Power in Uncertain Times".

Carbon highlighted the challenges that "pluralistic democracies on both sides of the Atlantic" are confronted with, including the "rise in nationalism, populism and isolationism", the declining "public trust in formal institutions and processes of democratic governance", and the impact of "disruptive technologies and artificial intelligence - paired with an explosion of disinformation in the public sphere". He stressed that these factors "feed polarization and weaken public support for core democratic values". In this context, "civil society leaders and organizations - in the arts and culture, in journalism, in education, in the non-profit sector and in public service - play absolutely essential roles in bolstering the resilience of democratic institutions and in cultivating pluralism and adherence to core democratic norms and principles". He mentioned that the TAD project received the Luxembourg Peace Prize in 2021 for its "outstanding educational dimension".

Carbon shared the difficulties faced by TAD, particularly due to political changes, citing the "inspiration of Trump" which led to American colleagues withdrawing support and government administrations issuing emails to "stop immediately all inclusive programmes, all transatlantic programmes, all international projects". He noted that this even led to individuals with a positive attitude towards these aspects being "suggested to quitting their positions". He contrasted this with the continued support from private universities, which "make everything possible". Despite these challenges, Miami University is taking over the lead of the programme, ensuring its continuation, and he hopes for a continued ECP partnership. He explained that while TAD events

are large, they are typically held every three years, not annually. He emphasized that the project has gained "clear political and symbolic importance".

Carbon's presentation also touched upon broader European challenges related to digital sovereignty. He emphasized that "Europe needs its own social media platforms to safeguard sovereignty," citing that "about 80% of our digital media working spaces" (including Microsoft Office and Google services) go through "US servers and companies". He argued that European social media platforms are not just tools but "shield against disinformation, treat cultural diversity as a value. What Europe should do is what a regular superpower should do, which is to implement legislation to support homegrown social media platforms". He suggested that the EU "could mandate US gatekeeper platforms in order to connect into Europe" and "introduce tax rates on the US, for using European platforms". He gave examples of existing European media platforms such as Eurovision, Euronews, and ARTE. He also highlighted the concept of a "Fediverse" of European alternatives like Mastodon and Pleroma as a path "towards a European 'Fediverse' and beyond". He mentioned demographic changes, noting Africa's growing population compared to Europe's aging one. He warned about Silicon Valley's model of "dopamine culture," which fosters addiction through "super short TikTok-type, click-bite" content. He underlined that Europe needs to support its own platforms to ensure the "sustainability of European culture through the support of essential humanitarian and fidelity values".

General Debate, moderated by Judith McKimm

Judith McKimm summarized the topics discussed over the two days, including "democracy being undermined ... through the use of new technology, namely social media and also AI". Other themes included "the resilience of the EU in the current geopolitical situation," its "role ... as a cultural actor, globally", and "a lack of self-assertion regarding what we actually do have, being European citizens, and the values that we represent". She also highlighted "budget cuts as a general problem in all the countries in Europe at the moment".

Amparo Serrano de Haro, an Art History Doctor and writer, reiterated the concern about cultural budget cuts, describing them as "existential threats". However, **Luís Tavares Pereira** offered a contrasting perspective, revealing that Portugal's culture budget for 2025 is €397 million, a "25% increase compared to 2024," and a "19% increase ... compared to 2023". He noted this coincided with a conservative government since 2024.

The debate touched upon censorship and state control through funding, with an example from France where large institutions like the Pompidou Centre and the Louvre are being renovated but this also becomes "a way of the state to determine" by "stirring the money, how to manage these institutions". It was noted that this echoed with "the history of "Entartete Kunst", when art was censured by the Nazis".

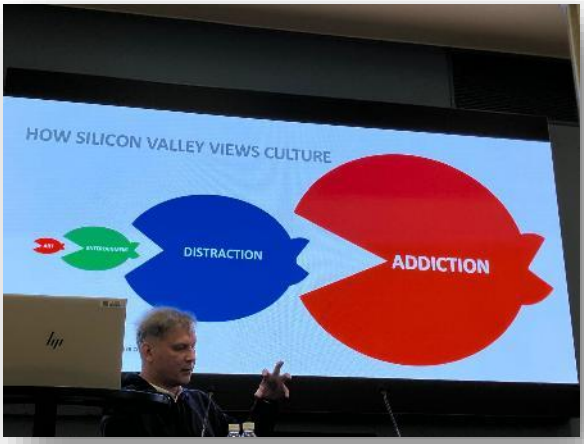
Peter Hanke argued for "more ambition" from politicians, declaring, "it is time for Europe to act". He asserted that "Europe is the answer in this conflict right now," and that "the arts and culture sector has a chance we haven't had for some time" to "fuel the politicians with arguments" and "give them some fuel for these new investments". He also stressed the need for the "regulation of AI" to be added to the "To-Do-List for Europe".

Janis Garancs' Presentation: Digital Sovereignty and Cultural Climate Change

The presentation explored how digital platforms shape public discourse and European culture, warning that the rising dominance of a few tech giants threatens Europe's sovereignty. The central argument posits that Europe must assert itself as a **regulatory superpower** to ensure the **sustainability of its culture**.

1. The Threat of "Dopamine Culture"

- Garancs used illustrations from Ted Gioa's article 'The State of the Culture, 2024' (link: https://www.honest-broker.com/p/the-state-of-the-culture-2024) explaining how culture is valued and consumed in the digital age, characterized by a shift toward immediate gratification and addiction:
- **Silicon Valley's View of Culture:** A graphic demonstrated a shrinking value chain: **Art** (the smallest element) feeds into **Entertainment**, which serves as **Distraction**, ultimately leading to **Addiction**.
- Today's digital environment, dubbed "Dopamine Culture" promotes fast, bite-sized content like clickbait news, viral clips, scrollable feeds, over traditional formats like newspapers, films and gallery exhibitions. This trend toward accelerated media consumption is tied to addictive mechanisms intentionally built into digital platforms.



2. The Sovereignty Crisis

Europe's reliance on US digital infrastructure poses a major threat to its autonomy:

- Digital Colonisation: Around 80% of Europe's digital workspaces (such as Microsoft Office and Google applications) depend on US-owned servers.
- Strategic Imperative: The presentation urged Europe to build its own social media platforms, warning: "Remain a digital colony of US tech giants or forge a sovereign future."

3. Policy Recommendations and European Alternatives

To counter this dependence, the presentation outlined legislative and economic tools the EU could deploy:

- **Regulatory Action:** The EU should leverage its position as a "regulatory superpower" to support homegrown social media platforms. Specifically, it could **mandate US "gatekeeper" platforms** (under the Digital Markets Act) to **interconnect with European alternatives**.
- **Economic Incentives:** The EU could introduce **EU-wide tax breaks for creators** who use European platforms, establishing a form of "cultural exceptions".
- **Existing and Decentralized Platforms:** European efforts already exist, such as **Eurovision**, **Euronews**, **3sat TV**, and **The European Collection** (a joint TV effort). Furthermore, promoting European "fediverse" alternatives (e.g., Mastodon, Pleroma, PeerTube) offers a path toward decentralized networks.

4. Cultural Context

Garancs tied these challenges to broader demographic trends, noting Europe's increasingly older population compared to regions like Africa. This context reinforces the call for a **"cultural climate change"** necessary to ensure the **"sustainability of European culture"** and support "essential humanitarian and vitality values".

- - -

Final Debate, including the adoption of the Oulu Declaration

The final session was dedicated to the adoption of the Oulu Declaration, with Minister Pär Stenbäck, Peter Hanke and Ambassador Karl-Erik Norrman also moderating the final debate. The Declaration began by expressing gratitude to the hosts in Oulu and private sponsors, congratulating the City of Oulu on its status as European Capital of Culture 2026, and welcoming the opportunity to establish contacts and discuss challenges for the European arts and culture in times of war and climate crisis.

Oulu Declaration 2025

Members of the European Cultural Parliament, ECP, met in full session in Oulu on 15 – 17 August.

We…

- Expressed our gratitude to the hosts of Oulu and the support of private sponsors,

- Congratulated the City of Oulu on its status of European Capital of Culture 2026,

- Welcomed this opportunity for establishing contacts between cultural personalities in Oulu and the rest of Europe,

·- Welcomed the opportunity to discuss the challenges for European Arts & Culture in times of war and Climate crisis in Europe and its neighbourhood,

-Emphasised the importance of defending European unity and European Culture,

- Confirmed the decisive role of Arts and Culture in defending European values, based on democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, freedom of speech and artistic expression and knowledge-based decision making,

- Strongly condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine and encouraged members to engage with their colleagues in Ukraine,

- Expressed belief and the renewed conviction in the integrative role of Arts and Culture, in making a strong contribution to the values and civic life of all European societies, despite the negative impact of the ongoing war,

- Called for an increased awareness of the Russian invasion as a war on culture, where art and artists are forced to eradicate Ukrainian culture, art, and national identity. This also has an impact on exiled artists in both countries within and outside this conflict area,

- Emphasised that Arts and Culture enhance empathy and offer a refuge into a world that is not defined by violence and destruction, a voice against loss of intellectual and ethical values.

- Expressed the conviction that Arts and Culture can contribute to healing wounds and losses, across borders, during and after periods of war and conflict,

- Expressed concerns regarding “cancel culture” and the marginalisation of humanities within education,

- Expressed concerns regarding influencers, blogging and podcasting as a new branch of the creative industries.

- Raised concerns about the unchecked power of tech giants over social media platforms, where manipulative gatekeeping and ideological censorship fuel disinformation and undermine the democratic discourse,

- Expressed concern over the impact of Climate change on European societies, incl. Arts & Culture,

- Welcomed the commitment of artists to make constructive contributions to information and education on measures against CO2 pollution and other dangers,

- Emphasised the role of Arts & Culture as a reliable source of hope, consolation and belief in the future in times of Climate crisis,

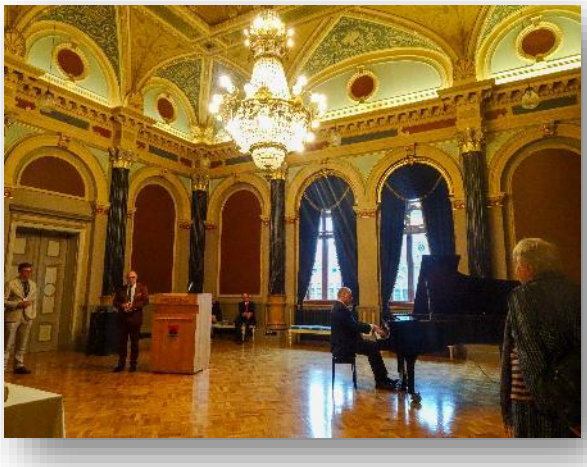
- Emphasised the role of non-tangible values in times of climate concerns and military armament,

- Emphasised the importance of sufficient public investments and private financial support to the cultural sector.

Cultural Program and Sightseeing

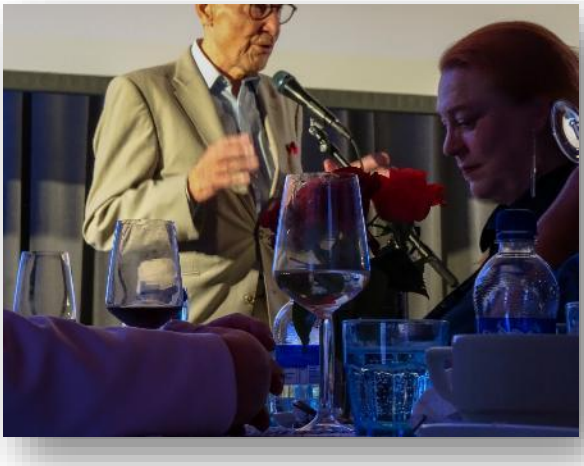
Beyond the intellectual debates, the conference included cultural experiences.

Welcome reception - The evening of Friday concluded with a welcome reception hosted by the City of Oulu, featuring a musical performance by **Concert Pianist / ECP Member Rimantas Vingras**, in celebration of the 150th anniversary of Lithuanian composer M.K. Čiurlionis.



A **mid-conference musical performance** was given by **cellist Francesco Bartoletti and violinists Alexandra Richardson, Johanna Leponiemi, and Osmo Leponiemi**.

Saturday evening was hosted at the **Swedish Private School** by **Rector Sampo Backman** and cultural rep. **Tea Stolt-de-Glanville** (dinner, discussions and music).



Guided sightseeing tour in Oulu by bus - The conference concluded with a **sightseeing tour in Oulu**. The tour showcased Oulu's historical evolution from the center with its sailing ships, tar trading and salmon fishing to the modern Oulu, known for its technology, well-being, education and vibrant cultural life such as the Air Guitar World Championship. The tour aimed at revealing Oulu as a "bold city of contrasts and a city of high living standards in the happiest country in the world".

ECP

Oulu-ECP – Press Release

On 15 - 17 August the European Cultural Parliament, ECP, will meet for its 22nd Session in Oulu, upon the invitation of the City of Oulu. The session will be held at the City Hall.

About 60 outstanding cultural personalities from 24 countries will participate. Theme of the session will be the same as the theme of Oulu for its year as European Capital of Culture 2026 – "*Cultural Climate Change in Europe".* This theme will inspire ECP Members to discuss important issues like the consequences of climate change for the Arts & Culture and the possible role of Culture in the fight against climate change. Members are also deeply concerned about the consequences for the Arts & Culture of the ongoing Russian war against Ukraine and the Israel - Hamas war.

The European Cultural Parliament was founded under the patronage of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, and operates as a volunteer-run and independent platform. Its first session was held in Bruges, Belgium in 2002. Since then, it has held sessions in different European cities, from Lisbon and Liverpool in the West to Dilijan (Armenia) in the East, from Athens in the south to this year´s host Oulu in the north.

The founders of the ECP (including Minister Pär Stenbäck, Finland. and Ambassador Karl-Erik Norrman, Sweden) wished to create a network/forum for distinguished European cultural personalities to discuss and make proposals for Europe from a cultural/philosophical, "soft-power" perspective - to create an additional dimension to that of Brussels on European issues. This approach is partly based on the famous idea by Jacques Delors, that *"Europe has a soul".* Well-known artists, authors, actors, musicians, philosophers, architects, historians and other cultural personalities are Members of the Parliament.

At the coming Oulu Session Suvi Lindén and Weikko Kotila will be welcomed as new "Senators" of the ECP and Maija Kuusisto and Virpi Räisänen will be welcomed as new Members.

More on the ECP on our Website: www.kulturparlament.com

List of Participants

Pierre Guillet de Monthoux, Sweden
Paula Birnbaum, Sweden - Observer
Luise Kloos, Austria
Marie Maierhofer, Austria
Massimo dell'Utri, Italy
Fatos Berisha, Kosovo
Jan Erik Andersson, Finland
Amparo Serrano de Haro, Spain
Elisa May Marquez, Spain - Observer
Zeynep Direk, Turkey
Steve Austen, Netherlands
Frederike Beltjes, Netherlands - Observer
Marie Louise von Plessen, Germany
Helle Juul, Denmark
Karoly Mehes, Hungary
Enikö Mehes, Hungary - Observer
Nik Dahlström, Sweden
Zusana Ronck, Austria
Tuuli Lähdesmäki, Finland
Gintautas Mazeikis, Lithuania
Fulvio Macciardi, Italy
Ms Macciardi, Italy - Observer
Stelios Virvidakis, Greece
Judith McKimm, Austria
Nora Vorderwinkler, Austria - Observer
Bartlomiej Struzik, Poland
Francesco Bartoletti, Switzerland
Ms Bartoletti, Switzerland - Observer
Francois Carbon, Luxembourg
Luis Tavares Pereira, Portugal
Peter Hanke, Denmark
Tine Vind, Denmark - Observer
Robert Pyrah, UK
Verena Huber, Switzerland
Ursula Knechtli, Switzerland - Observer
Bengt Kristersson Uggla, Sweden
Beate Engelhorn, Germany/Austria
Witold Wolny, Poland/US
Tanja Prusnik, Austria

Wang Yong, China - Observer
Vivek Arunachalam, India - Observer
Jacob Dahl Rendtorff, Denmark
Brigita Stroda, Latvia
Viktor Ruban, Ukraine (participates online!)
Janis Garancs, Latvia
Sarah Herold, Germany - Observer
Tea Stolt-de-Glanville, Finland - Observer
Rimantas Vingras, Lithuania
Suvi Lindén, Finland
Maija Kuusisto, Finland
Veikko Kotila, Finland
Virpi Räisänen, Finland
Elena Mindrutrunen, Finland/Romania - Observer
Pär Stenbäck, Finland
Karl-Erik Norrman, Sweden

Conclusion

The 22nd Session of the European Cultural Parliament in Oulu, Finland, reaffirmed the ECP's vital role as an independent platform for cultural personalities to address the most pressing issues facing Europe and the world. Through intensive debates, insightful presentations, and collaborative workshops, members explored the profound impact of "cultural climate change," both environmental and geopolitical, on the arts and culture. The discussions underscored the urgent need for a renewed European self-confidence rooted in its core values of democracy, human rights, and freedom of expression. The session highlighted culture's indispensable role as a "soft power" to counter disinformation, foster empathy, and build resilience in increasingly polarized and authoritarian times. The Oulu Declaration 2025 encapsulates these critical concerns and calls to action, providing a roadmap for cultural engagement in shaping a more humane and sustainable future for Europe.

AI – summary:

The ECP, founded under the patronage of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, operates as a volunteer-run and independent platform dedicated to fostering dialogue among prominent European cultural figures. Its mission is to discuss and propose solutions for Europe from a cultural, philosophical, and "soft power" perspective, adding a crucial dimension to conventional European discourse. The founders, including Minister Pär Stenbäck and Ambassador Karl-Erik Norrman, envisioned a network where artists, authors, actors, musicians, philosophers, architects, historians, and other cultural personalities could collectively address Europe's challenges and opportunities. This vision is partly rooted in Jacques Delors' concept that "Europe has a soul".

The 2025 Oulu session provided a timely platform for parliamentarians to engage in a "brave and creative debate" on the role of culture amidst a world marked by escalating global conflicts and the pervasive threat of climate change. The structure of the conference was meticulously planned, featuring opening speeches, general debates, parallel workshop sessions, presentations by new members, and a vibrant cultural programme, culminating in the adoption of the Oulu Declaration. To enhance participation and ensure comprehensive documentation, a roaming microphone system was implemented for general debates, and a WhatsApp group was utilized for sharing comments and opinions, facilitating a polyphony of voices and insights. The entire conference proceedings were audio-recorded for the purpose of this official report.

Impressum

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