



## **YEPP Seminar – January 2008 – Strasbourg**

### **Cultural diversity, a priority for young Europeans?**

#### **Simul et singulis**

##### **Introduction**

« Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a *de facto* solidarity. The coming together of the nations of Europe requires the elimination of the age-old opposition [...]. » Robert Schuman.

How to build Europe if not through cultural solidarity, a “factual” solidarity since the famous speech “de l’Horloge” of Robert Schuman we currently celebrate each and every 9<sup>th</sup> may as the day of Europe?

Europe as a union of States and citizens brought together by a common project is a relevant level to manage this together living. To understand each other, to share what make them unique, the Europeans need core values and common symbols. It is thus the long taking pathway to a true European culture building.

This unique cultural diversity has always been a European mainstream characteristic together with a fundamental political goal in the European building process. Accepting cultural diversity is a factor for social cohesion and for tolerance, a mean to accept differences, identification and mutual understanding between people. The culture makes people get together since it creates emotions and ease to overcome differences.

The respect of cultural diversity is a key condition for human societies, and it implies a singular importance in the building of information and knowledge society for 21<sup>st</sup> century. The development of information technologies, the globalisation and evolution of multilateral trade policies have a real impact on cultural diversity. And each and every democratic society based on predominance of the law has, in the past, taken measures to support and protect cultural diversity among their media and cultural policies.

In the European context, we have to recognise that cultural diversity is a fundamental asset for European cultural identity and this cultural diversity should

be promoted, valued and supported.

## **I. Cultural diversity : a strength for Europe**

One of the strengths of Europe lies in its diversity. Cultural diversity is in the core of European Union. It is a fundamental must in the implementation and development of policies for the European communities, and an asset for future.

### **Cultural diversity : an European goal**

The article 151.1 of the EC treaty states that “The Community shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore.”. There is no „European culture“, but several „European cultures and identities“. The article 151.2 about the principle of subsidiarity for culture states that “Action by the Community shall be aimed at encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, supporting and supplementing their action in the following areas:

- improving the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European people,
- conserving and safeguarding of cultural heritage of European significance,
- non-commercial cultural exchanges,
- artistic and literature creation, including in the audiovisual sector”.

Therefore, the principle of subsidiarity should also support the respect of national and regional identities and cultures.”

No community, no country can culturally enrich itself confining from the others. The European integration process is based on a dynamic approach of diversity. Languages, literatures, scenic and plastic arts, architecture, hand working, cinema, radio, all contribute to European cultural diversity. Though from a particular country and/or region, they represent part of our common cultural patrimony. And the goal of the European Union must be double: preserve and encourage this diversity and make it accessible to each other.

These goals were stated in the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 that officially mentions for the first time, the cultural dimension of the European integration. Cultural initiative started before Maastricht, with the programme started in 1985 to implement a yearly European capital city for culture.

Nowadays, the respect of cultural and linguistic diversity is a fundamental principle of the European Union, stated in the article 22 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. „The Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity“.

Despite the opposition of certain States to any communitarian action in the cultural domain and the deceiving current bottom line for these policies, one may wonder if it wouldn't be better for the Union to finally give up these policies. However, doing so would be a mistake since the community should build and

justify each and every Union project together with it. Moreover, we ought not to sweep out of sight cultural industries that generate important revenues and jobs since implying approximately 7 million workers.

### **Culture: a strategic asset for Europe**

„Culture and creativity are important engines for self development, social cohesion and economic growth. Today adopted strategy, promoting inter-cultural understanding, confirms the very room for culture, in the heart of our policies.“

That is how the president of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Durao Barroso, took position when the Commission adopted a communication regarding a European agenda for culture in the globalisation era.

This agenda includes 3 goals:

- promoting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue;
- promoting culture as a catalyst for creativity within the Lisbon strategy for growth and employment;
- promoting culture as an essential element in external relations of the Union.

Economic impact and potential of cultural and creation industries in Europe is enormous. Despite all the importance of culture to allow Europe to reach the Lisbon objectives, this strategy should not be constructed against cultural particularities. The European common strategy for culture should promote diversity, and its objectives, compatible with the Lisbon strategy, are important engine too for other policies like the Göteborg strategy for sustainable development. Actually, sustainability, creativity and culture are closely linked.

### **Programmes to support culture**

EU manages programmes to support certain cultural industries and encourage them to catch the occasion of the single market and digital technologies. It also tries to create a dynamical environment for these industries avoiding bureaucracy, offering them an easy access to funding, bringing them help for research programmes and encouraging closer cooperation with European and external partners.

The Union also integrates a cultural dimension in numerous of its other political domains such as education (through language learning), scientific research, new technologies and information society support, and social and regional development. Both the European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund dedicate up to 500 million euros per year to projects including cultural elements.

In the main lines of the Regional Development Fund, the European Commission asks the member States' governments to promote cultural development in the poorest regions as a mean to help them assert their identity, to attract tourists and create jobs in domains such as online services and medias. The Fund, for example, currently provides 2/3 of the 600 million euros budget dedicated to a 7 year programme to preserve and value the Greek archeological patrimony.

The media programmes, with goal to strengthen dynamism and competitiveness of the audiovisual sector, exists since 1990. These programmes are allocated with higher budget than Culture. Media 2007 cover the 2007-2013 period and is allocated 755 million euros.

The Culture Programme is currently established. It has to contribute to the establishment of a European citizenship through promotion of cultural cooperation within Europe, putting forward the cultural area that the Europeans share and that is based on a common patrimony and an extraordinary cultural diversity.

In its current form, it covers the 2007-2013 period and is allocated for this period an approx. 400 million euros budget. The programme covers all non audiovisual cultural activities. It focuses on the following objectives:

- encouraging knowledge and preservation of cultural goods to cover an European dimension;
- encouraging transnational mobility of workers in the cultural sectors;
- encouraging transnational circulation of artistic and cultural works and goods;
- stimulating intercultural dialogue.

Three kinds of support actions are led by the programme: support to cultural actions, support to European cultural organizations and networks, support activities to optimise the impact of the various projects, the collection of statistics, the studies on cooperation and on the development in cultural area.

### **Language diversity : a challenge and a chance**

Language diversity is a cultural asset together with a democratic challenge for the European Union. With 2004 and 2007 enlargements, the total number of official languages has grown from 11 to 23.

Multilinguism promotion in a pluralist Europe is a crucial factor to achieve cultural integration aiming at social cohesion thus strengthening european citizens' qualifications and expertise.

Not only the languages open up to new cultures, but they also concretely increase our ability to benefit from cultural contacts whenever travelling or working in other European countries. Certain European languages are also spoken in numerous third countries and constitute an important link between the citizens and other nations in the world.

Someone likely to communicate in more than one language enlarges his mental landscape and gets used to screen issues with different visions. Multilinguism can then stimulate tremendously creativity. In today's globalised economy, Europe must base its competitive advantage on creativity and benefit from the potential offered by its multilingual workforce to develop on new markets world wide.

The support to linguistic diversity is also one of the basic principles of the Union. A long term objective in improving individual linguistic aptitudes was adopted as a reference to the goal stated by the European Council gathered in 2002 in Barcelona: citizens should learn, apart from their mother tongue, at least two foreign languages. It is therefore positive to acknowledge the creation of a European commissioner especially dedicated to multilingualism issues.

## **II. Promote, value, support European cultural diversity**

European Union has to use its unique cultural diversity as an asset in today's world. Europe would not be the same without the richness of its diversity. Without multiplicity and diversity of its cultures, the European continent wouldn't be that attractive nor that lively.

### **Preserve and make European cultural diversity alive**

European citizens value to preserve their customs, what makes them different from the others, their architecture and their gastronomy among other things, because this difference gives the others the will to discover different things. The particularities are their landmarks; it focuses their references to judge their surrounding world. And Europe may be an answer to their questions and concerns: a protecting Europe, a promoting Europe, a building Europe.

European cultural diversity is the result of local cultural diversities, but also of the diversity of expression's modes. To that concern, linguistic diversity is an asset we have to value, to put forward and promote. Via events, European cultural and linguistic diversity will be made more accessible to the largest population.

### **Creation of a „local European culture“ label**

A label to guarantee authenticity and quality of the cultural good (Toscana, Vlaanderen, Dorf, Alsace...) would guarantee the good as a piece of local culture and would make it recognizable and could be registered in a directory of European cultural locations and goods. The criteria to get such a label wouldn't only be a guarantee that the goods come from a member state region, but produced in Europe after criteria of respect to local cultures. No subjective criteria could prevail for the granting of such a label. It should be considered an asset to ease the diffusion toward a larger number of consumers.

### **Usage of official and national languages in international events**

Among the promotion of European cultures, European artists and participants in international competitions and events should represent a given country in an official and/or national language. Therefore, a eurosong contender would sing in an official national/regional language of the country he/she represents.

### **European culture capital – an European day for cultural diversity**

80% of the European citizens are living in cities, and it is in large urban area that is based both economical and social prosperity and cultural creativity.

The programme « Capitals of Culture » aims to show the great diversity of European culture. Every year, one or two cities are chosen as European capitals for culture, what brings right to a funding in the name of the Culture programme. Those funds are helping to enlight the cultural patrimony of a given city and region, and to gather artists from all over Europe. This title of European Capital for Culture highly contributes in developing tourism and economy in a city and

also helps improve its European and international influence.

A more important part of the budget dedicated to this initiative could be devoted especially to other European country's artists (mobility) and to develop trans-European partnerships, in the framework of event calendar build by the European Capitals for Culture.

The programme „Month of Culture“ could also concentrate on cities, including non EU countries (Basel in 2001), that were not designated „European capital for culture“. Cultural capitals could also coordinate on the European level awareness initiatives toward European citizens, including the youth, creating a day or week of cultural diversity. It could take place the 9th may (day of Europe) or the 21st may (UNESCO cultural diversity day). A „capital“ city would therefore balance the inputs it gets with diversity promotion and would focus on common projects.

### **Promote cultural diversity, from school to University**

Educational sector is the best place to reach the young Europeans: from school to university, focused actions can promote European cultural diversity together with giving conscious to the particular and common European cultural identity.

### **A common basis of European cultural history**

A common programme for European cultural history to follow the main streams and the most famous features of the European culture could be taught during secondary education. It wouldn't be the occasion to follow each and every European country's culture, but to teach the evolution and mutual influence of various cultural streams through an European approach (eg : through XVII and XVIII century, from barroco to classical streams through Europe; in XIX century, the birth of romantics...). In this framework, specific contributions of various countries and national declinations of cultural streams could be mentioned. The main goal would be to make the youth conscious of a European culture for more than 2000 years together with local and national differences to enrich each other. Due to very different scholastic systems, the content and means would be different and determined in the national level by local experts, as it was done for the Franco-German history book.

### **Develop European sections Europe wide**

A developed use of teaching a given field through a foreign language must be supported. Thanks to this principle, secondary education students should get the chance to learn a non-linguistic field (history for example), in a foreign language. This kind of programme already exists in some European countries and could be developed. Though responsible for the educational policies, the member States could build a network to exchange best practices on that particular issue.

### **Cultural diversity toward students**

The Union already have actions engaged toward students that show an increasing success and allow young Europeans to get conscious with their



common European identity, together with their differences. That is a mutual enrichment. Cultural diversity should be a full part of these actions. We could imagine an European cultural passport to ease European students to access at a lower price to cinemas, museums (under the „European label“ or not) and cultural events, allowing to discover a wider part of European cultural diversity and specificities of the hosting country.

And as far as possible, courses should encourage students to get familiar with an official language from the hosting country or region.

This cultural part of the programme, currently not existing, could also include common actions with Socrates programme.

## **NEW TECHNOLOGIES TO HELP CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

Internet has become one of the major media granting access to information and knowledge for a large number of citizens, and for the youth in particular. Furthermore, the Lisbon strategy emphasises on new technologies representing a great potential for development of European economy. We should therefore associate the large diversity of the European patrimony together with new and innovative technologies, to benefit both the European citizen and culture.

### **Towards a European digital library**

The European digital library, a symbol for Europe united in its diversity, doesn't aim at diffusing exclusive content, but to coordinate the access to digitalised works. It would be implemented, step by step, through a common online, direct and multilingual access portal to European cultural patrimony. For its implementation, a large partnership should include national libraries, archive centres, university libraries and European States resources.

### **Develop multilinguism through new technologies**

We should take the biggest benefit from new digital tools and technologies for translation to allow European citizens to consult and receive, via internet, European information in their own language. The seventh „programme cadre“ on research and development, focuses on technology research and development activities linked to the NTIC. European multilinguism constitutes a real asset we should consider: European experience and expertise should show us a competitive actor in handling multicultural situations in other parts of the world.

### **Encourage and promote citizen blogs**

The example of Café Babel, an European webzine created by Erasmus students based in Strasbourg, has shown the willingness of bloggers for European construction, inclusively through a common cultural project. The blogs have become a universal key for cultural spreading. We should not ignore their impact and encourage their spreading: between December 2004 and 2006, the number of blogs world wide has grown from 5.4 to 63.1 million.

Among an initiative dedicated to citizens' expression development, the support to those blogs should be encouraged. A necessary pre-requisite to the efficiency of

such a system would obviously be the development of an European wide equipment infrastructures and equipments to ease efficient telecommunications.

### **EUROPEAN CULTURAL DIVERSITY AS AN INFLUENCE FACTOR**

Europe, thanks to its unique internal cultural diversity, is likely to play a major role in the globalisation time, where cultures are meant to discover, and too often, to confront each other. Europe is likely to be an example of different cultures to meet and learn from each other.

#### **The role of cultural diversity in relations with partner countries**

Culture, diversity and intercultural dialogue should become a major challenge for a world order based on peace, mutual understanding and respect for shared values. The implementation of the UNESCO convention on promotion and protection of diversity of cultural means, to which Europe enormously contributed, illustrates the new role of cultural diversity on the international level. As parties in this convention, the Union and its member States committed themselves to develop a new role for culture in the international relations context, to integrate culture as a fundamental element in EU relations with partner countries and to include, on a systematic basis, culture in the development programmes and projects.

As a part of this commitment, the European Commission proposes to create a EU-ACP Cultural Fund as an European contribution to support the diffusion and, in certain cases, the production of cultural goods in ACP countries. This Fund encourages the emergence of local industries and markets, and allows cultural goods from ACP countries to access on an increased way to European markets. The Commission proposes to allocate, as an European contribution to this fund, 30 million euros for 2007-2013 period and invites member States to bring additional funding.

#### **Develop external promotion tools for European cultural diversity**

Those actions and tools (and others) for cultural diplomacy of the member states (Goethe Institut, Instituto Cervantes, Alliance Française...) should be coordinated to develop their European dimensions. The development of collaboration between national public television, radio channels and exterior medias from the member states (Deutsche Welle, BBC World, France 24...) around Euronews would bring contents to this European channel and allow its broadcasting worldwide valuating European cultural diversity.

« United in diversity », that's the Europe we want.

This motto is especially adapted to cultural diversity. It is a reference to both the peace and freedom area to allow the expression of our common cultural heritage, and to the singular look of a unique culture and expression means area world wide.

Cultural diversity goes together with Europe. And we do have to promote this particularity today since it belongs to our most precious things.

Meanwhile we should focus on a better common understanding: that is the condition for our cultural diversity to be an asset in today's globalising world. It should be our asset in this time when exchanges are developing, together with the consciousness of differences, in a time when immaterial and cultural dimension is fundamental.

And that's only based on this cultural diversity that we can build a sustainable Europe for tomorrow.

*Adopted at the YEPP Council, 19<sup>th</sup> January 2008*