



Con.Me. Contemporaneo Mediterraneo (Contemporary Mediterranean) contribution to the public consultation on European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)

Four years after the launch of European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), On May 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> 2008 the third Euro-Mediterranean conference of Culture Ministers took place.

In the conference conclusions, the “Euro-Mediterranean Strategy for Culture” was agreed, which aimed to “intensify the cultural dimension of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership in a concrete and innovative way”.

According to the principles of the Barcelona Declaration of 1995, the Ministers repeated the extraordinary potential represented by art and culture for Euro-Mediterranean relationships, as instruments for freedom, emancipation, citizenship, education to critical thinking and democracy.

Also in 2008, the European Union Council published its own conclusions on the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue in the external relations of the Union and its Member States, confirming the Culture Ministers’ motivations.

However, art and culture still occupy a marginal place in the Union’s external relations, and are considered exclusively as a matter of “local cultures and cultural-historical heritage”.

In March 2014, upon the establishment of the new Instrument of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENI) 2014-2020, culture is the big missing point in the Euro-Mediterranean, bilateral and regional, cooperation.

The only two projects in action right now are Anna Lindh Foundation, established in 2005, and Med Culture project, limited to 2014-2018.

Anna Lindh Foundation was supposed to give answers to analysis and recommendations elaborated by the so-called “High Level Advisory Group”, a group made by experts, created by the former President of the European Commission Romano Prodi, aimed to work on how to give new impulse to the Euro-Mediterranean intercultural dialogue through concrete guidelines for cultural cooperation.

In ten years of activities, the Foundation has shown unable to fully accomplish its main aim, i.e. cultural cooperation, due to being subject to the will (often in conflict) of the 42 Governments forming its Governing Council.

Med Culture project, created to support and develop the cultural area’s policies and practices, has a serious limit in covering only the South Mediterranean countries, thus denying the deep sense of Euro-Mediterranean collaboration.

A new vision of the European Neighbourhood Policy can’t ignore the cultural area’s needs anymore; this area also intersects all others issues already exhaustively faced by the Neighbourhood Policy Instrument, to promote a sustainable development in the Euro-Mediterranean area.

While strengthening cultural workers, it can't ignore the importance of building more balanced cultural exchanges, by intensifying direct cooperation between Europe and Arab Countries and not excluding the European geographical area.

Cultural cooperation cannot disregard mobility of professionals in general and it has to become easier by a more simple and decent modality of visa facilitation.

Recommendations:

- to consider culture as a transversal element in all programmes, on a bilateral and regional level;
- to establish a programme dedicated to funding independent artistic and cultural Euro-Mediterranean projects;
- to simplify procedures to accessing and report public financing;
- to support network activities between independent cultural structures of the Euro-Mediterranean civil society;
- to ensure freedom of artistic and cultural expression;
- to ensure the independence of culture, of its actors and places;
- to enhance artistic and cultural expressions and forms, promoting a culture of rights beyond political borders and cultural identities and interpreting practices of active citizenship.

Con.Me. Contemporaneo Mediterraneo

Fondation René Seydoux

Con.Me. Contemporaneo Mediterraneo Network was founded in June 2014. The network is made up by civil society organizations working in the fields of art, culture and international cooperation. Among its aims, supporting and developing international relationships through the dialogue between diversities, processes of democratisation in the governance of institutions and civil society, respect of human rights, sustainable development.

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