

POSITION PAPER

Access to Culture

Brussels, 17th March 2010



EARLALL

Position Paper on Access to Culture

EARLALL was set up in October 2001 with the aim of developing real and innovative forms of trans-national cooperation in the field of lifelong learning among European regional and local authorities in order better face the challenges of a knowledge based society. The organisation today has member regions from all over the European Union.

EARLALL has noted with great interest taken the document presented to the GD Education and Culture in August 2009 entitled “Policy Guidelines” from the Civil Society Platform on Access to Culture.

EARLALL especially endorses the notion of the Civil Society Platform on stimulating learning through culture. It is important with stronger recognition of the synergies between education and culture and support to such projects in all appropriate funding instruments – to increase the access to culture through education and the access to education through culture. Participation by the public at large in the different dimensions of cultural expression and in its enjoyment is possible only when means of access have been secured and facilitated. Formal, non- formal and informal education – regardless of level or context – is one of the basic elements of accessing culture, as it provides tools for participating in and understanding culture and the arts - which in turn helps citizens to live richer lives. Similarly, culture can provide access to education by helping people to develop a variety of skills that supports their ability to function in a knowledge-based society.

Culture can play an important role in the implementation of the “Key Competences for Lifelong Learning” as defined by the European Parliament in 2006: participation in cultural activities can be a powerful tool to achieve several generic competences such as creativity, entrepreneurship and civic competences. Cultural experiences can also be an effective way for different groups of people with learning difficulties to achieve the key competences in ordinary educational processes. The connection between access to culture as an important tool for access to learning and education is related to the notion of European Key Competences and that relation should be emphasized in coming political initiatives on regional, national and European levels. Access to culture thus also means equipping people for lifelong learning and, as a consequence, will have an impact on economic progress.

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EARLALL also strongly welcomes the Platform's recommendation in its Policy Guidelines that calls for increased support for language learning, including lesser used and regional languages. The learning of languages naturally leads to greater cultural understanding and as many European regions, including some EARLALL member regions, are truly bilingual, it is important that both the educational and cultural benefits of this diversity are fully celebrated at the European level.

EARLALL also wants to underline the importance of regarding participating in cultural activities as learning and as a support for education activities as such in a broader meaning. The annexes of the document include many examples from a wide range of cultural activities which contributes to learning: Formal cultural training centres and schools such as youth theatre schools, music conservatories and painting schools but also archives, libraries, traditional museums and open air museums as well as art museums, galleries and others.

EARLALL sincerely believes that for the construction of a successful and truly European Area of Lifelong Learning the proper role of access to cultural experiences should be duly taken into account in future works.

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