

Summer session 2018

Minutes of the first consultation on European cultural identity

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Venue: Agora of the Council of Europe, room G02

Speakers:

- Karl DONERT, EUROGEO, Vice-Chair of the Education and Culture Committee
 - Aurélie FILIPPETTI, French Minister of Culture and Communication from 2012 to 2014, author
 - Christophe GIRARD, Deputy Mayor of Paris (member city of the network of Intercultural Cities and founder of the Paris Nuit Blanche event)
 - Julianne LAGADEC, VOLONTEUROPE, Vice-Chair of the Education and Culture Committee
 - Catherine LALUMIERE, Secretary General of the Council of Europe from 1989 to 1994; President of Maison de l'Europe
 - Jean-Baptiste MATTEI, permanent representative of France at the Council of Europe
 - Joanna NOWICKI, university professor specialising in cultural areas, and the movement and history of ideas
 - Miroslav PAPA, permanent representative of Croatia at the Council of Europe
 - Philippe POTENTINI from the Directorate of Communications of the Council of Europe; representative of the Intercultural Cities unit
 - Paolo RUDELLI, permanent representative of the Holy See at the Council of Europe
 - Claude VIVIER LE GOT, FEDE, Chairwoman of the Education and Culture Committee
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1) Opening speech by the Chairwoman of the Education and Culture Committee

Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear guests,
Dear friends,

I would like to begin by warmly thanking you all for being here today for this first discussion of European cultural identity.

I would particularly like to thank Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, for her support from the outset and for the personal encouragement she provided a few days ago.

I am also grateful for the friendly and positive assistance of the Council of Europe's Pilar Morales, Ivana d'Alessandro, Eladio Fernandez Galiano, Hakan Demir and Ahmet Murat Kiliç.

Thanks also to Bruno Favel and Orane Proisy of the French Ministry of Culture and the Council of Europe's CDCPP for including this event in the official list of dates, published in four languages, for the European Year of Cultural Heritage.

For the period up to June 2020, our Committee has set up three working groups: Intercultural Cities, Life-Long Education and Heritage and Creation in Europe. The Committee is also directing a fourth, transversal group on Digital Citizenship.

Let me also thank Julianne Lagadec and Karl Donert, Vice-Chairs of the Education and Culture Committee, and the other group coordinators Iamvi Totsti, Gabriela Frey, Hugo Castelli Eyre and Noël Orsat for their invaluable contributions. And finally, warm thank to all those members of the Committee who have been involved in our work, in particular via Loomio, our online platform. My aim in this speech is to present the advances we have made together so far.

European cultural identity is the shared theme running through all our work; it will also be the topic of today's discussion.

The topic is by no means new. European cultural identity has already been addressed by numerous texts and conventions. To name just a few: the 1954 European Cultural Convention, the 2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, the 2005 Faro Convention, and the Council of Europe's White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue in 2008.

While a number of meetings have been dedicated to European cultural identity, to my knowledge civil society has not always played a central role. Given this year is the tenth anniversary of the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, it seemed a fitting time to change that by actively inviting civil society to join the debate.

In conducting our work we are well aware of the current political context: a rise in nationalism that is fanning the flames of popular anger and paralysing level-headed political leaders. Nonetheless, we hope to rise above this difficult backdrop and to work in a positive and proactive manner.

European culture simultaneously affirms identity and diversity – a seeming contradiction, since the first implies unity and fusion, while the second implies multiplicity and spread.

Identity, meanwhile, is based on our shared heritage.

'Heritage' can refer to European intellectual heritage, the heritage of ancient Greece and Rome, Judeo-Christian heritage, Arab-Muslim heritage, or indeed the heritage of humanism, which began with the Enlightenment. There is also the heritage of our architecture and landscapes. And that of the sea and land routes of, for example, European wine and cod. There is the heritage of European trade cooperation between, for instance, builders, coal workers and many others. Nor must we forget European freedom, European impertinence, European creative power, and European imagination – a heritage that includes, of course, the Grand Tour.

Already we can see that identity and diversity are not so irreconcilable after all. Indeed we can observe:

- first, that identity is rooted in heritage that is itself diverse and sometimes contradictory;
- second, that much of heritage is mobile in nature and results from the movement of knowledge and skills.

European culture, we might say, to borrow the terms of Professor Lynne Chisholm, is therefore a combination of 'roots' and 'routes' – an idea that will be explored by our working group Heritage and Creation in Europe.

However, we need to go further still. The past is over and fixed. The present is already beyond our control. The future, on the other hand, provides infinite opportunities for imagination and construction. It is from this angle that we wish to approach European cultural identity. In doing so we must avoid getting bogged down in historically controversial definitions of identities; that is, by self-defeating dichotomies between 'us' and 'them' that, because they are rigid, prevent integration and enrichment.

On the contrary, our task is to conceive of a hypothetical identity, that is always in the making – to build a definition – if 'definition' is the right term – that is modern, dynamic and flexible. In order to achieve this, discussion and debate are essential.

The birth place of democracy was the Greek city, where citizens played an active role in political life. Indeed, our Intercultural Cities working group will be focusing on promoting the potential of modern cosmopolitan cities as democratic agora.

Indeed, it is through dialogue that we can build links between different sources of identity and different key aspects of what makes us European. The emancipating power of dialogue requires a degree of cultural openness that itself must be acquired. This takes effort and proactive dynamism. A coherent and energetic politics, if it is boldly to attempt to nip populism in the bud, must make sure to address the issues populists raise.

And so, the final aspect of our strategy concerns education: lifelong education. We have therefore also created a working group dedicated to education. Education creates, nourishes and preserves culture. It is also a means of passing culture on to future generations. It is therefore at the heart of the virtuous circle powered by civil society. Lifelong education includes formal education, non-formal and informal education: universal education for the well-being of all.

Education is intrinsically connected to social integration and dignity. It is also key to maintaining a balance between identity and diversity.

In its formal aspect, education can help us introduce collective strategies for envisaging our shared future. In its informal, but increasingly widespread, aspect, education offers infinite new possibilities.

One of the objectives of the Conference of INGOs' transversal group Digital Citizenship – a group directed by our Committee – is to investigate the new modes of exchange and transmission made possible by new technology.

Civil society is the heart of Europe.

For our dialogue to be fruitful, everyone must have the chance to be heard as we analyse the multiple and complementary elements that are at the heart of European cultural identity.

This freedom of speech is essential if we are to bring together all of the unique, open-minded and civil stances found in today's contemporary intercultural world.

In this connection, it is essential that the Council of Europe and its members defend human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Without these values, European cultural identity cannot be constructed.

It will not have escaped you that my speech closes with more questions than answers. Our ambitious project is only just beginning and will never truly be finished – this for a reason I have alluded to: European cultural identity is, by its nature, constantly evolving.

In order to conceive of European cultural identity in all its diversity, we need to examine a variety of positions. And on that note, let me offer my heartfelt thanks to today's speakers, who are:

- Catherine Lalumière, Secretary General of the Council of Europe from 1989 to 1994 and currently President of *Maison de l'Europe*. She said in 2014: 'We have shared characteristics, shared ideas and shared behaviour, in spite of our undeniable national and regional differences'. Catherine Lalumière also gave an inspiring talk at the 2005 Council of Europe conference 'European culture: identity and diversity'.
- Miroslav Papa, Permanent Representative of Croatia. Croatia is currently chairing the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which has made European cultural heritage and cultural routes one of its four priorities.
- Jean-Baptiste Mattéi, Permanent Representative of France, whose president Emmanuel Macron wrote us an encouraging message stating that he is, I quote, 'convinced that culture is the best way to bring together peoples and help construct a true European identity'. He went on to say that, for him, culture is a priority in terms of rebuilding a better Europe.
- Paolo Rudelli, Permanent Representative of the Holy See, whose approach to cultural identity includes interreligious dialogue. Indeed, the 2008 White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue states, I quote: 'Part of Europe's rich cultural heritage is a range of religious, as well as secular, conceptions of the purpose of life'.
- Aurélie Filippetti, author and French Minister of Culture and Communication from 2012 to 2014. She has argued that, I quote: 'Culture is one of the means of recommencing the construction of European identity'.
- Philippe Potentini of the Directorate of Communications of the Council of Europe, who is representing the Intercultural Cities unit and who has emphasised that the intercultural model is opposed to any fixed idea of identity since identities evolve and interact according to times and contexts.

- Christophe Girard, Deputy Mayor of Paris (a member city of the intercultural city network) and founder of the Paris Nuit Blanche – an iconic cultural event and veritable engine of artistic creation and imagination. The Nuit Blanche, which promotes meetings, dialogue and exchanges, has become European in scale, since it has been replicated in numerous cities.
- Joanna Nowicki, a university professor specialising in cultural areas and the movement and history of ideas, will have the difficult task of resuming the various positions expressed by our speakers and of drawing conclusions.

Conscious that you have all gone to some trouble to be here today to speak with the Conference of INGOs, I would like without further ado to invite you to take the floor and share your ideas with us. A warm thank you to everybody.

2) Talks by Catherine LALUMIERE, Miroslav PAPA, Jean-Baptiste MATTEI and Paolo RUDELLI

Catherine LALUMIERE

Madam Chair, distinguished ambassadors, ladies and gentlemen,

I am happy to be here with you this afternoon. The pleasure is all the greater since the Conference of INGOs is these days high on my agenda: the Association of Political Studies of the Council of Europe, which I head, has recently acquired participatory status at the Conference. So I am pleased to be taking part at this meeting 'on home territory'. Today's topic is both important and potentially explosive in the current political context. What is a European? What are her or his characteristics? Can we speak of a 'European identity'? What about 'European culture'?

Wherever Europeans travel in the world, we notice two things: locals spot us straightaway and we ourselves can pick out our fellow Europeans. So clearly we have some shared characteristics!

European cultural identity has frequently been studied in the past, particularly by the Council of Europe. The Chairwoman mentioned a number of conferences in her introduction. Various texts and reports have also been produced. Some address Europe's long history (a lot happens in 3000 years!), others focus on culture. All give us much food for thought.

Given that the Council of Europe's budget for culture is currently being squeezed, prudence is of the essence.

Issues directly or indirectly linked to European identity have frequently been studied from political perspective, in particular as regards the integration of new Council of Europe members. It has always been understood that Council of Europe Member States must be European. But what is a European country? The first problem was how to define Europe's borders.

Finally the Council of Europe has adopted an open and flexible stance. One of its founding members is Turkey – which, in the current context, might seem problematic. But we should not forget the Cold War context. At a time when Western Europe and the United States were attempting to shield themselves from large parts of the world, it was considered useful to have Turkey as an ally, and so it was deemed European and politically acceptable. In other words, decisions frequently come down to politics and diplomacy – or, others would say, recklessness – on the part of the Council of Europe.

Robert Schuman had already anticipated that the countries separated from 'us' at Yalta would later join us. So the door was left open from the very inception of the Council of Europe. After 1989, and over a period that I know rather well since I was in the thick of the Council's work at the time, we adopted an open approach; indeed, we were busy making contacts that would allow us to admit Central European countries to the Council as quickly as possible.

The first to be admitted was Hungary in 1990. We strove to be understanding: numerous states benefited from a certain indulgence or a certain political strategy. We were willing to forget certain events. It seems the ability to forget is a sign of strong nations.

After 1995, the Council of Europe became more open still. Its membership grew to 47, and its borders moved towards the Balkans and the Caucasus. Whereas the Balkans are indisputably part of Europe, things are more complicated when it comes to the Caucasus. For geographers, Europe stops at the Urals and does not therefore, in theory, include most of Russia, which is nonetheless a major European country in our continent's history.

All that is to emphasise the open and flexible approach of the Council of Europe as concerns its membership.

As I have said, cultural identity issues are nowadays explosive. They reflect new geopolitical challenges, amongst which the most critical is migration. Migration has always been a feature of European history. But the difference now is that the migration we are seeing is massive and many countries are not ready to host new populations. This has created tensions on such a large scale that they are destabilising Member States and threatening European construction. I believe that events are unfurling in an unhealthy and dangerous way.

There are many more reasons why European cultural identity presents problems. Some fear that the volume of migrants, their origins and religious differences (I note in passing that it is remarkable that such secular people accord so much importance to religion) will erode national identities.

There is currently a conflict between European cultural identity and the national identities that we are familiar with, attached to and identify with. The same phenomenon can be observed at the regional level, in terms of regional identities. But for nationalists, only national identity matters. The emergence and development of national identities has not been easy. It took many years (in France many centuries) for national identities to stabilise. It is precisely because it was so difficult to create our national identities that we are so deeply attached to them. This can be said for the French, but also for the English, the Germans and the Italians, who attached great importance to the idea of nation from the nineteenth century onwards. Consequently, Europe is composed of numerous nations and those nations, with their own national identities, wish to 'endure'. In such a context, any other identity seems to threaten the national identities we hold dear.

It is in this very specific context that questions surrounding European identity are arising, namely, whether a European identity exists, whether it can exist, whether we can tolerate it, and whether we can remain attached to our national identities whilst also accepting this new European cultural identity. Nationalists wish to give minimal value to European identity. For them, values, in particular, are to be determined at the national level; Europe is to be conceived of in terms of an exclusively intergovernmental model, along the lines of the Council of Europe. This is why, for nationalists, the EU is intrinsically flawed: it plays a supranational role, since decisions made at the EU level can overrule

decisions taken at the national level. And so nationalists decry the EU, while remaining relatively tolerant of the Council of Europe.

Now the primary argument behind the rejection of European identity as found in nationalist-inspired theories is that we have, in Europe, too many cultural differences and that we live very separate lives. Indeed, for nationalists we are so different that any attempts to unite us would be a vain fantasy and an abstraction. The bottom line of their argument is this: nations and national cultures are eternal and must endure; there will never be a European cultural identity; nothing must alter our national identities, and everything is unchangeable. They claim that, in spite of attempts, such as the Erasmus programme, to bring us together, we know each other poorly; we have different histories and we have fought all too often in the past. And besides, national identities must endure and remain unchanged. In other words what nationalists believe that everything is set in stone.

And yet we are well acquainted with the terrible consequences of ultra-nationalism, which we experienced during the twentieth century. And it is this tragic past that makes many people afraid today. The consequences of ultra-nationalism can be resumed as war, the extermination of sections of the population that did not fit the national ideal, and the emergence of regimes claiming to protect the nation – regimes that became totalitarian.

I would like to conclude by saying that what nationalists present as unchangeable is, on the contrary, constantly evolving. European construction is, by its nature, a process. European cultural identity, which began to form three millennia ago, is only just beginning. This construction must continue, and European cultural identity must be formed and solidify. This does not in any way imply the elimination of nations. Rather, Europe is a new partner that endangers neither nations nor regions but adds something new; that something we will be the first, but not the last, to help shape.

Miroslav PAPA

First of all, I would like to thank the Committee on Education and Culture and the INGOs for organising this exchange of views and for inviting me. It is a particular pleasure to be representing the Croatian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe here today. As the Chairwoman of the Committee pointed out, Croatia has identified among its priorities the protection of cultural heritage and cultural routes. You can find these priorities on the Council of Europe website (https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=090000168086c0c8).

We firmly believe that issues related to culture, the protection of cultural heritage and the arts are of major importance. They are at the heart of the Council of Europe's work. It goes without saying that the protection of cultural heritage is necessary. In this regard, co-operation based on the European Cultural Convention, one of the flagship treaties of the Council of Europe, remains of major importance, particularly in the context of the crises and challenges we are facing in Europe nowadays. Another challenge related to European cultural routes is: why do we consider this partial agreement as one of the most important activities of the Council of Europe? Because it is not only linked to cooperation in the cultural sphere, but it also underlines a potential link between culture and development. As Mrs Lalumière has remarkably pointed out, by addressing issues of cultural identity, we are able to truly identify our common approaches to different pasts in Europe, even in geographical

terms of different roots. Not having the same roots and coming from different countries, we nonetheless observe that history has an impact on our daily lives and on our collective heritage.

I will share with you today my vision of cultural identity as a representative of the Republic of Croatia and after nine years in the Council of Europe. We are facing growing intolerance, exclusion and ghettoization of different groups. These are not only refugees and migrants, coming from outside our borders, but also those who are in Europe on a more permanent basis: national minorities, the Roma population and other vulnerable. Populism is not only active in the political sphere, but also in the economic, social and human rights spheres. My experience as a human rights lawyer reinforces this conviction. The rise of populist trends has an impact on our cultural identity in the sense, for example, that human rights are considered less important than other aspects of political and social life. This is a particularly worrying trend. Increasingly, Europe's values are being labelled as imported elements. We are thus confronted with the promotion of a cultural relativization that denies the progress made at European level; progress based, once again, on traditional values, whatever they may be.

It is a fact that European cultural identity can only be based on the recognition of diversity. National identities remain and will remain. They are important for all countries, both small and big. The fact that the Croatian identity, for example, remains important does not mean that we are relativizing what brings us together. Moreover, the States which value their nationality the most may also be those which are favouring the deeper European integration. These two trends are therefore not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Finally, I believe that European cultural identity is essentially based on respecting the core values of the Council of Europe. That is the major challenge: if we do not respect basic democratic standards, the rule of law and human rights, I do not see how we can talk about a common identity. Yet it is this European cultural identity that is under attack today.

How to counter this adverse populist trend? The only way is to recommit to our values. We must act at the political and national levels by imposing common standards. Among them must be education to democratic citizenship and life in a democratic society. It is the only way to build inclusive societies. From an institutional point of view, it seems to me that the use of certain Council of Europe mechanisms, including implementation and monitoring mechanisms, would provide a better understanding of how to counter populism.

Finally, since we are in the framework of the Conference of INGOs, to which we attach particular importance and value, I would like to stress the major role of civil society. Only synergy between civil society and governments can enable positive action. And I stress that it is very much the time to act before it is too late.

[Jean-Baptiste MATTEI](#)

Thank you for inviting me to participate in today's discussion. As Permanent Representative of France at the Council of Europe, I would like to make a few comments, some of which are in keeping with those of the first two speakers.

First, I would like to draw attention to the title of today's event. As has been said, we must be careful when we speak about identity. As we see in the difficult debates taking place in Europe today, identity

is frequently used by populists as a means of discriminating or excluding. The turning inwards that we are seeing in many European countries is a form of sovereignism or cultural protectionism that is extremely dangerous.

National identity is an increasingly important topic in political debate, particularly as regards migration and the threats some claim it poses to our culture and way of life. Likewise, regional identities are being promoted by those pursuing secessionist or independentist politics and who for that reason also wish to underline differences rather than similarities promoting national unity. For this reason France has not ratified the Council of Europe's Framework Convention on national minorities or the Charter on regional languages, although the teaching of these languages in France is authorised and even encouraged.

The concept of European identity has also been exploited by nationalists. We might recall the debates that have taken place at the EU concerning Europe's 'Christian roots'. Certain groups and political parties have used these debates to draw a contrast between Europe and European culture and foreign regions, cultures and religions.

We all know that European cultural identity is, by its essence, the fruit of a large-scale merging of populations and civilisations. The diversity of our languages and national cultures is a defining feature of our continent and is what makes it so rich. Much of this richness is owed to external influences, from both our closest neighbours and from further afield.

Just like national identity, European identity is based first and foremost on a desire to live together in harmony and to partake in a shared vision. We cannot talk of European cultural identity without reference to values. Europe is today the only continent where the death penalty has been completely eradicated, with the one exception of Belarus. Europe is the continent where rights and freedoms are the best protected, largely thanks to the Convention and the European Court of Human Rights. All of this is essential for ensuring the success and endurance of the European project; indeed these values help to define our deep-rooted identity.

Let me now recall that France has always accorded great importance to the truly cultural dimension of European construction. President Macron is continuing this approach. Just recently he explained to the European Parliament that European sovereignty does not imply less national sovereignty but rather an increase in total sovereignty. Likewise, I believe that European identity does not mean less national identity, but rather an increase in our overall, shared identity. Indeed, in his speech at the Sorbonne – a venue he had chosen for a reason –, the President argued that the strongest 'cement' of European construction will always be culture and knowledge. In particular, he stressed the benefits of multilingualism and of youth mobility across Europe. He suggested a goal: that by 2024 every student should be able to speak at least two European languages and that half of the students in each year group should have spent at least six months in a different European country.

The President went on to discuss the creation of European universities by founding university networks across several European countries. Shared degree programmes would be offered and taught in at least two languages. By 2024 we can expect the creation of some 20 European universities. The President also suggested making secondary school qualifications more uniform or else putting in place a scheme

for Europe-wide recognition of these qualifications, as has already been done for higher education via the Bologna Process.

The Council of Europe has played a pioneering role in all of these areas. The European Cultural Convention of 1954, which predates the European Community, bears witness to this.

The Council of Europe was also a forerunner in terms of harmonising language learning. And it is a leader in terms of citizenship education. The Council is also active in terms of audiovisual technology; we might mention the European Audiovisual Observatory and the Eurimages fund headed by Catherine Trautmann. Moreover, we recently celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the European Cultural Routes, which have become extremely popular in Member States and are having a positive economic as well as cultural impact.

The Council of Europe does not have the same funds as the European Union and should not try to compete with the EU in terms of culture and education. But it must continue its pioneering role and persist in promoting unity amongst the larger Europe of its 47 Member States. It is in our deepest interests that countries such as Russia and Turkey do not turn towards Asia but maintain their attachment to Europe.

In anchoring these countries to European values, we are fighting against threats to freedom of expression and freedom of creation across our continent. And I would like to conclude with a moment's thought for Oleg Sentsov, the Ukrainian filmmaker who is currently on hunger strike in protest against his 20-year prison sentence, and for Asli Erdogan, the Turkish author who was imprisoned and who continues to be persecuted to this day. Their fates are not without relevance to our discussion today.

[Highness Paolo RUDELLI](#)

I would first like to thank the INGOs for the invitation to speak at today's meeting on European cultural identity – a theme that is sensitive but nonetheless essential for European construction. It is my pleasure to share with you the following thoughts.

People are often embarrassed by the issue of identities and cultural identities in particular; sometimes the issue is even perceived as dangerous by our contemporary culture, which claims to be universal and all-inclusive. Indeed, cultural identities are often regarded with suspicion owing to the conflicts they can generate. And yet nobody can do without her or his cultural identity: we are all in the grip of an insurmountable relationship with something we have inherited along with a language, community and a historical era. And in a culture based on the pursuit of the absolute autonomy of the individual, this can seem surprising: we seem to think, 'What I did not choose is not mine and is not me'. But cultural identity demonstrates that we are also, always, what we have not chosen. Human freedom is a tiring journey of appropriation; it is never a 'start' in absolute terms.

The issue of identities is all the more complex for Europe, where highly diverse cultures have emerged that nonetheless share deeply rooted foundations.

Some years ago, in his famous work *Eccentric Culture: A Theory of Western Civilization*, Rémi Brague argued that eccentricity [ex-centricity] is the distinctive feature of European culture. He emphasised how Roman civilisation was built on a normative canon situated outside of itself, namely in Greek

civilisation. As he puts it: 'To be Roman was to live the experience of the ancients as a new experience, renewed by its transplanted into a new soil' (see the French edition p. 49).

What we have here is the myth of Aeneas, who fled the burning city of Troy carrying his elderly father Anchises on his shoulders and arrived on the shores of Latium, thus beginning Rome's legendary history. The same mechanism, notes Brague, can be seen in Christianity, whose centre is also outside of itself since it is based on a previous alliance – that of Israel. The distinctive characteristic of European culture would therefore be its eccentricity [ex-centricity], that is, its reference to a classical model that precedes it. It is this that has made Europe's numerous rebirths possible: every time we create something new we turn our eyes and our minds to what came before.

Pope Francis, in the speech he gave at the Council of Europe during his visit on 25 November 2014, described a similar concept when he compared Europe to a vast tree that, in order to reach its branches ever higher, must dig its roots ever deeper; roots that, he said, are nourished by truth based on conscience. It is not a museum we must conserve but a living heritage that helps us address questions concerning the meaning and truth of humankind – questions that transcend any given culture and that enable dialogue between cultures.

European cultural identity consists of this rich, multifarious heritage of the past in which Christianity has played a decisive role, alongside, and sometimes even in opposition to, other influences.

But identity is a living, dynamic process that is not produced exclusively with reference to the past. While reference to our roots remains vital, in today's increasingly globalised context our relationship with other cultures is equally vital. The two approaches are not mutually exclusive but fit together: only a person conscious of her or his own identity can truly dialogue with others.

In this respect, it is important to recall the Pope's reference, in his speech at the Council of Europe, to two major challenges that he invited Europe to take on: the challenges of 'multipolarity' and of 'transversality'.

Europe, being at the crossroads of different cultural, political and religious poles, currently faces mounting multipolarity. The first challenge, the Pope stated, is to 'globalise' this multipolarity in an original way, namely by pursuing a 'constructive harmony, one free of those pretensions to power which, while appearing from a pragmatic standpoint to make things easier, end up destroying the cultural and religious distinctiveness of peoples'.

Pretensions to power tend to be uniformising. Let me give an example. When we hear the term 'shared European values' we sometimes have the impression that European institutions are promoting uniformised or abstract models rather than promoting the various cultural, historical and religious experiences that are behind these values and that are necessary to their survival.

The challenge of multipolarity is closely linked to that of transversality. In the Pope's words: 'Our times demand the ability to break out of the structures which "contain" our identity and to encounter others, for the sake of making that identity more solid and fruitful in the fraternal exchange of transversality. A Europe which can only dialogue with limited groups stops halfway.'

Indeed, we are currently only halfway. In our increasingly pluralist societies we need to establish dialogue that includes the full range of diverse social actors: political institutions, civil society, religious communities and the world of art and culture. All of these different poles must learn to dialogue in a transversal way, free from predetermined models. The future of Europe, if there is to be one, is to be

found in this dialogue between its rich cultural identity and the other cultures and traditions that are converging in the agora of our globalised world.

The alternative would be to cast aside our past in favour of a blank slate, to forget the historical cultural identities that have created Europe and those that are currently developing here; to impose uniform, predetermined and abstract models with which everyone would have to identify. In my view such a strategy would be doomed to failure because it is artificial. Moreover, in reality attempts to erase identities merely create the conditions for even bloodier conflicts.

A European rebirth is possible, indeed necessary, but can only take place if we are able to carry our heritage on our shoulders, like Aeneas carried his father, so that it might live again, in a new form.

3) First summary by Joanna NOWICKI

You have entrusted an academic with summarising the interesting ideas put forward today. Thank you! The Chairwoman's speech described the guiding theme of the work of the Committee she chairs: European cultural identity. Four working groups have been created: Intercultural Cities, Lifelong Education, Heritage and Creation in Europe and Digital Citizenship. There is a clear desire to address identity by adopting a global approach going beyond a merely philosophical view of the issue.

Catherine Lalumière expressed her concern regarding the dangers she discerns in nationalist discourse. The prevalence of this discourse can lead us to forget our achievements. It was the memory of violence that gave the European project its initial impetus. And it was partly on this basis that we established the European community. We chose to construct our future together. Numerous fears are emerging regarding migration. However, it is dangerous to focus the European cultural identity debate exclusively around migration. The risk is not national fervour, but an excess of national fervour.

Miroslav Papa emphasised that Central Europe is more pro-European than we think. He drew our attention to the mutual enrichment that can result from attachment both to one's nation and to Europe. Roots are needed for culture and development, making them important and eternal and necessary for the future. This is the vision widespread in Central Europe and less well-known in the western part of our continent. Miroslav Papa made suggestions for possible action, while focusing his speech on diversity. He is confident that national identity will endure, even though countries in Central Europe have suffered a loss of identity in the past. He demonstrated his proactive approach and optimism, in spite of the current context, and also drew attention to the checks needed to avoid abuses.

Jean-Baptiste Mattéi acquainted us with certain issues being discussed in France and he, too, evoked the danger of associating identity and migration. He expressed doubts as to the re-emergence of national identities – a very French stance that is not necessarily shared by all countries. He said that we are currently seeing a problematic appropriation by nationalists of the problems of regional identity, linguistic identity and roots more generally. His approach to European cultural identity is pragmatic and can be summed up as the desire to live together in harmony. He said that the French President wishes to draw on the resources of universities and education and on the Council of Europe's community of 47, which is capable of promoting a forward-looking vision. Our attention was drawn to contemporary cases of persecution.

Paolo Rudelli placed particular emphasis on heritage. Heritage is not a burden to be done away with in favour of autonomy, he argued: it is part of our national heritage and must be valued so that we can construct the new from the old. Rémy Brague has explained that Europe propagates values that it initially imported. There should be an emphasis both on multipolarity and transversality, which are two approaches to the European project. Dialogue (as defined by Paul Ricoeur) is only possible if we are open to the heritage of others.

4) Talks by Aurélie FILIPPETTI, Philippe POTENTINI and Christophe GIRARD

Aurélie FILIPPETTI

I am delighted to be here today to talk about a subject that I hold dear. European cultural identity cannot be reduced either to the notion of identity nor to the notion of culture. What is interesting is precisely how these two notions interact, enrich and cross-fertilise one another. I'm going to share with you my experience as French Minister of Culture and as a citizen and elected representative.

Culture is the very stuff of European identity. If there is one thing that lies behind a feeling of belonging to Europe on the part of the EU's 28 or the Council of Europe's 47 Member States, that thing is our shared culture – in other words a relationship to the world and to other people that is expressed artistically or aesthetically and that generates a meeting. Culture is always a meeting between the artist's subjectivity and that of the audience, which participates in defining the work. Culture is a meeting between something extremely intimate – creation, the mystery of creation and even the mystery of life – and something that can touch us in a universal way.

This is what Kant called intersubjectivity. Through culture we exchange with the other, with alterity; and this does not impoverish us but, on the contrary, enriches us. When I behold a creation of another person, I lose nothing but only gain. My identity is deepened and enriched by my meeting with the identity of the other. If identity is understood as something fixed and given at any moment in time, then it is the opposite of a cultural process that is dynamic and a democratic mechanism that is constantly under construction. European cultural identity is constantly under construction and never complete. This is a fine parable of democracy, which is itself always incomplete and imperfect.

The concept of identity must not be neglected; but it must be considered as a dynamic under construction and as a meeting with the other. If we put aside the concept of identity we risk finding ourselves at a loss in the face of populism. A sense of cultural belonging also allows people, particularly those belonging to the working classes, to feel that they belong to society.

It gives them a sense of dignity. In France, certain (but not all) regions with a strong cultural identity are those that also reject racism and xenophobia – often more successfully than other regions. Regional identity is not considered to be the only possible identity, and this allows more room for others, for the other. If folklore is based on repetition, then culture, on the contrary, is perpetual re-creation.

Creation and heritage should not be considered contradictory. Promoting heritage is in itself a creative act. We do not take care of historical monuments today as we did in the nineteenth century. Priorities have changed.

European cultural identity is a strength so long as it is open. European history is a history of openness. Openness was also the strength of the Roman Empire, in which culture and religion were combined.

For example, the religion based on the god Mithra came from abroad. The Roman Empire consisted of dialogue between East and West. This was not simply the result of the intermingling of Latin and Greek, for it was also a time of great tension surrounding Christianity, which came from the East and was eventually integrated into Roman culture. Interreligious dialogue has taken place at other times during European history: we might mention the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. On each occasion, the result was a frenzy of artistic creativity. Certainly we have also experienced violent conflicts, but this is part of the construction of identity. And our strength is to be found precisely in this continuous movement.

We ought to draw on the richness offered by cultural diversity – a notion widely recognised since the 2005 UNESCO Convention, which has been included in European texts. The Convention is a remarkable, solid legislative tool that can be used to promote diversity of expression.

We fought for what we called ‘cultural exception’ – the idea that culture and mechanisms of cultural production must not be subject only to market forces, for otherwise the result would be destruction and homogenisation. We should be proud of diversity and also of cultural exception, which allows us clearly to say to the rest of the world, ‘This is Europe and this is how it functions’.

European citizens are enthusiastic about the plays and films produced in Europe. And they express this pride openly. Thanks to its diversity, our culture is extremely rich. We ought not to be afraid! And we need to pass this mentality onto future generations. It is for this reason that I feel that artistic education should be a pillar of education in Europe.

It is fundamental both for culture and citizenship and for helping students to learn more traditional disciplines more effectively. There is no question of being threatened by a loss or ‘replacement’ of our identity. We have always been able to draw the best from civilisations and cultures we have encountered, and this tradition will continue. We will continue to pursue this dynamic approach because dynamism is the essence of life.

Philippe POTENTINI

I am someone who works ‘on the ground’; at the Council of Europe I serve as an intermediary between civil society and our institutions.

I would like briefly to look back over 60 years of pro-peace standard-setting activity at the Council of Europe, then to discuss the policies we have seen over the past ten years.

The Council of Europe was founded in 1949 following the wreckage caused by two global conflicts. Standing before the tombs of tens of millions of Europeans and beholding the ashes of the Holocaust, a group of courageous and proactive people wished to unite our nations and move together towards a shared future.

The first of the Council of Europe’s conventions was the European Convention on Human Rights. It instated a rights-based culture. It recognised a European identity that had for centuries been based on conflict. It did this no doubt in order to oppose ongoing practices that have now been banned such as the death penalty, arbitrary detention and so on. René Cassin played a key role in helping this European identity to emerge. He assessed its relative efficacy between 1940 to 1950 and he wished to equip the

continent with an international court that would oblige Member States to protect the rights contained in the Convention. All of this is a key element of European cultural heritage.

The second convention I would like to refer to is the European Cultural Convention of 1954, which aimed to create an agreement between Europe's peoples and to promote regional and minority cultures. A number of institutions and ongoing events resulted from this Convention: the European Night of Museums, the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes (there will be a tourism show in Paris in October, attended by representatives of the Cultural Routes and the French Minister of Culture), the European Heritage Days and the Faro Convention on the value of cultural heritage for society.

The Council of Europe's art exhibitions, originally conceived of in 1954, have also become very popular. They are now organised via a programme entitled 'We, the others'. The exhibitions get civil society involved in creating a new format in terms of the choice of works, themes and techniques, the idea being to reach the widest possible audience.

Since 2008 Europe has faced the repercussions of the financial crisis and of globalisation, whose effects are shaking up our societies. Identity is a constantly evolving concept. We accept changes to our identity more easily if we understand that those changes are inevitable. The feeling of being overlooked or left out leads us defensively to cling to our familiar, existing identities.

The vision of European culture put forward by the Intercultural Cities unit is one of a constantly evolving process. The network's member cities form a community based on shared values and the shared conviction that diversity and migration are positive phenomena. In this respect, the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue is a key text.

Two cities are particularly close to my heart: Patras (the Greek gateway to the EU for migrants) and Paris. In 2008 we launched an anti-discrimination campaign in Paris. Afterwards we asked the Mayor's assistant in charge of international relations to have Paris join the network of intercultural cities. After eight years of lobbying, Paris joined in May 2016.

Christophe GIRARD

It is important that national languages be preserved for they are part of each country's culture.

I was born in Angers in 1956. Angers was a twinned town, and I am convinced that twinning was an excellent way of teaching young citizens about the end of the war and peace building. The scheme carried a message of economic cooperation, but it also gave the sense of a shared space of peace, intelligence and shared education.

I have twice stood for EU elections. In 2004 the idea was hit upon that European citizens should be able to stand for election in any EU country. There was a French candidate in Portugal, an Italian candidate in Belgium, myself in Italy, and several other French candidates across Europe. It was an excellent experience in terms of building progressive European discourse.

Concerning European culture, of which the previous speakers have spoken highly, we also need to consider the problem of public awareness and understanding. Many people do not know what we mean when we refer to the Council of Europe. And yet this information is essential. As representatives

of our democracies, we must undertake the work needed to inform the public about the Council of Europe. When a country leaves or distances itself from the Council, it endangers both the organisation and its funds. Often funding for culture falls victim. If funding for culture is not openly adopted through a clear political policy, then culture can quickly become a merely amusing distraction. But in my eyes, this is not at all what culture is.

Culture is the construction of a critical capacity, of taste, of distaste, of the ability to evaluate, create and appreciate. After initial reserves, I count myself amongst those who holds regional languages in high esteem. As a European, I am not afraid to teach in Pristina, the capital of Kosovo – a small country that has been independent for 10 years now and dreams and longs for Europe. Croatia is also a country where, as in all European countries, contradictory forces are to be found. But Europe also exists to protect those who uphold strong European values as an ideal.

With regard to the *Nuit Blanche* event, my original idea was to attract our fellow citizens to the heart of their cities and to their heritage. It is not simply a question of all-night openings but rather of handing over the city's keys to artists so that they might rewrite its heritage. The aim is also to help those who are reticent about culture to feel more at ease. When we open up libraries or conservatories for example, both social cohesion and individual knowledge are bolstered. I think we have tended to believe that culture is a given. But it cannot survive and will be reduced if it is not funded. Unfortunately at the moment we are seeing just this: cities, counties, regions and countries are cutting their budgets.

Take a good look at those people who, infected by a widespread anxiety, are putting about the idea that a certain form of national identity is in danger. This is a fantasy. Inaccurate information has also been put about concerning migration (let me recall that in 2017 one million people arrived in France; only 46,000 remain today). It is sometimes argued that we lack the resources host migrants. I am a member of a charity in the Pays de la Loire region of France that helps local families to host migrants. Thanks to our scheme the region has benefited from certain professional skills that we lacked locally and has also been able to re-form its football team!

The 104 in Paris is a unique, state-sponsored cultural centre. It is located in the most socially diverse district of Paris that also has the city's highest unemployment rate. The centre is going from strength to strength. Access to 'beauty' transforms an area. The 104 is home to a range of amateur artistic practices.

So let's not scrimp on culture. If someone tells you that culture is expensive, tell them that the cost of ignorance is far higher.

5) Second summary by Joanna NOWICKI

In the second part of the debate we heard three presentations.

Aurélié Filippetti argued that we must have the courage to speak about cultural identity and its links to democracy and citizenship. She emphasised that European cultural identity should not be seen as a photograph but rather as a film: it is essential to ensure it is constantly moving.

Philippe Potentini pointed out the importance of law in terms of defending culture and identity; he did so with reference to creativity and various aspects that draw on artistic vitality and the artistic lifestyle. He reminded us of the relevant conventions and other work undertaken by European institutions to this end.

Christophe Girard said that culture teaches us to evaluate and appreciate. He said that culture should not simply be a social veneer. He said it is important to be able to understand what artists wish to convey in their works.

6) Discussion with INGOs

Claude-Laurent GENTY (CITI)

I am extremely pleased that this debate has been organised, since it goes beyond anything that has been done on the subject for many years.

Moreover, what excellent speakers! I would say there is something else that unites European citizens in our countries and regions: values – values that had been flouted. These values and the culture connected to them are what bring Europeans together.

Hugo CASTELLI (EN/RE)

A question for Paolo Rudelli: can cultural merging – accepting alterity so as to move towards cultural integration – be achieved by bringing together multipolarity and transversality? Would you say we are moving towards a renewal of European cultural identity? Can we always learn from dialogue?

Noël ORSAT (CITI)

(The speaker founded and runs the Via Charlemagne Cultural Route).

A quick quiz question: Was Charlemagne king of the Belgians, king of France, German Emperor, or father of Europe? Answer: all of the above!

And whilst I have the floor I would like to mention that the Via Charlemagne and the Impressionisms Routes are the latest Cultural Routes to have received Council of Europe certification.

Harry ROGGE (EUROGEO)

First I would like to share an anecdote. Last year I met a delegation of INGOs from China, Japan and South Korea who told me that they envied Europe the construction/reconstruction process it began after the Second World War, since such a project has never been undertaken in Asia.

And now a question: how can we reach out to young Europeans who have no idea what the Council of Europe is?

Jean-Philippe DURRENBERGER (EAICY)

I sensed in Christophe Girard's speech a strong enthusiasm for extending education. Given the current preponderance of commodification, charities and NGOs have a major role to play in education.

Bernard SENELLE (OIEC)

I would like to return to the idea expressed that the ability to forget is a sign of strong nations. The European project is built around reconciliation and not, of course, forgetfulness. On the contrary we must remember lest we forget, so as never to repeat the same mistakes, particularly the Holocaust.

[Roseline MOREAU \(GERFEC\)](#)

Let me first thank the speakers for their excellent presentations. I would like to come back to the expression used by Aurélie Filippetti, who conceived of culture as 'perpetual re-creation'.

We belong to the Education and Culture Committee; education and culture are closely linked. What policies can we introduce to develop infinite re-creation in school children? And how can this be connected to the work of the Intercultural Cities group?

[Farouk ALLOUCHE \(Eurodoc\)](#)

I would like to come back to the comment made by Jean-Baptiste Mattéi on the speech given by the French president Emmanuel Macron at the Sorbonne. Strasbourg, Fribourg and Bâle are good examples of what can be expected of European universities.

With regard to higher education, the new Horizon Europe research programme seems promising in terms of making research more international. Might this principle of openness be applied to culture generally?

[Jean-Claude GONON \(AEDE\)](#)

I find national identities problematic since they are often confused with belonging. National identity is a concept, and perhaps our misuse of it is actually helping drive populist discourse.

The same can be said of immigration: governments use the same semantic categories in their speeches as those used by extreme right-wing parties. I feel we ought to change our habits.

7) Conclusions

[Aurélie FILIPPETTI](#)

We cannot do away with the issue of identity simply because it embarrasses us. There are things we can be proud of if we are, for example, French. For various reasons, I personally also feel Italian and European and identify with the Lorraine region of France. So I have several identities, and what matters is that they are not mutually exclusive but, on the contrary, mutually enriching.

I am interested in the fact that we can, via culture – let us say the works of Japanese, Brazilian and African artists –, access not only others' subjectivity but also a sense of the universal. When reading literary works I discover and appropriate a universe that has originated in the identity and the profound subjectivity of another person. Culture is a means of breaking out of the impasse we find ourselves in we talk about identity.

[Christophe GIRARD](#)

Making culture accessible to the public at large is extremely important. When describing our cultural venues (for example a media library or *The 104* in Paris) I like to use the term 'everyday intellectuals' [savant populaire].

That does not mean giving free rein to mass market culture; indeed I am opposed to reducing culture to entertainment. We know what artistic education is, and it is extremely important. It is essential to

be democratic and promote the broadest possible access to culture . The question of universal education is closely linked to European values and should be addressed at the European level.

Paolo RUDELLI

Mixing is part of identity, which is not closed. Ricoeur speaks of narrative identity. When two people meet, something completely new and unpredictable is born. All meetings are positive.

How to reach out to young people? We talked about the Erasmus programme; Philippe Potentini has proposed it be extended to Council of Europe Member States and the Maghreb countries and to parties to the Cultural Convention. Meetings are enriching for all participants.

Jean-Baptiste MATTEI

The question of values is indeed essential and was evoked in many of the presentations given by today's speakers. As regards links between youth and the Council of Europe, I think that INGOs have a key role to play in inspiring future generations.

For me, forgetting and memory are not mutually exclusive. Different stages have to be addressed. Often the process is difficult. I am shocked to have witnessed Serbian MPs attacking a Croatian minister visiting the Council of Europe recently.

Miroslav PAPA

It is important to take into account language barriers.

Council of Europe values were indeed touched upon in all the presentations. We all have a duty to promote the Council of Europe.

But we should promote the Council's values and not necessarily the institution itself. Nowadays we hear people talking about the Council of Europe, and particularly the European Court of Human Rights, when the Council's values have been flouted. So clearly it is the values we need to emphasise – in a positive (and not simply punitive) way.

Philippe POTENTINI

The Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities network has an educational dimension , promoting the exchange of good practice and encouraging cooperation between local and national authorities. The role of civil society is also acknowledged and will be the subject of a discussion in early 2019.

A friend of mine created two non-profit organisations that were awarded prizes by the city of Paris in 2015. The first, *KIF KIF Vivre Ensemble*, organises meetings involving two strangers. The two people discuss their hobbies, their lives and their culture. The second is called *Voisin Malin*. It is a network of residents who wish to make their local area more dynamic. This friend of mine attended the same secondary school as the Kouachi brothers [the terrorists who committed the attack on Charlie Hebdo in Paris in 2015]. These kinds of initiatives also help us reach out to young people.

The aim of the Intercultural Cities network is to draw attention to the benefits of diversity and migration.

Catherine LALUMIERE

Today's event has given us a taster of a vast range of views. Much has been said about the Council of Europe. However the Council is only one of the partners involved in the question of European cultural identity. Today's rich debate has focused on the importance of cultural diversity and the important role of culture in society. The discussion has been open-minded.

In today's context, cultural identity tends to favour cultural diversity; but it can also be a source of serious conflicts within our European family, which has been trying for 50 years, with more or less success, to increase unity between its peoples. We might have addressed political and divisive identity-related phenomena within the cultural sphere, since these do not serve to promote culture.

With regards to forgetting, it is important to bear in mind that when we think about Europe and are concerned for its future, true forgetfulness would be highly dangerous. The European project arose in opposition to a situation born of war. Our younger generations are tempted to forget. But if we forget, then Europe's underlying mission will be incomprehensible, and all that will remain is the desire to create a large, economically profitable market. This is the risk we run today: many people do not know the origins of European construction; they are unaware of what happened in the 1930's or during the wars. This raises the question of the role of history. But what exactly should be taught?

In 1991 Hungary was freed from Soviet and Communist control. At the time a large number of history teachers entered politics and defended nationalist views. Memory is very – indeed too – often exploited to serve particular ends. There is a resounding need to pass on historical knowledge to our young people.

However, we need to take care that history does not become a synonym for revived nationalism. We should talk about history, but in doing so we must look towards the future, without stirring up vengeance. In other words, we need to teach knowledge that will allow young people to discern in the past the reasons for which we need to construct Europe. This may sound solemn, but I think the current period is similar to that of 1989-90 – the period when the Berlin Wall came down. I think the two periods are similar in terms of the large-scale consequences arising from events. The fall of the Berlin Wall changed Europe radically. European reunification was the dominant theme of the second half of the twentieth century.

We are now seeing the undoing of our reconstruction work. Young people need to be educated, prepared, taught to understand and learn the lessons of the past so as to act differently and better.

Claude Vivier Le Got

I would like to thank you all for the high standard of today's discussion.

This initial meeting has laid the bases for our upcoming work and has helped identify the aspects that should be at the heart of that work.

In the two years to come we will be organising further debates and will produce a white paper on European cultural identity. I invite and strongly encourage each of you to get involved.