R1 Enabling creation, preserving memory. For the progressive cultural policy for Eastern Europe.

Organization:	Executive Committee
Resolution date:	14.02.2026
Agenda item:	5. Resolutions

Resolution text

Across Eastern Europe, culture is increasingly treated as a marginal or instrumental policy rather than a public good. Artists and cultural workers are often deprived of social security, forced to take on additional jobs outside the cultural sector, and pushed into precarious employment conditions, rendering long-term cultural work unsustainable. This leads to talent drain, burnout, emigration of artists and cultural workers, and the exclusion of people from less privileged backgrounds from artistic and cultural professions. At the same time, underfunding of cultural institutions in some countries, such as Serbia, is a political tool used to silence critical and anti-government narratives, further contributing to the precarity of culture workers and undermining artistic freedom. The fair pay and social security of artists and culture workers, as well as good, sustainable funding of institutions, should thus be a priority of cultural policy. The universal basic income for artists can be considered, following the evidence from pilot programmes, eg, in Ireland, that show strong socio-economic profits from such investments[1].

Participation in culture needs to be encouraged, especially among young people. There are several good practices already implemented in Eastern European countries, such as free museum entrance days programmes existing in Bulgaria or cultural vouchers covering entry to cultural institutions for students and teachers in Slovakia[2]. Young people need to be treated as creators of culture, not just consumers, and have spaces to create and participate in shaping cultural spaces and programmes in their communities. Culture needs to be integrated into education. There are some good ways to do it, such as school visits to cultural institutions or the Estonian initiative to organise the lessons with trained culture workers[3]. This needs to be tailored to the age and needs of children, to build the habit of enjoying culture, and go in pair with broader reform and modernisation of the educational system. Regional culture and local institutions should be financed to be attractive for young people, and cooperate with schools.

Systematic underfunding or neglect of cultural infrastructure also affects the cultural heritage. Archives, collections and documentations of historical and contemporary culture are often neglected or fragmented. Cultural products sectors as early digital art, video games, etc., are being lost[4]. The initiatives such as Stop Destroying Videogames[5] highlight the need for legal and institutional frameworks that allow preservation, archiving and public access to digital cultural works. Moreover, the neglect of digitalisation and the lack of open-source and free digital materials lead to further inequalities in access to culture, especially between big cities and towns and rural areas with little to no cultural institutions. Countries should follow examples such like Slovakiana cultural portal that has digitised over 180.000 objects from over 75 institutions.[6].

Promoting cultural heritage and collective memory is an important aspect of building resilience and decolonisation in some countries, such as Moldova or the Baltic States. On the other hand, historical revisionism is a key discourse point of Vucic's or Orban's regimes, and even in democratic countries, it is often a political tool used to consolidate power and spread hatred towards minorities and neighbours. For example, the Institute of the Romanian Revolution of December 1989 was led for 17 years by former president Ion Iliescu and used to promote himself and his political movements rather than conduct independent and reliable research. Similarly, the Polish Institute of National Remembrance, despite some successes, is widely used to legitimise current right-wing politics and whitewash Polish crimes (such as Operation Vistula). While promoting further decolonisation, states should depoliticise collective memory and focus on creating research institutions that promote high-quality scientific research, archiving, institutional intercultural dialogue, and funding for interactive and immersive museums.

With this, we urge the Eastern European politicians:

- Guarantee stable and independent public funding for culture, including a minimum budget threshold;
- Introduce social protection mechanisms, including healthcare, for cultural workers.
- Expand participatory cultural governance, including participatory budgeting and public involvement in shaping cultural priorities and programmes;
- Integrate culture meaningfully into education systems.
- Ensure public access to publicly funded culture, including the principle that cultural content financed publicly should be available digitally whenever possible and the implementation of good programmes from other countries.

CDN will contribute to these processes by:

- Advocating for cultural workers' rights and proper culture funding, including social security and fair pay, and promoting evidence-based policy arguments and good practices from Eastern European countries;
- Continuing its work to provide counter- and alternative narratives addressing populist use of prejudices and collective memory, supporting intercultural dialogue and decolonisation processes;
- Promoting digital access and archiving of culture, including open-access cultural content or initiatives to preserve endangered cultural forms;
- Working with its partners to develop youth-focused cultural participation programmes, with emphasis on active creation, such as a guidebook for leading school theatre or peer-led performances on important environmental issues

---

[1] Department of Culture, Communications and Sport. (2025, September 22). Basic Income for the Arts pilot produced over €100 million in social and economic benefits. Government of Ireland. https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-culture-communications-and-sport/press-releases/basic-income-for-the-arts-pilot-produced-over-100-million-in-social-and-economic-benefits/

[2] Council of Europe. Culture vouchers in: Strategy 21 - Good practices. https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/-/back-to-school

[3] Council of Europe. Back to School in: Strategy 21 - Good practices. https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/-/back-to-school

[4] Campbell, I. C. (2020, November 19). The Internet Archive is now preserving Flash games and animations. The Verge. https://www.theverge.com/2020/11/19/21578616/internet-archive-preservation-flash-animations-games-adobe

[5] European Citizens' Initiative. Stop Destroying Videogames. https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu/initiatives/details/2024/000007_en

[6]https://slovakiana.sk/en/about-slovakiana