



Cities and Regions. Their Cultural Responsibility for Europe and How They Can Fulfil It – Summary of the Manual

Given their key responsibility for culture, the cities and regions have an important role to play in European integration. That is why the 'A Soul for Europe' initiative – working together with the European Capital of Culture Ruhr 2010 project and leading experts and representatives from a wide variety of sectors – developed a manual designed to help the cities and regions assume their responsibility for Europe. The manual contains a host of information on the subject, along with scholarly articles and critical remarks, concrete examples and key questions, providing guidelines for action by the cities and regions.

The European Cultural Responsibility of Cities and Regions

The manual deals with the cities and regions' cultural responsibility for Europe, based on the following considerations: it is European culture that constitutes Europe's soul, enabling us to feel and understand the power and fascination emanating from this tremendous 'European Idea' and the shared values uniting Europeans underneath all their differences. Here we must proceed from a broad definition of culture, transcending art and culture in the narrow sense and encompassing all areas of life, such as the business and working world, preserving the environment, developing Europe's legal system and languages.

Culture, in this broad sense, is alive in the cities and regions. It is not the responsibility of European-level institutions, but the immediate and direct responsibility of the cities and regions – and that means not just their cultural affairs departments but all sections of their policy-making apparatus. The cities and regions are instrumental in framing and shaping culture, acting not just locally and regionally but in a European context. It is therefore in their hands to strengthen the function of culture as a motor of European integration and help ensure that 'Europe' becomes a matter for its citizens, thus promoting the emergence of a European civic awareness.

The Strategic Importance of Culture

To enable them to fulfil their responsibility in this sense, cities and regions must mobilize all elements of their cultural potential. The decisive factor here is not what a city or region possesses in terms of cultural assets, but what it does with its assets and potential. It is important to preserve and strengthen its unique cultural profile, taking care to provide a place for cultural encounter, communication and education and that is open to everyone – locals and outsiders alike.

This calls for a strategy that gives culture in the cities and regions the necessary freedom and scope to evolve in all areas of society and enables the networking of local and regional cultural activities at European level. This also involves strengthening the cities themselves in their status as European cultural achievements and the interaction between the different sectors of municipal policy. A city's or region's cultural resources must, together with the forces of civil society, promote the community's overall development rather than merely promoting 'culture' in the narrow sense. This means strengthening citizens' sense of individual and collective responsibility – the basic idea behind the 'A Soul for Europe' initiative.

Cultural Projects of European Significance

To clarify the types of cultural projects that can have an impact at European level above and beyond the general goals and approaches outlined above, a classification into six categories is proposed, dividing the cultural spectrum into operational areas rather than areas of specialism. No one city or region will be equally strong in all of these areas, but each will make its contribution to Europe in more than one category. What makes a city or region a player at European level is, then, not just its cultural potential, it is the effectiveness with which it can activate that potential for strategic purposes. What counts is not what is available (i.e. cultural 'substance'), or what is possible (i.e. cultural 'potential') but only what is effective in municipal and regional development.

The Six Categories in Outline:

a. Outstanding cultural performance

This category is the most comprehensive, encompassing particularly striking contributions to Europe's culture. What constitutes a city's or region's outstanding cultural performance? What do cities and regions do in order to utilize their cultural potential for their general development and consolidation?

Examples: Ferrara – from industrial output to cultural output, the Berlin Philharmonic

b. Lieux de Mémoire – Europe's memory

This category includes places and objects that are part of a transnational, European memory and the way they are integrated into the cultural performance of a city or region. Some cities and regions boast sites (buildings, landscapes or topographic points) of European significance.

Examples: the Bastille, Auschwitz, the Brandenburg Gate

c. Cultural diversity

One of the cities' and regions' most important cultural achievements is integrating people from different cultures into their societies. This demonstrates respect for the traditional and modern, for what is local and what is foreign. Europe's cultural diversity is one of its greatest assets: it shows how openness and tolerance can be instrumental in mastering the major challenges posed by the coexistence of different cultures. What we need to ask is: Where is cultural diversity practised and encouraged? How are people with different cultural backgrounds integrated into society?

Examples: Day of Dialogue in Rotterdam, Carnival of Cultures in Berlin, 'district mothers' in Neukölln

d. Conversion and urban renewal

This includes the transformation of individual locations into municipal districts and re-using buildings and civil infrastructure for new purposes. How are cities and regions mastering the necessary process of transition from an industrial to a knowledge-based society? An economic, technological, political and social process of conversion and urban renewal is under way that is having an impact on how cities and regions – and the people who live there – look. This process of fundamental structural change is altering the face of cities and regions. What is happening to no longer needed industrial buildings, to military facilities, to disused residential and school buildings? What sort of re-purposing can we expect?

Examples: Zollverein Colliery, Hamburg's Warehouse District

e. Borderlands

This category includes the transformation of border areas into active interfaces for encounter and cultural exchange, regions where cross-border cooperation is an established tradition and new tasks at new borders. Sub-regions or sub-cities located close to borders are integrating to form new entities. Border crossing is possible and necessary, or at least desirable. Borderlands offer their citizens new opportunities and prospects. How are these used? How are new partnerships formed and new modes of everyday cooperation developed?

Examples: the German-Polish border town of Guben-Gubin, Luxembourg and the Grande Région, Vienna-Bratislava, the Baltic region

f. European cultural heritage

Cities and regions are European players by virtue of their cultural heritage. Europe's cultural heritage – both physical and non-physical – takes a variety of forms: not only important buildings from different stylistic periods and characteristic landscapes but also general lifestyles, religions, regional practices, festivals, customs and traditions, languages, regional dialects, facial expressions and gestures and the cultivation of traditions and heritage.

Examples: Mostar Bridge, the Route of Brick Gothic, the Celtic peoples' bagpipe festivals, the great Baltic Song and Dance Celebrations

For the purpose of further analysis, it is suggested that a number of questions be examined in relation to the above categories, for example: How do we cultivate our distinctive features? How do the cities and regions activate their specific potential in strategic terms? How do we represent connections between the past, present and future? What part do policy-makers, public institutions and civil society play in this? How do we cooperate at inter-municipal, transregional, European and international level?

'City of Europe' and 'Region of Europe' Labels

To underline the importance of preserving and further developing European cultures under the cities' and regions' responsibility and to win the support of as many cities and regions as possible in this endeavour, the 'A Soul for Europe' initiative proposes creating a label or designation that would be bestowed on cities and regions that have demonstrated particular commitment or made their special mark in one or more of the above categories.

Annex – Synopsis of the Manual Selected Examples

Selected examples of outstanding cultural performance in each of the six categories; further examples are given in the full-length version of the manual.

a. Cultural performance

The **Italian city of Ferrara** (population 133,000) has seen its industrial output decline. Over the past 15 years, it has made systematic use of culture as a major element in its development strategy, through which it is seeking to reposition itself in Europe. The city is creating a new cultural profile for itself, not by means of festivals and other such temporary events but by establishing a pan-European network of cultural institutions and continually holding events of international status and European significance. The old city centre has since been designated a UNESCO World Heritage site.

b. Lieux de mémoire

On 14 June 1985, five European Union member states signed an agreement to abolish border controls at the internal frontiers of the signatory countries at the village of **Schengen** in Luxembourg. The enlargement of the Schengen Area to include nearly all EU member states had made cross-border traffic without border controls possible throughout most of Europe. The now disused border crossing points are *e contrario* places of memory – lieux de mémoire. In Schengen, a European memorial commemorates this European achievement.

In the summer of 1989, some 600 holidaymakers from the GDR took advantage of a 'Paneuropa-Union' festival at **Sopron**, a small Hungarian town on the border with Austria, to hold the **Pan-European Picnic** and flee to Austria – with the tacit connivance of the Hungarian border guards. This marked the beginning of the end of the Iron Curtain.

The foreign ministers of Hungary and Austria symbolically cut the barbed wire fence at Sopron.

Now commemorations are held every year at this site to keep alive the memory of this historic event.

The **Fall of the Berlin Wall** on 9 November 1989 marks the end of Europe's East-West partition; the **Brandenburg Gate** in Berlin is a symbol – and hence a lieu de mémoire – for this beginning of a new era.

In April 1937, the small Basque town of **Guernica** was the victim of a brutal bombing raid by the German air force. This horrendous act was memorialized by Pablo Picasso in an impressive work of art that was first shown at the 1937 World Exposition in Paris and is regarded today across the world as an indictment of war.

In Guernica, a lieu de mémoire of European significance, there is a museum commemorating this atrocity.

Other examples: Thermopylae, Belém, Bastille, Auschwitz, Golden Horn, Alhambra, Bauhaus

c. Cultural diversity

Every year in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and other cities across the Netherlands, the '**Days of Dialogue**' are held, in which people with different cultural backgrounds and ethnic identities celebrate and gather in small groups at 'round tables' to talk about what it is like to live together and what their lives are really like, about their differences and what they have in common. These frank discussions are mostly held under the patronage of the local mayors. The 'Days of Dialogue' could serve as a model for similar events elsewhere.

Major multicultural events lasting several days, such as the **Notting Hill Carnival** in London, the **Zomercarnaval** in Rotterdam or the **Carnival of Cultures** in Berlin, which are held every year and draw hundreds of thousands or even millions of participants and visitors, are popular examples of how to generate mutual respect and esteem. The vibrancy of different cultures in Europe's cities is a testimony to the process of renewal in European society.

d. Conversion and urban renewal

Santral Istanbul is one of Europe's biggest cultural projects of recent years. In preparation for Istanbul's year as the European Capital of Culture 2010 (along with Pécs and RUHR 2010), a major power plant in the Golden Horn neighbourhood was converted into a cultural centre. Santral Istanbul will stand alongside the city's world-famous museums and its historic heritage from the Antique, Byzantine and Ottoman periods as a contribution to its cultural modernization.

As part of the European Capital of Culture RUHR 2010 project, urban renewal strategies are being implemented in a multi-stage process. The idea is to revive former industrial buildings – now disused industrial relics following the disappearance of many production sectors – making them places of social and interpersonal encounter, artistic creation and an attractive destination for new residents. An outstanding example of such a project is the **Zollverein Colliery** in Essen.

e. **Borderlands**

By integrating the Grande Région into its **European Capital of Culture 2007** programme, **Luxembourg** created a truly European event. Participants in the project were the German federal states of Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland, the French départements of Moselle, Meurthe-et-Moselle, Meuse and Vosges as well as the German- and French-speaking areas of Belgium.

The impact of this 2007 project – straddling four different countries with three languages and a population of some 11.5 million – can still be felt! The *Kulturaum Großregion/Espace culturel Grande Région* Association with its own permanent joint secretariat is developing strategies for a common cultural policy in the Grande Région.

The town of **Guben-Gubin** on the German-Polish border has been described as a ‘window on Eastern Europe’. Drawing on case studies and pilot measures, planning concepts have been developed to more closely link the two separate communities. There are similar examples in other border regions, e.g. Görlitz-Zgorzelec on the River Neisse.

f. **European cultural heritage**

Europe’s cities and regions are the guardians of its cultural heritage, in particular its physical heritage including sacred and secular buildings, urban architectural ensembles and natural landscapes. An admonitory example is **Mostar Bridge** in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Dating back to the Ottoman era, the bridge was destroyed by bombing in 1993 and reconstructed in 2004. The **Acropolis in Athens**, whose conservation is being supported by substantial European funding, is a unique example of how European identity – and the history of European philosophy and democracy – is created and developed.

But the continent’s non-physical or intangible heritage also symbolizes Europe. For example, UNESCO has recognized the great **Baltic Song and Dance Celebrations** as a unique cultural asset and designated them a **Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity**.