**Questionnaire on the Cultural Dimension of the Right to Education**

Response by the UCLG Committee on Culture to the consultation launched by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education

February 2020

1. **Please provide information on how, in your country, the issue of respect for cultural diversity and the cultural rights of each person is reflected in school curricula (legislative, institutional and policy framework, and implementation)**

The Committee on Culture of the global association of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) promotes the consideration of culture as an integral element in approaches to local sustainable development. In this context, the integration of cultural and educational policies is critical, as reflected in the Culture 21 Actions toolkit adopted in 2015 (see <http://www.agenda21culture.net/documents/culture-21-actions>) Since the Committee on Culture represents local governments across the world, the responses provided to this questionnaire do not focus on one particular country, but rather on the values and goals advocated by the Committee and its members, the tools developed to support local policy implementation, as well as the trends and examples observed.

The chapter devoted to culture and education in the Culture 21 Actions toolkit argues that “Any transmission of knowledge or the development of knowledge through research, comparison, and experimentation, is a cultural act. In fact, lifelong education and training are an important cultural right.” It goes on to argue that policies connecting education and culture should also “promote the connections between institutional knowledge and knowledge that emerges from daily life, thus contributing to social innovation. Only by valuing the diversity of knowledge can a place’s cultural wealth be fully recognized. In addition to the traditional educational environments of schools and universities, civil society organizations fulfill an important role in the development of the diversity of knowledge and skills that allow people to think critically. It is essential to adopt diverse teaching methods and appropriately train educators in this diversity.”

More concretely, Culture 21 Actions suggests a range of measures related to the integration of cultural diversity and cultural rights in school curricula, including the following:

* The curricula of students in primary and secondary education should include acquiring skills and knowledge pertaining to intercultural dialogue and the recognition of the value of diversity, creativity, tangible and intangible heritage and digital tools.
* Cultural rights, as well as human rights in general, should be covered in educational programmes and training activities in the cultural sector.

These items, alongside the other aspects covered by Culture 21 Actions, are examined in self-assessment exercises in the cities that take part in the UCLG Committee on Culture’s capacity-building and peer-learning programmes, including the Pilot Cities scheme (see <http://www.agenda21culture.net/our-cities/pilot-cities>). Several policies and programmes addressing these themes have also been identified in the context of the *Obs* database of good practices (see <http://obs.agenda21culture.net/en/home-grid>) and the *Culture in the SDGs: a Guide for Local Action* manual (see <http://www.agenda21culture.net/advocacy/culture-in-SDGs>), including in its contribution to Target 4.7 of the SDGs.

1. **Please provide information on how, in your country, the issue of respect for cultural diversity and the cultural rights of each person is taken into account in the organization of the school system and schools (legislative, institutional and policy framework, and implementation)**

The Culture 21 Actions toolkit proposes some actions that relate to the organization of the school system in order to respond to respect for cultural diversity and the cultural rights of each person. In particular, the following should be noted:

* Local governments should approve a local strategy linking educational policy with cultural policy.
* There should be a local platform or network bringing together public, civic, and private actors in the field of culture, education, and lifelong learning.

A key aspect towards a better organization of the school system and its ability to foster respect for cultural diversity and the cultural rights of individuals lies in the decentralization of competences in the field of education. As observed in several self-assessment exercises facilitated by the UCLG Committee on Culture, the frequent centralization of educational planning deprives local governments and other local stakeholders from developing educational programmes that are respectful with cultural diversity, recognize local specificities and enable students’ and the broader community’s exercise of cultural rights. Conversely, decentralized models allow better connections between educational and cultural institutions as well as further appreciation of local cultural and linguistic diversity. Steps towards decentralization should be promoted, involving not only the transfer of competences but also of adequate financial, human and technical resources.

1. **Please clarify to what extent the measures described above relate not only to the issue of languages in education (in this regard, please briefly explain the context and provide details on the State language policy), but also to the arts, heritage, science, history, values and religions, or world views and ways of life, in all their diversity.**

The UCLG Committee on Culture promotes a comprehensive understanding of culture, which includes the values, beliefs, languages, knowledge, art and wisdom, with which a person or people, individually or collectively, expresses both their humanity and the meaning they give to their life and its course. In this respect, the integration of cultural aspects in educational policies should also be comprehensive. In line with respect for cultural diversity, the specific meaning and implications of these aspects will need to be negotiated locally, while fully respecting the universality of human rights, including cultural rights.

Attention to the arts and heritage in education is central in the Committee on Culture’s approach to the connection between culture and education. In this respect, among the items proposed by the Culture 21 Actions toolkit are the following:

* Education and training strategies should place appropriate value on local cultural resources.
* Schools and education centres, associations and businesses should take part in cultural creation, distribution, and mediation activities, ranging from artist residencies to more comprehensive projects including creativity training.
* Artistic education such as music, visual arts, performing arts, and multimedia, among other disciplines, should be provided in local schools at all levels, and be accessible to people regardless of age and social, economic, or cultural backgrounds.

Several of the good practices collected in the *Obs* database (<http://obs.agenda21culture.net/en/home-grid>) and other publications of the UCLG Committee on Culture demonstrate how local governments around the world have adopted programmes to foster creative skills among children, young people and adults (see e.g. the Crea programme in Bogotá, the *In Residence* initiative in Barcelona or the Arena da Cultura – Free School of the Arts programme in Belo Horizonte), the appreciation of traditional knowledge in learning contexts (see e.g. the *Take me in your village* project in Gabrovo and the Seed Swap Festival in Seferihisar) and collective participation in educational and social projects fostering diversity, creativity and ownership of public spaces (see e.g. the ‘I am…’ project in Vaudreuil-Dorion, and the School of the Commons in Dakar).

1. **Please specify the specific and particular difficulties encountered in ensuring an inclusive and quality education that allows cultural diversity and the cultural rights of each person to flourish at the same time.**

From the perspective of the UCLG Committee on Culture, key obstacles in ensuring an inclusive and quality education that allows cultural diversity and the cultural rights of everyone, particularly at the local level, include the following:

* The frequent centralization of competences in educational policy, as noted above, which limits the ability to adapt educational programmes, particularly within the formal system, to local cultural realities, to develop joint local strategies connecting education and culture, and to foster collaboration with local cultural organisations.
* The limited attention given to culture, in its broad and specific meanings (e.g. the arts and heritage) in many formal education programmes, despite the obvious differences existing internationally.
* The limited attention given to educational programmes by some cultural institutions and stakeholders (e.g. theatres, museums, orchestras, cultural heritage NGOs, etc.), even though, again, there are significant differences. A range of factors, including limited financial resources in many cases, also serve to explain partly this situation. In any case, steps should increasingly be taken to develop educational initiatives as integral to the remit of most cultural organisations.
* The frequent lack of permanent dialogue between policymakers in charge of education and culture.
* The limited attention given to culture within global, regional and national sustainable development agendas. Whereas the integration of cultural diversity and the appreciation of culture’s contribution to sustainable development in Target 4.7 of the SDGs is a welcome step, further attention to the importance of the arts, heritage and languages within education and lifelong learning would have been desirable, in the context of a stronger attention to cultural aspects as integral to sustainable development.
1. **Have specific mechanisms been established to consult and ensure the participation of stakeholders, in particular the populations concerned and parents, for a better understanding and effectiveness of the right to education, including its cultural dimension? What place is given in this context to the voice of children?**

The UCLG Committee on Culture promotes integrated frameworks for the governance of culture, comprising transversal collaboration among department of local governments (e.g. those respectively in charge of education and culture), multi-level collaboration among different tiers of government (e.g. national / federal, state / province / region, and local governments, as well as broader continental / regional organisations where applicable) and participatory mechanisms involving dialogue among public, private and civic stakeholders, which should involve schools, families, children and broader communities where applicable.

Some of the projects conducted by cities participating in the Committee on Culture’s peer-learning schemes have fostered networks among cultural and educational stakeholders, such as the kültürLab network established in Izmir.

1. **What recommendations should be provided to States and other stakeholders on these issues?**

The aforementioned Culture 21 Actions toolkit provides guidance on how to integrate cultural and educational policies in order to enable the exercise of cultural rights, with particular attention to local stakeholders. As noted above, measures to foster an enabling environment to this end should also be adopted by national authorities (particularly as regards the decentralization of competences and of related financial, human and technical resources) and by international and regional organisations (including in the adoption of global and regional agendas which connect culture and education and recognize the importance of cultural factors, including creativity, diversity and heritage, in order to foster sustainable development).

Finally, the Committee on Culture would like to commend the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education for her initiative to examine the cultural dimension of the right to education. We remain available to provide further information if necessary.

UCLG Committee on Culture

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