

Report of the Europe Conference 2016 in Wrocław 21-22 October 2016

Venue: Nowe Horyzonty Art-House Cinema

Part 1 – 21 October 2016

"Cities and Regions for Europe"

Welcome speech by Rafał Dutkiewicz, Mayor of Wrocław

- National thinking is outdated. Europe is our future.

Introduction by Volker Hassemer, Management Chair of "A Soul for Europe", Chairman of the Board of Stiftung Zukunft Berlin

- A Europe of meaning – Event with the grand backdrop of the cultural capital of Wrocław.
- What is happening in Europe and what is our responsibility when interacting with each other?

Keynote by Marek Prawda, EU Commission Representative - Warsaw

- The EU is rocking from one crisis to the next
- For many, the EU creates more crises than solutions
- We need to move away from crisis management and towards normal operations
- The states are digging themselves in
- There are no propositions capable of winning a majority
- Recommendations: Boosting approval from society
- Citizens have the choice: To be EU observers or to share in its creation.

Discussion: What can cities do for Europe Visions for the active role of cities and regions when setting up Europe

E. Boc:

- Duty of the cities: Build bridges, integration, bottom-up setup of the EU.
- Innovation: Giving citizens a voice
- Culture has priority - it creates a civil society.
- Involving the youth is a central task.
- Culture and innovation are the best investment in the future.

S. Austen:

- Thanks to the EU, developments are in motion
- Maastricht Treaty: Free movement through Europe, freedom of trade and right of domicile
- Mobility resolves the need for a national identity

- Individuals develop their own economy – 1992 Treaty (Maastricht)
→ resulted in great cultural development
- EU is a market for ideas
- National states no longer have the option to restrict the free exchange movement

S. Tamm:

- After 1990, the communes first needed to create security
- Personal contacts are the key to better relationships
- Poznan: Lack of skilled labour
- Strong NGOs were created
- Job for the city: Boost involvement of the citizens
- Culture creators are the resources for innovation
- Programs which are created by citizens
- Putting cultural activities into European contexts

R. Dutkiewicz:

- Cities as a new source of strength - A dream, but dreams should be fulfilled
- Benjamin Barber: Nation states are not suitable for the challenges of the future
- It will be a parliament of mayors (utopia)
- The music is playing in the cities
- The city politics of the EU Commission are diluted
- Problem: Distribution of skills between centralized and decentralized systems
→ The EU Commission needs to react to this
Cities - good agents of the EU - The best counter to populism and idiotism

E. Boc:

- 2 dreams – think globally, act locally
- In the large pro-European majority, things are beginning to fracture.

A commentary by Hannes Swoboda, former member of the European Parliament,
On the meaning of the decentralized system of cities

- Cities are the connection between the past and the future
- Cities introduce the individual to the world
- An urban agenda of the EU was long overdue
- Europe, as a project for the elite, must become a Europe for the people
- Connecting the project of the EU with the people, they are in the cities
- Structural features, development of a social periphery
- Migration remains a fact, a cultural question
- Cities as catalysts of change in Europe

The position of cities according to the EU cities agenda

Impulse 1: Hella Dunger-Löper, State Secretary, European Representative of the State of Berlin

The new cities agenda of the European Commission is a big step forward. Now, it is necessary to further develop this agenda and make it a part of political and social practice.

What's necessary is:

- clear responsibilities within the AdR,
- a related responsibility of the Commission and preferably of the Deputy President of the Commission.

Commentary and discussion on the new role of cities

All of those who participated in the discussion welcomed the new agenda as: the European Union needs more of "Europe from the bottom up". A Europe whose citizens do not act as the consumers of the European project, but as producers also responsible for it. This means the people of Europe, its cities and its regions are no longer the only ones affected by the European unification process. Instead they become its protagonists by taking on responsibility for the success of this process. Here, the agenda is a major step, and for a "Europe from the bottom up" it is an important advancement.

It was regrettable that the work groups which were set up did not include the topic of culture. The following two work group topics were considered positive:

- Culture of the cities work group

The work group would have the job of identifying the effect of the culture which developed in cities on Europe and showing its benefits. Here is the field of creativity "for Europe".

- Cultural capitals work group

The work group would have the task of using the example of the firmly established "European Capital of Culture" institution to cement the potential of European culture to effectuate the development of the entire European project. The aim is to develop the European Capital of Culture into an elevated festival of Europe, into a manifestation of the communality of Europe (also see Conference Day 2).

In regard to the Committee of the Regions (AdR - Ausschuss der Regionen), the letter from its President was considered to be great encouragement. In future, the Committee, which to date has focused more on the interests of the cities and regions in relation to Europe, needs to be further advanced into an instrument of shared responsibility of the cities and regions for(!) Europe.

Part 2 – 22 October 2016

"The Instrument of the European Cities of Culture"

Cultural capitals for the rest of this decade and the coming one

The work group should cement the potential of European culture in order to make a telling contribution to the development of the entire European project.

The aim is to develop the European Capital of Culture into an elevated festival of Europe, into a manifestation of the communality of Europe (not just an event of culture for culture's sake).

The pro and contra were discussed, which is why the cultural capitals more than previously must be connected with the highest level of political responsibility of the Commission and perhaps even of the Council of Ministers. What option is available to the heads of Europe that is more impressive and more affirming for Europe to inspire Europeans for the common project that is Europe in the form of festivals and events? The cultural capitals prove that Europe is not just a collection of structural, financial and economic problems.

The state of affairs and suggestions for improvements with the instrument of the European cultural capital

At the Europe Conference in Wrocław on 21/22 October 2016, different findings and experiences were presented by the participants:

- The "collective memory" and the "mutual identity" are expressed in the campaigns of the cultural capital
- New ways to come together are found.
- Of course, the options of art and culture may not be overestimated.
- However, the fact that the options available to culture need to be implemented in a responsible way, is the task right now in Europe's current difficult situation.
- The integration and participation of the public offers opportunities (audience development).
- The past should meet the present.
- Courage is also needed to fight out conflicts.
- It is advised to involve the youth of Europe.
- Young artists in particular can build bridges.
- It is recommended to learn from the experiences made by previous capitals of culture.

The "European Capital of Culture" campaign is of great political relevance. Culture is a way to practice democratic understanding. The skills and the wealth of experience of the advisors to the individual capitals of culture represent important potential to be tapped. Capital cities need to be focused in order to secure the future of culture.

At the same time, however, the cities themselves are called on (via their work before, during and after being the cultural capital) to participate in the further development and the European positioning of the instrument that is the European capital of culture and to bring with them their experiences and aims.

Distinct consequences for the instrument European Capital of Culture

There is a great need to secure the sustainability and continuity of the actions of the cultural capitals. The suggestion of creating a **permanent secretariat** for the cultural capitals was discussed repeatedly.

The Mayor of Wrocław, Rafał Dutkiewicz, announced the readiness and interest of his city in setting up and financing such a secretariat in Wrocław. This was greatly welcomed. ASfE stated that it was ready to assist Wrocław as regards contents and logistics (building on from the collaboration in the run-up to and during the execution of the Wrocław Conference).

The same applies for Cluj in terms of readiness and interest in collaborating on such a permanent secretariat. Rarita Zbranca, Cluj (the city was not able to win the race to the title for 2021, one of those bearing the title for Romania will be Timisoara), explains that a powerful initiative to create a network with the participation of multiple cities already exists, in particular among applicant cities. It is desirable to create a financial fund with contributions from all participating cities to be able to carry out joint projects.

The representative of the European Commission, Alicia Herbowska, Deputy Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Navracsics (Commissioner responsible for Education, Culture, Youth and Sports) advised the cities interested to apply for the call for proposals under Creative Europe:

"Is now the right time for the network to go one step further and establish itself in a more formal way, with a permanent secretariat and a proper work programme? Perhaps - I leave it for ECOOC title-holders to answer the question. [...] To start with, if a more formalised network is created, we would be ready to lend a hand. Supporting it technically - and potentially also financially (provided that the network submits a successful application under Creative Europe). In fact, we have a call for "European networks" open until 25 November."