

**Subject: Call for contributions to the Access to Culture Platform, Working Group on Audience Participation publication**

ACCESS TO CULTURE



**A fundamental right of all citizens**

The Access to Culture Platform, Working Group on Audiences Participation and its partners invite academics, practitioners and experts to contribute to the upcoming publication:

***The cultural component of citizenship: an inventory of challenges.***  
***(Working title)***

**Submission:**

The Editorial Committee of this peer-reviewed publication invites contributions in the form of: a paper or a case study, a best practice, a conference speech/presentation, interviews or other relevant contribution also in video format that focalize on certain aspects of this wide topic. Perspectives and methodologies drawn from a variety of disciplines are welcome.

**Timeline:**

- Abstracts (not more than 500 words) to be submitted within the 16<sup>th</sup> of July 2012.
- Complete paper to be submitted by the 24<sup>th</sup> of August 2012.

**Guidelines:**

- For those who will be submitting a research paper (as opposed to a speech, interview, etc.), please contact the secretariat for the style guidelines of the publication.

**Background and context:**

**Access to culture: A fundamental right for all!**

The Working Group on Audience Participation recognises the primary right to cultural participation enshrined in Art 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>1</sup> and considers artistic practice, access to cultural expression, and participation in the arts fundamental to the development of an active European citizenship. An active citizenship is in turn central to democratic, open and inclusive European societies. The governments of the Member States of the EU do recognise the jurisdiction of the European Convention on Human Rights in all cases brought to the Court by individual European citizens. Although national cultural policy is in the hands of the Member States themselves (article 151

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<sup>1</sup> 'Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. (Article 27 Universal Declaration of Human Rights)



of the Treaty of Maastricht), the right of the citizen to have access to cultural goods and expressions in a trans-regional, trans-national European cultural space must be guaranteed in line with the above mentioned agreements, as well as with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [Art 15 (1) ]. Through participation and access to arts and culture, individuals and communities not only reflect on their views on societies, imagine the world they want to live in, and elaborate individual and collective standpoints, but through the mobility of cultural and artistic expression, as well as of ideas and appreciations within Europe, people get access and benefit from the European process. In this way, social and identity issues, which are vital for participation and the development of civic awareness, are addressed and valorised.

In this sense participation opens the way to new meanings, enriches and exercises the individual and collective mind to understand and live in complexity - a set of skills of crucial importance in today's world. Access to culture implies that all individuals have the freedom to choose between a large spectrum of available options, either as audience or as creators. Conditions for providing these options must be developed on the one hand, and audiences should, at the same time, have the necessary skills to choose, thus fostering the European Union's motto to "Unity in diversity". A more engaged and participative audience will not only strengthen the vitality of the culture sector in terms of creation (a more participative, critical audience will push creators to new levels) but also in economic terms (an educated participative audience places a value on cultural goods and services, and can also be a lever to increase demand and the development of new related businesses) and in social terms (culture is an invaluable tool for increased civic engagement and active citizenship).

Societies which possess a strong artistic and cultural life also see an increase of civic engagement, and therefore the strengthening of active citizenship. On a European level, the development of a notion of European citizenship has been challenged for many years due to the absence of genuine European public spaces and debates. Artistic sensitivity and engagement – of professionals, amateurs and audiences – is a key to develop such a European public space, and artistic creation and participation should therefore be supported and nurtured as a core objective on all level -policies. Active citizenship is the objective of any democracy. Audience participation is also the food of creative practice, in the same way that the arts are the cultural DNA of creative industries. The Working Group urges that audience participation be stated as an essential part of Europe's Creative and Civic Ecology, i.e. audience participation is one of the basic inputs/foundations of the entire creative, cultural and societal environment, including creative activities such as educational engagement or active participation.

### **Presentation**

In the frame of the European Year of Citizens, the Access to Culture Platform and partners aim to present the publication in various public moments and discuss its contents with the broader public during the whole year and beyond. First presentation moments: launch of the Cultural Coalition for a Citizens' Europe, Berlin 10 November, Brussels 16 – 18 November, Amsterdam 26 November 2012.

### **Co-ordination**

The Felix Meritis Foundation, the European House of Culture and the Access to Culture Platform (Audiences Participation working group)

### **Editorial Committee**

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