

9 The challenges of recalibrating the values of culture in the cultural field

Key recommendations

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In contrast to the biased and limited vision of the value of culture that has prevailed in Europe in recent decades, throughout the UNCHARTED project we have developed an alternative perspective on the plurality and complexity of cultural valuation in our societies. It is a perspective based on extensive empirical work on the different spheres in which this valuation is elaborated: first, in cultural production and heritage management; second, in cultural consumption and participation; and third, in cultural administrations and cultural information institutions. All these spheres have an impact on the dynamics of cultural valuation.

The preceding chapters of this book have presented the principal findings of our research in this regard. First, the general context of social and political circumstances in which cultural valuation takes place in European societies today was established. Following this, the values associated with culture that emerge in the everyday practices of the different areas of the cultural sphere were identified. Subsequently, the evaluation dynamics in these spheres and their characteristic tensions and resolutions were analysed. Finally, the scope, coherence, and effectiveness with which cultural administrations and institutions promote the plurality of cultural values were assessed. These analyses revealed the complex and multidimensional framework of attributing value in European societies today.

In light of the vision that has been developed thus far, the authors of this chapter, together with other researchers involved in the project, proceed to engage in a general reflection on the cultural policy models that can best favour the promotion and full exploitation of the societal value of culture in its intrinsic plurality. This chapter presents the roadmap for cultural policy action that was elaborated based on this collective reflection and feedback from a group of policymakers from a range of backgrounds.¹ We start by defining the challenges to which public authorities and cultural institution leaders must respond regarding the variations and tensions in cultural valuation in cultural consumption, cultural production, heritage management, cultural administration, and cultural information systems. According to our investigations, these challenges are crucial in promoting and better exploiting the plural values of culture in Europe. We then develop a series of policy recommendations to address those challenges. The issues and recommendations are

also thematically presented in a graphical form at the end of this chapter in Annex 1 (Figure 7).

Challenges

Throughout our fieldwork, we observed that five challenges are the subject of a very high degree of discursive convergence among policymakers, heads of institutions, cultural actors, and citizens we have met.

How can cultural policies better consider the plurality of values expressed in society?

How cultural policies and institutions define the values of their actions contrasts with how citizens and cultural actors value their artistic practices. This divergence is due to two main factors: the heterogeneity of values expressed by public and private actors and the fact that values are sometimes hierarchized differently.

The values that citizens attach to their cultural practices are sometimes absent in the discourses and programmes of public authorities. Well-being is a striking example. Such values are mostly considered incidental results of cultural policies rather than guiding principles of public action. Conversely, some instrumental values promoted by cultural policies, often of an economic nature, are alien to citizens' most common value perspective.

Alongside the heterogeneity of valuation between political supply and social demand, there is also a discrepancy in how values are hierarchized. While most public authorities agree on the triptych of aesthetics, social access, and *Bildung* (the idea that culture can foster cohesion within communities), they do not necessarily give them the same priority. For instance, as we have seen in Chapter 4, aesthetics is mainly the primary value for national policies, whereas social access and *Bildung* are more central to regional and local policies.

How can cultural policies be more democratic?

Except for "illiberal democracies" such as Hungary, cultural policies are justified by the contribution of culture to democratic development. However, this link between culture and democracy is problematic.

On the one hand, values are rarely explicit when implementing cultural policies. Nevertheless, democracy is founded on the principles of transparency and deliberation. Reintroducing democratic debate on values is, therefore, a crucial challenge for European cultural policies.

On the other hand, there is an unresolved debate between two visions of the relationship between democracy, culture, and society: democratization and cultural democracy. While democratization implies conventional, mediated, and hierarchical forms of participation within a frame defined by the public institutions, cultural democracy shakes up this conception, promising citizen empowerment and cultural exchange starting from the values expressed within society. Thus, the second

democratic challenge is establishing this debate within a legitimate and enlightened framework that embraces the tensions between these visions.

How can cultural policies be implemented more coherently?

Coherence is generally a condition of public action's effectiveness and efficiency. Interpretative tensions, hierarchical misalignments, and heterogeneity between politics and society regarding cultural values are challenging. Indeed, there is no reason to justify the superiority of one value over another or to impose a correct interpretation of values. In addition, unlike other sectoral policies, cultural policies are not based on precise and successive paradigms but on paradigms that build on each other.

Consequently, a cultural policy is always a compromise between heterogeneous visions that combine various values. In a democratic system, this compromise has an integrative value that prevents it from aligning with specific interests or visions. Therefore, a certain level of incoherence in public action is also a democratic necessity.

However, policies need a certain level of coherence to prevent them from being swept away by intersectoral and governmental regulations. Therefore, the challenge of coherence can be expressed as follows: to base cultural policies on stabilization, always provisional, of values in tension and on the adequacy of the plurality of values and instruments of action.

How can cultural policies improve their evaluation methodologies?

In the case of cultural values, evaluation is, first and foremost, a political process in which values are continuously recreated and negotiated. In cultural policy, evaluation is critical in recruiting technical personnel, making grantmaking decisions, and managing intervention processes and cultural facilities. The impact of cultural policies on society is also subject to evaluation. All these different dimensions of evaluation entail challenges.

A significant challenge is how cultural administrations incorporate values' plurality, tensions, and hierarchies into their evaluation methods. The evidence from the UNCHARTED project highlights the importance of engaging in dialogue with the agents involved to construct methods more suited to the diverse value realities under evaluation and intervention. The challenge of obtaining legitimacy depends on the transparency of evaluation mechanisms. This relies on an effective dialogue between the evaluators and the ones who are evaluated.

Direct dialogue between cultural administrations and recipients of support gives rise to differences of interpretation and even conflicts of definition concerning the values of cultural public action. These differences sometimes lead to a mutual lack of understanding of what should be evaluated and how it should be evaluated. For instance, the rigidity of evaluation grids—the “one-size-fits-all” approach—is sometimes described as an administrative constraint leading to a general disregard for the specificities of actions developed by cultural institutions and an underestimation of their actual impact on their environments.

The dialogue between administrations and cultural institutions is ultimately challenged by the lack of resources that characterizes the economic reality of many structures and constitutes a significant brake on the development of appropriate and systematic evaluation processes. Moreover, outsourcing evaluation (to academics or private firms) is proving difficult not only for these economic reasons but also for reasons of mutual incomprehension. The training of teams within institutions in evaluation techniques is thus becoming a decisive issue. Evaluation in this context is not only a technical issue but a political one, too. In this respect, the challenge is incorporating end-users into the evaluation in ways that simultaneously provide legitimate political orientations for cultural institutions and preserve cultural autonomy.

How can cultural policies rely on the most relevant cultural information systems?

Cultural information systems are now the fundamental foundations of democratic cultural policies. Through increasingly complex and eclectic methods, they constitute a decisive tool for understanding the forms of cultural participation and action of civil society and professional actors. They guide public decision-making and communicate with and inform the various actors involved in culture, from technicians and specialists in public action to producers and receivers of cultural offerings.

The first challenge is their complexity: they encompass not only national statistical institutes and Eurostat but also cultural observatories of different scopes (national, regional, and local) and sometimes devoted to specific fields, as well as many other data providers, such as professional and trade associations, rights management bodies, and unions. Cultural administrations and institutions of different kinds are also essential parts of these information systems, and their interaction poses specific challenges.

Public authorities, whatever their level of intervention, are poorly trained in evaluation and rarely have the appropriate tools to measure the concrete results of their policies. In most cases analysed, these tools are limited to quantitative indicators, which are often incomplete and imprecise and which the authorities do not necessarily control: they are produced by the cultural institutions themselves, about their audiences, actions, and teams. This reality gives rise to a twofold contradiction. On the one hand, this situation leads to inequality in the production of information, often produced by the most integrated institutions, those with the most resources. On the other hand, while government departments are, to some extent, able to assess what cultural institutions produce directly on their territory, they are inefficient at measuring what these institutions produce indirectly and what they do not produce. For example, the public use of cultural facilities, a fundamental issue in the context of cultural democratization and democracy, remains a central blind spot in European cultural policies.

A second challenge concerns the adaptability of information systems in general. Without calling into question the usefulness of an approach that makes it possible

to objectify the reality of cultural practices, our research raises questions about the possibility of providing information about values and quality using exclusively quantitative tools. In addition, transparency and accessibility to data require the availability of survey results via the development of open data and the collaboration of cultural and academic actors regarding scientific validity to ensure that information dissemination is not just a bureaucratic, top-down process.

There is also a significant need to improve these systems to incorporate the analysis of practices outside the cultural field, such as social or political practices. Because the cultural information systems are only focused on the cultural domain, the available data makes it challenging to establish intersections and connections between cultural practices and political participation, civic engagement, or community involvement.

Finally, a third challenge is comparing tools and data from different administrations on a European scale. Despite several statistical efforts made by the EU, cultural data is mainly produced within a national statistical framework, making international comparisons difficult. Encouraging dialogue between national administrations and improving the comparability of information systems is a significant challenge in creating a general vision of cultural actions and practices on a European scale.

Thirty recommendations for European cultural policies

This section presents 30 recommendations for cultural policy action based on our research results, in connection with the above-mentioned challenges.

Democratically resolving value conflicts through transparency, performance, and instrumental efficiency for greater value coherence

Numerous incoherences arise from accumulating values, with contradictory principles coexisting (aesthetics versus democracy or well-being; equality and diversity versus economics). This can lead to conflicts between very different, non-comparable, and irreconcilable scales of values. It is difficult to debate democratically in a field where values are multiple and blurred. Then, when it comes to implementation, counter-productive effects might arise. We can argue that value conflicts are healthy in a democratic society. However, values should be clearly defined for this debate to be transparent. Conflicts over instruments and strategies should be based on explicit value hierarchies. These observations lead to an initial series of three recommendations:

1. *Promote transparent public debate around values:* Values should be defined, prioritized, and contradicted in transparent public debate.
2. *Provide clear definitions of values:* The performance and effectiveness of values in policy implementation and impact require a detailed definition of values in concrete terms (translated into qualitative objectives, instruments, and impact indicators).

3. *Empower values:* An enforceable right to denounce or legally condemn the ineffectiveness of values can be imagined, enabling comparisons between the implementation and results of objectives and values.

From governance to social accuracy

Key recommendations focus here on the importance of inclusive governance, combating illiberal tendencies, refining cultural policy models, adapting governance to local contexts, and balancing commercialization and participation. Implementing these strategies aims to foster a more inclusive, participatory, and compelling cultural policy landscape in different national contexts across Europe. Thus, the UNCHARTED consortium formulated the following recommendations:

4. *Promote inclusive governance:* Advocate for mechanisms that actively involve professional actors at all levels of decision-making and encourage cultural sector organizations to collaborate and organize, fostering a sense of collective participation.
5. *Combat illiberalism:* Public institutions should develop policies that oppose the logic of explicit exclusion, ensure a more inclusive approach to cultural policy values, and establish safeguards against the deliberate sidelining of groups that oppose hegemonic cultural policy values.
6. *Examine cultural policy models:* To mitigate their respective limitations, reassess the dynamics of cultural policy governance from the perspective of an architect and patron models (see Chapter 4). Consider modifying the principle of independence to balance preventing clientelism and promoting the integration of diverse actors.
7. *Adapt governance to local contexts:* Recognize the impact of political culture on decision-making, adapt governance structures accordingly, and implement context-specific decentralization strategies to improve consultation processes.
8. *Balance commercialization and participation:* Promote a critical approach to commercialization, recognizing its impact on participation levels, and explore strategies to balance economic considerations and inclusivity in cultural policy governance.
9. *Promote inclusivity:* Advocate for policies that balance the predominantly top-down approach with greater inclusivity and implement measures to improve participatory dynamics at all levels, ensuring diverse voices are heard in cultural policy deliberations and decisions.
10. *Build capacity for participation:* Invest in capacity-building programmes to empower less privileged actors at all levels and promote educational initiatives to improve knowledge and ability to access cultural policy resources.
11. *Ongoing monitoring and adaptation:* Establish mechanisms to monitor social precision in cultural policies and ensure that these policies are adaptable and open to policy refinement in line with society's evolving values and needs.

Increasing coherence in cultural policy implementation

Are there systematic differences between cultural policy values and the practical implementation of cultural policy? This question, a central one in the UNCHARTED project, deals with the level of coherence we might identify when we hold cultural policy's explicit and implicit values up against current policy practice.

In the context of cultural policy, we understand incoherence as a lack of consistency between explicit cultural policy values and the actual, practical, and factual policy measures, priorities, organization, and administration. Put in fundamental terms: Do policies let the values they are based on guide their actual politics? What are some possible ways of enhancing the coherence of cultural policies and aligning the actual implementation of these policies better with the values that legitimate them? We propose five recommendations.

12. *Implement transparent and explicit policies:* These policies must be transparent and explicit for their general legitimacy and the coherence of cultural policies. This means that it should be evident to the general public and stakeholders within the cultural sector what the priorities are, how decisions are being made, who has what responsibility, and what gets funded on what grounds. Our studies show that this is far from the case in several countries.
13. *Increase and prioritize culture funding:* While it is not an easy fix, and of course, easier said than done, there is no doubt that the available funding for culture is crucial in making policy values and implementation more coherent. The most transparent, updated, competent, and dynamic policies are useless without funding to back them up. Furthermore, increased predictability of funding will, necessarily, also ensure more stable and less ad hoc policies, adding to policy coherence.
14. *Increase bureaucratic (top and street-level) competence, create shared conceptions of value, and increase dialogue between stakeholders at different levels:* This recommendation deals primarily with the role and expertise of bureaucrats. Even if their role differs across countries due to political systems and traditions, a common need is for these bureaucrats to have sectoral competence and knowledge and to engage in regular dialogue with stakeholders at different levels. One element worth mentioning is the systematic use of evaluation systems. Bureaucrats play a crucial role in gathering, interpreting, and using results from other evaluation forms to develop cultural policies into more effective and coherent ones. This can also contribute to creating shared conceptions of value. Similarly, developing and professionalizing competent cultural administrations seems crucial. This point is related to the former recommendation regarding the more formal side of cultural administrations and bureaucracy. A well-functioning cultural administration needs designated positions with designated roles in implementing policies. In other words, these administrations need to be of a specific size, have a formal anchoring in the local/regional/national political system, and be permanent rather than ad hoc or project based.

15. *Pursue long-term and dynamic policies, combining long-term goals and the ability to respond to innovations and challenges:* This recommendation is related to combining long-term and short-term policies. There are numerous advantages to predictable long-term policies where the accessibility of funding, the essential priorities, and the fundamental values do not change yearly. Such long-term stability can, however, lead to unwanted inertia and needs to be combined with possibilities to react more swiftly to innovations and challenges. The topics of sustainability, digitalization, and artificial intelligence are three cases that illustrate this issue.

Promoting and evaluating the plurality of values in cultural policies

The plurality of values associated with culture, especially the values conveying the idea of a democratic impact of arts and cultural activities such as equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), respond to the dual concern of preserving the cultural diversity of societies affected by globalization and respecting the right of minorities to access and participate in cultural activities within increasingly multicultural societies.

As we saw in Chapter 4, there are significant problems in implementing such initiatives in European cultural institutions. One of these problems is the economic and material cost of these initiatives, which is notable given that many of the institutions we analysed operate on modest budgets and rely on volunteers. Another issue is the diversity of the areas targeted, which requires institutions to be highly adaptable. More generally, implementing actions associated with values of culture requires a high degree of malleability and the ability to question the intrinsic complexity of this set of values and the plurality of definitions that may be associated with it. Cultural institutions also face the critical problem of resolving the tensions and constraints of evaluating these initiatives.

Based on our research, we have formulated specific policy recommendations designed to improve evaluation, especially around EDI issues:

16. *Promote (and fund) good evaluation:* Good evaluation is crucial to the cultural ecosystem. It allows cultural organizations to continually enact their aims and visions, improve operations, and achieve artistically and socially valued outcomes.
17. *What gets measured gets managed:* Related to the recommendation above, policymakers pay attention to socially desirable outcomes, such as EDI. As shown in several studies, policy attention to an area, especially when attached to funding, achieves a beneficial focus on that area, leading to improvement and expansion.
18. *Avoid a one-size-fits-all approach:* In many national contexts, removing metric-based evaluation entirely would not be feasible, and many private funders also prefer or require such metrics. Nevertheless, policies that allow for the incorporation of non-metric evaluation categories would usefully record the

work and impact of different sizes of organizations with varying orientations for various time horizons.

19. *Establish training, networks, and sharing of best practices:* Promote training in evaluation techniques within teams to improve informal internal evaluation and contribute to more effective outward-facing evaluation among cultural organization staff. A system of publicly funded training in evaluation techniques should be offered to cultural organizations.
20. *Support co-created evaluation involving (potential) audiences:* Support organizations' efforts towards creating their internal systems of assessment, including co-created evaluation involving (potential) audiences, including "non-traditional" audiences and underserved publics. Such evaluation approaches can build or strengthen community connections and generate new ideas.
21. *Encourage evaluation partnerships with external allies:* While the previous recommendations focused on the knowledge embedded in communities about these communities, this recommendation focuses on tapping expertise held by specialists, such as those with expertise in evaluation. Policy should encourage and ideally fund evaluation partnerships with external allies to develop more "conversational" and "reflective" evaluation systems.

Promoting the plurality of values in cultural information systems

These recommendations advocate for a collaborative and adaptive approach, recognizing the dynamic nature of cultural phenomena. They are derived from the participatory process presented in more detail in Chapter 8 of this book.

22. *Recognize and integrate the plurality of cultural values into information systems:* Cultural information systems should be designed to reflect the diversity of cultural values, including those of amateur practices, digital activities, and so-called "profane" aesthetics. Such recognition helps to broaden the scope of cultural policies beyond "legitimate" institutions.
23. *Establish cooperative observation mechanisms at various levels:* Creating shared observation programmes at the local, regional, and national levels enhances information flow, knowledge sharing, and the identification of best practices. These mechanisms should facilitate effective networking among cultural actors and promote the accumulation of empirical knowledge.
24. *Adapt data systems to changing cultural values:* Information systems must be able to adjust to changes in social representations and modes of cultural valorization. Such adaptation requires recognizing the dynamic and conflictual nature of cultural values and integrating methodologies sensitive to the diversity of contexts.
25. *Take post-practice dynamics into account in analysing cultural phenomena:* The social effects of cultural practices extend beyond the cultural event itself. Integrating post-practice interactions—such as discussions, informal exchanges, or symbolic circulation—greatly enriches the analysis of cultural impact.

26. *Examining the reasons behind cultural non-participation is crucial for understanding the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion within the cultural sector.* By identifying the barriers that prevent participation, stakeholders can create strategies to expand audiences and reconsider measures for cultural accessibility.
27. *Articulate quantitative and qualitative methodologies:* Evaluation systems must combine quantitative indicators (frequency, distribution, and coverage) and qualitative approaches (emotions, narratives, and meanings). This complementarity allows one to grasp the intersubjective complexity of cultural practices and avoid a standardization of results that would impoverish them.
28. *Responding to the challenges of digital culture and the attention economy:* The changes brought about by digital technology must be integrated into cultural information systems. This requires analysing the logic of attention, the influence of digital actors (influencers and platforms), and the effects of segmentation and tribalization of audiences in online spaces.
29. *Territorialize cultural analysis through regional observatories:* Creating regional cultural observatories with multidisciplinary expertise would enable a contextualized understanding of local cultural dynamics. These structures must produce quantitative data and qualitative studies while promoting polycentric cultural governance rooted in the territories.
30. *Produce ethnographic indicators to capture cultural interactions:* It is recommended that indicators be developed based on ethnographic approaches capable of reflecting tensions, mediations, and interactions between actors (creators, mechanisms, institutions, and audiences). These indicators capture the complexity of cultural production and reception processes.

Conclusion

Considering the recommendations in this chapter, four main logics stand out as keys to developing and sharing a cultural value perspective.

The first is the importance of multi-level governance: a cultural value perspective must concern all levels of public policy, which are concurrently involved in realizing the value of culture, but according to different modalities, skills, and capacities.

The second logic is the societal rooting of culture through two dimensions: publicizing the values of projects and policies rather than leaving them general or implicit and valorizing the work of mediators who link grand narratives with everyday actions. Devaluation fits with silent consent. Valuing implies debate.

The third logic implies cooperating about values. It identifies three keys to development: harmonizing observation and information systems, training cultural actors from the European level to local governments, and encouraging projects associating major institutions and local socio-cultural actors.

The final logic concerns fostering the participatory dimension of evaluation. As a tool for both objectification and improvement, evaluation based on cultural social

values involves the participation of all the actors involved during the whole process, rather than being entrusted to external experts at the end of the programme.

Multi-level, rooted in society, based on cooperation and participatory evaluation, the value of culture asserts itself as a European lever for the social identification of a dynamic community.

Annex 1

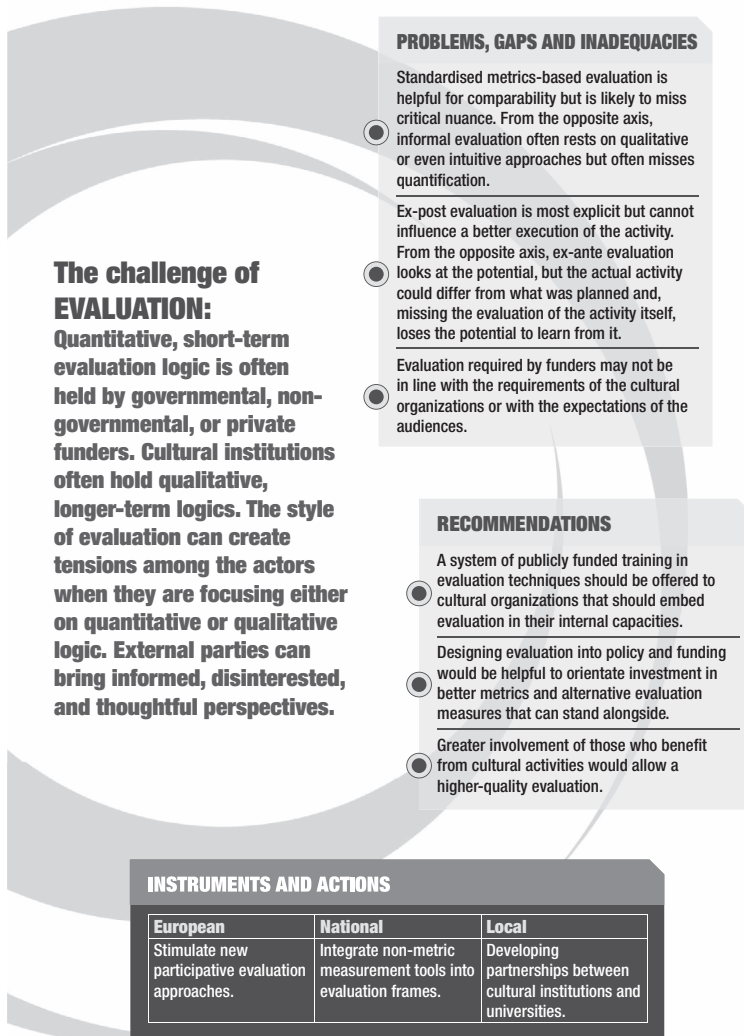


Figure 7 Roadmap for cultural policy action

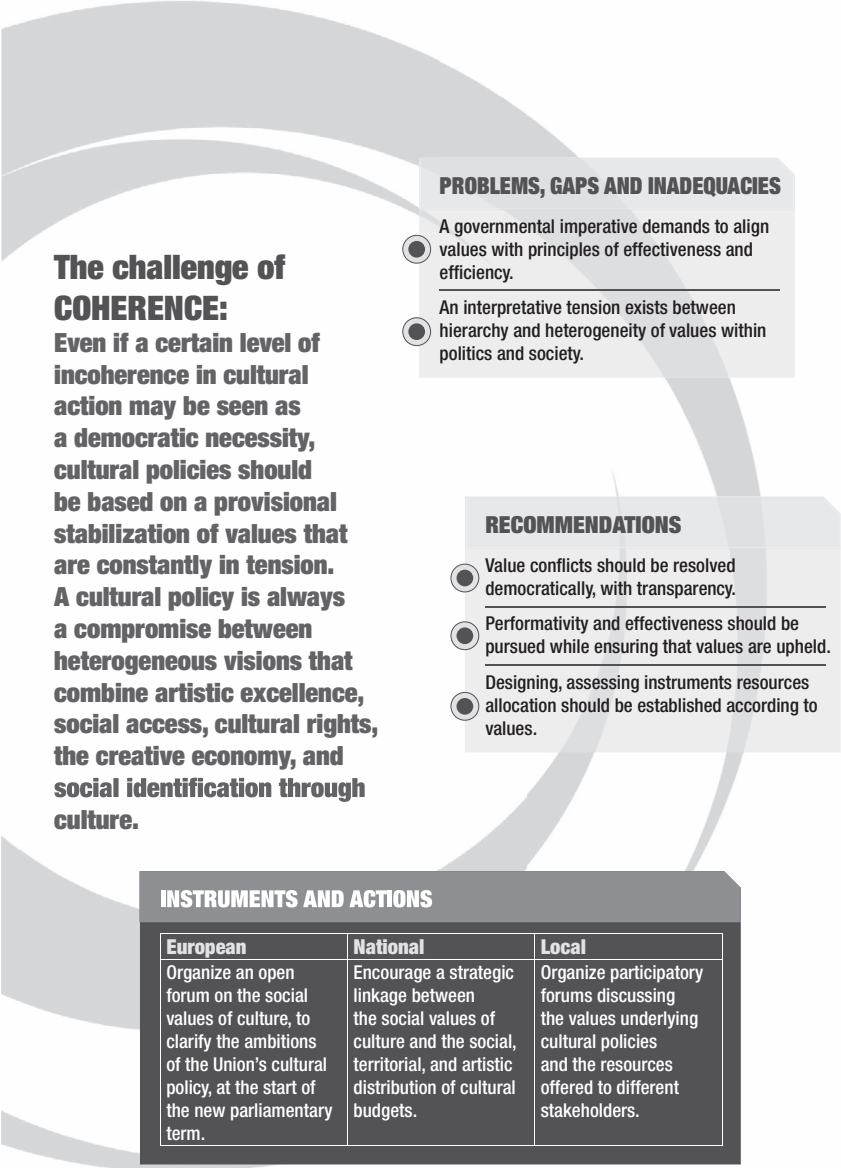


Figure 7 (Continued)



Figure 7 (Continued)

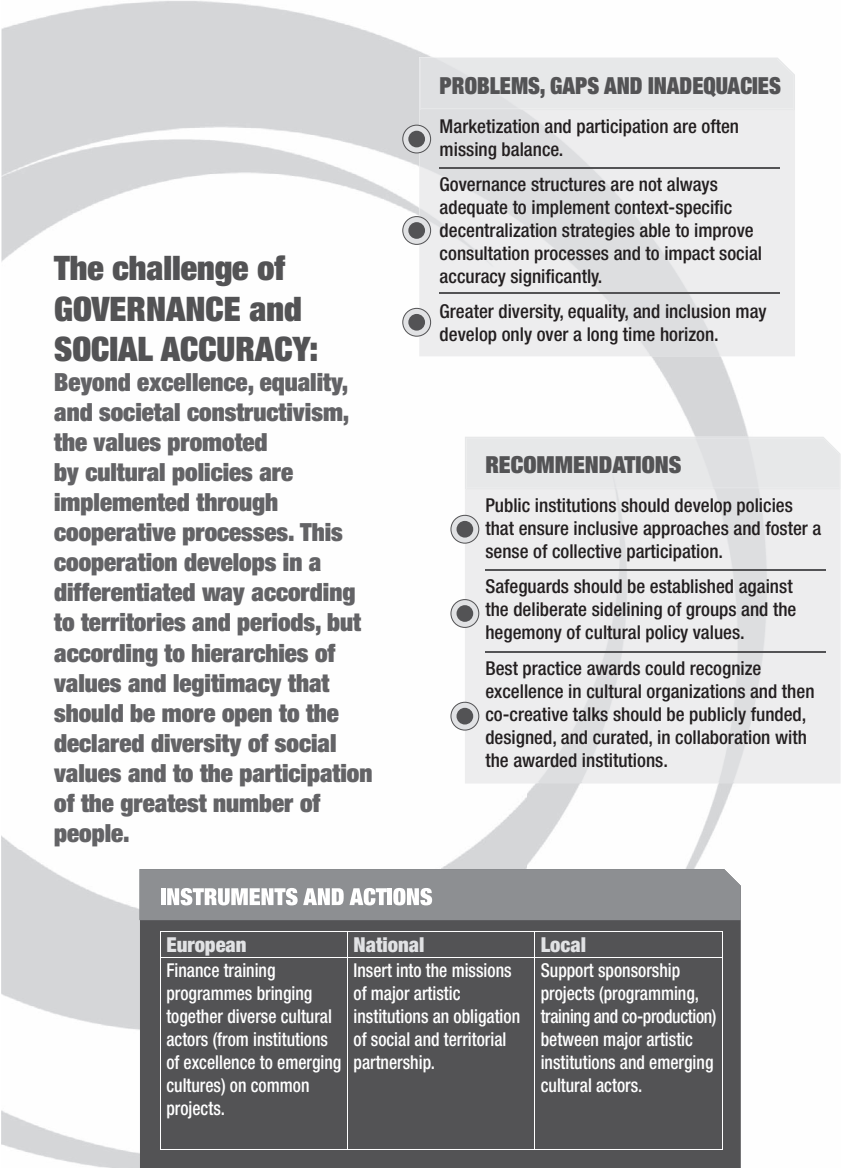


Figure 7 (Continued)

The challenge of INFORMATION: Cultural information systems emerge as highly centralized, revealing a deficiency in articulation within the cultural and artistic field and a dearth of academic expertise, often lacking the depth of experimental co-creation processes. The challenge of information systems is their adaptation to evolving cultural valuations and the reflection of diverse cultural landscapes in the data models.

PROBLEMS, GAPS AND INADEQUACIES

Underdeveloped qualitative dimensions hamper linking culture to broader concepts such as well-being and mental health and risk failing to capture the intrinsic value of cultural practices.

Integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches can contribute to a nuanced analysis of cultural phenomena that advocates for collaborative and adaptive approaches, recognition of the dynamic nature of cultural phenomena, and development of inclusive cultural information ecosystems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Holistic perspectives are important for the development of robust information systems, favouring the deepening of themes rather than focusing on the speed of results, capturing the complexity of cultural experiences rather than adopting standardization of procedures.

Cultural ministries or public funding bodies could undertake the development of centralized digital databases with examples of good practices to be shared at many levels.

INSTRUMENTS AND ACTIONS

European	National	Local
Encourage cooperative observation programmes.	Developing multidisciplinary observation tools.	Creating regional cultural observatories.

Figure 7 (Continued)

Note

- 1 This roadmap was presented to a group of policymakers from a range of backgrounds, who provided valuable feedback: Simone Dudt (European Music Council), Preben von der Lippe (Norwegian National Arts Council), Caroline Vabret (DRAC—Regional State Directorate of Culture of Occitanie, France), Sara Brighenti (Deputy Commissioner, Plano Nacional das Artes, Portugal), Gábor Kerpel-Fronius (Vice-Mayor of Budapest), Abid Hussain (Director of Diversity, Arts Council England), Ludovica Michelin (Consultant in Cultural Policy/EU-related projects, Italy), and Maria João Mota (Coordinator of PELE, Cultural and Social Association in Porto, Portugal).