

Speech of the Minister of Education and Culture

Mr. George Demosthenous

At the Meeting of Senior Officials on Culture

Filoxenia Conference Center, Kyrenia Hall, August 29, 2012 at 9 am

It is with great pleasure and satisfaction that I welcome you to Cyprus, the most eastern gateway to Europe and to this Meeting of Senior Officials for Culture which will discuss issues of cultural governance and is organised under the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Dear delegates, ladies and gentlemen

Cyprus has undertaken for the first time the Presidency of the European Union under conditions and the consequences of economic crisis. I think now, more than ever, the European Union must stand close to its citizens. It is important to put people back at the heart of EU policies and to convey a strong message of hope and solidarity. In this context the Cyprus Presidency works at the maximum of its potential, for a better Europe.

Culture is an invaluable public good that affects every aspect of modern society. Culture is not only a means of expression. It is a source for contemporary creation and growth, a tool for the development of political and social consciousness. The cultural development of our citizens should be an important pillar of our priorities, and a necessary social good. Our main target should be to upgrade and develop the values and principles that provide content, vision and perspective to our citizens. Equip him with forces in their fight for social justice and equality. And it is through these processes offer cultural and culture when culture acquires its importance as a factor in economic development and not vice versa.

The ongoing economic crisis is putting additional pressure on the effective and efficient use of public finances. The horizontal nature of culture poses a challenge to the governance of culture. Thus, cultural governance should focus not only on the mobility of resources and human capital in the sector, but also the integration of culture at the heart of public policy.

Within this context, the Cyprus Presidency will seek to further promote the social dimension of culture holistically approaching the issues of cultural governance and strengthening cultural research and evidence-based policy on culture.

For the development of cultural policies rational planning is required. Research should be based on data which, when related to culture, should not merely be quantitative, but also qualitative. In this way, the cultural value of the arts will be adequately reflected to the people and the society when we justify our political interference.

The discussion that will take place among the high-level guests at the meeting of Senior Officials for Culture, aims to exchange views and experiences between Member States in relation to strategies to connect cultural organizations with other sectors such as civil societies and actors in the broader economy.

The conclusions of the conference will form the basis for preparation of Council conclusions on the issue of promoting cultural research in the context of cultural governance.

As a closing remark I would like to emphasize the high expectations that I have as a Minister and as a person for the role that Culture should play in today's society.

With these few words, I would like to thank my colleagues, speakers and all of you who participate in the meeting and wish you every success in

your work and a pleasant stay in Cyprus.