

Two proposals

I dedicate this paper to the memory of Diogo Vasconcelos, European leader in social innovation

Some projects of extraordinary convergence and dialogue took place after the Second World War, of which the European Union is one of the most visible results.

Then, until the crisis began in 2008, the idea of prosperity and the idea of the end of history (to which contributed the dissolution of the Soviet Union and its sphere of influence) drove many critical thought. European integration process was part of it.

Now we know that history continues and that we are writing it. Now we know that economics and finance works better with the political engagement of institutions, companies and citizens as a whole and not just as a result of the decision making of a small group of players. Now we know that some intangible assets, of which I would like to enhance arts and culture, are an essential part of reinforcing European integration.

With this framework I would like to present two proposals.

The first aims to contribute to strengthening the EU institutional framework. The second, concerns the future of European integration.

1st proposal: contribute to the reinforcement of EU institutions

Regardless of the differences between European countries of which we often emphasize the negative aspects, the truth is that an outsider looking at the space of the European Union finds in it an identity of shared values, a history of culture and the arts with many features that make Europe recognizable as a unit.

In his State of the Union, the President of the European Commission spoke about the European soul. The European soul is perceived or revealed in so many ways through the European cultural heritage, contemporary arts, and more generally speaking, through the products of our creativity and skills.

Arts and culture are part of the heart of the European soul - of its history, its present, and its future. Arts and culture can strengthen the EU institutions, and their presence in the global arena, in Internet and in the new media.

The Agora project

What? A regular project inspired by a manifesto with the aim of presenting arts and culture to EU citizens and their visitors.

How? By performing in different European squares and in the virtual space arts and culture events based on:

- A common manifesto
- A *Dialogue Café*
- The free will of each participating city to organize its program associated with the project.

When? Every year, for one month, starting on the Europe Day, arising from an annual manifesto written by different artists and intellectuals living in Europe.

Where? In the squares of all the EU cities joining the project and in a virtual square.

Why?

To contribute to reinforce what links Europeans.

2nd proposal: to contribute to the future of European integration

The EU's population is estimated at over 500 million and will increase next year with the accession of Croatia.

Despite the weak demographic outlook for the coming decades, the EU is a major demographic bloc in the world, after China and India.

But Eurostat estimates that 25.254 million men and women in the EU-27, of whom 18.002 million were in the euro area (EA-17), were unemployed in July 2012.

Compared with July 2011, unemployment rose by 2 104 000 in the EU-27 and by 2 051 000 in the euro area. In July 2012, 5.468 million young people (under 25) were unemployed in the EU-27, of whom 3.388 million were in the euro area. The euro area seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate was 11.3 % in July 2012. In July 2012, the unemployment rate was 8.3 % in the USA. In June 2012, the unemployment rate was 4.3 % in Japan.

The working-age population (15 to 64) in EU-25 will fall by 48 million between 2006 and 2050 and the dependency ratio is set to double, reaching 51% by 2050. From the EU-27 population stood at an estimated 501.1 million persons on the 1 January 2010, of these some 87.1 million were aged 65 or over. Rate of the population aged 65 and over in 2050: 29 %

We cannot tell to more than 110 millions of European citizens (unemployed and aged more than 65), one fifth of our population, that their lives and presence is worthless.

Arts and culture can build a new paradigm about social recognition, welfare and new skills of this part of the European population. They can even challenge the paradigm working force/non working force and all the related indicators.

I believe that arts and culture can greatly contribute to the future of the European construction.

We need to address a new perspective, as President Barroso said in his last State of the Union speech. We need new perspectives to new challenges.

We need to look at the value of time, the value of life beyond the concepts of labour force/unemployment/retirement.

I strongly recommend that we start linking arts and culture with the challenges we face to change the paradigm.

Brussels, September 17th, 2012

Intellectuals Meeting organized by the President of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso

Jorge Barreto Xavier