



GOALS AND CLAIMS OF THE BERLIN CONFERENCE 2015

The first Berlin Conference in 2004 marked the beginning of a dialogue between politics and civil society with the goal to integrate culture on all levels of political decision-making as a creative force in Europe's coalescing process. Since then, the resulting initiative "A Soul for Europe" has pursued this goal in all its debates, projects, and publications. However, dialogues and debates were not the sole goal of the initiative. In fact, the initiative was started with the intention to create policy proposals and to present them to respective partners.

This year, again, the Berlin Conference intends to develop goals that should be understood as common agenda:

1) Two Propositions to Strengthen the Active Position of Cities in the EU

a) Commissioner for Culture

We recommend that the European Commissioner for Culture establishes a series of dialogues between intellectuals and politicians to clarify fundamental topics which determine European politics. The EU is in need of new methodologies to increase the visibility of its practical actions. European politics are not only the responsibility of politicians.

b) European Committee of the Regions in Brussels

This Committee should not spring into action only in case of inappropriate actions on the part of the European Commission and Council of Ministers. We recommend building a second department in which achievements, creativity, and manifold contributions of cities and regions for the development of Europe are demanded and become increasingly significant for the European unification.

This implies that cities and regions must acknowledge and act upon their joint responsibility as designers of Europe.

2) Memorandum for the cities

The existential challenge that manifests itself in the great influx of refugees emphasises the necessity of an approach which takes the European responsibility of its cities and regions seriously. The ultimate goal is the long-term integration of these refugees. This must be achieved primarily by the cities and communities of Europe. European and national institutions have to build the necessary political framework, but the success of their decisions will be decided upon in the municipalities. We advocate an active, responsible European agenda for the cities: "Cities for Europe". This could go along with a new agenda of the Committee of the Regions (cf. 1b).

3) European Capitals of Culture

The initiative "A Soul for Europe" with its long-standing practical work has intensively striven for a definition and realignment of this major European project.

The initiative's recommendations were taken into account by the European Committee of the Regions in its endeavor for new regulations. An apparent lack of political enthusiasm led to a local and international decrease in awareness despite the aforementioned positive outcomes. What is missing is a distinguished political authority.

Therefore, we call for a new widely acknowledged European authority that is characterised by cultural and political relevance. This could be a senate consisting of a small circle of personalities, enabled by the



President of the European Commission on recommendation of the Commissioners for Culture. A group of competent experts from the present Capitals of Culture support this body.

4) Competence Group “Periphery“

Especially the recent developments with regard to the great number of refugees exemplifies that Central Europe has disregarded the broad European periphery, particularly the South-East of Europe.

In these “peripheral” countries energies exist despite, or perhaps unnoted precisely, due to the economic difficulties they are facing. We are in need of a new, non-hierarchical vocabulary, and an equal collaboration in politics and civil society.

We recommend the building of a “Periphery Competence Group” whose members should consist of members of the European Parliament and members of “A Soul for Europe”, as well as other civil society initiatives.