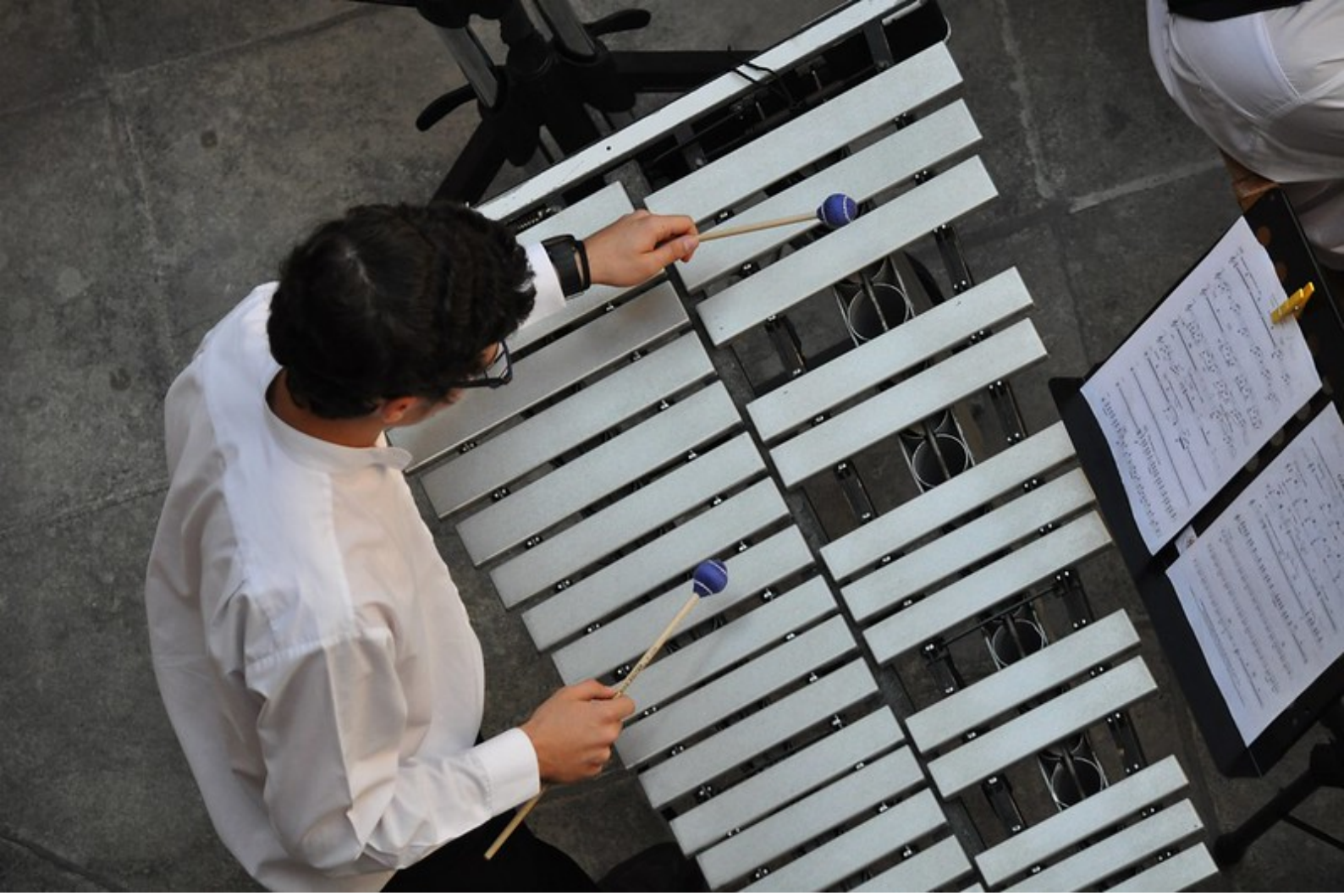


News

Understanding The Link Between Cultural Activities And Democracy

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Cultural activities have a significant impact on democracy and social cohesion.

According to a new European Commission report, participation in cultural events promotes critical thinking and creativity, both essential for democratic engagement. Cultural activities also create opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to come together, fostering social cohesion and reducing social isolation.

The report found that cultural activities, such as attending concerts, exhibitions, and theatre performances, can help to foster a sense of belonging and identity among individuals from different backgrounds.

“Culture is at the heart of our democratic societies. Participating in shaping the societies we live in. We need to harness this immense power of culture for the democratic health of our societies. This report comes at a very good point in time, and it will contribute to our efforts to deepen democracy and promote an inclusive and engaged society as we support our cultural sectors” said Margaritis Schinas, Commission Vice President for Promoting our European Way of Life

According to the report, cultural participation has been shown to increase trust between people and institutions, promote tolerance and understanding across diverse groups, and encourage civic engagement. For instance, the recent Black Lives Matter protests have led to a surge in interest in Black art and culture, highlighting the need for greater representation in the arts sector. The research has shown that engaging in cultural activities can lead to increased empathy and understanding toward others, as well as a greater appreciation for cultural diversity.

A fundamental right

“Access to cultural activities is a fundamental right that should be available to everyone, regardless of their social or economic status”. The report emphasizes the need for increased access to cultural activities for all members of society, regardless of their socio-economic status or geographic location.

Recent developments have also highlighted the importance of

digital cultural participation, which has become increasingly popular due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This offers new opportunities for people to engage with culture and connect with others despite physical barriers.

Across Europe

In 2018, the European Union launched "Creative Europe" which aims to provide funding for cultural projects that promote diversity, inclusion, and dialogue between different cultures. The new EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026 includes the action Culture and promoting democracy: toward cultural citizenship in Europe.

Activities in this context will bring together key players from the cultural and educational sectors who will share knowledge and examples of how to harness the potential of culture to enhance learners' citizenship education and democratic attitudes, in a concrete and practical way. Additionally, many cities around the world are implementing cultural policies that prioritize community engagement and participation in cultural activities

- Barcelona's "Barcelona Participatory Culture Plan" focuses on promoting citizen participation in artistic and cultural projects. These initiatives not only strengthen democracy by giving citizens a voice in decision-making processes but also foster social cohesion by bringing people from diverse backgrounds together to share experiences and ideas through art and culture.
- Another successful initiative promoting cultural participation is the "Culture Pass" program in Brussels, Belgium. This program provides every resident under the age of 26 with a free pass to over 100 cultural institutions and events throughout the city. The goal is to encourage young people to engage with their city's cultural offerings, regardless of their socio-economic background.
- The "Culture for All" program in Helsinki, Finland, focuses on making cultural events and venues accessible for people with disabilities. This includes providing sign language interpretation, audio descriptions, and wheelchair access. The program has been successful in promoting social inclusion and breaking down barriers to cultural participation.

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