



Sunday 25 October 2015,
Mons 2015, European Capital of Culture
MICX - Mons International Congress Xperience
Avenue Melina Mercouri, 1 - 7000 Mons
www.forum-mons2015.cfwb.be

International forum organized as part of
the Celebration of the 10th anniversary
of the Convention of the UNESCO
on the protection and promotion
of the diversity of cultural expressions



MONS 2015
CAPITALE EUROPEENNE
DE LA CULTURE

Cultural exception facing the challenges of the digital world : How to put new technologies at the service of the diversity of cultural expressions ?

NOTE OF CONTEXT

More than twenty years after the meeting of European Ministers of Culture which confirmed, in Mons, the need to defend cultural exception, and at a time when the digital revolution upsets the modes of cultural creation and diffusion, it is appropriate to take stock and prospects of the UNESCO Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions.

The 1993 meeting of the European Ministers of Culture was in the context of the transition from the GATT and the GATTS to the WTO in matters of international trade.

In 2005, after the failure of the 1999 negotiations with the WTO, the UNESCO Convention was adopted. It founds in public international law, the legitimacy for the States to promote and protect their culture.

The 10th anniversary of this Convention will be celebrated on Sunday, 25 October 2015 in Mons. The European Capital of Culture in 2015, with the self-chosen theme of «Where technology meets culture» is the ideal setting to commemorate this event and rekindle «the Spirit of Mons» in the digital age.

The Government of the Federation Wallonia-Brussels and the Mons 2015 Foundation intend to propose an International Forum to support the efforts initiated by France and Canada to reinforce the comments made by the Director General of UNESCO, Ms Irina Bokova, on 4 April 2014. On the occasion of the Chaillot Forum, she indeed said that the Convention certainly applies to the digital world and is based on technological neutrality, the base of cultural exception.

The International Forum in Mons has the ambition to confirm these principles, and to explore the available tools to implement them.

To achieve this, several questions posed by the relationship between culture, trade and the digital world in a society in full metamorphosis will be addressed. These issues are complex and multifaceted, linked to issues such as knowledge management, providing support to the creation and distribution of cultural content, taking into account their evolution (deterritorialisation and dematerialisation, media convergence, strengthening of participation processes...), intellectual property, or the protection of personal data.

After a series of institutional and academic speeches on these themes, three debates between experts and representatives of the civil society will be presented:

1st debate : **“Strengthen creators and access to culture : the digital challenges of the cultural exception”**

The digital technologies radically changed the ways of cultural creation, dissemination and consumption. This phenomenon is rich in opportunities in the economic, social and cultural perspectives, in terms of diversity of created cultural contents or access to these productions. However, in a rapidly changing global environment, it also poses key challenges. Which tools to be established or strengthened at national and transnational levels to support cultural creativity and protect creators? And how to exploit digital technologies to better guarantee the cultural rights of the populations?

2nd debate : **“Creators and audiences in Southern countries: the contributions of the Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions in the digital age.”**

In the global context, and in the particularly tense context of the destruction of jewels of world heritage, Southern countries are confronted with very specific situations facing the challenges of the cultural exception and the digital world. In this regard, several factors are involved such as financial resources available to support their creation, access to new technological instruments, or the difficulty of penetrating the markets of Northern countries. Is cultural exception an obstacle or a driving force to cultural development for Southern countries? How can digital technologies change the answer to these questions?

3rd debate : **“The digital world as a tool for the protection and promotion of cultural diversity in small or medium-sized cities.”**

The focus is often placed on big cities (Paris, London, Berlin, Barcelona, ...) in the analysis of interactions between the digital world and the expression of cultural diversity.

Yet small and medium-sized cities are also facing significant challenges in this area. Which strategies can these cities develop to promote, new ways of creating and ensuring access to tools and digital products to citizens, depending on their social, economic and cultural specific ecosystem?

