

The Protection and Promotion of Cultural Rights and Cultural Expressions of Migrants in Host Societies

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Since 2018, the UNESCO Chair on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions based at Université Laval, Faculty of Law in Quebec, has developed a specific research program devoted to the cultural expressions of migrants. The Chair organized three conferences “Access to oneself. Access to the other”.

Methodology: The particularity of our approach is that these conferences bring together academic experts but also policy makers, artists and civil society organizations to understand the challenges of ensuring cultural rights and protecting the cultural diversity of migrants, to collect and share good practices and to issue recommendations to public authorities and cultural institutions.

Results: Two publications are available online on the website of the UNESCO Chair on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and a third publication is on the way. Each publication contains a list of recommendations to the various stakeholders involved in the field. In May 2023, the UNESCO Chair plans to organize a fourth conference, this time focusing on the representativeness of migrants' cultural expressions in the media and digital environment.

Key Speakers of the 3rd Conference: a diversity of Stakeholders involved



Patrice Meyer-Bisch
President of the Observatory of Diversity and Cultural Rights, University of Fribourg, and Coordinator of the UNESCO Chair for Human Rights and Democracy, University of Fribourg

“Refugees and exiles of all kinds are the vanguard of transnational democracy, without which our democracies will forever remain underdeveloped.”



Alexandra Xanthaki
United Nations special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights

“I would like to see more art produced by migrant artists in the state and encouraged by local authorities, more art created in collaboration with migrant organizations, and more art that reveals the multi layered character and personalities and themes and interests of cultures of people on the move.”



Catherine Vallières-Roland
Councillor and Deputy Mayor, responsible for international relations, indigenous affairs, major events, culture, family and living together, Quebec City



Jordi Pascual
Coordinator of the Committee on culture of the global network of United Cities and Local Governments



This conference explored the link between the protection of cultural expressions as defined by the UNESCO 2005 Convention, cultural policies and their application to migrants. It also highlighted the potential of cultural policies as a tool for the integration of migrants. Not only could these policies contribute to achieving the objectives of the 2005 Convention and certain sustainable development goals, but they could be essential to the full realization of the fundamental rights and freedoms of new Quebecers and Canadians, such as their right to participate in the cultural life of their community or their right to respect for their cultural identity.



This conference focused on artistic freedom, including the status of the artist and the inclusion of migrant persons in democratic societies. It also examined and clarified the rights that need to be protected and promoted so that migrants can enjoy full artistic freedom in their host society. It provided an opportunity to identify international legal instruments, particularly in the area of fundamental rights and freedoms, including cultural rights, and national legislation that can be implemented in order to protect this artistic freedom.



This conference addressed the role of cities and local authorities in the protection and promotion of cultural diversity and cultural rights of migrants. It also emphasized existing public policies and other measures by which cities and local authorities are committed to the protection and promotion of the diversity and cultural rights of all people, including migrants. Whether they are led by cities or regions, or deployed to support projects led by civil society, public policies conducted at the local level are often a source of good practices.

