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The SDGs in the EU Cultural Policies: an institutional communication perspective

Abstract

The main goal of this research is to analyze the experts' opinions on cultural sustainability and the importance of sustainable development in the EU cultural policies. Besides, the research analyses how institutional communication may contribute to the introduction of the sustainable development, and, specifically, of the SDGs in the European Union cultural policies' definition. In order to achieve these objectives, we share a survey with several experts in EU cultural policies. The experts' conclusions show that the SDGs need to be explicitly included in the cultural policies, adding a more practical perspective through specific projects and action plans. Institutional communication is a strategic factor for the success of sustainable development in terms of cultural policies and cultural sustainability in the European Union.

Keywords

Institutional communication, cultural policies, sustainable development, cultural sustainability, SDGs, European Union.

1. Introduction

In 2015 the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. All the states members decided to work together for a better and more just world. The 2030 Agenda is formed by 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as an action plan to safeguard the interests of people, planet and prosperity worldwide (UN Global Compact, n.d.). The final goal is to strengthen the universal peace and the access to justice (Marcolin *et al.*, 2020). Since the publication of the Brundtland report (United Nations, 1987), the sustainability concept has been defined as the “development that meets the needs of the present generations

without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland *et al.*, 1987). Accordingly, today's main world challenges are focused on poverty eradication and climate change (United Nations, 2016).

Unfortunately, up to now the 2030 Agenda has not been fully implemented and a lot of effort is still needed (United Nations, 2019). The global COVID-19 pandemic has caused catastrophic effects on people's lives (United Nations, 2020) and has negatively affected the 2030 Agenda implementation (United Nations, 2021), also from the cultural perspective.

The function of culture in the 2030 Agenda has been largely discussed and for the first-time culture is included in a global sustainable development strategy (Streimikiene *et al.*, 2019). Culture is explicitly mentioned only in some goals regarding education (SDG4), sustainable cities (SDG11), food security (SDG2), environment (SDG13), economic growth (SDG8), sustainable consumption and production patterns (SDG12) and peaceful and inclusive

societies (SDG17) (Erlewein, 2017a; Streimikiene *et al.*, 2019; Wiktor-Mach, 2020). For this reason, most academics highlight the low impact of culture on the SDGs (Duxbury *et al.*, 2017a; Erlewein, 2017c; Throsby, 2017; Turner, 2017b), and claim that culture needs to be considered as part of the sustainable development and it should be a tool for sustainability (Baltà Portolés & Dragičević Šešić, 2017; Dessein *et al.*, 2015; Errichiello & Micera, 2018; Kagan *et al.*, 2018; Molina Neira, 2018; Rayman-Bacchus & Radavoi, 2020; Swanson & DeVereaux, 2017; Throsby, 2017; Wiktor-Mach, 2020). The SDGs offer a new approach and mindset to the cultural industry, suggesting a triple opportunity in terms of caring about people, planet and profit (REDS, 2021).

Culture is a complex construct, and several authors highlight that there is not a consensus about its definition (Faulkner *et al.*, 2006; Rosaldo, 2006).

In this research, we adopted the UNESCO's definition of culture as: "culture is the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, that encompasses, not only art and literature, but lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs" (UNESCO, 2001).

The relationship between culture and the sustainable development may be considered from an intangible or a tangible perspective (Zheng *et al.*, 2021). The intangible dimension is the constituent interpretation of culture and it refers to values, beliefs and norms as a positive driver to sustainable development.

The tangible perspective, according to its functional interpretation, refers to cultural production and consumption, and it may generate economic growth and employment. Both perspectives are taken into consideration in this research.

The function of culture as a mediator or driver of sustainable development is getting more and more relevant, nevertheless it is still undervalued (Zheng *et al.*, 2021).

Several researchers highlight the need to deeply analyze the relationship between culture and sustainability, identifying a gap in the research agenda and the need to understand how culture may be a tool for sustainable development (Asikainen *et al.*, 2017). According to Soini and Dessein (Soini & Dessein, 2016), although "cultural sustainability" is used in a number of meanings and contexts, there are very few attempts to bring "culture" and "sustainability" together in a systematic way and it is necessary to tackle this new approach. Even if culture as an aspect of sustainability has become a new and increasingly popular field of inquiry and debate, more research is needed since culture is not widely and explicitly considered as built-in the sustainable agenda (Wiktor-Mach, 2020).

Furthermore, there is a specific necessity to help policymakers to understand the concept of cultural sustainability and its impact on the society (Rayman-Bacchus & Radavoi, 2020b).

This study is meant to address and fulfill these research gaps, contributing to the academic field of cultural sustainability, sustainable development, cultural policies and institutional communication.

Besides, we would like to provide European policymakers and cultural industry's managers with useful advices and practical implications.

The main goal of this research is to analyze the experts' opinions on cultural sustainability and the importance of sustainable development in the EU cultural policies. Besides, the research analyzes how institutional communication may contribute to the introduction of the sustainable development, and, specifically, of the SDGs in the European Union cultural policies' definition.

In order to achieve these objectives, we shared a survey with several experts in the EU cultural policies. The experts' conclusions show that the SDGs have to be explicitly included in the cultural policies, adding a more practical perspective, focusing on specific projects and action plans. Cultural sustainability is considered a multidimensional and transversal area of

the sustainable development. In this field, the intellectual and creative products, as well as beliefs and societal practices, have a positive impact on the society, as drivers and enabler of the 2030 Agenda (Kagan, 2019).

Finally, the conclusions show that, in the European Union, institutional communication is a strategic tool for the success of the sustainable development in terms of cultural policies and cultural sustainability.

The experts' survey methodology provides interesting and useful findings that contribute to the academic literature and, also, to the professional practice of the policymakers and the cultural industry's managers (Darko *et al.*, 2017; Laaksonen, 2018a).

This article is organized as follows: first we perform a literature review focused on the research field of cultural sustainability, cultural policies and institutional communication from an EU perspective. Afterward, we present the methodology, the results, and the conclusions.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Cultural sustainability: a theoretical framework

Cultural sustainability is a multidisciplinary and flexible concept (Duxbury *et al.*, 2017b). As per Soini & Birkeland (2014) cultural sustainability is organized around seven storylines: heritage, vitality, economic vitality, diversity, locality, eco-cultural resilience, and eco-cultural civilization (Soini & Birkeland, 2014). But a clear and concise definition of cultural sustainability has not been created yet (Payne & O'Neil, 2019). As Bekerman and Kopelowitz (2008) affirm, at the most basic level, cultural sustainability is an attempt to transmit culture or particular ways of life to the next generation (Bekerman & Kopelowitz, 2008). In this sense, some authors consider that cultural sustainability is still a framework under construction (Martinell, 2020; Pascual, 2020a). Throsby adds that this concept needs to follow the principle of interconnectedness to the equilibrium between all dimensions of sustainability: "This principle it provides for a holistic interpretation of development where no one component of the system should be seen in isolation" (Throsby, 2017, p. 140). Many authors (Baltà Portolés & Dragičević Šešić, 2017b; Errichiello & Micera, 2018b; Kagan *et al.*, 2018b; Molina Neira, 2018b; Rayman-Bacchus & Radavoi, 2020b; Swanson & DeVereaux, 2017b; Wiktor-Mach, 2020) adopt the Dessein *et al* (2015) approach that states that culture is in sustainability, culture is for sustainability and culture is as sustainability (Dessein *et al.*, 2015).

According to Hawkes (2001) culture is the fourth dimension of sustainable development, at the same level as the economic, environmental, and social dimensions. Other theories try to include culture as a new pillar (UCLG, 2015). Nevertheless, up to now, culture has a low impact on the sustainable development (Duxbury *et al.*, 2017b; Erlewein, 2017b; Throsby, 2017; Turner, 2017a), even though culture is mentioned for the first time within the SDGs framework as a dimension of the sustainable development (Streimikiene *et al.*, 2019; Wiktor-Mach, 2020). In this article, we consider culture from a broad perspective, as "intellectual and creative products" and as "societal beliefs and practices" (Ferran, Miotto & Rom, 2021). According to REDS (2021), "culture has significant power to bring about the transformative change needed to achieve the SDGs. Culture is part of our being and shapes our ways of life: it encompasses values, beliefs, convictions, human expressiveness and creative capacity" (REDS, 2021). In the same way, we consider that cultural sustainability is a transversal dimension of sustainable development as UNESCO (2019) proposed. Culture transversally contributes to each of the five dimensions of sustainability (People, Planet, Profit, Peace, and Partnerships) and it has an important function in driving and enabling the sustainable development (UNESCO, 2013, 2019).

2.2. Cultural policies and Sustainable Development in the European Union

In order to simplify the theoretical framework of this research, we introduce the definition of cultural policies: they are sectoral public policies that involve the delimitation of a specific field of action by a government, or by a civil and private institutions or groups, with specific objectives and an effective system of intervention (Colombo, 2011). The cultural policies of each region, country or nation are designed and applied according to the needs and will of each territory, society or government, with the aim of satisfying the cultural needs of a population and promoting the development of symbolic representations (Colombo, 2011).

As per Fiallos Quintero (2020), the dynamics of contemporary societies, globalization and development of communication technologies have a decisive impact on the cultural policies formulation. Other attributes of public culture have been added as important variable such as: diversity, interculturality and cultural rights. In this context, governments strategies require more effective cross-cutting actions (Fiallos Quintero, 2020).

Cultural sustainability and cultural policies have been developed and strategically organized globally, but in a geographically customized way. The European Union has dedicated not too much effort in cultural policies strategy. The countries' regulatory authorities manage most of the cultural policies, while the EU keeps a low profile in these issues. According to Stoicheva (2018), "Cultural policy is one of the last bastions of the nation-state power and symbolically exemplifies the contemporary opposition between preservation of national culture and the impact of globalization" (Stoicheva, 2018). Even though, the EU is developing certain programs that support the creative industries, such as the "Creative Cities" program, "Media" program or the "European Capitals of Culture," where the EU promotes the "creative turn" that began in Great Britain and has been implemented in European programs since the 90s (Rius-Ulldemolins *et al.*, 2019; Xuereb, 2018). Even so, the notion of European convergence, which refers to the adoption of a common cultural framework converging on "the European way of doing things," is currently under discussion (Rius-Ulldemolins *et al.*, 2019). In this regard, Stoicheva (2018) proposes that the notion of European cultural identity can be shaped by common cultural policies. Recently, a progressively positive attitude of Europeans towards an EU culture policy definition has grown and the new agenda sets new common objectives: cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue as main assets; European culture as a catalyst of creativity and a driver of economic growth and employment; and culture as a component of international relations in terms of cultural diplomacy (Stoicheva, 2018).

The new European Agenda for Culture (European Commission, 2018) fosters this new approach, encouraging the mobility of the cultural and creative sectors professionals, promoting Europe's cultural heritage in order to raise Europe common history awareness and reinforcing the sense of a common European identity (Vries, 2020).

In the last years, culture has gained relevancy within the international development narrative with a particular emphasis on sustainability and its positive impact on the society (British Council, 2020). As Hosagrahar states "after the 2030 Agenda was adopted, in 2017, UNESCO claimed that culture could contribute directly to many of the SDGs relating not only to education, but also economic growth, the reduction of inequalities, the protection of the environment, the promotion of gender equality and peaceful and inclusive societies" (Hosagrahar, 2017).

The EU developed "The New European Consensus on Development" adopting the SDGs guidelines. Culture is explicitly recognized as an important enabler for sustainable development. The states members should promote intercultural dialogue, cooperation and cultural diversity. They should protect the cultural heritage and encourage the cultural and creative industry (European Union, 2017). The EU should "harness the full potential of

education, training and culture as drivers for job creation, economic growth and social fairness” (European Commission, 2019, p. 22).

Nevertheless, as the UNESCO confirms, the SDGs integration into the cultural policies is still minimal, especially in the environmental dimension (Unesco, 2022a). The EU has embraced the UNESCO’s demand to engage the cultural ministries and cultural stakeholders to create new holistic policies to achieve the 2030 Agenda goals (Council of the European Union, 2019; Unesco, 2022b).

2.3 Sustainable Development: an institutional communication perspective

Several challenges affect cultural policies in terms of institutional communication: “There is a need for major institutions to become better at messaging the impact of their work, ensuring that it aligns with the SDGs. This is important for the sector to clearly demonstrate that it is invested in the Goals, and to develop a clear story about the role of arts and culture in achieving economic and particularly social impact” (British Council, 2020).

Institutional communication, reputation and stakeholders’ engagement determine the success of sustainable development in the EU public institutions and cultural policies.

Public institutions also known as *Public Sector Organizations (PSOs)* are defined by the OECD (2015) as any organization under government control that develops public goods or services. They are major employers and services providers of the sustainability organization (Ball, A. & Grubnic, 2007). The political nature behind the public sector organizations is the distinctive feature behind this sector (Domingues *et al.*, 2017; Lane, 2005).

Institutional communication in the Public Sector Organizations is the management function that provides a framework for the effective coordination of all internal and external communications, with the overall purpose of establishing and maintaining a favorable reputation and influence within the different stakeholders (Cornelissen, 2011). Accordingly, institutional communication aims to increase awareness, understanding and appreciation of public policies (Dolphin, 2001).

According to Fombrun (1996), the reputation of an institution is the sum of the stakeholders’ perceptions about a firm (Fombrun, 1996) and a proactive attitude of the organization to keep a positive relationship through communication (Villafañe, 2015). Reputation is a perceptual construct based on the transmission of information through communication (VÍctor Costa & VÍctor Costa, 2015). Reputation is the collective evaluation of the attractiveness of a company or institution of specific stakeholders (Ponzi *et al.*, 2011).

Positive reputation is a strategic resource to create credibility and support among the different stakeholders (Miotto *et al.*, 2020). Organizations activate stakeholder engagement to positively involve stakeholders in the organization’s activities (Greenwood, 2007). The overall purpose of stakeholder engagement is to contribute to the sustainable development throughout the society (Unerman *et al.*, 2010).

Sulkowski *et al.* (2018) propose to “shake” the stakeholders out of complacency, soliciting their cooperation, altering their behavior, changing societal or market conditions, or shaking-up stakeholder relationships to stimulate adoption of sustainable practices (Sulkowski *et al.*, 2018). According to Allen (2016), communication can be used to gain consent, achieve control, enlist cooperation, enact accountability, increase participation, enhance trust, or serve as a mechanism of corporate governance (Allen, 2016).

It is also important to highlight which are the better and more effective strategies to communicate SDGs, such as: assess the target audience, use positive messages, develop a consistent storytelling, connect and mainstream SDGs in everyday life (Mulholland, 2019a).

The 2030 Agenda does not make an explicit reference to communication. The reason why communication is not taken into account is because the contexts in each country can be very different, so a unique communication strategy is difficult to define and implement (Mulholland, 2019b).

Up to now, the EU institutional communication focuses on the European Green Deal, engaging citizens mostly in terms of environmental issues (European Commission, 2020).

Unfortunately, the EU institutions do not include the cultural dimension in the sustainable development projects and strategies communication. Even though, many organizations confirm that culture is a driver and an enabler for sustainable development.

3. Methodology

The main goal of this research is to analyze the experts' opinions on cultural sustainability and the importance of sustainable development in the EU cultural policies. Furthermore, the research analyzes how the institutional communication may contribute to the introduction of sustainable development, and specifically the SDGs, in the European Union's cultural policies definition.

We use an exploratory descriptive methodology, and we analyze the opinion of 18 experts in EU cultural policies.

The survey respondents are professionals in the European cultural sector. They all participated in the Compendium of Cultural Policies. This project is a European Council online platform where more than 100 cultural policy researchers, from 43 different countries, collaborate in the cultural policies monitoring and definition. The Compendium plays a crucial function in the global knowledge developing and sharing (Boekman Foundation, 2020).

In the following table demographic and professional data of the respondents are described.

Table 1. Respondents' demographic and professional information.

Respondents	Country	Age	Sex	Profession
Respondent 1	Germany	40ties	Female	Cultural research assistant, project manager, lector in universities and consultant
Respondent 2	Austria	60ties	Female	Founder and director of an institute for applied culture research
Respondent 3	Belgium	40ties	Male	Research and Development in an Art Institute
Respondent 4	Croatia	40ties	Female	Senior research associate in de Department of Culture and Communication in an Institute of Development and international relations
Respondent 5	Slovenia	50ties	Female	Lawyer in the ministry of culture. Researcher and assistant lecturer of cultural policy in University of Ljubljana.
Respondent 6	Rumania	40thies	Female	General Manager at National Institute for Cultural Research and Training
Respondent 7	Poland	30ties	Female	Coordinator of the Creative Economy Research Center at the SWPS University
Respondent 8	Spain	40ties	Female	PhD in Economics. Associate professor of a university where she teaches Economics of culture
Respondent 9	Spain	50ties	Female	Associate professor and member of the executive board of the Association for Cultural Economics
Respondent 10	Estonia	50ties	Male	Lecturer
Respondent 11	France	50ties	Male	Research officer in the Department of Studies, Future trends and Statistics in the French Ministry of Culture and Communication

Respondent 12	Hungary	60ties	Male	Director Budapest Observatory: Regional Observatory on Financing Culture in East-Central Europe
Respondent 13	Italy	60ties	Female	Vice-President Associazione per l'economia della cultura
Respondent 14	Leetonia	40ties	Female	Senior Researcher at the research center of Latvian Academy of Culture
Respondent 15	Netherlands	30ties	Male	Senior Researcher and project coordinator at the Boekman Foundation
Respondent 16	Poland	50ties	Female	Professor and theoretician of management in culture and creative industries
Respondent 17	Check Republic	40thies	Female	Director Arts and Theatre Institute
Respondent 18	Norway			Professor of cultural policy and cultural organization at the University of Southeastern.

Source: Own elaboration.

A descriptive methodology is “a method of choice when straight descriptions of phenomena are desired” (Sandelowski, 2000). We used a survey as a practical tool to collect, handle, and analyze information from individuals in a systematic way (Laaksonen, 2018b). The type of information collected through the survey is characterized by a high degree of external validity and the samples has a high representation of the population (López-Roldán & Fachelli, 2015). According to Wolf *et al* (2017), the survey methodology is changing rapidly in the era of the Internet and globalization. The future of social science research will be based on the international comparative research, using surveys addressed and designed to understand the differences between countries from a global perspective (Wolf *et al.*, 2017), as we did in this study.

The population taken on consideration is made by 31 cultural policy experts, representing 24 of the 27 European Union countries that participated in the “Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends.”

The questionnaire sent by mail contained 23 questions, 10 with closed simple answers, 8 with a scaled response, 1 with a multiple-choice option and 4 open questions. We used the open-source online tool Google Forms. This tool allowed the participants to answer to the questionnaire at their own convenience during five weeks, from December 1st 2020 to January 10th, 2021.

The survey’s questions are original and specific for this study, nevertheless we based the content on previous similar research (Asikainen *et al.*, 2017; Darko *et al.*, 2017; Dessein *et al.*, 2015; Duxbury *et al.*, 2017b; Erlewein, 2017b; Loach *et al.*, 2017; Soini & Dessein, 2016; Wiktor-Mach, 2020). The final questionnaire was validated by two scholars, that confirmed the validity of the methodology.

To analyze the content of the open questions’ replies, we used the CADQAS software Atlas.ti (Silver & Lewins, 2014). The codes were created “in vivo” while reading the answers (Friese, 2011; Olabuénaga, 2012). The three authors doublechecked the consistency of the coding and the interpretation, in order to assure the quality of the results.

The study aims to contribute to the cultural sustainability academic field and to fulfill the identified research gap (Martinell, 2020; Pascual, 2020b). Besides, the novelty of the research focuses on the SDGs in cultural policies (Kangas *et al.*, 2017). Several scholars studied the relationship between sustainability and cultural policies (Duxbury *et al.*, 2017b; Kangas *et al.*, 2017), but nobody has introduced yet the SDGs as a variable.

The main research questions are:

RQ1. Which is the European experts’ opinion on cultural sustainability?

RQ2. How important is sustainable development in the EU cultural policies?

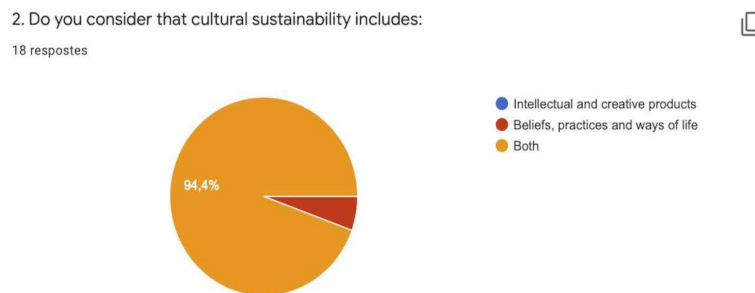
RQ3. How institutional communication may contribute to the introduction of the sustainable development, and specifically the SDGs, in the European Union cultural policies' definition?

4. Results

The research applied a qualitative descriptive methodology where 18 EU cultural policies experts from the “Compendium and Cultural Trends” platform shared their opinion via a survey. The countries that have participated are: Spain (2 experts), Poland (2 experts), Croatia, Germany, Belgium, France, Romania, Norway, Italy, Estonia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenija, Netherlands, Austria and Latvia.

Regarding the concept of cultural sustainability, the results show that the experts consider that cultural sustainability includes both intellectual and creative products, as well as beliefs, practices and ways of life (94.4%). Only the 5.6% considers that cultural sustainability includes only beliefs, practices and ways of life.

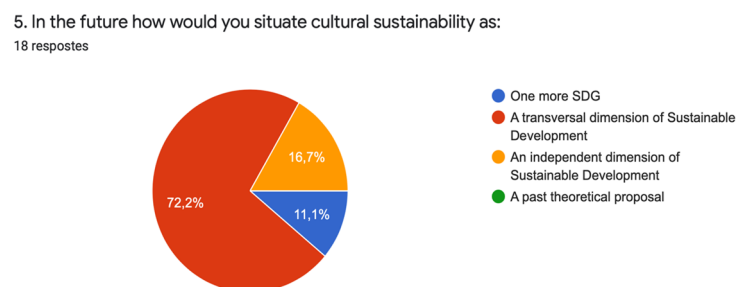
Figure 1. Cultural sustainability.



Source: Own elaboration.

All of them agree that cultural sustainability is a multidimensional concept. Most of the experts consider that cultural sustainability plays an active function in the UN 2030 Agenda. Almost all of them (94.4%) confirm that cultural sustainability is another dimension of the sustainable development, in addition to the economic, social and environmental sustainability. The 44.4% strongly believe that this is an important aspect to take into consideration. The vast majority (72.2%) consider that, in the future, cultural sustainability will be a relevant transversal dimension of sustainable development. On the other hand, the 16.7% consider cultural sustainability as an independent dimension of sustainable development and only the 11.1% think that it should be considered as a specific SDG.

Figure 2. Future of cultural sustainability.



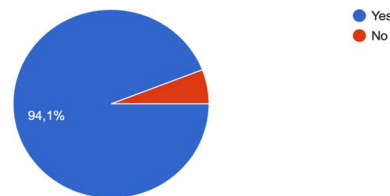
Source: Own elaboration.

The 82.3% of the experts consider that culture is a driver for sustainable development. Although the majority of the experts (52.9%) affirm that culture is the basis for sustainable development (Culture as SD), the 35.3% say that culture is a mediator between the three dimensions (Culture for SD). Finally, only the 11.8% consider culture as an intellectual and creative product and another dimension of sustainable development (Culture in SD).

In terms of sustainable development, the 44.4% of the experts believe that cultural policies main objective is the safeguard and sustainability of cultural practices and rights. Only the 22.2% believe that cultural policies help to raise awareness and to catalyze actions to promote sustainability and fight against the climate change.

Figure 3. SD and cultural policies.

6. Do you think that one way to demonstrate that culture has a role to play in Sustainable Development is by including the SDGs in cultural policies?
17 responses



Source: Own elaboration.

The 83.3% of the experts think that the sustainable development in cultural policies should be a common concern for all the EU countries. In this sense, they said that: “The proposals should be of transversal nature” and that the countries’ strategies should be transversal and holistic to promote culture as a tool for sustainable development.

The vast majority (94.1%) of the respondents think that the SDGs perspective should be included in the definition of the cultural policies. On the other hand, the 70.6% do not consider that cultural sustainability is well represented in the 2030 Agenda.

The 77.8% of the cultural policy experts consider that the SDGs are useful for the cultural sustainability implementation and the 82.4% believe that cultural policies should explicitly mention the SDGs. The 17.6% believe that including the SDGs in the cultural policies “will be an instrumentalization of culture.” The experts affirm that the SDGs will help to address strategic issues and to design more consistent policies.

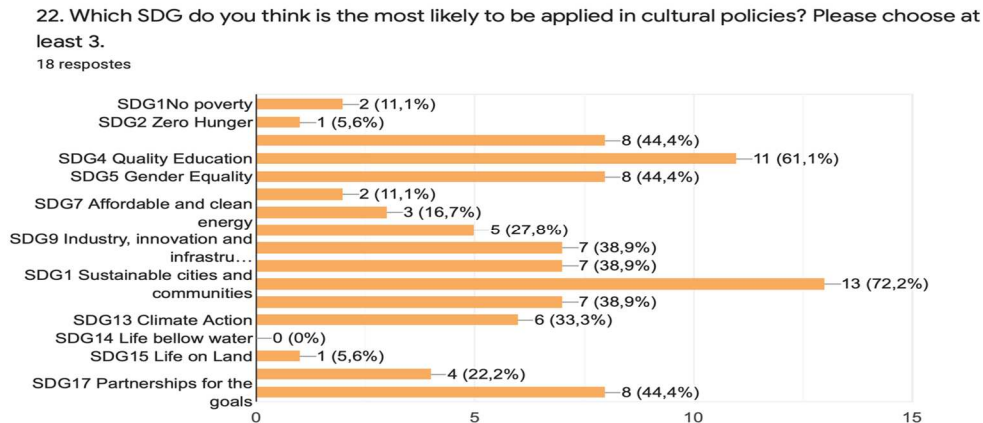
Nevertheless, only the 5% believe that the SDGs inclusion will improve the cultural policies communication. For example, one respondent said that “because what matters are actual activities and consequences, cultural policies are already plagued by symbolic language without any positive effect on sustainability.”

Actually, they agree that a shared vocabulary and communication strategy is highly recommended in the EU in order to improve the awareness and importance of the SDGs in cultural policies.

The experts believe that policy makers should foster communication and engagement between all the involved stakeholders, specifically the different institutional departments and the citizens.

Most of the SDGs are considered important by the policy makers, nevertheless, according to their response, these are the most relevant: SDG11 (13 answers), SDG4 (11 answers), SDG3 (8 answers), SDG17 (8 answers), SDG5 (8 answers), SDG9 (7 answers), SDG10 (7 answers), and SDG12 (7 answers).

Figure 4. SDGs and cultural policies.



Source: Own elaboration.

5. Conclusions

The main goal of this research is to analyze the experts' opinions on cultural sustainability and the importance of sustainable development in the EU cultural policies. Moreover, we aim to understand how institutional communication may contribute to the introduction of the SDGs in the European Union cultural policies definition.

The experts conclude that cultural sustainability includes both intellectual and creative products as well as beliefs, practices and ways of life and that cultural sustainability is a multidimensional concept included in the sustainable development field (Asikainen *et al.*, 2017; Loach *et al.*, 2017; Soini & Dessein, 2016). The experts share the vision of the UNESCO (2019b) where cultural sustainability is conceived as a cross-cutting dimension and a driver of sustainable development (Baran & Berkowicz, 2020). Cultural sustainability, considered as a multidisciplinary, flexible, and plural concept (Duxbury *et al.*, 2017b) has to be part of the future cultural policies definition.

The EU cultural policy experts consider that culture is poorly represented in the UN 2030 Agenda and that it should be more relevant. In order to reinforce this positioning, the SDGs should be explicitly mentioned in cultural policies, not just theoretically, but aligned to specific projects and action plans (Ferran Vila *et al.*, 2021). Sustainable development in cultural policies should become a common concern for the EU members.

According to the study results, some SDGs are more important than other in terms of cultural sustainability: SDG11 (Sustainable cities and communities), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 3 (Good health and wellbeing), SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructures), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) and SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production). This demonstrates that cultural policies could contribute directly to the achievement of several SDGs (Hosagrahar, 2017), even though they are not fully integrated on the EU cultural policies (Unesco, 2022b).

According to the research results and the literature review, thanks to the link to the United Nations, references to the SDGs would legitimate and improve cultural policies reputation.

Policy makers should adopt a common language and a shared narrative and communication strategy, using the SDGs indicators as a roadmap for fostering cultural sustainability as a key factor to pursue a sustainable development in several areas such as heritage safeguard, creative industry growth, environmental preservation and economic progress.

A specific communication plan focused on the SDGs and cultural policies will be a very important tool to reach the different stakeholders involved in the cultural sustainability development. The EU should promote this common language and communication strategy between the different countries and public institutions.

Policy makers should apply a more practical approach, through specific projects and action plans focused on cultural sustainability and the most relevant SDGs. Many stakeholders will be positively impacted by this new mindset, such as the creative industry, tourism, academic institutions and the society in general.

The EU institutional communication is very important for the sustainable development success, since it creates the necessary common ground for stakeholders' management and engagement.

Future investigation should analyze how a cultural sustainability communication strategy based on the SDGs may positively affect the degree of implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda in the different EU countries.

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