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NOTE

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Subject: Addressing cultural policy challenges in the context of the next Council Work Plan for Culture
- *Policy debate*
[Public debate pursuant to Article 8(2) CRP [proposed by the Presidency]]

Following consultation of the Cultural Affairs Committee, the Presidency has drawn up the attached discussion paper as the basis for the policy debate at the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting on 20-21 May 2014.

Addressing cultural policy challenges in the context of the next Council Work Plan for Culture

Presidency discussion paper

At a time when identifying sustainable development approaches for the future becomes a common and pressing concern in public policy-making, it is crucial to underline the role of cultural policy in addressing this concern and thus in enhancing the potential of culture to deliver a wide range of benefits for European societies.

I. Cultural policy challenges

Culture is one of Europe's greatest strengths: it is a source of values, identity and citizenship; it can be critical in addressing social cohesion and inclusion; it becomes instrumental to the revitalisation of cities and regions and is a driving force of economic sustainable development. Taking full account of the values and potential of culture as an important resource for Europe's future development and internal coherence requires cultural policies to adapt to current challenges and embrace change. Such challenges include:

1. **Exploring new funding models for culture as a response to a changing financial context.**
As all European countries have experienced the impact of the financial crisis and the reduction in public budgets for culture, the challenge now is to diversify revenue sources and explore new opportunities for funding, including innovative partnership schemes combining public (national and regional), private and European sources as well as community-based models like crowd-funding.

2. **Promoting access to and participation in culture, including via digital means.** The need to ensure equal access to culture for all members of society with no discrimination, including reaching out to the "non-audiences" of today, has been gaining ground in the context of cultural democratisation strategies across Europe. Digital tools and platforms have changed the way cultural and creative content is produced, distributed and communicated and can be used not only to bring in new audiences but also turn the audience into active participants.
3. **Dealing with changing models of cultural governance.** In addition to the promotion of participatory approaches in the creation of and engagement with cultural content, fostering participation in the management of culture also remains a challenge. A participatory approach calls for an increased involvement of stakeholders from the public and private sphere at local and regional level, and a stronger engagement of civil society in the development and implementation of cultural policies.
4. **Better understanding and measuring of the impact of culture on society.** In response to a rising demand for evidence-based policies, it is important to measure the potential of culture in both qualitative and quantitative terms. In such a way, a convincing case for investing into culture can be made which will, in turn, help to justify public funding but also attract private investment.
5. **Promoting the cross-sectorial policy relevance of culture (mainstreaming).** An increased emphasis has been placed in recent years on the mainstreaming of culture, which goes hand-in-hand with the growing recognition of the cross-cutting character of cultural policies and the need to better integrate cultural policy objectives into other policy fields (e.g. regional development, social cohesion, education, trade, foreign affairs, environment, tourism, research and innovation).

Since 2002, the Council has used the Work Plans for Culture as a medium-term policy tool to set up priority areas in which it considered the work should be carried out at expert level. Since the next Work Plan for Culture will be prepared later this year, the Council has now an opportunity to reflect on the key challenges facing cultural policy today, including those mentioned above, and address them in the next Work Plan.

II. Council Work Plan for Culture

The current Council Work Plan for Culture (2011-2014)¹, based on strategic objectives set out in the European Agenda for Culture², is an instrument of cooperation among Member States, with the involvement of the Commission and the participation of civil society. It aims at addressing cultural challenges and problems of a European dimension in a more effective way than Member States would do on their own.

The current Work Plan is structured around six priority areas: a) cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, b) cultural and creative industries, c) skills and mobility, d) cultural heritage, e) culture in external relations, and f) culture statistics.

Under each of these priorities, specific activities have been carried out mainly by the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) working groups. These groups are composed of experts appointed by national ministries or relevant authorities who work on a voluntary basis to collect and exchange information, identify good practice examples and prepare guidelines or recommendations for future action.

In view of the preparation of the next Work Plan for the period beyond 2015, the evaluation of the current one has already started and is due to be completed in June 2014.

¹ OJ C 325, 2.12.2010, p. 1.

² Endorsed by the Council in its resolution of 16 November 2007 (OJ C 287, 29.11.2007, p. 1.).

During the Hellenic Presidency, Member States contributed to a questionnaire on the assessment of the current Work Plan, the results of which were discussed on several occasions by the relevant preparatory body of the Council. The findings of the questionnaire revealed that there is a consensus on the validity, relevance and effectiveness of the current Work Plan with the great majority of the respondents agreeing on its positive impact on cultural policy development at both national and EU level. With regard to the relevance of current priority areas for the forthcoming Work Plan, the top three choices in terms of national relevance proved to be cultural heritage, culture statistics and accessible and inclusive culture. However it is important to note that many delegations called for new topics to be included so that the priorities of the Work Plan for the next period take into account current challenges and address future developments as far as possible. Delegations also underlined the need for the next Work Plan to be more focused.

III. Policy debate

In the light of the above, the Hellenic Presidency wishes to invite Ministers to take part in a debate to be centered around the following question:

What is, in your opinion, the most important challenge for cultural policy-making at EU level for the coming years and how could the forthcoming Council Work Plan for Culture contribute most effectively to addressing this challenge?

In order to give all Ministers an opportunity to contribute, interventions will be restricted to **2 minutes** maximum.

The Presidency's aim is that Ministers engage in a constructive and interactive debate which will allow them to formulate some preliminary ideas about the strategic direction for the next Work Plan for Culture. Ideas generated by the debate could then be tested and further discussed at technical level, so as to feed into the preparation of the next Council Work Plan for Culture which will be carried out under the incoming Italian Presidency.