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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE
COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE
COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

Report on the implementation and relevance of the Work Plan for Culture 2011-2014

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1. INTRODUCTION

Culture and the diversity of cultural expression are among Europe's greatest strengths. As a source of values, identity and sense of citizenship, culture contributes to citizens' well-being and to social cohesion and inclusion. It is also a driver for economic growth, job creation and external trade.

In 2007, the European Commission proposed to shape European cooperation on culture around three strategic objectives in the European Agenda for Culture:

- promoting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue;
- promoting culture as a catalyst for creativity and growth; and
- promoting culture as a vital element in the EU's external relations.

This Agenda was endorsed by the Council, and its priorities were subsequently reflected in two Council work plans for culture.

In 2010, having come to the conclusion that the Council Work Plan for Culture 2008-2010 constituted a new and important stage in the development of Member State cooperation in the field of culture and had improved the coherence and visibility of European action in the field, the Council adopted the second work plan covering the years 2011-2014.

Firmly anchored in these three overarching objectives, this new work plan was also based on the reaffirmation by EU Member States that culture can contribute to achieving the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

When it adopted the current Work Plan for Culture in December 2010, the Council invited the Commission to present a final report on its implementation and relevance before the end of the first half of 2014, based on voluntary contributions from Member States. The report is intended to serve as a basis for preparing the next work plan.

This report first looks at progress made in implementing the work plan's six sectorial priority areas through the working methods foreseen by the Council, such as the open method of coordination (OMC). Then, drawing on an independent evaluation that assessed the OMC as a tool for implementing the Agenda for Culture¹ and contributions submitted by EU Member States to a 2014 Commission survey, the report presents the lessons learnt regarding the relevance of the work plan and its instruments. The final chapter makes recommendations for the steps to take regarding the content and working methods of the next Work Plan for Culture beyond 2014.

¹ 'Evaluation of the open method of coordination and the structured dialogue as the Agenda for Culture's implementing tools at EU level', by Ecorys, an international consultancy company (2013).

2. PROGRESS TOWARDS THE 2011-2014 WORK PLAN OBJECTIVES

The 2011-14 Work Plan for Culture sets out an ambitious framework for cooperation and specifies six priority areas for action towards the European Agenda for Culture objectives and the Europe 2020 strategy's objective of smart, inclusive and sustainable growth. These priority areas are:

- cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and accessible and inclusive culture;
- cultural and creative industries;
- skills and mobility;
- cultural heritage, including the mobility of collections;
- culture in external relations; and
- culture statistics.

The following section looks at the progress made in implementing the key actions foreseen in the work plan for each of these six sectorial priorities.

2.1 Cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, and accessible and inclusive culture

Intercultural dialogue is a key objective of the European Agenda for Culture; in addition, intercultural dialogue and participation in cultural activities can strengthen social cohesion and contribute to inclusive growth.

Member State experts first focused on the role of publicly funded cultural institutions in promoting access to culture, working through the OMC. Their analysis of more than 80 policies and practices — gathered together in a good-practice manual that was published in 2013² — led them to conclude that the issue of access is also an issue of lack of public demand and that 'audience development' is, therefore, to be encouraged.

Building on these conclusions, a second OMC expert group focused on policies and good practices for public art and cultural institutions as facilitators of exchanges among cultures and between social groups. It concluded that cultural institutions should adapt their programming (e.g. theatrical shows, exhibits displayed, etc.) so as to ensure that it is relevant to a diverse audience. They should also:

- have staff that understand diverse needs;
- make efforts to reach out to new audiences; and
- create spaces for encounters within institutions.³

Given that addressing school-age children and young people is the most obvious way to build future audiences, a third OMC working group is currently focusing on developing cultural awareness and expression through education at all levels.⁴

² http://ec.europa.eu/culture/policy/strategic-framework/documents/omc-report-access-to-culture_en.pdf

³ http://ec.europa.eu/culture/library/reports/201405-omc-diversity-dialogue_en.pdf

2.2 Cultural and creative sectors

The cultural and creative sectors (CCSs) are key providers of cultural diversity and account for 4.5 % of EU GDP. In recognition of the fact that they can help achieve the Europe 2020 strategy's objective of smart and sustainable growth, the CCSs are the work plan's second priority. The work plan provides for a wide range of actions to be implemented by the Commission and OMC groups.

In 2012, the Commission published a comprehensive strategy to promote the EU's cultural and creative sectors in jobs and growth,⁵ which built on responses to the 2010 Green Paper on 'unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries'.⁶ The strategy invited Member States to develop new governance models at national and regional level, based on cooperation between different sectors and policies, to fully unleash the potential of CCSs and help them respond to the challenges raised by globalisation and digitisation.

The strategy also paved the way for increased cooperation in the field of the CCSs between relevant initiatives of different Commission departments. For example, the European Creative Industries Alliance, which combined policy learning and testing models on accessing finance and innovation, was invited to share its results with experts in the relevant OMC groups.

Three OMC groups worked on this priority area. Two OMC groups produced best practice reports, one on the strategic use of structural funds to make best use of the CCSs' potential (2012),⁷ and one on CCS export support and internationalisation strategies (2014).⁸ Both reports have become useful tools for policy makers at national and regional level, and are frequently quoted reference documents.

The third OMC working group is focused on existing funding schemes for the CCSs in EU Member States. This group was launched in 2014 and will produce a good-practice report on financial engineering for SMEs in the CCSs by the end of 2014. Like the other OMC groups, it will thus help build a body of policy recommendations that can help to design policies which strengthen the CCSs' contribution to smart, sustainable growth.

2.3 Skills and mobility

When they travel and work within the EU, artists help create a common European cultural area. Being mobile also increases their opportunities to broaden their audiences, advance their careers, and more generally contribute to creativity and innovation.

In 2012, to contribute improving the policy framework, an OMC working group issued a report providing concise and practical advice to policy makers, entitled 'building a strong framework for artists' mobility: five key principles'.⁹ Another OMC working group, launched in 2013, will deliver a good-practice manual on artists' residencies by the end of 2014.

⁴ This OMC group is expected to finish in 2015.

⁵ COM(2012) 537

⁶ COM(2010) 183

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/culture/policy/strategic-framework/documents/structural-funds-handbook_en.pdf

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/culture/library/reports/eac-omc-executive-summary-ccs-strategies_en.pdf

⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/culture/policy/strategic-framework/documents/omc-report-mobility-of-artists_en.pdf

Artists moving around the EU encounter many challenges, including a lack of comprehensive information on administrative issues like visas and social security. Therefore, as part of the work plan, an expert group convened by the Commission produced common standards for information and advice services for artists and culture professionals seeking to be more mobile.¹⁰ This set of standards can now be used by Member States to create or revise existing information portals. This is the case in Germany and Austria, for example.

However, even when the information is available, rules pertaining to visas, social security and cross border taxation remain complex, particularly for artists who work on short-term postings and under various employment statuses across borders. This is why, as part of the work plan, the Commission organised two seminars in 2013 and 2014, bringing together relevant staff from the Commission, EU Member States and the cultural sector. Their objective was to facilitate the exchange of good practice and put forward a number of recommendations. These include, for example, establishing more multi-lingual information portals in the Member States or the need for improved coordination between administrations and greater compliance with the most recent EU legislation on social security coordination.

At the EU-level, the Commission adopted on 1 April 2014 a "visa package", which includes a new type of "Touring visa" that would allow legitimate non-EU nationals entering the Schengen area to circulate in it for up to 1 year¹¹. This would apply for instance, to live-performing and circus artists. On taxes, the expert group set up by the Commission, in which the live performance sector will be represented, will contribute to the identification of tax problems facing individuals who are active across borders within the EU, as well as of good practices.

This priority area also focused on skills. Topics tackled included promoting creative partnerships, identifying and developing skills through culture sector councils, and promoting media literacy. In 2013, an OMC group produced a policy handbook¹² identifying and modelling successful creative partnerships and practices, to encourage interaction between the cultural and creative sectors and other sectors such as education and training, as well as business. The group found that creative partnerships are high-impact, low-cost tools which can help to develop attitudes that are essential for innovation and creativity and may help prevent or remedy early school leaving.

2.4 Cultural heritage, including mobility of collections

Europe's cultural heritage is much more than a repository of knowledge; it is also a shared resource, and a common good. Heritage makes a major contribution to defining the identity of European citizens and is a resource for social cohesion and economic development. It can therefore contribute to meeting the Europe 2020 strategy's objectives.

In 2012, an OMC group examined ways to simplify the process of lending and borrowing cultural objects between EU Member States. It produced practical recommendations and a toolkit containing guidelines for introducing:

- state indemnity schemes, shared liability and risk assessment;

¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/culture/library/publications/mobility-info-standards_en.pdf

¹¹ Without, however, staying in one Member State for more than 90 days in any 180-day period.

¹² http://ec.europa.eu/culture/library/reports/creative-partnerships_en.pdf

- a valuation checklist;
- best practices in risk assessment and in reducing transport costs; and
- a multilingual glossary.

To complete this work, comparative research was conducted to analyse systems for valuing works of art for insurance, state indemnity, and shared liability purposes.¹³

Digitisation was another key area of work, with a focus on film heritage and Europeana, Europe's digital library and archive.¹⁴ In 2011, the Commission adopted a recommendation on digital preservation and the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material. It asked Member States to step up their efforts and involve the private sector more in digitising cultural material. For its part, the Commission included Europeana as one of the digital service infrastructures eligible for support under the Connecting Europe Facility. The Commission also ensured the accessibility of the interface and the contents of Europeana for persons with disabilities.

Finally, an ad-hoc expert group, convened by the Commission, looked into the feasibility of producing European guidelines and a code of ethics on due diligence in the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural goods. The group suggested waiting until the revised Directive 93/7/EEC¹⁵ on the return of cultural objects unlawfully removed from the territory of a Member State is adopted before taking further action.

As a means of accompanying and further advancing this work, the Commission presented in June 2014 a policy document calling for stronger cooperation at EU level, allowing for an integrated approach that could help the European heritage sector face current challenges, and inviting heritage stakeholders to fully seize the opportunities of EU funding programmes in place.¹⁶

2.5 Culture in EU external relations

The Agenda for Culture identified culture as a vital element of the EU's external relations. The Work Plan provided for several activities in this field, such as organising joint informal meetings between senior officials of Ministries of Culture and of Foreign Affairs. These activities would also support the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy and the Agenda for Culture.

Several such meetings were organised by EU Presidencies and helped develop a strategic approach to culture in EU external relations. In addition, in 2012 the Commission convened an expert group to look into this area. They produced a set of recommendations and principles for developing a strategic approach to culture in EU external relations, taking China as a test case. EU culture ministers gave their support to this approach at a policy debate in May 2013.

¹³ http://ec.europa.eu/culture/policy/strategic-framework/documents/omc-report-mobility-of-collections_en.pdf; http://ec.europa.eu/culture/policy/strategic-framework/documents/toolkit-mobility-of-collections_en.pdf

¹⁴ <http://www.europeana.eu/>

¹⁵ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31993L0007:en:HTML>

¹⁶ Commission Communication 'Towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe' (COM) 2014 477 final.

The ratification and objectives of the 2005 UNESCO convention on protecting and promoting the diversity of cultural expression were promoted in relations with third countries, such as at the Tbilisi ministerial conference held in June 2013¹⁷ or through the joint declarations on culture signed with the EU's strategic partners.¹⁸

2.6 Culture statistics

Comparable statistics on culture's contribution to the economy and social cohesion are essential for evidence-based policies. However, no real European system for cultural statistics is in place. The only data that can be used are those produced by Member States and these data are extremely difficult to compare with one another due, inter alia, to differences in the definition of the cultural field and its boundaries. In May 2012, the 'ESSnet culture' project¹⁹ proposed a methodological framework for producing comparable cultural data across the EU. Implementing this will require further work by Eurostat and help from national statistical offices. In this respect work to develop and produce a set of regular European statistics on culture has been initiated at Eurostat and is expected to produce results starting in 2015. In 2011, Eurostat also published a new edition of its pocket book on cultural statistics.²⁰

The work plan also asked the Commission to improve statistics on the mobility of artists. However, a Commission-convened expert group concluded that methodological problems prevented them from developing a reliable sampling approach to measuring the mobility of artists and culture professionals.

3. WORKING METHODS

The tools and working methods for implementing the work plan included working groups of Member State experts holding OMC meetings, expert groups convened by the Commission, senior official meetings organised by EU Presidencies, studies, and reports.

3.1 The open method of coordination (OMC)

The OMC is a flexible, non-binding framework to structure cooperation between Member States in the field of culture which is organised around strategic objectives and fostering exchanges of best practice. The OMC was the most frequently used method of producing output under the 2011-14 Work Plan.

On average, the groups were composed of 25 experts, representing an equivalent number of Member States. The experts had diverse backgrounds, representing national ministries, academia and civil society.

All members of the OMC groups were invited to widely disseminate their results, at both national and regional levels. Plans to disseminate the results, introduced upon the suggestion of the Commission, proved useful. The Commission also played an active role in sharing results at European level and at relevant conferences such as the 2011 and 2013 European Culture Forums.

¹⁷ At the Eastern Partnership ministerial conference on culture held in Georgia in June 2013, Eastern partners confirmed their commitment to fully implementing the convention.

¹⁸ For example, Brazil, China, and Mexico.

¹⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/culture/library/reports/ess-net-report_en.pdf

²⁰ http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-32-10-374/EN/KS-32-10-374-EN.PDF

3.2 Structured dialogue with civil society

The Council conclusions adopting the work plan asked the Commission and Member States to regularly consult and inform stakeholders on progress and results achieved by implementing the work plan.

The Commission regularly invited the platform for intercultural Europe, the platform on access to culture, and the platform on the cultural and creative industries to attend OMC meetings. These platforms are part of the structured dialogue that the Commission has been conducting with civil society since 2008.

Some Member States, like Austria, have organised seminars to publicise the results of the OMC to relevant stakeholders.

3.3 Information to third countries

Candidate countries, members of the European Free Trade Association and other countries participating in the EU's Culture programme were kept informed of work carried out under the work plan.

4. LESSONS LEARNT

4.1 Relevance and impact of the 2011-2014 work plan

In 2013, the Commission requested an external evaluation report²¹ to look at the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the OMC as a tool for the implementation of the European Agenda for Culture and the Work Plan for Culture.

The report concluded that the range of activities undertaken and the level of participation and engagement generated demonstrated that the OMC process supported delivery of the Agenda for Culture's policy objectives.

It highlighted that, overall, the themes and topics covered by both generations²² of the OMC process have proved equally relevant to policy-making at national and EU level and that the working groups were meeting demand for mutual learning opportunities. The evidence suggested a two-fold need is being met: to share and learn about practices in other countries, and to learn about and participate in the development of EU policies in areas of particular relevance to national interests.

Participation in OMC meetings was satisfactory overall. The mixture of officials, practitioners and external experts strengthened the quality of the activities carried out. The evaluators pointed out that one of the most important factors to consider in terms of the profile of participants concerns individuals' connectivity to key decision-makers in their home country (e.g. in Ministries).

²¹ 'Evaluation of the open method of coordination and the structured dialogue as the Agenda for Culture's implementing tools at EU level', by Ecorys, an international consultancy company

²² 2008-2010, and 2011-2014

The evaluators concluded that the benefits and impacts of the OMC mainly related to mutual learning, best practice exchanges, and building European knowledge networks on specific cultural topics. They considered that, while it was difficult to gauge the extent of the OMC's overall impact, some activities and outputs have indeed fed into national policies and that a proportion of these results appeared to be directly attributable to the OMC.

The evaluators also noted that there was potential to achieve greater impact, through stronger connections with and better information-sharing channels between OMC participants and key decision-makers at national level.

In 2014, the Commission conducted a survey in which all EU Member States participated. It showed that 86% of Member States considered that the work plan has focused on the right priorities, and 85% were of the opinion that their implementation had generally met their government's expectations. In addition, 75% agreed that the work plan had had a positive impact on the cultural sector in their country, and that it was relevant to cultural policy *development* there. A similar number of respondents (72%) stated that the work plan was relevant for *implementing* cultural policy in their country; 21% considered that this was not the case.

Member States expressed a slightly more mixed opinion on the role played by the work plan on coordinating cultural policy at EU level, with 67% considering that coordination had improved, and 25% considering that it had not. Similarly, 68% agreed that the work plan had led to better recognition of culture's contribution to achieving the overall goals of the Europe 2020 strategy, while 18% did not share this view. 65% agreed that the work plan improved coordination between the EU and cultural stakeholders; only 10% stated that this was not the case.

4.2. Relevance and impact of tools and working methods

86% of the Member States considered that the work plan has used the right structures and working methods.

The external evaluators analysed a total of ten OMC groups. They concluded that the outputs of the second OMC generation (2011-14) were seen as a marked improvement, with a focus on issuing more practical material such as guides, handbooks, tools, etc. They noted that there was a risk that time pressure might negatively affect output quality in future and recommended possibly extending the duration (and/or number of meetings) of the OMC working group cycle.

The evaluators noted that, overall, there was widespread support for the way the OMC currently works, a result confirmed by the Commission's survey of Member States, where 93% had a positive view of the OMC performance and its role in implementing the work plan. The evaluators found that the organisation and management of the OMC process had been efficient and the support offered by the Commission was considered very positive.

The evaluators suggested that more study visits as part of the OMC process would potentially further increase interaction and engagement. They also suggested adopting a more thorough, evidence-based approach in order to further improve the quality of results.

The evaluators noted that interaction between the OMC working groups and the structured dialogue process involving civil society had been limited and that there were potential benefits of closer integration. The evaluators also noted that rigidity and unnecessary

institutionalisation should be avoided and that greater flexibility should be introduced where possible. This would allow themes for discussion to be adjusted on the basis of the participants' needs and participation to be more flexible, giving all interested organisations the chance to contribute to the dialogue.

5. TOWARDS A NEW WORK PLAN FOR CULTURE

5.1 Duration and working methods

According to the Commission's 2014 survey, 68% of EU Member States would like the new culture work plan to cover four years and 73% would like to see a mid-term evaluation.

The Commission would therefore propose that the new work plan cover four years from 2015 and be divided into two two-year phases. In 2016, an in-depth mid-term review would allow the work plan to be amended in light of new challenges or to return to issues that were worked on under previous work plans, but which were not immediate priorities in 2015. Each phase should see a maximum of four OMC expert groups running in parallel, allowing the Commission to effectively support the process and the Council and Presidencies to make use of the work plan's outcomes. Other potential improvements will be examined when planning the work plan to run from 2015.

5.2. Challenges to be addressed and thematic priorities

A policy debate was held at the May 2014 Council meeting to prepare the new Council Work Plan for Culture. EU Culture Ministers identified a number of challenges to be addressed by European cooperation in the field of culture:

- the impact of the digital shift on culture and cultural operators ;
- exploring new funding models for culture in response to a changing financial context;
- promoting access to and participation in culture, including via digital means;
- dealing with changing models of cultural governance;
- better understanding and measurement of the impact of culture; and
- promoting culture's cross-sectorial policy relevance ('mainstreaming').

Ministers confirmed their interest in cultural heritage and in developing the cultural and creative sectors. They also agreed that safeguarding cultural diversity was a key reason to better coordinate action. The need to start preparing for the next phase of the European Structural and Investment Funds was also highlighted.

These areas for action are fully in line with the overarching objectives of the European Agenda for Culture and the Europe 2020 strategy. A streamlined work plan, focused on a number of limited, but high level, priorities would make it possible to deliver results with a clearer added value. The Commission would therefore recommend that the new work plan cover the following priority areas:

- supporting cultural diversity and access to culture;
- cultural heritage;

- promoting innovation by and within the cultural and creative sectors, including the digital ; and
- improving governance and mainstreaming of culture.

These proposals, amongst others, will be discussed when drawing up the next work plan.

5.3 Working methods

The open method of coordination (OMC)

While Member States are satisfied with the way the OMC operated, a number of small improvements may be made to the way it functions, arising from the independent external evaluation and the Commission's survey. Each OMC process should have well-defined, practical outputs and, where possible, the Commission will commission research to support their work, so as to strengthen the evidence base. The duration of the OMC working groups should be slightly extended from one and a half years to two years, with a total of six meetings. Peer learning could be improved by means of study visits to be introduced during the OMC.

Structured dialogue with civil society

In line with recommendations from the external evaluators, the Commission intends to continue holding a regular dialogue with civil society, though it will amend the process to allow for more open, inclusive and flexible civil society contributions. The Commission will put in place a renewed structured dialogue which will focus on specific initiatives and themes linked to those in the new Work Plan, with minimal support for administrative functions. Once in place, the renewed structured dialogue and its participants will provide expertise that could be shared with the relevant OMC expert groups.

The Commission also intends to continue using the biennial European Culture Forums to publicise the work plan's results to European stakeholders.

5.4 Using results at national and European levels

While the OMC has proven a good framework for networking and mutual learning among EU administrations, channelling expert groups' recommendations into policy making at national and European level remains a challenge. To address this issue, disseminating results at regional, national and European level must be one of the new work plan's priorities. Holding regular discussions about the OMC findings with Member States and the Commission's Directors-General for culture may also help with this.

Some Member States have also proposed strengthening the link between the EU's political priorities and the work plan's outputs. This could be done by introducing relevant OMC conclusions to the agenda of Council meetings and ensuring that the work plan priorities are more clearly integrated with priorities for the Presidency trios.

6. CONCLUSION

The European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions are invited to take note of this report.

The Council is invited to take this report as a basis for preparing the next EU Work Plan for Culture, and to consider the proposals on challenges to be addressed and revised work arrangements that this report has set out.