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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
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Subject:	The way ahead: long-term vision for the contribution of culture to the EU after 2020 - <i>Policy debate</i> (<i>Public debate in accordance with Article 8(2) of the Council's Rules of Procedure</i>) [<i>proposed by the Presidency</i>]

Following consultation of the Cultural Affairs Committee, the Presidency has prepared the attached discussion paper, which is submitted as the basis for the policy debate at the EYCS Council on 23 May 2018.

The way ahead: long term vision for the contribution of culture to the EU after 2020***Presidency discussion paper******Foreword***

Europe is a community of diverse cultures based on shared values. Culture is a common good which acquires an increasing significance for contemporary Europe, in intrinsic cultural, societal and economic terms. Culture is sparking off innovations in other sectors by unlocking creative thinking. Culture can influence and change society, but also culture can transform itself under the influences and impetus coming from the outside. Culture is a dynamic element that feeds identity, brings trust and helps people understand and embrace changes around them. In this way culture is always driver of change and this is how, in fact, it contributes to the EU project.

Consequences of the economic and social crisis

With the onset of the financial crisis, and the threats to the economic stability of the EU that came in its wake, various forms of regionalism, nationalism, and populism have appeared, questioning the nature of European Union and European identity and raising doubts on the prospects of a common European future. This situation calls for urgent actions to strengthen the ties between and within our societies. Undoubtedly, culture and heritage have the potential to be one of the driving forces of this process.

Political development

Today culture is highlighted on the EU's political agenda. In the Rome Declaration of 25 March 2017, the Leaders of both Member States and their EU institutions proclaimed a vision of a "Union where citizens have new opportunities for cultural and social development" which "preserves our cultural heritage and promotes cultural diversity". In addition, the European Council in its conclusions of 14 December 2017 called on Member States, the Council and the Commission, in line with their respective competences, to take work forward with a view to increasing awareness of the social and economic importance of culture and cultural heritage.

Around the same time, on 17 November 2017, the Commission adopted a Communication intended as a contribution to the EU Leaders' meeting in Gothenburg, Sweden. In this document, the Commission expressed its intention to revamp and strengthen the European Agenda for Culture, based on the cultural mainstreaming principle of the Treaty, to promote the cultural dimension of the Union, with particular emphasis on a European identity through culture and values. In the same document, the Commission stated its intention to launch by 2020 a #Digital4Culture strategy aimed at using digital potential to enhance the positive economic and societal effects of culture.

In the recent years, the Council of the EU adopted several conclusions aiming to highlight the role of culture as a strategic resource for a sustainable Europe. The Bulgarian Presidency has also made its contribution to create beneficial political conditions for strengthening the social and economic role of culture, particularly through the focus on the need to bring cultural heritage to the fore across policies in the EU.

The draft Conclusions (due for adoption on 23 May 2018) on this topic reaffirm the value of good cooperation at EU level, confirm the importance of mainstreaming cultural heritage into other sectoral policies and underline the cultural heritage of Europe as being among the EU's political priorities. They also invite Member States to take the opportunity of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 to build, together with the Commission, a shared and comprehensive strategic vision for cultural heritage and ensure the Year's legacy by developing concrete actions.

Financial support for culture

To be able to fulfil this new role and to meet these expectations with concrete actions, the cultural and creative sectors have to be provided with the relevant political and financial support by different sources. The aim is to ensure a more prominent place for culture, cultural heritage and the cultural and creative sectors in the future funding instruments. It is, therefore, of vital importance to enhance the process of mainstreaming culture in the other sectoral policies, which would result in mutual benefits for both culture and the relevant sector.

As far as the future financial support for culture at EU level is concerned, the new Multiannual Financial Framework, a proposal for which will be presented soon, will identify the priority areas for the future 7-year period. Culture should feature among the MFF priority areas due to the important contribution that it makes to European society, economy, cohesion and democracy. Naturally, in order to deliver on these ambitious goals, appropriate funding of cultural policies and activities and cultural infrastructure has to be provided.

Culture currently obtains significantly greater support from instruments of other policies than through the specific instrument (the Creative Europe programme 2014-2020). However, both ways of financing are important and should be seen as complementing each other. While other policy instruments provide support mainly to investment and infrastructure activities, the sector specific programme covering culture provides support mostly to projects which contribute to strengthening the intrinsic value of culture as a strategic resource for innovation, sustainable development and social cohesion.

Conclusion

Developments over recent years have raised important questions about the EU's future direction. At the same time, we are under no illusions – culture cannot alone offer a solution to all our problems. But at this moment, when Europeans have a need to validate their sense of belonging to the European Union, it would be beneficial to use and to mobilise the cohesive force of European cultures.

In this context, the Presidency would like to invite Ministers to focus their interventions on the following questions:

- 1. In the context of the next MFF, what actions at EU level could we undertake to raise a level of ambition regarding the current actions in the cultural field, so that culture becomes a real driver of change in the EU after 2020?**

- 2. Do you think that there should be a targeted program in the field of culture that would, inter alia, focus on culture and creativity and their prominence in contemporary society with a view to Europe's future?**