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European Union

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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council

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Subject: Council conclusions on an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations and a framework for action

Delegations will find attached the Conclusions on an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations and a framework for action, as adopted by the Council (Foreign Affairs) at its meeting on 8 April 2019.

Council conclusions on an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations and a framework for action

The Council of the European Union,

BUILDING UPON:

1. the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions of 2005¹;
2. the Council conclusions of 23 May 2017 on an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations²;
3. the New European Consensus on Development: 'Our world, our dignity, our future' of 7 June 2017³;
4. the Council conclusions of 23 May 2018 on the need to bring cultural heritage to the fore across policies in the EU⁴;
5. the Council conclusions of 27 November 2018 on the Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022⁵;

WELCOMING

6. the joint communication from the European Commission and the High Representative 'Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations' of 2016;

¹ <https://en.unesco.org/creativity/convention>

² OJ C 189, 15.6.2017, p. 38.

³ OJ C 210, 30.6.2017, p. 1.

⁴ OJ C 196, 8.6.2018, p. 20.

⁵ OJ C 460, 21.12.2018, p. 12.

7. the communication from the Commission 'A New European Agenda for Culture' of 2018;

TAKING NOTE OF

1. the Report on the current state of the partnership between EU National Institutes for culture (EUNIC) clusters and EU delegations of July 2018 and its recommendations⁶;
2. the launching of the 'European Houses of Culture' project, aimed at testing and implementing innovative models of collaboration between European actors and local stakeholders in non-EU countries⁷;

ACKNOWLEDGING THAT

1. the foreign policy of the European Union is based on the development of mutual political solidarity among Member States, the identification of questions of general interest and the achievement of an ever-increasing degree of convergence of Member States' actions;
2. Union action in the area of culture is based on the EU's competence to carry out actions to support, coordinate or supplement actions of Member States;
3. cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue are an integral part of the values of the European Union and play an important role in the promotion of human rights, artistic freedom, respect and tolerance towards others, mutual understanding, conflict prevention, reconciliation and counter-extremism and contribute to democratisation, good governance and more peaceful societies;
4. being first and foremost a value in its own right, culture has positive socio-economic effects, it improves the quality of life, and its positive role in external relations has gained increased recognition;

⁶ <https://www.eunicglobal.eu/news/report-on-the-current-state-of-the-partnership-between-eunic-clusters-and-eu-delegations>

⁷ <https://www.eunicglobal.eu/european-houses-of-culture>

AIMING TO

1. strengthen the effectiveness and impact of EU foreign policy by integrating international cultural relations in the range of its foreign policy instruments, especially with a long-term perspective;
2. improve the coherence of EU positions and actions at multilateral level in order to increase the effectiveness of the EU as a cohesive force in international relations, including by removing obstacles for all relevant stakeholders to operate effectively;
3. foster mutual learning, cross-cultural understanding and trust between the EU and its partners in external relations, while empowering local cultural sectors as engines for inclusive and sustainable development, social and cultural progress, and fostering cultural diversity, innovation and economic resilience;
4. mutually reinforce the external dimensions of the cultural policies, programmes and projects as well as cultural and creative dimension of international relations of the EU and its Member States by strengthening cross-sectoral cooperation between and within Union institutions and Member States;
5. seek synergies and complementarity between the activities undertaken by the EU and its Member States in third countries, including their diplomatic and consular representations and the EUNIC network;

WITH DUE REGARD FOR

1. the respective spheres of competence of Member States, the Commission and the EEAS, as well as the principles of subsidiarity and complementarity;

RESPECTING

1. cultural diversity, artistic freedom and the independence of the cultural sector;

RECOGNISING THE NEED FOR

1. a cross-cutting approach to culture that includes cultural and creative industries, arts, science, education, tourism and cultural heritage, etc.;
2. continuing the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural goods;
3. inclusiveness: the involvement of Member States in third countries should be encouraged and facilitated, including where they have no diplomatic and consular representations;
4. a new spirit of dialogue, mutual understanding and learning, which entails the cooperation with local stakeholders and civil society at all levels (planning, design, implementation) and on an equal footing, aiming at bottom-up and people-to-people approach, local empowerment, participation and co-creation;
5. a decentralised approach, requiring policies and projects adapted to local context, needs and aspirations;
6. explaining and awareness raising, including on the respective roles and mutual expectations of EU institutions and Member States, along with their diplomatic and consular representations, cultural institutes and networks such as EUNIC, as well as other stakeholders;
7. flexibility when designing financing and administrative tools, in order to support also small and medium-sized projects and match local capacities;

THEREFORE ESTABLISHES THE FOLLOWING FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION BY

INVITING THE MEMBER STATES TO:

1. enhance, where appropriate, collaboration between the relevant ministries, particularly ministries of culture and foreign affairs;

2. where relevant, develop further existing networks for knowledge and competence development and encourage exchange between academia and practitioners in the field of international cultural relations;
3. make use, when holding the Presidency of the Council of the EU, of the informal meetings of senior officials in ministries of culture and senior officials for culture in ministries of foreign affairs to analyse and accompany the implementation of this strategic approach, in addition to meetings of the Council and its relevant geographic and thematic preparatory bodies, which remain the principal authority for political guidance, decision shaping and decision taking;
4. strengthen their participation in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of common local cultural strategies and projects in third countries. EUNIC and the cooperation between diplomatic and consular representations could contribute to the achievement of this objective;

CALLING ON THE COMMISSION AND THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNION FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY POLICY TO:

1. embed the principles and objectives of this strategic approach and strengthen collaboration with relevant Council bodies in the design and implementation of existing and future thematic and geographic frameworks, such as in the context of enlargement, development and ENP countries or strategic partners;
2. ensure the appropriate expertise in the field of cultural relations;
3. designate 'cultural focal points' and ensure adequate capacities for culture in EU delegations;
4. establish a single web contact point with access to information on EU policies, programmes and actions undertaken by the Commission and EEAS regarding international cultural relations;

5. include the aspect of international cultural relations, where appropriate, in the regular reporting on foreign policy actions and programmes, including in the context of the Global Strategy;

CALLING ON THE MEMBER STATES, THE COMMISSION AND THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNION FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY POLICY, WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE SPHERES OF COMPETENCE AND WITH DUE REGARD FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY AND COMPLEMENTARITY, TO:

1. strengthen coordination, synergies and strategic guidance on the best way to promote international cultural relations, in particular through regular engagement of the Council and its relevant preparatory bodies and dedicated expert groups;
2. further strengthen the role of culture in policies and programmes within the framework of external relations, including under the CSFP;
3. promote cooperation along the objectives of this strategic approach with third countries and relevant international organisations, in particular UNESCO and the Council of Europe;
4. increase efforts to reach common EU positions in multilateral fora and networks and, where appropriate, speak with one voice on issues having an impact on international cultural relations;
5. support efforts to strengthen the role of culture as a horizontal enabler for Sustainable Development Goals;
6. facilitate, through the appropriate institutional and legal frameworks and support measures, the mobility of artists and cultural professionals between the EU and third countries;
7. develop partnerships with international organisations and institutions that promote the role of culture and cultural heritage in bringing peace to conflict and post-conflict areas;

8. put particular effort into the implementation of common projects and joint actions in third countries based on a common strategic vision developed at local level by the Member States, their diplomatic and consular representations, their cultural institutes, EUNIC, EU delegations and local stakeholders; adequate frameworks and instruments should be developed for that purpose;
9. make better use of existing fora, mechanisms, networks and databases for sharing information and exchanging good practices, including the Cultural Diplomacy Platform.

Main political references

- Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict of 1954;
- UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property of 1970;
- UNESCO Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of 1972;
- UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of 2003;
- UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions of 2005;
- United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of 2015;
- Council of Europe Conventions on culture, architectural heritage, archaeological heritage, value of cultural heritage for society and landscape;
- Council conclusions of 20 November 2008 on the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue in the external relations of the Union and its Member States;
- Council conclusions of 24 November 2015 on culture in the EU's external relations with a focus on culture in development cooperation;
- Council conclusions of 17 October 2016 on the Global Strategy on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy