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INFORMATION NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Council
Subject:	Towards a better protection of Europe's cultural heritage - <i>Information from the Romanian delegation</i>

Delegations will find attached an information note from the Romanian delegation on the above subject, which has been put on the agenda under 'Any other business' of the next Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting on 15-16 May 2023.

Note from the Romanian delegation**Towards a better protection of Europe's cultural heritage**

Romania would like to use the opportunity of the EYCS Council on 15 -16 May 2023 to invite the Member States and the Commission to reflect on the possibility of establishing a new Cultural Heritage Fund that would support the conservation, protection and restoration of our cultural heritage, as one of the most important assets to be passed on to future generations.

Cultural heritage is a key aspect of our national identities, fostering, at the same time, a common European identity based on a shared history and joint values.

The ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine highlighted the need to take further steps to safeguard cultural heritage and intensify the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural goods. At times like this when cultural artefacts and monuments are being destroyed, we recognise more than ever the need to protect our identity and cultural richness.

Significant steps have been already taken at EU level.

The EU Work Plan for Culture (2023 -2026), adopted in November 2022, highlights cultural heritage as an important priority.

In terms of EU funding instruments, some Member States are currently exploiting the potential of the Recovery and Resilience Facility, especially in relation to the green and digital transitions. Cohesion policy funds can also provide significant support for cultural heritage projects. Cross-border cooperation is enabled by several EU programmes, including Creative Europe, Erasmus + or Horizon Europe, which support, among other things, the collaborative cloud for cultural heritage, aimed at safeguarding European cultural treasures through a secure digital infrastructure, as well as the Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) that will deliver relevant innovative solutions for the benefit of the sector. Last but not least, EU loans and guarantees can leverage the available funding.

However, these resources should be reinforced and further complemented by new instruments, to address the real needs of the sector.

In order to put in place an integrated strategy for all Member States, with due attention to geographical balance, we need to continue our joint actions. It is therefore our common duty to better recognise heritage as an important priority of the European political agenda by taking a longer-term view and by mobilising financial resources to invest in the present as well as in the future and, at the same time, to drive cohesion, civic empowerment, and urban and regional development.

We believe that a **Cultural Heritage Fund** could be created through a mixed scheme, combining private and public resources in a pan-European effort.

1. Contributions from the private sector

Private contributions should be better used to ensure stable revenues for the restauration and preservation of cultural heritage.

The European Court of Auditors recommended in its report 8/2020 that the European Commission encourage the use of private funds to safeguard Europe's cultural heritage and that it explore, in coordination with the Member States, the possibility of developing a scheme that builds on private sources of funding for heritage sites to complement public resources. However, this recommendation, supported by several Member States, has not yet been put into practice. We should therefore continue our efforts to develop a scheme building on private funding, as recommended by the European Court of Auditors in 2020.

2. Voluntary contributions of Member States

Voluntary contributions from national budgets could ensure complementary monetary flows, highlighting our commitment to further protect, conserve and revitalise our cultural heritage.

3. The allocation of new EU resources

A dedicated line for cultural heritage could also be foreseen in the context of the mid-term revision of the multiannual financial framework 2021- 2027. Re-designed and upscaled funds for cultural heritage at EU level are required to prompt the deployment of national innovative solutions.

Thus, the newly established Fund would enable a more coherent cross-sectoral approach, targeting resources towards the most urgent needs. The fund could also be used for local cultural projects, in connection with heritage, thus highlighting Europe's cultural and linguistic diversity.

We would therefore like to invite delegations to reflect on the possibility of establishing a new Cultural Heritage Fund as a vector for resilience and sustainable development.
