



Council of the  
European Union

162610/EU XXVII. GP  
Eingelangt am 20/11/23

Brussels, 20 November 2023  
(OR. en)

15705/23

CULT 164  
SAN 684  
SOC 808  
SUSTDEV 148  
JEUN 268  
SPORT 57  
EMPL 582  
RECH 522

#### NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
No. prev. doc.:	15505/23
Subject:	Open Method of Coordination (OMC) Group of Member States' experts on culture and health - <i>Mandate</i>

Delegations will find attached the mandate for the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) Group of Member States' experts on Culture and Health, as approved by the Cultural Affairs Committee (CAC) on 17 November 2023.

**Open Method of Coordination (OMC) Group of Member States' experts on culture and health set up under the EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026**

**Priority B: 'Culture for the people: enhancing cultural participation and the role of culture in society'**

**- Mandate –**

**A. BACKGROUND**

1. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health problems affected around 84 million people in the EU (one in six people), at a cost of EUR 600 billion or more than 4% of GDP<sup>1</sup>, with significant regional, social, gender and age inequalities. When it comes to the workplace, 27% of workers have reported experiencing work-related stress, depression, or anxiety during the previous twelve months, which increases the chances of absenteeism with serious impact on workers' lives and business organisation. The cost of non-action on mental health is already significant and unfortunately, it is forecasted to rise even more, in line with global stressors. Already in 2019, more than 7% of people in the EU suffered from depression and 13% felt lonely most of the time<sup>2</sup>. Made even worse due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the mental health crisis is just one of the many other EU challenges related to health and well-being, to which can be added: an aging population, the association between ill health and patterns of inequality, ongoing changes to labour markets and work patterns, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> [Health at a Glance: Europe 2018](#).

<sup>2</sup> [Eurostat News - Eurostat \(europa.eu\)](#).

2. In this context, culture can improve health and well-being on the individual and community level, particularly since existing scientific research and empirical evidence prove its benefits and cost-effectiveness in supporting health policies. While the intrinsic value of culture remains at the centre of the work in this area as one of the defining characteristics of our humanity, cultural interventions can be solutions, either in their own right - particularly in the promotion of good health or prevention of ill-health - or complementary to bio-medical interventions. This is valid at the individual and community level, fostering social cohesion and social inclusion.
3. The EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026<sup>3</sup>, under priority B ‘Culture for the people: enhancing cultural participation and the role of culture in society’<sup>4</sup>, provides for the creation of a short-term Open Method of Coordination (OMC) group of Member States’ experts focusing on culture and health. The Work Plan notes that participation in culture and cultural heritage, creativity and the arts have a positive impact on people of all ages and backgrounds; it enhances people’s quality of life, and it improves the health and overall well-being of individuals and communities. The previous Work Plan for Culture 2019-22 also included an OMC expert group on culture and social cohesion<sup>4</sup> with a special online workshop on culture and health and aging, which also informed a dedicated session at a Portuguese Presidency Conference in May 2021. Moreover, the OMC report “From social inclusion to social cohesion” (2019) stresses the need to seek ways to make culture more accessible for people with limitations caused by their health and for other disadvantaged groups<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> OJ C 466, 7.12.2022, p. 1

<sup>4</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/e1b88304-f3b0-11e9-8c1f-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

<sup>5</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/e1b88304-f3b0-11e9-8c1f-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

4. Health and well-being are at the heart of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to which all Member States are committed. The connection between culture and health policies has received increased recognition at the international and EU level in recent years – as also illustrated by the Commission’s “Report on the cultural dimension of sustainable development in EU actions”<sup>6</sup>. Moreover, in the MONDIACULT declaration, 150 UNESCO Member States, including 135 Ministers of Culture, have committed to advocate for a systemic anchoring of culture in public policies, including in health and emotional well-being. The Declaration was adopted at the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development – MONDIACULT 2022 on 28-30 September 2022, in Mexico.
5. The Ministers of Culture of the EU, at their informal meeting on 25-26 September 2023, convened by the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU in Cáceres, Spain, adopted the Cáceres Declaration<sup>7</sup> in which they have recognised culture’s contribution to health and physical and mental well-being.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=COM:2022:709:FIN>

<sup>7</sup> <https://spanish-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/en/news/caceres-declaration/>

6. The World Health Organization (WHO) published a report in 2019 “What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review”. It brought together over 3,000 scientific studies on how arts can support the promotion of health, and the prevention, treatment, and management of disease<sup>8</sup>. The WHO Regional Committee for Europe adopted the European regional action framework for behavioural and cultural insights (BCI) for health for the 2022-2027<sup>9</sup> period, as the basis for intensified efforts across the Region to promote the multidisciplinary science and use of BCI for better implementation of measures related to Health in All Policies and of health, health equity and well-being outcomes at intercountry, national and local levels. The resolution was endorsed by the seventy-sixth World Health Assembly<sup>10</sup>.
7. The right to health and to access to culture are part of various international charters and other documents; however they are not connected per se. At the EU level, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights states that everyone has the right of access to preventive health care and the right to benefit from medical treatment under the conditions established by national laws and practices. According to the European Pillar of Social rights, everyone has the right to timely access to affordable, preventive and curative health care of good quality. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recalls that everyone has the right to participate freely in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/9789289054553>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/EUR-RC72-R1>

<sup>10</sup> [https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/WHA76/A76\\_R7-en.pdf](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA76/A76_R7-en.pdf)

8. The Council adopted in 2019 Conclusions on the Economy of Wellbeing, which recall that people's wellbeing is a principal aim of the European Union<sup>11</sup>. The Economy of Wellbeing focuses on the creation of an environment that enables people to reach their full potential and to enjoy their fundamental rights. At the same time, sustainable and inclusive economic growth and resilience function as enablers for the wellbeing of people, societies and the planet.
9. The aim to prioritise integration of policies and services addressing mental health and well-being, across culture and media as well as in communication policies, is also envisaged in the ongoing work in the Council on the planned Council Conclusions on Mental Health.
10. The European Parliament has been very active in the area of mental health, as shown by its resolution of 13 September 2022 on the impact of COVID-19 closures of educational, cultural, youth and sports activities on children and young people in the EU<sup>12</sup> and by the conference co-organised by the Commission and the EP CULT Committee on "Culture: a driver for health and well-being"<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> [Economy of Wellbeing: the Council adopts conclusions - Consilium \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0314\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0314_EN.html)

<sup>13</sup> [Commission and Parliament discuss culture as a driver for health and well-being | Culture and Creativity \(europa.eu\)](#)

11. The recent Commission’s Communication “A comprehensive approach to mental health” is the first health-related EU policy document that includes culture and the arts; examples include social prescribing (including culture-based social prescribing) in the chapter “Reinforcing mental health systems and improving access to treatment and care”<sup>14</sup>. The Communication highlights the need to tackle the existing mental health crisis in the EU through a comprehensive, cross-sectorial approach.
12. In terms of EU cultural cooperation, one of the three strategic pillars of the Commission’s New European Agenda for Culture<sup>15</sup> published in 2018 is the “Social dimension - harnessing the power of culture and cultural diversity for social cohesion and well-being” which underlines how cultural participation also improves health and well-being.
13. The EU Preparatory action “Bottom-up policy development for culture and well-being in the EU” initiated by the European Parliament was implemented by the project “CultureForHealth” (2022-2023), through a consortium led by Culture Action Europe. CultureForHealth has published a scientific literature review (building on the 2019 WHO scoping review and going beyond); issued policy recommendations; analysed 8 major challenges faced by the EU and how culture can contribute to possible solutions; implemented 6 pilot projects; produced guidelines for practitioners; and gathered more than 800 worldwide initiatives and projects on the topic culture, health and well-being<sup>16</sup>, all this aiming to serve as inspirations for new policy and programme developments in this field.
14. The Creative Europe Programme 2021-2027<sup>17</sup>, to some degree, has supported projects focusing on culture for health and well-being.

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<sup>14</sup> [https://health.ec.europa.eu/publications/comprehensive-approach-mental-health\\_en](https://health.ec.europa.eu/publications/comprehensive-approach-mental-health_en)

<sup>15</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2018%3A267%3AFIN>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.cultureforhealth.eu/>

<sup>17</sup> OJ L 189, 28.5.2021, p. 34

15. In 2022, the Commission launched a Voices of Culture dialogue on “Youth, mental health and culture” with civil society, which put forward recommendations both for cultural practitioners and policy-makers<sup>18</sup>.

## **B. ROLE OF THE OMC GROUP**

16. In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity and in full respect of Member States competences in the field of culture and health, as laid down in the EU Treaties, the OMC Group should explore how to strengthen the cross-sectorial collaboration between the culture and health sectors in the EU and in the Member States, and make corresponding recommendations. The overall aim would be to identify ways to effectively bridge the gaps between the two sectors and their relevant administrative levels and ultimately to contribute to a better implementation of cross-sectorial cooperation, while paying special attention to the benefits for the culture and health sectors stemming from this collaboration.
17. In line with these general objectives, the OMC group should:
18. build on the results and lessons learned from the EU Preparatory action “CultureforHealth”, Creative Europe-funded cooperation projects and cultural networks, the work of the OMC group on social inclusion and other relevant initiatives, including regarding funding and training needs, and particularly taking into account the implications and economic costs of the current EU mental health crisis in the context of well-being economy;

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<sup>18</sup> <https://voicesofculture.eu/2022/06/17/the-role-of-cultural-and-creative-sectors-in-improving-mental-health-of-the-youth/>



- i) continue the inventory/ mapping of already existing culture and health strategies and of tested models such as culture-based social prescribing and art interventions; identify and discuss the merits and replicability of identified good practices; collect evidence of impact generated by the cultural involvement/participation of different target groups. The results of this work should be made publicly available;
- ii) develop recommendations on how culture could be best incorporated into the field of health, with a focus on mental health (promotion), including in the recovery from natural and man-made emergencies;

- iii) make proposals on how to raise awareness about the positive effects of culture in the field of health (promotion) and on how to create more cross-sectoral cooperation among decision-makers and administrations in the culture and health policy fields; and develop proposals on how to establish communication channels / platforms between decision makers and artists, independent experts and practitioners in the field of culture and health, including networking at national and European level.

Within its mandate and with the support of the Commission, the OMC Group should work toward complementarities and synergies with other relevant initiatives under the EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026, as well as other relevant Council preparatory bodies, expert groups and fora.

## **C. WORKING APPROACHES AND RESULTS**

- 19. The OMC group should aim to be composed on an equal basis of Member State experts from the relevant government entities responsible for culture and health policies, according to the relevant structures in the Member States. Experts should preferably have field experience and been involved in project implementation and/ or policy design. Practitioners could be invited on a case-by-case basis.
- 20. The OMC Group should involve relevant services from the Commission, particularly DGs SANTE, DG EMPL, DG RTD, JRC19.

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<sup>19</sup> [Loneliness research](#)

21. The OMC Group may, when relevant for further inspiration and input, decide to involve external experts, such as
- a) international organisations such as the World Health Organization;
  - b) researchers, representatives of academia, civil society and relevant professional networks, including practitioners with solid experience working in the field;
  - c) considering the relevance of the topic for countries from the EU neighbourhood, the OMC Group may also consider inviting experts from non-EU countries participating in the Creative Europe programme and / or having a candidate status, when relevant to the Group's work.

d) The OMC Group should elect a chair from within its members.

22. The recommendations and good practices should be compiled in a final report, which will be drafted by its members with technical support from the Commission. The report should reflect the current challenges and opportunities of cross-sectorial collaboration in the area of culture and health; the report should also highlight good practices for culture and health projects/ programmes/ strategies at European, national, regional and local levels and provide beneficial and short, medium and long-term policy recommendations, which can be shared and used in all the Member States. This document could be the basis for future exchanges and policy development promoting the cross-sectorial collaboration in this field, for example with future Presidencies of the Council.

**Topic:**

Culture and Health

**Working methods:**

short-term OMC group on including culture in health policies – exchanging good practices with a special focus on mental health.

**Rationale:**

Cultural activities can support illness prevention, health promotion, and management and treatment of illnesses. Cultural activities offer a holistic approach and have a positive impact on people of all ages and backgrounds, enhance people's quality of life and increase the health and overall well-being of individuals and communities. There is also a significant economic impact. The OMC can build on the results of the 2022 preparatory action 'Culture for Health' and on previous research and work undertaken on this topic.

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**Target outputs:** Raising awareness of the positive effects of culture and creating more cross-sectoral cooperation among decision-makers; recommendations for implementing participatory cultural practices, with a focus on mental health; continue mapping good practices.

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