



Brussels, 28 April 2025  
(OR. en)

7679/25

CULT 25  
AUDIO 23  
SOC 235  
SUSTDEV 20  
SAN 169  
EDUC 120  
EMPL 151  
RELEX 481  
DIGIT 67

#### NOTE

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From:	Presidency
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject:	A new approach to culture in the European Union: the Culture Compass and the future of the Creative Europe Programme - <i>Policy debate</i>

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Delegations will find attached a Presidency steering note on the above subject, with a view to the policy debate at the Council (Education, Youth, Culture and Sport) on 13 May 2025.

**A new approach to culture in the European Union:  
the Culture Compass and the future of the Creative Europe Programme**

**Policy debate**

**A. INTRODUCTION**

The current volatile and concerning geopolitical situation calls for a strong and united EU. Culture and cultural heritage are an expression of creativity and our rich history; they provide the foundations for community life, cultural diversity and European values. At the same time, Europe's cultural and creative sectors (CCS) face unprecedented challenges. The Russian aggression to Ukraine and its barbaric manifestations show clearly that also cultural heritage is under threat. In conflict situations, where Europe's shared culture and heritage fall victim to war, it is crucial to develop social and institutional resilience, as well as strategies that put culture, heritage and sustainable development at the center of recovery policies.

Thus, in this crucial phase for Europe, a rethinking of our support to culture and to the CCS is needed. We are looking forward to the publication of Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2034, which will determine the scope and settings of future EU financial support for culture. In parallel, and in response to the Council's invitation, the European Commission is working on a Culture Compass, an overarching strategic framework to guide and harness culture's multiple dimensions that should provide direction on pressing issues facing Europe's CCS.

## **B. THE FUTURE OF THE CREATIVE EUROPE PROGRAMME**

In this context, the Creative Europe Programme (CEP) – the most important EU-funded instrument for supporting the European CCS is of particular interest to all Member States. Initiatives implemented under the CEP made it possible to provide substantial support for cross-border cooperation, promote cultural and linguistic diversity, pool expertise and develop the potential and scope of European entities in the cultural and creative sectors. They also contributed to the reinforcing professionalisation and the CCS' competitiveness as well as growth on the global market.

The programming and implementation of the CEP remains with the European Commission. In January 2025, the Ministers of Culture of the 27 EU countries signed a letter addressed to Vice-President Henna Virkkunen and Commissioners Glenn Micallef and Piotr Serafin, in which they stressed the importance of culture for the development and diversity of Europe and indicated that joint efforts to sustain the Programme should continue. The EU Culture Ministers noted that the CEP is the only EU programme specifically designed to support cooperation between cultural and creative organisations, artists and cultural professionals. They stressed that culture plays a key role in protecting community of values, enriching our common European identity and increasing social cohesion, while supporting innovation and competitiveness. Moreover, culture fosters a sense of belonging and civic engagement, which is essential for upholding EU democratic values. They noted that the need for cooperation in the CCS at EU level has never been more urgent, especially in the context of the ongoing digital transformation and in a world that is constantly changing.

The will to continue the CEP is evidenced by the conclusion of the letter:

*“(...) to ensure that the sector can continue to adapt and thrive in the rapidly evolving global landscape, we, the undersigned Ministers for Culture, strongly call the European Commission to continue prioritizing cultural diversity and artistic freedom. We reaffirm that the cultural and creative sectors, including the audiovisual industry, require effective and sector-tailored EU incentives. These incentives must be both highly visible and strategically designed to support cultural cooperation and content creation. They should ensure that EU strategies and funding priorities are flexible and responsive to the rapidly evolving needs of the sector as well as digital challenges and technological innovations. Without pre-empting EU budgetary negotiations, we would like to stress that only with such targeted measures can we safeguard the sector’s long-term resilience, competitiveness and vitality of Europe’s cultural and creative ecosystem. We look forward to continuing our joint efforts and to further strengthening Europe’s role in fostering cultural diversity, creativity, and innovation.”*

The clear and firm position of the EU Ministers of Culture is a key element to take into account in the ongoing preparatory process in the sense of strengthening the CEP in the future.

### **C. A NEW CULTURE COMPASS**

The Culture Compass is a flagship initiative in Commissioner Glenn Micallef’s mission letter. The Compass should help embed culture in the EU’s overarching policy goals, reaffirming EU values and guiding principles, with the final aim of ensuring culture becomes more accessible for all. It should address the need for a more strategic and coherent approach in EU support to culture, one that responds to the challenging political and geopolitical context.

The Commission started preparations for this strategic initiative, including a first productive exchange with EU Member States that took place at the informal ministerial meeting (IMM) in Warsaw, on 8 April, focusing on the underlying guiding principles for EU policy making on culture to be enshrined in the future Culture Compass and confirming key directions. Member States declaimed the inherent value of culture and a need to guarantee artistic freedom, safeguard cultural diversity, cultural heritage and building the sector resilience, with digital technology input in preparedness and culture accessibility. In face of climate changes, culture policymakers should also take into account sustainable development, ensure investment in innovation and technological transformation, with sensitiveness however to the AI impact on the sector. Many voices referred to the artists and creators as key capital, advocating for legislation facilitating their work conditions and fair pay, improving social protection. The participants unanimously emphasized the role of culture in building democracy, well-being and health of societies and as a result culture mainstreaming in the EU policies and cultural diplomacy were brought up.

Following the constructive discussions at the IMM, the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting on 13 May provides the opportunity for Ministers to deepening the exchange views on key cultural policy themes that feature in the Culture Compass to address the main challenges for culture and the CCS and industries.

The comprehensive consultation process for the Culture Compass also includes a written consultation (online survey) and a working seminar, co-hosted by the European Commission and the Presidency on 17 June 2025 in Brussels. These consultation steps are intended to facilitate the engagement of Member States in designing the future strategic EU policy support for culture.

## **D. QUESTIONS FOR THE POLICY DEBATE**

Against this background, Ministers are invited to share their views on the following questions:

1. Considering the current challenges that the cultural and creative sectors are facing, please indicate whether the Creative Europe Programme should be adjusted in order to better address those challenges, and if so, how?
2. Considering the current geopolitical context, how can the Culture Compass break with the status quo and ensure that culture's strategic importance is recognised alongside the new political priorities emerging at EU and Member State level?

Please do not exceed three minutes' speaking time.

The Presidency would like Ministers to submit their statements in written form after the EYCS Council session. Your suggestions will be forwarded to the European Commission as an input for the further preparation of the future Creative Europe Programme and the Culture Compass.

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