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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	AOB for the meeting of the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council on 27 and 28 November 2025: Freedom of artistic expression - <i>Information from Luxembourg</i>

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**Freedom of artistic expression**

*Information from Luxembourg*

As has been underlined on many occasions, most notably in the Cáceres declaration of 2023 and in the recent Mondiacult declaration, culture is an essential public good. During its chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, one of Luxembourg's three policy priorities focussed on culture and democracy to underline the essential role that culture indeed plays as cornerstone of societies and of their democratic functioning. "No culture – No democracy" was the main message.

Distorted cultural and identity narratives negatively impact societal tissues, the ability to live together peacefully in culturally diverse societies and, in the end, the very principles and values that constitute the fundamental anchor of democracies. The consequences not only lead to a loss of cultural diversity as nourishing tissue, but also to a progressive democratic backsliding. Therefore, culture is nothing less than a "must" for any democracy.

Freedom of expression, and particularly freedom of artistic expression, form part of the fundamental principles of democracy. Artists and cultural professionals are indeed most central when talking about culture's role with regard to democracy: if they cannot express themselves freely anymore, it is the first domino of democracy that is falling. Examples of the significance of the freedom of artistic expression as a stake and as a political pawn in a larger geopolitical context are the oppression of critical Russian and Byelorussian cultural actors, as well as the systematic destruction of cultural heritage in Ukraine by Russia, both aiming at silencing civil society, suppressing criticism and erasing cultural identities.

Therefore, the ministry of Culture of Luxembourg, together with the *Compendium of Cultural Policies & Trends*<sup>1</sup>, organised an International Cultural Policy conference on 16 October 2025 in Luxembourg that focused on the role of cultural policies in safeguarding and enabling freedom of artistic expression as a pillar of democratic societies. More specifically, the conference looked into refining how cultural policies can effectively monitor early warning signs – key markers that signal shifts in artistic freedom and, by extension, in the democratic health of societies – before violations occur.

Participants to the conference – representatives of government bodies, independent experts in cultural policy research, and practitioners – looked into different ways of monitoring freedom of artistic expression, with a view to develop dynamic preventive tools to safeguard this freedom as a vital barometer of democracy.

Main recommendations from the conference have been assembled in a “Luxembourg call” that aims to serve as a stepping-stone towards a potential “Cultural Freedom Coalition”, i.e. the creation of a shared European space where freedom of artistic expression is both actively preserved and encouraged, with a view to reinforce a common European space of democracy, where culture continues to serve as essential cornerstone for open, resilient and democratic societies.

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<sup>1</sup> Initiated in 1998 as a programme of the Council of Europe, the *Compendium of Cultural Policies & Trends* is an online information and monitoring platform. It seeks to generate and review policy standards in areas of concern to governments and society, by providing knowledge, statistics, resources and more ([www.culturalpolicies.net](http://www.culturalpolicies.net)).

Interested Member States are thus invited to share this commitment and to join efforts to identify concrete ways of engaging, inter alia, in an effective monitoring of freedom of artistic expression, at the level of Member States as well as in the cooperation between the European Union and the Council of Europe.

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