



Brussels, 5 April 2017
(OR. en)

7935/17

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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

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Subject: Draft Council conclusions on an EU strategic approach to international
cultural relations
- *Adoption*

In the course of several meetings, the Cultural Affairs Committee has prepared the above set of conclusions with a view to their adoption at the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council on 22-23 May 2017. The text now meets with the agreement of all delegations.

The Permanent Representatives Committee is accordingly invited to confirm the agreement reached on the draft conclusions in the Cultural Affairs Committee and to forward the text to the Council for adoption and subsequent publication in the Official Journal.

Council conclusions on an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

1. RECALLS the Council Conclusions of 24 November 2015 on culture in the EU's external relations with a focus on culture in development cooperation¹ that, *inter alia*, called on the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to propose a more strategic approach to culture in the EU's external relations;
2. WELCOMES that the Commission and the High Representative responded to this invitation by issuing a Joint Communication "Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations"² on 8 June 2016;
3. RECALLS the Council Conclusions of 17 October 2016 on the Global Strategy on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy³, which endorsed the priority areas for the implementation of the Global Strategy and highlighted the role of cultural diplomacy;
4. WELCOMES that the Global Strategy⁴ has recognised the role of culture in the EU's Foreign and Security Policy in general and in particular in areas such as counter-terrorism, societal resilience and conflict settlement;
5. thus RECOGNISES that culture forms part of a strategic and cross-cutting approach to the Union's international relations;

¹ Council Conclusions on culture in the EU's external relations with a focus on culture in development cooperation, OJ C 417, 15.12.2015, p. 41.

² 10082/16

³ 13202/16

⁴ 10715/16

6. WITH DUE REGARD to the respective spheres of competence of the European Union and of the Member States, as well as to the principle of subsidiarity, UNDERLINES that a strategic approach to international cultural relations should encompass all relevant policy areas and take into account the Joint Communication of 8 June 2016. It should also be in line with the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions as well as the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. More specifically, such an approach should:
- a) entail a bottom-up perspective, while respecting the independence of the cultural sector, reinforcing freedom of expression and artists' integrity, encouraging direct contacts between artists, cultural operators and civil society, and allowing for sufficient flexibility to take into consideration the rapidly changing global scenario;
 - b) be developed on the premise that international cultural relations can only take shape by fostering cultural diversity within the EU, thereby empowering citizens to broaden their cultural appreciation and knowledge, stimulate their creativity and encourage mutual learning and dialogue that is nurtured over time, with a view to further developing intercultural competences⁵ and promoting intercultural dialogue;
 - c) encourage consistency and coherence of efforts, whilst ensuring full complementarity with Member States' actions. There should also be complementarity with actions being carried out on an international level, such as through the Council of Europe and UNESCO, whilst avoiding duplication of efforts;

⁵ Council Conclusions of 22 May 2008 on Intercultural Competences (OJ C 141, 7.6.2008, p.14).

7. On the understanding that culture is an essential part of the EU's international relations, RECOMMENDS that a Friends of the Presidency Group be activated to act as a cross-cutting platform to draw up an integrated, comprehensive and step-by-step EU strategic approach to international cultural relations that explores synergies across all relevant policy areas in full respect of the principle of subsidiarity. In so doing, this Group would identify the common strategic principles, objectives and priorities of such approach for inclusion in a roadmap, identifying where joint action at EU level could be relevant;

INVITES MEMBER STATES to

8. Enhance collaboration between the relevant Ministries, particularly Ministries for Culture and Foreign Affairs, local and regional authorities, and stakeholders;

INVITES THE COMMISSION AND THE EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE (EEAS) to

9. Support the Friends of the Presidency Group by providing technical expertise, such as through the Cultural Diplomacy Platform⁶;
10. Prioritise initiatives in the field of international cultural relations through EU policies and programmes and consider enabling their visibility through a single access portal;

⁶ The Cultural Diplomacy Platform was launched in March 2016 by the European Commission's Service for Foreign Policy Instruments in order to support the EU institutions in the implementation of an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations. The Platform aims at carrying out activities enhancing the EU's cultural engagement with third countries and their citizens, mostly by supporting and advising EU institutions, including EU delegations, and setting up a global cultural leadership training programme. (Source: (<http://www.cultureinexternalrelations.eu/>))

INVITES MEMBER STATES, THE COMMISSION AND THE EEAS to

11. Collect and exchange best practices on cultural initiatives in third countries, including through the Cultural Diplomacy Platform;
 12. Consider pilot projects in third countries to test forms of collaboration, including joint actions and creative cross-sectoral partnerships, with the involvement of local cultural actors, local and regional authorities, relevant NGOs, national cultural institutes, EUNIC⁷ clusters and EU delegations.
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⁷ EUNIC (European Union National Institutes for Culture) is an umbrella network gathering national cultural institutes and embassies.