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**NOTE**

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From: Presidency  
To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council  
Subject: EU work plan for culture 2027-2030  
*- Exchange of views*

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Delegations will find attached a Presidency steering note on the above subject, with a view to the exchange of views at the Council (Education, Youth, Culture and Sport) on 12 May 2026.

**Steering note****EU Work Plan for Culture 2027 -2030: exchange of views****Background and context**

Since 2011, the EU Work Plans for Culture (‘the Work Plan(s)’) have shaped multi-annual priorities in the field of culture, guiding cooperation between Member States, the Council and the Commission. While Member States retain responsibility for their own cultural policies, those Work Plans have played a significant role in informing actions that support, coordinate, or supplement national cultural policies and in addressing issues relevant to the cultural and creative sectors throughout the European Union, in accordance with the Council’s role under the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

The origins of the Work Plans can be traced back to the first European Agenda for Culture adopted in 2007. That Agenda marked a significant milestone by establishing a shared vision for cultural cooperation between Member States, setting out common objectives and recognising culture as a key driver for social cohesion, economic growth and European integration. The subsequent Work Plans have built on that foundation, translating the Agenda’s priorities into practical actions and developing strategies in response to changing circumstances and needs.

## **Previous Work Plans and key priority areas**

To date, four EU Work Plans for Culture have been implemented: 2011–2014, 2015–2018, 2019–2022, and 2023–2026. Each plan has built upon its predecessor, reinforcing the principle of subsidiarity while responding to emerging and ongoing geopolitical, economic, and social challenges. Actions and working methods have developed around several key priority areas, including:

- cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue
- support for the cultural and creative sectors to foster economic growth, innovation, and competitiveness within the sectors
- skills and mobility of artists and professionals
- cultural heritage and sustainability
- culture in external/international relations
- culture statistics
- accessible and inclusive culture
- social cohesion and well-being
- gender equality

## **Current EU Work Plan for Culture (2023–2026)**

The current Work Plan (2023–2026)<sup>1</sup> is structured around four main priorities: (i) artists and cultural professionals, (ii) culture for the people, (iii) culture for the planet, and (iv) co-creative partnerships. It has established 21 actions and has led to coordinated reports by groups of experts on topics such as culture and health, the green transition of the cultural and creative sectors, international cultural relations, and the roles of public libraries.

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 466, 7.12.2022, pp. 1–18

Additionally, the Work Plan has helped define priority themes for incoming presidencies of the Council of the EU. Those themes have guided the delivery of Council Conclusions, presidency conferences, and informal ministerial discussions. Recognising that external political, economic and social contexts – at both national and international level – may require flexibility and adaptability in presidency agendas, the current Work Plan has set a forward-looking policy agenda.

### **Preliminary evaluation and challenges**

Although the final report on the implementation of the EU Work Plan for Culture 2023–2026 is due for June 2026, preliminary evaluation results<sup>2</sup> suggest that the Work Plan continues to serve its core purpose of providing strategic guidance to cultural cooperation between Member States at EU level. Key strengths identified include support for Member States through peer learning and cooperation, strong alignment with national priorities and the promotion of cross-sector impact, particularly in the fields of health, education, and sustainability. However, some challenges remain, such as the uneven impact across Member States and limited clarity, visibility and follow-up, as well as gaps in financing and emerging issues such as artificial intelligence.

### **Considerations for the 2027–2030 Work Plan**

Each renewal of the Work Plan provides an opportunity to reflect on the current landscape and realities, not only within, but also beyond the cultural and creative sectors, - given culture’s cross-cutting nature and its importance as a pillar of European integration, social cohesion, economic growth, and democratic resilience. Consideration should also be given to the policy context in which the next Work Plan will be drafted. Preparations for the upcoming cycle come at a time when the cultural landscape is evolving due to several transformative factors: geopolitical shifts and the rising importance of culture in external relations and democratic resilience; digital transformation, including the evolution of artificial intelligence (AI); climate and sustainability imperatives; cultural participation and social cohesion; and wider issues as regards economic frameworks and working conditions.

Importantly, the next Work Plan will be developed alongside the new Culture Compass for Europe, which will replace the New European Agenda for Culture (the framework for EU cultural policy since 2018). The Culture Compass provides a strategic framework and outlines the political

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<sup>2</sup> Commission presentation to CAC March 2026.

ambition and vision for the future direction of culture policy. One of the main challenges for the next Work Plan is to translate that ambition into concrete priorities, effective working methods, and measurable cooperation among Member States. It is essential to consider how best to deliver a robust, future-proof, and fit-for-purpose Work Plan that maintains long-standing Council priorities while providing mechanisms to address emerging issues.

### **Key questions for consideration**

In the light of the above, the presidency invites ministers to consider the following questions for discussion:

1. What cultural policy topics should be prioritised by the Council during the Work Plan period 2027–2030, and what specific Council actions would best address these?
  2. In what ways can those priorities address current challenges and align with the Culture Compass and other relevant policy frameworks, while ensuring sufficient flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances?
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