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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
No. prev. doc.:	8786/23
Subject:	Open Method of Coordination (OMC) group of Member States' experts on international cultural relations - <i>Mandate</i>

Delegations are informed that since the informal silence procedure launched through the Cultural Affairs Committee (CAC) on 26 April till 28 April 2023 in doc. 8786/23 was not broken, the mandate for the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) Group of member States' experts on International Cultural Relations (IRC) can be deemed as agreed.

Delegations will find attached the final version of the OMC IRC mandate.

Open Method of Coordination (OMC) Group of Member States’ experts on the governance of the EU strategic approach to international cultural relations and framework

set up under the EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026

Priority D: ‘Culture for co-creative partnerships: strengthening the cultural dimension of EU external relations’

- Mandate –

A. BACKGROUND

1. The Council conclusions on an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations and a framework for action¹ acknowledge that “being first and foremost a value in its own right, culture has positive socioeconomic effects, it improves the quality of life, and its positive role in external relations has gained increased recognition”.
2. The EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026², under priority D ‘Culture for co-creative partnerships: strengthening the cultural dimension of EU external relations’, provides for the creation of a short-term Open Method of Coordination (OMC) group of Member States’ experts focusing on the governance of the EU strategic approach to international cultural relations (ICR) and framework.

¹ 2019/C 192/04

² OJ C 466, 7.12.2022, p. 1

3. Culture’s role in external relations has been enshrined in a number of EU strategic documents. The 2016 Joint Communication “Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations”³ defines guiding principles for EU action -such as the bottom-up approach and the focus on people-to-people contacts- and work streams to advance international cultural relations with partner countries. The 2018 New European Agenda for Culture⁴ includes as objective “strengthening international cultural relations”. Council conclusions of 2019 on an “EU strategic approach to international cultural relations and a framework for action”, further define policy objectives and recommend working methods, including on increased coordination at multilateral level.⁵ Council conclusions of 2021 on an “EU approach to cultural heritage in conflicts and crises” make a clear link between culture, peace, development and security.⁶
4. The European Parliament Resolution on the “Implementation of the New European Agenda for Culture and the EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations”⁷ outlines the difference of approaches between traditional Cultural Diplomacy as a means of soft power and International Cultural Relations (ICR) which is focusing on civil societies and calls on the Commission services and the European External Action Service (EEAS) to improve the coordination mechanisms between their entities engaged in cross-cutting work on ICR, including through the creation of more coherent and streamlined working methods, in order to maximise efficiency, avoid overlapping actions and ensure institutional memory.

³ JOIN(2016) 29 final

⁴ COM(2018) 267 final; SWD(2018) 167 final

⁵ OJ C 192, 7.6.2019, p. 6

⁶ Doc. 9837/21

⁷ 2022/2047 (INI)/ A9-0279/2022/

5. The opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on “Cultural diplomacy as a vector of EU external relations. New partnerships and role of CSO”⁸ calls for a flexible governance structure for cultural diplomacy.
6. The Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument - Global Europe⁹ provides funding for EU action in partner countries that aim to promote intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity in all its forms, to preserve and promote cultural heritage and to unlock the potential of creative industries for sustainable social and economic development.
7. The Creative Europe Programme 2021-2027¹⁰ supports an international dimension to some degree, by supporting the internationalisation of the European cultural and creative sectors (for example of European cultural networks), and also by allowing some non-EU countries to become associated to the programme.¹¹
8. Member States, the Commission and the EEAS are rolling out the “Team Europe” approach to join forces so that the EU’s joint external action becomes more effective, and in particular to strengthen the coordination of EU positions on international cultural relations, -notably in multilateral forums and network (e.g. Rome Declaration 2021, Mondiacult 2022, G20 meetings in India in 2023)- and the EU participation in global outreach cultural events, (e.g. the EU participation as Guest of Honour at the 2023 Guadalajara International Book Fair.)

⁸ EESC 2022 – 01594 -00-00-AC REX/548

⁹ OJ L 209, 14.6.2021, p. 1

¹⁰ OJ L 189, 28.5.2021, p. 34

¹¹ To date, 14 non-EU countries are associated to the Creative Europe Programme.

9. The Preparatory Action European Spaces of Culture¹² is testing innovative collaboration models in cultural relations between European and local partner organisations in countries outside the EU.
10. The Cultural Relations Platform¹³ supports the work at EU level in international cultural cooperation with third countries, both through support to the EU Delegations and to the headquarters through research, networking and training, including the Global Cultural Relations Programme.
11. In 2022, the Commission launched a Voices of Culture dialogue on ICR with civil society, which put forward recommendations both for cultural practitioners on a local level and for policy-makers¹⁴.

¹² <https://europeanspacesofculture.eu/>

¹³ <https://www.cultureinexternalrelations.eu/>

¹⁴ <https://voicesofculture.eu/2022/10/24/brainstorming-report-international-cultural-relations-now-available-in-5-languages/>

12. The EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026

- recognises that “Europe’s cultural richness and freedom, the EU’s bottom-up approach rooted in civil society and the EU’s strong engagement in co-creation are strong assets for international relations from the perspective of building sustainable partnerships on an equal footing”;
- considers that “cultural co-creation can authentically underpin and credibly communicate European values, including artistic liberties and cultural rights, in large parts of the world, and thus help contain the reach of authoritarian systems”;
- notes that “close coordination at EU level and the integration of culture into all relevant areas of the EU’s external action and into appropriate financial instruments will be key to strengthening the role of culture in EU external relations”.
- recognises that “coordination and bridging gaps between different stakeholders involved in implementation (of ICR) remains a challenge at all levels, both for the EU and for Member States. Structuring the cooperation between all relevant actors and strengthening equal footing of interests, including artists and cultural professionals, is necessary. Bearing in mind the principle of co-creation in the EU’s external relations, working methods need to be adapted for cohesive decision shaping on a continuous basis, including for the definition of regional and thematic priorities (e.g. in the context of partnerships with candidate countries) or the preparation of EU flagship actions (e.g. book fairs, world exhibitions, fairs and festivals, etc.).”

B. ROLE OF THE OMC GROUP

1. In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity and with the EU and the Member States competences in the field of culture, as laid down in the EU Treaties, the OMC Group should focus on the governance of the EU strategic approach to ICR by outlining possible ways for improving working structures and methods, including approaches for cultural heritage in conflicts and crises and culture in development cooperation. These proposals should allow for the effective bridging of gaps between administrations responsible for foreign affairs, cultural affairs and development cooperation policies. The aim of these improved working structures and methods should be to:
 - i) strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation and synergies between activities undertaken by the EU and its Member States with third countries, including with UNESCO and the Council of Europe,
 - ii) promote coherent, well structured, prepared and implemented EU policies relating to ICR, based on grass-roots level cooperation and a co-creative partnership logic,
 - iii) foster the capacity of the EU and its Member States to actively contribute in a collaborative way to relevant culture-related multilateral policy processes, in particular as regards the 2030 Agenda and the sustainable development agenda beyond 2030.

2. In this regard, the OMC Group should exchange information on cooperation practices between relevant public departments in charge of culture, in charge of foreign affairs and, where appropriate, in charge of development cooperation, including agencies, in the Member States and at EU level to identify good practices that could help establish a reinforced, coherent and longer-term cooperation process in ICR, that involves all relevant stakeholders, and reinforces the bottom-up approach and co-creation principle. As part of this work, the OMC Group should reflect on how to promote the “Team Europe” approach efficiently and effectively in ICR.
3. In a spirit of co-creation, the OMC Group should compile recommendations for a cross-cutting, inclusive and more effective policy approach, including proposals for improved working structures and methods. These recommendations should take account of the definition of regional and thematic priorities (e.g. in the context of partnerships with candidate countries) or the preparation of EU flagship actions, exploring how culture can be better implemented in EU instruments, including in foreign policy ones (e.g. the further internationalisation of EU policies and actions under the NDICI) as well as possible activities and related investment of resources (e.g. EU presence in book fairs, world exhibitions, fairs and festivals; co-creation projects to protect cultural heritage and culture as a global good, to foster the exchange of artists residencies and to support creative industries, etc).
4. In this respect, the OMC Group should also contribute to the EU strategic framework for culture that the EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026 invites the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to consider proposing, within their respective fields of competence, and which “will aim to strategically mainstream the cultural policy perspective and the assets of culture into all relevant EU policies, programmes and initiatives”.
5. The geographical scope of the works should cover the whole world.

C. WORKING APPROACHES AND RESULTS

1. The OMC Group should ensure 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.
2. The OMC Group should build on the results and lessons learned from the Cultural Relations Platform and from the European Spaces of Culture initiative and other relevant EU initiatives.
3. The OMC group should not duplicate the work of the meetings of Senior Officials (SOM) on culture and foreign affairs, organised by the Presidencies of the Council of the EU at their discretion.¹⁵
4. The OMC group should be composed of Member State experts from the relevant government entities responsible for cultural and foreign affairs/development cooperation policies, according to the relevant structures in the Member States. Experts should preferably have field experience and been involved in putting in place local actions.
5. The OMC Group should involve relevant services from the Commission and the EEAS.
6. The European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) may be invited on an ad-hoc basis, and when relevant. Other international organisations such as UNESCO and the Council of Europe may also be invited when relevant.

¹⁵ The level of participants in both fora should, where possible, be different; in addition, the OMC Group should compile good practices and recommendations, whereas the SOM should not.

7. The OMC Group may, for further inspiration and input, decide to involve external experts, such as researchers and representatives from civil society and relevant professional networks.
 8. The recommendations and good practices should be compiled in a final report. The OMC Group should elect a chair and rapporteur from within its members.
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Topic:

Governance of the EU strategic approach to international cultural relations and framework

Working methods:

Short-term OMC group

Rationale:

Culture's role in external relations has been enshrined in a number of recent milestone EU documents. Nevertheless, coordination and bridging gaps between different stakeholders involved in implementation remains a challenge at all levels, both for the EU and for Member States and which hampers impact. Structuring the cooperation between all relevant actors and strengthening equal footing of interests, including artists and cultural professionals, is therefore necessary. Bearing in mind the principle of the Team Europe Approach and co-creation in the EU's external relations, working methods need to be adapted for cohesive decision shaping on a continuous basis, including for the definition of regional and thematic priorities (e.g. in the context of partnerships with candidate countries), or the preparation of EU flagship programmes (e.g. the further internationalisation of EU policies and actions under NDICI) as well as actions (e.g. book fairs, world exhibitions, fairs and festivals, etc.).

Target outputs:

Cross-cutting and inclusive methodology, including proposals for future working structures and methods that would ensure a reinforced, coherent and longer-term cultural cooperation process in international cultural relations, involving all relevant stakeholders.