



Council of the European Union
General Secretariat

Brussels, 30 January 2025

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WK 1186/2025 REV 1

LIMITE

**CULT
RELEX**

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INFORMATION

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Cultural Affairs Committee
Subject:	Open Method of Coordination (OMC) Group of member States' experts on International Cultural Relations (ICR): final report with recommendations and good practices - Presentation by the Co-Chairs of the OMC Group on ICR

Delegations will find attached the presentation made by the Co-Chairs of the OMC Group on ICR for the Cultural Affairs Committee on 29 January 2025.

OMC EXPERT GROUP ON THE GOVERNANCE OF THE EU STRATEGIC APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL RELATIONS AND FRAMEWORK

Cultural Affairs Committee

29 January 2025

MANDATE

EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026:

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

- **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. 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 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.).
- **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.

OMC EXPERT GROUP

9 meetings (6 on-site in Brussels and 3 online) with an **average of 33 experts** from **23 Member States**, many being represented by experts from **both Ministries of Culture and Ministries of Foreign Affairs.**



METHODOLOGY

Creation of 3 subgroups on:

- - Governance in Member States (to provide an overview of national ICR governance and coordination mechanisms)
 - - Multilateral coordination (to better understand how EU coordination works within multilateral fora and how improved coordination could benefit more coherent ICR)
 - - Policy documents analysis (to analyse existing EU policy documents related to ICR and identify shared baselines).
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Exchanges and discussions with internal and external guest speakers: DG Intpa, FPI, EU delegations, GSC, Council of Europe, UNESCO, EUNIC Global, EUNIC cluster heads, Cultural relations platform

Presentations:

- ICR governance in Denmark and in the Netherlands
 - Baltic Culture Fund
 - Council of Ministers of South East Europe (CoMoCoSEE)
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Questionnaires:

- Addressed to Member States, European Commission directorates and services, the EEAS and EU delegations
- Questions related to their comprehension of ICR and general positioning, as well as to their governance and transversal coordination



WORK ROADMAP

Identification of
four working areas

Definition of **possible aims**
within in each area, addressing
three to four specific topics

OMC EXPERT GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL RELATIONS

Work road map

WORKING AREAS & TOPICS

BOX 1 – GOVERNANCE WITHIN MEMBER STATES	BOX 2 – GOVERNANCE WITHIN EU	BOX 3 – COOPERATION AT MULTILATERAL LEVEL	BOX 4 – TRANSVERSAL ITEMS
<p>Possible aims:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Sharing of practices on strategies and governance 2) Improvement of the equal involvement of (public) players in the definition and implementation of national ICR strategies and/or projects <p>Suggested topics:</p> <p>1.1. Questionnaire on MS internal governance, coordination structure and methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↳ Deadline for changes: Friday, September 15th ↳ Deadline for answers: Friday, September 29th ↳ First analysis of trends by co-chairs: meeting 3 <p>1.2. Identification of needs and definition of basic components for possible coordination mechanisms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation of governance/coordination best cases by available MS during meeting 3 - Analysis of recurring problems and possible solutions (e.g. human resources, discontinuation of strategies or projects, information flow etc.) - Cooperation with civil society and local communities - Coordination between MS with and without diplomatic representation in other EU/third countries <p>1.3. MS Factsheets & documents repository (Teams)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information gathering and exchange at all levels 	<p>Possible aims:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Better understanding of who does what, when and how 2) Identification of an all-inclusive governance model for ICR-related policies, i.a. for the definition and implementation of an EU strategic ICR approach and framework <p>Suggested topics:</p> <p>2.1. Current governance practices & challenges at Council level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - List of existing formal and informal groups dealing with ICR-related issues + how to use them differently - Identification of “disconnections” as regards themes (e.g. culture and security issues) and decision-making processes (e.g. conclusions on priorities for EU-CoE cooperation) <p>2.2. Coordination at EU programme and project level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Factsheet for DGs involved, EEAS, EP, EIB, others on their ICR-related activities (short description of object aims, involved/eligible actors and partners, timelines, finances, selection/evaluation processes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↳ Deadline for draft factsheet: September 29th ↳ Deadline for changes: October 19th ↳ Deadline for answers: December 1st ↳ Presentation of overview: meeting 4 - Third country/local communities involvement in definition and implementation; recurring problems <p>2.3. Team Europe approach in the culture area : definition of expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understanding Team Europe approach - Role of cultural policies in global policy battles <p>2.4. Other proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joint Council working group - National secondments within EU delegations - MS chef de file projects in third countries - ICR as continued PRES priority - ... 	<p>Possible aims:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Enhancement of the consideration for and of culture in multilateral fora and policies 2) Identification of models for collaboration at multilateral level <p>Suggested topics:</p> <p>3.1. Current consultation practices between MS and as EU within multilateral fora</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who talks “on behalf of the EU” where and when? - Models of supra-regional coordination (e.g. Baltics, Nordic, Benelux etc.): benefits and challenges <p>3.2. Perception of EU coordination by multilateral partners and third country delegations</p> <p>3.3. Refining of roles and expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preparatory bodies consultation mechanisms - What can we learn from other country unions (ASEAN, OIC, OEI,...)? - Listing (“earmarking”) of relevant multilateral meetings - How to absorb and integrate the information of other organisations’ ICR strategies and programmes 	<p>Possible aims:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Identification of shared ICR strategic baseline elements 2) Clarification of the relation between ICR, cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy etc. <p>Suggested topics:</p> <p>4.1. “Connecting the dots”: docs, docs, docs... but where do we want to go?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analysis of existing policy documents and what they are aiming for <p>4.2. Capacity-building & training & impact assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existing schemes at MS and EU level - Possible partners - Role of philanthropy and private funding - Measuring the impact of cultural events <p>4.3. “It’s all covered by artistic freedom”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dealing with hits and threats to our cultures and to artistic freedom - Avoiding the instrumentalisation risk

What are we
talking about?
And are we all
talking about
the same?

A joint baseline understanding of ICR:

- *„EU international cultural relations constitute coordinated and complementary actions of the EU and Member States to promote culture, creativity, cultural heritage and diversity in their relations with non-EU countries and in multilateral forums through established mechanisms of co-operation based on the principles of freedom, democracy and respect for human rights to advance peace also by means of inter-cultural dialogue, and to foster sustainable social and economic development. These actions should take into consideration local context and needs, apply a decentralised approach, and support co-creation with a long-term perspective“.*

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WITH BETTER GOVERNANCE TOWARDS
AN IDEAL ICR ECOSYSTEM

FIVE PILLARS FOR AN IDEAL ICR ECOSYSTEM

- A shared long-term strategic framework for ICR as basis for sectoral implementation action plans.
- Permanent ICR working structure(s) comprising complementary competences and skills.
- Sufficient human and financial resources.
- Clear coordination procedures and involvement of all relevant stakeholders,
- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation with a view to continuous improvement.



MAIN GOVERNANCE ISSUES:

THE FIVE “C”



COMPREHENSION



COHESIVENESS



COMPETENCE



COORDINATION



CAPACITY



*horizontal: COMMUNICATION

COMPREHENSION

What?

ICR need to be recognised as policy field on its own, in which the EU plays an important leadership role, which it needs nevertheless to acknowledge and embrace more strongly in the context of global geopolitical ICR discussions.

Why?

- 1) ICR are at the intersection between different policies (culture, foreign affairs (including peace and security), development cooperation, enlargement) and cannot be covered entirely and exclusively by any of those policies.
- 2) Culture not only is an increasingly strategic stake in geopolitics, but it is also increasingly important to understand and deal with ever-increasing complex international contexts.

How?

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| Work on mindsets | > Promote the understanding of ICR as a distinct policy field |
| | > Establish that culture is at stake in global geopolitical discussions |
| Work on governance | > Cross-check governance structures against the adequate comprehension of ICR |
| | > Take cultural policies further into account in foreign affairs discussions and vice-versa |
| | > Act according to an agreed, coherent, and holistic ICR strategic approach and principles |
| | > Involve the SOMs in a more significant way |

COHESIVENESS

What?

The EU needs a consolidated ICR policy strategy that encompasses and interconnects the specific angles of the different policy fields related to ICR and that all can agree on as shared basis (including for defining sectoral strategies, plans and programmes) in order for the EU to have a coherent political discourse and action on ICR.

Why?

- 1) The ICR goals of the different sectoral policies may be very similar, but depending on the policy, they translate different angles and nuances, while consistency and complementarity between them is presently not (sufficiently) ensured.
- 2) Political decision-makers have called repeatedly for a transversal ICR strategy, but ICR policy and programme processes are currently still operating in mostly disconnected ways.
- 3) As long-term policy reference framework, the future *EU strategic framework for culture/Culture Compass* is an opportunity for assembling the cornerstones of an EU policy strategy for ICR.

How?

Small steps: Analyse more thoroughly the ICR overlaps between the different policy fields; envisage ICR events in a more collaborative way to make outcomes and messages more relevant; define a clearer vision of how culture could be included in a more tailored or accurate way in Global Gateway, Team Europe and FPI; ...

Giant leap: Define and adopt a consolidated ICR policy strategy, involving relevant working groups and the SOM, also in ensuring overall cohesiveness in its implementation.

COMPETENCES

What?

Every ICR stakeholder's competence must be acknowledged and every stakeholder must fully embrace its competence for ICR, within its limits but in an effective interaction that ensures that every stakeholder's specificities and angles are being included and considered if we want to talk about a shared strategic vision for ICR and more efficient partnerships with third countries and multilateral organisations.

Why?

- 1) At present, work on ICR is marked to a certain degree by a blur as to who does or should do what, stakeholders are more or less working in silos, especially at upfront phases of processes that define policies or actions, leading to stakeholders being not or less involved than they should be.
- 2) EU Treaty provisions related to cooperation on ICR leave room for improvement in their implementation.
- 3) Particularly in relation with third countries and multilateral organisations, it is not always clear who is talking on behalf of the EU and according to whose positioning on the matter at hand.

How?

In parallel to defining an EU strategic vision, mandates and/or roles should be strengthened and/or clarified, mechanism should be revised to ensure a systematic coordination between all stakeholders concerned for determining EU positions on ICR, and the CAC needs to step up its involvement in ICR.

COORDINATION

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What?

In order to ensure the coherence and integrity of the EU's ICR efforts, a comprehensive review and modernisation of the existing coordination procedures is essential. Coordination must necessarily involve all relevant actors in accordance with their respective competences under the TFEU and long-term strategies.

Why?

Internal coordination of ICR policies and actions often takes place on an ad hoc basis in Member States and at EU level. When Member States and the EU cooperate at multilateral level or in bilateral cooperation with third countries, consultation processes often do not involve all relevant stakeholders. There are many reasons for this, ranging from time and communication constraints to issues of competence. All of this means that the voice of the EU in the international arena is not heard as much and is not as influential as it could be.

How?

By ensuring the involvement of all relevant working groups, providing them with timely information and enabling them to contribute to the formulation of EU ICR positions, programmes, agreements and initiatives. In addition to the ICR's bilateral relations, particular attention should be paid to the preparation and presentation of ICR positions in multilateral fora, in particular in cooperation with the Council of Europe and UNESCO

CAPACITY

What?

Capacity for ICR should be strengthened, both in terms of human and financial resources.

Why?

- 1) to overcome the lack of human resources and skills for the ICR
- 2) to better use existing financial resources and involve public private partnerships
- 3) to build capacity for informed policy decisions through continuous monitoring and evaluation

How?

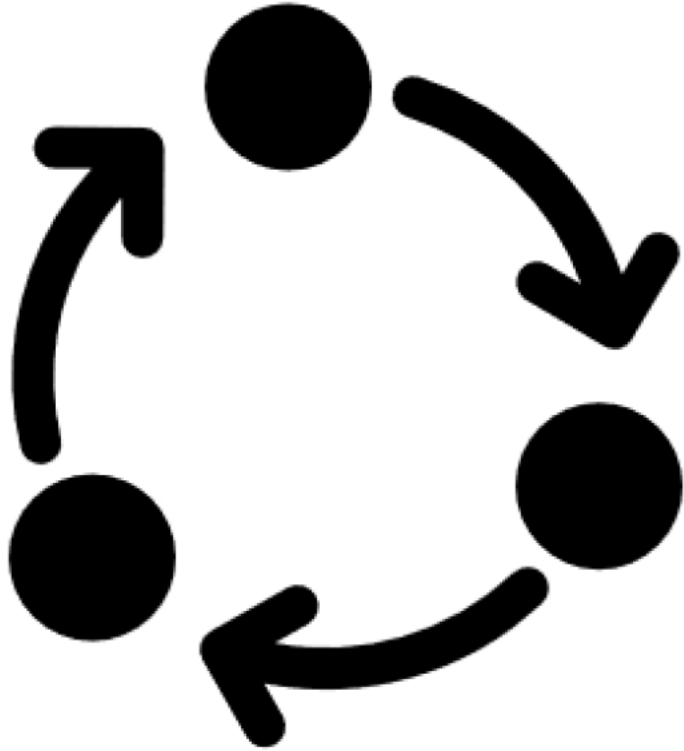
- 1) with tailor-made training programmes (with civil society and academic institutions)
- 2) with seconded national experts in EU institutions and EUEDEs
- 3) with centralised support through guidelines, tools, examples of good practice and regular online briefings
- 4) by pooling resources for greater impact (EU funding programmes, public-private partnerships). For Global Gateway: with a thematic multi-annual indicative programme on culture within NDICI-Global Europe.
- 5) by monitoring and evaluation to improve approaches, partner selection and quality of content, financial planning and implementation.



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PROPOSALS HIGHLIGHTED FOR CAC MEMBERS

PROPOSALS FOR MEMBER STATES



- Adopt comprehensive and result-oriented national approaches to ICR, based on systematic inter-institutional strategies and action plans and linked to the forthcoming EU Strategic Framework for Culture/Cultural Compass.
- Establish permanent national coordination structures with complementary expertise in the fields of culture, foreign affairs and development cooperation and with shared responsibility, including for coordinating positions in multilateral contexts.
- Support joint funding of ICR activities to achieve ownership and accountability for results.

PROPOSALS FOR SENIOR OFFICIALS' MEETINGS (SOM)

1. Clearly link the agenda and format of the SOMs to the strategic aspects of the ICR (coherence with the forthcoming EU Strategic Framework for Culture/Culture Compass, the current EU Work Plan for Culture and relevant strategies and action plans).
2. Establish an informal steering committee composed of interested Member States (including the Trio Presidencies), EC DGs, EEAS and other interested stakeholders, co-chaired by representatives of Culture and Foreign Affairs.
3. As regards the frequency of SOMs, in the short term, organise two SOMs per year on a voluntary basis by the Presidencies or by a "coalition of the willing" or "friends of the SOM". In the medium term, consideration should be given to increasing the number of meetings to 3/4 per year.

PROPOSALS FOR THE COUNCIL, WITH THE FOCUS ON CAC AND GENERAL SECRETARIAT

FOR WGs

- a) Strengthen the role of the CAC for ICR through closer and more structured involvement in the preparation of official EU statements and positions, including with a permanent ICR item on the agendas of meetings.
- b) Organise joint meetings between the CAC, Relex, Devco, Civcom and other relevant Council bodies.
- c) Regularly invite members of other working groups to discuss ICR issues.
- d) Develop an overall mandate for the ICR Working Group in line with the forthcoming Strategic Framework for Culture/Culture Compass.
- e) On the basis of the analysis of the pilot project on the use of the Working Party of External Relations Advisers/Horizontal Issues (Relex-HQ), also consider in the longer term the appropriateness and possibility of setting up a specific ICR Council Working Party under Coreper I, Coreper II or any other possible umbrella.

FOR THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT

- a) Strengthen internal working methods and coordination by establishing regular meetings between GSC staff responsible for working groups dealing with aspects of the ICR.
- b) Set up an automatic ICR notification system on the delegates' portal.
- c) Update the system of acronyms for Council documents and the internal guidelines for their distribution by including the acronym "CULT" in the relevant Council documents on the ICRs of other Council formations and vice versa.
- d) Ensure appropriate sequencing for the adoption of coordinated positions in COREPER in view of important multilateral meetings; in case of urgent coordination needs, provide for ad hoc digital meetings to prepare coordinated positions and/or statements.

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THE ,TO DO' LIST

Ongoing

Recognition of ICR as policy field on its own and political advocacy for ICR
→ Recommendations n° 1, 3, 42

Recommendations for implementation in the mid-term

Work on principles to roll out the EU's ICR policy on a consolidated and longer-term basis :

- **EU strategic approach for ICR:** elaboration of a coherent and shared ICR policy as pillar in the Culture Compass
→ Recommendations n° 2, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 21, 27, 34, 46, 50, 53, 63
- **ICR within the Council:** setting-up of a dedicated policy working group
→ Recommendations n° 5, 22, 34, 43

Extension of the structuring of approaches and coordination mechanisms, including human and financial resources:

- **Next generation programmes:** adjustments based on an EU strategic approach for ICR and a shared baseline understanding of ICR
→ Recommendations n° 15, 45, 61, 62
- **Regular strategic guidance**
→ Recommendations n° 23, 26, 29, 34, 44, 47, 51, 54, 55, 57, 60
- **At national level:** establishment of comprehensive and coherent definition, training and funding systems for ICR
→ Recommendations n° 31, 32, 33, 58, 59

Recommendations for implementation in the short-term

Adaptations to achieve an improvement of consultation and decision-making processes and of the flow of information on ICR:

- **ICR within the EU:** systematic linkage and consultations between services and working groups from relevant policy fields, with a strengthening of the CAC
→ Recommendations n° 4, 10, 22, 23, 28, 34, 36, 43, 47, 48 / CAC: 11, 17, 25, 35, 47, 49
- **SOMs:** revision and reinforcement of their role and functioning (substance, form and frequency)
→ Recommendations n° 7, 9, 11, 17, 39, 40, 41, 48
- **National coordination:** increased consultation on ICR
→ Recommendations n° 18, 38, 52, 54, 55, 56

Adjustments to better reflect the cultural dimension of ICR:

- **Political leadership for ICR:** more preparedness to get involved
→ Recommendations n° 5, 27
- **Programmes, approaches etc.**
→ Recommendations n° 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 30, 46

Recommendations for implementation in the longer-term

Systematic application of an EU strategic approach in an ideal ICR ecosystem:

- **EU as an engaged actor in global ICR**
→ Recommendations n° 5, 27
- **ICR coordination mechanisms:** functioning of a dedicated policy working group, coordinated training and ensured funding
→ Recommendation n° 34, 37, 60, 61, 63, 64, 65
- **Partnerships:** interlocking and mutually completing ICR policies, activities and projects
→ Recommendation n° 50, 56

WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITIES

Elaboration by the EC of the Culture Compass

The Culture Compass is the central task of the new Culture Commissioner, and ICR should be one of its pillars as a seminal basis for other short or medium-term ICR documents, such as action plans and programme projects.

PL , DK, CY and IE presidencies of the Council of the EU

The next presidencies play a central role to enhance and strengthen ICR within the Council (e.g. in the context of the Work Plan for Culture), but also with regard to its governance (e.g. to further interconnect working groups, examine the option of a stand-alone ICR group, and reinforce the SOMs).

Next Cultural Relations Platform

The current CRP will expire at the end of 2025. Discussions on its potential follow-up would be an opportunity to imagine more collaborative ways.

EU Work Plan for Culture

By amending the current Work Plan for Culture or when preparing the Work Plan post-2026, ICR could be given a more prominent role and concrete actions could be added.

New EC and EP

In the face of global challenges, European decision-makers will be open to innovative and creative solutions to build trust, understanding and cooperation with partner countries. ICR need to get ready to become an integral part of the EU's external relations.

UNESCO Mondiacult 2025 and 2025 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP30)

At multilateral level, these two top meetings call for the EU to agree on shared and coherent messages, notably in defense of culture as a stand-alone goal in the post 2023-Agenda.

Next generation programmes

An ICR priority in the Culture Compass should receive increased financial support in the next generation of all relevant EU programmes from 2027 onwards.

THANK YOU!

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