



Council of the European Union
General Secretariat

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WK 2254/2026 INIT

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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Cultural Affairs Committee

Subject: Culture Compass for Europe – Draft Joint Declaration "Europe for Culture - Culture for Europe"
– Presidency text

With a view to the Cultural Affairs Committee (CAC) meeting on 16-17 February, delegations will find attached the above-mentioned document as revised by the Presidency. Changes reflect in particular considerations of legal nature, as discussed in the CAC meeting of 21 January.

Bold underline (for additions) and ~~strikethrough~~ (for deletions) are used to indicate changes to the Commission text (doc. 15410/25 ADD 2).

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Draft Joint Declaration

“Europe for Culture - Culture for Europe”

Preamble

Whereas:

- a) Europe is a continent of immeasurable art, culture, creativity, and rich cultural heritage and history. Europe’s cultural diversity and vibrancy, fuelled by the excellence of its artists and professionals, are fundamental to EU values and identity, fostering a European sense of belonging and shared European identity, and strengthening democracy.
- b) The cultural and creative sectors and industries are dynamic economic sectors. They represent a strategic resource for Europe’s competitiveness and cohesion, generating economic growth and positive spillovers across sectors and territories, creating qualified jobs, and fuelling the EU’s creative and innovative edge.
- c) Culture and cultural heritage underpin the core values the EU is founded on – respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights (Article 2 TEU) – and embody the motto ‘United in diversity’. The EU's overarching objective in the field of culture is to respect and promote its rich cultural and linguistic diversity; to ensure that Europe’s cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced; and to encourage cooperation between Member States (Article 3 TEU, Article 167 TFEU).

- d) Culture and cultural heritage create a space to imagine desirable futures and are vital to the European way of life. They provide a platform for public dialogue, unite communities, enrich lives, bring cohesion to our societies and are an important vector for the EU's external action. The EU can leverage its cultural assets to build resilience, promote peace and democracy, and inspire innovative solutions that contribute to sustainable development.
- e) Culture is a strategic resource for the EU to confront today's pressing realities, such as geopolitical and geoeconomic tensions, global warming and environmental degradation, social and economic inequalities, rapid technological changes, demographic shifts, and a mental health crisis. At the same time, the cultural and creative sectors and industries face their own challenges, necessitating targeted support and decisive action.
- f) This declaration articulates a long-term strategic vision to place culture at the heart of Europe's identity, emphasising the importance of culture for individuals, communities and the EU, and strengthening cultural rights and principles.
- g) Recognising the EU's supporting role in the field of culture, this declaration affirms shared political commitments and responsibilities of the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission - within their respective competencies and in full compliance with EU law – **inspired by** ~~based on~~ the key directions set out in the Commission's 2025 Culture Compass for Europe.

Joint Declaration on Europe for Culture - Culture for Europe

We aim at promoting and positioning culture both as a resource for and a beneficiary of European unity, democracy, excellence and competitiveness. And, thus, we commit to:

- Strengthening the European Union's role as a global cultural powerhouse and vibrant hub of creativity, where everyone can freely create and engage with culture; a role which upholds cultural rights, empowers citizens and creative professionals.
- Ensuring that culture remains a driving force to the socio-economic and territorial fabric of Europe recognising culture's intrinsic, societal, civic and economic value, and its transformative potential.
- Promoting measures to empower, thrive, innovate and compete globally.
- Acknowledging the role of culture as a public good, contributing to the EU's resilience and sustainable growth.

Aligned with these commitments and the four key directions of the Culture Compass for Europe, we declare our embrace of the following principles for cultural policies in Europe.

1. **Freedom of artistic expression** and freedom to create are the foundations of culture, and play an indispensable role in fostering democratic societies and in upholding European values.

We commit to:

- Safeguarding the freedom of artistic expression and respect of EU values as a cornerstone of democracy and fundamental rights within the European Union.
- Protecting artists and cultural professionals from censorship, intimidation, and undue interference.
- Shielding the independence of cultural institutions.

2. **Cultural and linguistic diversity** are fundamental values on which the EU is founded. We commit to:
 - Supporting, celebrating and preserving the rich cultural and linguistic diversity of the European Union and its cultural sovereignty.
 - Promoting the full diversity of cultural content created in Europe, notably online and harnessing new technologies to ensure the visibility and discoverability of this content.
3. **Access to culture** is a fundamental pillar of democratic and inclusive societies. We commit to:
 - Enhancing inclusive access to, participation in, enjoyment and benefit of culture and cultural heritage for everyone, especially younger generations.
 - Paying particular attention to the cultural rights of persons with disabilities, marginalised and disadvantaged groups, and people living in rural, remote or underserved areas – including areas at risk of depopulation or facing socio-economic challenges.
 - Enhancing and improving cultural infrastructure across Europe, paying attention to addressing socio-economic and territorial disparities.
4. Everyone has the right to **fair, just, healthy and safe working conditions**, including artists and cultural professionals who are at the heart of our cultural and creative sectors and industries. We commit to:
 - Promoting fair remuneration, adequate social protection, and access to skills development for all artists and cultural professionals, as well as supporting their collective bargaining rights and fostering their occupational health and safety, including their mental health.
 - Promoting gender equality in culture and cultural heritage, and protecting the rights of artists and cultural professionals with disabilities.

5. **Young people** are crucial in shaping Europe's future and its diverse cultural landscape. We commit to:
- Promoting young people's representation and participation in cultural governance structures to amplify their voices in decision-making processes that concern them.
 - Supporting young and emerging artists, recognising their contribution to Europe's culture and heritage.
6. The synergy between **culture, arts, and education** is fundamental to the development and prosperity of future societies. We commit to:
- Fostering arts education for everyone in formal, non-formal, and informal education, including lifelong learning.
 - Supporting the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) approach and interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary synergies between culture, the arts, science, and technology.
7. Cultural engagement has proven positive impacts on the **health and well-being** of individuals and communities. We commit to:
- Promoting - through our policies - the positive effects of culture and cultural participation on health and well-being.
 - Sharing best practices and innovative approaches across sectors.

8. The use, development and governance of **artificial intelligence** (AI) systems should foster human creativity through a fair human-centric and rights-based approach. It should: respect cultural rights, accessibility, inclusivity and cultural diversity; develop and promote discoverability of European, national and local content; foster competitiveness; counter digital divides; and foster digital inclusion. We commit to:
- Promoting human creation and European cultural and linguistic digital sovereignty, and addressing ethical risks of biases and cultural homogenisation.
 - Protecting intellectual property rights, by addressing the impacts of AI on creators' remuneration, while embracing innovation.
 - Monitoring and mitigating the impact of AI on jobs, as well as supporting the cultural and creative sectors and industries adapt to technological change and acquire digital skills.
 - Fostering the use of AI as a tool to support cultural and creative professionals, and enabling the cultural and creative sectors and industries to harness the opportunities offered by these technologies.
9. **Cultural heritage** connects our past with our future. It is a symbol of unity in diversity and a cornerstone of our identity, democracy, and resilience. We commit to:
- Protecting, safeguarding and promoting Europe's rich natural and cultural heritage – both tangible and intangible – while harnessing digital technologies to foster its preservation, access and innovation.
 - Improving awareness, research and capacity building, and the use and interoperability of databases and digital technologies to face the threat of cultural goods trafficking and other related crimes, while fostering ~~international~~ cooperation among all relevant professionals, such as heritage, law enforcement or customs professionals.
 - Fostering intergenerational exchange to ensure the transmission of cultural heritage and knowledge from older to younger generations.
10. Culture and cultural heritage foster **regional and territorial development, resilience, social cohesion and convergence** between Europe's regions. They also need to be protected in times of crises, including from risks such as the effects of climate change. We commit to:

- Untapping the potential of culture and cultural heritage, in synergy with other areas, in boosting attractiveness of all territories and addressing territorial challenges, including countering demographic decline, especially in peripheral, rural, remote and underserved areas, including EU outermost regions.
- Advancing sustainable cultural tourism, respectful of cultural heritage, landscapes and community practices, and contributing to regional and local development.
- ~~Enhancing cooperation on crisis preparedness and~~ **Exploring different ways of** integrating culture and cultural heritage into **cooperation on crisis preparedness** security and crisis preparedness planning, crisis and risk management, post-crisis reconstruction, recovery and peace-building processes.

11. Culture, including cultural heritage, is crucial in the **shift towards environmental sustainability** as it shapes values, behaviours and practices that underpin environmentally responsible development. We commit to:

- Emphasising the importance of culture in the policy response to ecological challenges, by promoting architecture, design, heritage safeguarding and landscape management that pursues quality, innovation, inclusion and excellence, as well as by encouraging the uptake of practical greening tools and enabling cultural and heritage agents to lead and change narratives in co-creation with communities.

12. Pursuing the ambitions of this declaration and fully leveraging culture's transversal impacts means promoting culture in the EU's internal and external policies, investing in the cultural and creative sectors and industries, and monitoring progress. We commit to:

- Supporting ~~continuous, dedicated funding for~~ **the sustainability of the cultural and creative sectors and industries, including by encouraging different forms of funding** and ~~promoting~~ **considering** innovative and alternative modes of funding at all levels of governance.
 - **Embedding culture within relevant strategies, policies and actions**, and the corresponding funding tools.
 - Maintaining close **dialogue with relevant stakeholders**.
 - Promoting this declaration in the **EU's relations with international organisations and partner countries** – within the respective roles and powers of the signatories —~~and anchoring our partnerships to the values of reciprocity and long-term engagement.~~
 - Advancing initiatives aimed at improving the availability of sound and comparable data on culture to support the development of evidence-based cultural policies.
 - Reviewing progress in the areas covered in this declaration.
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