

Cultural dimensions of the EU's external actions

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The Committee on Culture and Education unanimously adopted the own-initiative report by Marietje SCHAAKE (ADLE, NL) on the cultural dimensions of the EU's external actions.

Culture and European values: underlining the cross-cutting nature and the importance of culture in all aspects of life, Members stress the need for all EU institutions to recognise more fully the value of culture as a force for tolerance and understanding.

The report reiterates that **culture plays a role in bilateral agreements on development and trade**, and through measures such as the European instruments for Development Cooperation, for Stability, for Democracy and Human Rights and for Pre-Accession, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the Eastern Partnership, the Union for the Mediterranean and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), which all allocate resources to cultural programmes. It also values public-private cooperation with a strong role for civil society, including NGOs and European cultural networks, in addressing the cultural aspects of the EU's external relations.

EU programmes: Members are concerned at the fragmentation of external EU cultural policy and projects, which is hampering the strategic and efficient use of cultural resources and the development of a visible common EU strategy on the cultural aspects of the EU's external relations. They urge the streamlining of internal operations in the Commission in the various DGs which focus on external relations (foreign policy, enlargement, trade, development), education and culture and the digital agenda. They encourage, therefore, synergies between cultural, sports, education, media, multilingualism and youth programmes. They also encourage **cooperation with practitioners, mediator organisations and civil society, in both Member States and third countries**, in drawing up and implementing external cultural policies and in promoting cultural events and exchanges which improve mutual understanding whilst taking due account of European cultural and linguistic diversity.

The report calls for the creation of a **cultural visa for third-country nationals, artists and other professionals in the cultural field**, along the lines of the existing Scientific Visa Programme in force since 2005.

Media and new information technologies: Members condemn the fact that repressive regimes increasingly censor and monitor the internet, and urge the Commission and the Member States to promote internet freedom globally. They reaffirm the principle of net neutrality, which is designed to ensure that the internet remains a free and open technology, fostering democratic communication. Emphasising the internet's role as a tool for promoting European culture, Members call on the Member States to further **develop investment in broadband internet throughout the EU**.

The report emphasises the importance of the **new media** and, above all, of the internet as free, easily accessible and user-friendly communications and information platforms. It also stresses the importance of the new media in providing access to cultural goods and content and in making Europe's cultural heritage and history better known, inside and outside the EU, as demonstrated by key projects such as Europeana.

The Commission is called upon to create a **central internet portal** which both provides information on existing EU support programmes in the external relations sphere which have a cultural component and on the planning and organisation of cultural events of pan-European significance by the EU's foreign representations.

Cultural diplomacy and cultural cooperation: Members stress the need to devise effective strategies for intercultural negotiations, and consider that a **multicultural approach to this task may facilitate the conclusion of beneficial agreements**, putting the EU and third-country partners on an equal footing. They urge that one person in each EU representation overseas should be responsible for the coordination of cultural relations and interaction between the EU and third countries and for the promotion of European culture. In general, Members emphasises the need to adopt a **comprehensive approach** to cultural mediation and cultural exchange and the role of culture in fostering democratisation, human rights, conflict prevention and peace-building. They encourage the launch of **policy dialogues on culture**, such as that recently initiated between the EU and India.

EU external relations and European External Action Service (EEAS): Members expect the draft organisational chart of the EEAS to include positions tailored to cultural aspects. They call for EEAS staff to be provided with appropriate training and further training in the cultural and digital aspects of external policy. They also call for the inclusion of a **DG Cultural and Digital Diplomacy** in the organisation of the EEAS.

The report encourages the EEAS to take account of the EU's recently established **European Heritage Label** as a tool to be used in relations with third countries. It proposes the **creation of specific information systems to support the mobility of artists and other professionals in the cultural field.**

Members urge the Commission to propose and adopt in 2011 a Green Paper on a strategy on culture and cultural cooperation in the EU's external actions, to be followed by a communication.

UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions: Members call on the EEAS to encourage third countries to develop policies on culture and systematically to call on third countries to ratify and implement the UNESCO Convention. They encourage the Member States and the Commission to step up their cooperation efforts in order to further improve national legal frameworks and policies for the protection and preservation of cultural heritage and cultural assets, in accordance with national legislation and international legal frameworks, including measures to combat illegal trafficking in cultural assets and intellectual property.

The report also calls for:

- a coherent EU strategy for the international promotion of European cultural activities and programmes based on the protection of diversity and the dual nature of cultural goods and activities;
- a coherent strategy for the protection and promotion of cultural and natural heritage, both tangible and intangible, and international cooperation in conflict areas;
- personnel being sent to conflict and post-conflict areas to be given training in the cultural aspects of action to preserve heritage and promote reconciliation, democracy and human rights;
- all human rights need to be respected;
- the establishment of cultural relations with countries with which no other
- partnerships exist, as a stepping stone towards the development of further relations
- the inclusion of a chapter on culture in the Annual Review on Human Rights and to mainstream culture in the work of interparliamentary delegations.

Lastly, Members wish to ensure that, in the framework of existing financial instruments, operational programmes are focused on simplification, efficiency and the coordination of EU policies.