

Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations

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PURPOSE: to propose an EU strategy in the field of international cultural relations (joint Communication presented by the Commission and the High Representative).

BACKGROUND: **promoting diversity** through international cultural relations is an important part of the EU's role as a global actor. This involves a commitment to both promoting 'international cultural relations', through the support and assistance the EU provides to third countries, and supporting the promotion of the Union and the diverse cultures of EU Member States through 'cultural diplomacy.'

The entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty and the establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS) created a new architecture, which can further enhance the EU's contribution to **international cultural relations**. In recent years, Member States, the European Parliament and civil society representatives have requested a more coordinated EU approach to international cultural relations.

As a party to the 2005 **UNESCO Convention** on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions, the EU is committed to promoting the diversity of cultural expression as part of its international cultural relations.

Moreover, cultural and creative industries represent around **3 % of the global GDP and 30 million jobs**. **In the EU alone, these industries account for over 7 million jobs**. Culture can help promote job creation and competitiveness both inside the EU and beyond its borders. It is one of the important sectors promoted as part of the EU's development cooperation.

Europe's cultural relations with other countries are already strong. In line with requests from the Council and the Parliament, **coordinated EU action, based on 'smart complementarity'**, can contribute to strengthening these ties by creating synergies, pooling resources, facilitating cooperation and providing more visibility to these cultural exchanges and actions.

CONTENT: this Joint Communication proposes an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations that focuses on **advancing cultural cooperation** with partner countries across three main strands: supporting culture as an engine for sustainable social and economic development; promoting culture and intercultural dialogue for peaceful inter-community relations; reinforcing cooperation on cultural heritage. In pursuing these objectives, **the EU's International Cultural Relations will contribute to making the EU a stronger global actor**.

First, the proposed **guiding principles** for EU action aim to ensure that EU action in this area promotes human rights, diversity, inter-cultural dialogue while respecting subsidiarity and complementarity and retaining policy coherence by promoting culture within existing partnership frameworks.

The second pillar proposed three main strands to provide a focus for advancing cultural cooperation with partner countries, including:

Strand 1 -Supporting culture as an engine for social and economic development:

- *Supporting the development of cultural policies:* the EU should help partner countries incorporate culture in national policies. The EU works to advance the ratification and implementation of the

2005 UNESCO Convention by deepening policy dialogues with partner countries and strengthening systems of governance. The EU proposes **sharing experience** with enlargement and neighbourhood countries.

- ***Strengthening cultural and creative industries***: the EU can share expertise on further developing relevant skills and a sound regulatory framework. The Commission suggests promoting the creation of creative hubs and clusters through: (i) the co-funding of the **Asia-Europe Foundation**; (ii) support for a project to develop clusters in the cultural and creative industries in the Southern Mediterranean; (iii) support for an action under the [Creative Europe](#) programme to develop a European Network of Creative Hubs; (iv) an EU pilot project is supporting networking between **young creative and cultural entrepreneurs** from the EU and third countries.
- ***Supporting the role of local authorities in partner countries***: the EU's approach is based on: (i) **innovative partnerships**: funded under the [Development Cooperation Instrument](#) (DCI), this initiative with local authorities has a special focus on least developed countries including fragile democratic contexts or countries where cultural rights are threatened; (ii) support cultural **city twinning**, notably with Latin America; (iii) share capitals of culture to enhance cultural heritage; (iv) support to municipalities in developing urban strategies for the rehabilitation of **historic towns**.

Strand 2 - Promoting culture and inter-cultural dialogue for peaceful inter-community relations: inter-cultural dialogue, including inter-religious dialogue, can help promote the building of fair, peaceful and inclusive societies that value cultural diversity and respect for human rights.

In this area, the following is suggested:

support cooperation amongst cultural operators: (i) by encouraging participation in Creative Europe; (ii) by promoting culture within the Eastern Partnership;

fostering Peace-building through inter-cultural dialogue through: (i) an Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP); (ii) youth inter-cultural dialogue; (iii) training for observers of election observations missions and staff to be deployed in civilian stabilisation missions; (iv) promoting cultural rights, including local identity and indigenous rights, as well as the role of cultural rights defenders.

Strand 3 - Reinforcing cooperation on cultural heritage: cultural heritage is fragile and often threatened by natural disasters, man-made destruction such as wars, looting and pillaging, sometimes motivated by sectarian hatred.

The Commission intends to:

- present a **legislative proposal to regulate the import into the EU of cultural goods**. It will consider a wider response to combatting terrorist finance via illicit trafficking in cultural goods – whatever the country of provenance;
- contribute to international efforts, led by UNESCO, to set up a **rapid reaction mechanism** for the protection of cultural heritage sites.

The third pillar proposes a strategic EU approach to cultural diplomacy, including enhanced European cooperation (notably between EU Member States and EU Delegations) and inter-cultural exchanges to promote the diverse cultures of the EU.

A cultural diplomacy platform, established in February 2016 and funded by the Partnership Instrument (PI), will issue advice on cultural policy, facilitate networking, and carry out activities with cultural stakeholders, Member States and EU delegations.