

Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Culture and Education adopted the own-initiative report by Elmar BROK (EPP, DE) and Silvia COSTA (S&D, IT) on towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations.

Members recalled that the EU is an important actor in international politics playing an ever-increasing role in world affairs. It states that culture has an intrinsic value, and the EU's experience has shown that cultural exchanges can serve to promote its external objectives and as a powerful bridge between people of different ethnic, religious and social backgrounds.

In this regard, Members considered that **culture should become an essential part of the political dialogue with third countries**, and that there is a need to systematically integrate culture into projects and programmes.

Objectives: Members welcomed the joint communication (proposed by the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy) which offers an overview of all instruments, actions, initiatives, programmes and projects supported or implemented by the EU and its Member States that have culture as a common denominator. They called for the development of an effective **EU strategy for international cultural relations**.

While recognising that while principles of subsidiarity and proportionality have to be respected in the field of culture, Members suggested that each Member State could launch joint actions together with the EU to highlight a different EU country each year by means of, e.g., exhibitions and coproductions, with a view to **increasing the visibility** of their actions and initiatives abroad.

Governance and tools: Members urged the Commission, in the next multiannual financial framework, to provide for a **budget line dedicated to supporting international cultural relations in existing programmes** and future calls, especially in the next generation of programmes on culture and education.

They proposed the creation of a **dedicated EU programme on international mobility and exchanges** especially for young cultural and creative professionals and artists. In this context, they proposed that alumni and former beneficiaries of Erasmus and other mobility educational and volunteering programmes should be encouraged to make use of their intercultural skills and competences to the benefit of others.

They also called on the Commission and the EEAS to include international cultural relations in international cooperation instruments and programmes in a horizontal way, and to **strengthen the impact of the cultural dimension in international relations** by including the cultural dimension systematically in negotiations and in association agreements.

The Commission is also urged to strengthen the international dimension of Erasmus+, Creative Europe, Europe for Citizens and Horizon 2020.

Members stressed that **Parliament should play an active role in promoting culture in the EU's external action**, including through its information and liaison offices.

People-to-people approach: Members welcomed the proposal of the joint communication to **shift from a top-down showcasing approach to a people-to-people (P2P) approach**, stressing processes of co-creation and co-production in cultural and creative industries. Members considered that **culture should reach all citizens**.

Members welcomed initiatives by the Commission to promote peer-to-peer learning for young cultural entrepreneurs, such as the Med Culture programme, or to support initiatives in training in intercultural relations, such as More Europe.

They advocated measures to make it as easy as possible for third countries to participate in EU cultural activities such as the European Capital of Culture and the Lux Prize and recalled that digital tools, technological platforms such as *Europeana*, and cultural networks can play a crucial role in reaching larger audiences and disseminating best practices.

They called for improved visibility and better dissemination of the EU's and the Member States' activities in the field of culture at international level, including through the setting up common guidelines¹ and by reaching out to target audiences in their local languages.

They also called for the **creation of a cultural visa programme**, along the lines of the existing Scientific Visa Programme, for third-country nationals, artists and other professionals in the cultural field with a view to fostering cultural relations and eliminating obstacles to mobility in the cultural sector.

EU Global Strategy: Members highlighted the important role of culture in EU external policy as a **soft power tool, a catalyst for peacekeeping, stability and reconciliation**, and as an engine for sustainable socio-economic and human development.

Even though they praised the fact that the EU Global Strategy highlights the importance of intercultural and interreligious dialogue in enhancing mutual understanding, they regretted that **the intrinsic value of culture and art as restraints against radicalism and terrorism** is not mentioned. They called on the VP/HR to give a specific role to cultural issues in the implementation road map of the EU Global Strategy.

Members also called on the Commission to step up its cooperation with international organisations such as the United Nations, UNESCO, Interpol, the World Customs Organisation and the International Council of Museums in order to strengthen the fight against trafficking in cultural goods that can serve to finance criminal activities, including the financing of terrorist organisations.

The report called for international cultural relations to be strengthened in discussions on 'migration' and refugee policies. It called on the Commission and the EEAS to foster cultural relations with the EU's direct neighbours with a view to promoting concrete actions aimed at stimulating intercultural dialogue.

Lastly, Members stressed that culture should be a **bridge for mutual understanding** with a view to living together in greater harmony.