



Procedure file

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Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations		
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European Parliament	

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06/10/2016	Referral to joint committee announced in Parliament		
30/05/2017	Vote in committee		
13/06/2017	Committee report tabled for plenary	A8-0220/2017	Summary
04/07/2017	Debate in Parliament		
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Committee draft report		PE599.563	22/02/2017	EP	
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Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations

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.

Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations

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 and the Member States activities in the field of culture at international level, including through the setting up of 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.

Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations

The European Parliament adopted by 462 votes to 137, with 58 abstentions, a resolution on entitled Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations

Parliament recalled that the EU is an important actor in international politics playing an ever-increasing role in world affairs. It stated that culture has an intrinsic value, and the EUs 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, Parliament 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: Parliament 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. It called for the development of an effective EU strategy for international cultural relations.

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Governance and tools: Parliament 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.

It 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, Members 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.

The Commission is called on to develop the cultural tourism dimension by, for example, drafting and exchanging thematic programmes and best practices.

Parliament 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.

Parliament called for the allocation of appropriate human and financial resources in the EEAS for cultural international relations, empowering the EEAS with a catalytic leadership role within the different EU services dealing with the international cultural relations.

People-to-people approach: Parliament 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. Culture should reach all citizens according to Parliament.

It 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.

It advocated measures to make it as easy as possible for third countries to participate further in cross-border and joint projects such as the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.

Parliament recognised young people are one of the main target groups in the EU and partner countries and that performing arts, visual arts, street arts, music, theatre, film, literature and social media, and digital platforms in general, are the best channels for reaching and engaging them.

Parliament 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.

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