

To Make the Silos Dance

Mainstreaming Culture into EU Policy

Gijs de Vries

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*Ja! Diesem Sinne bin ich ganz ergeben,
Das ist der Weisheit letzter Schluss:
Nur der verdient sich Freiheit wie das Leben
Der täglich sie erobern muss.*

*This is the best wisdom that I own,
The best that mankind ever knew:
Freedom and life are earned by those alone
Who conquer them each day anew.¹*

1. Walter Kaufman, tr., Goethe's Faust: Part One and Sections from Part Two (New York: Anchor Books, 1990, p. 469)

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Executive summary

There are three main reasons why culture matters to Europe and why it should figure more prominently in EU policy. Culture matters intrinsically; it is central to a life worth living. Culture also matters as a central component of our societies and economies. Finally, culture matters existentially, as a principal but vulnerable dimension of our common identity as Europeans.

The EU does excellent work in the field of culture. The European Year of Cultural Heritage has been a resounding success; prize-winning films supported by the Media Programme have moved audiences in and beyond Europe; the European Capital of Culture distinction helps local communities to boost their revenues and reputation; the Europa Nostra prizes are recognized far and wide as a European label of distinction; EU subsidies promote innovative cultural collaboration and research.

The EU should build on these results. We live in a time of growing intolerance and increasing nationalism. Europe's social fabric is fraying at the edges. To restore a sense of unity, a sense of trust and direction, and to re-connect minorities and majorities we need to imagine a common future. And to imagine that common, European future we must harness the power of culture.

The **Green Deal** challenges Europeans to change the way they live and the way they think. Such transformational, cultural change needs artists and cultural organizations to play their full part. The EU should enable the cultural world to help raise awareness of the need for change and to motivate and empower people to contribute personally. It should also step up work with the cultural sector to build its **digital** maturity and resilience.

Across the EU, 7.2 million people work in cultural employment – 3.6% of total employment. Cities around the world are mobilizing culture as a driver of sustainable urban development and social cohesion. To promote the **creative economy** the EU should make it a priority to promote the arts, the creative industries and heritage at local and regional level, and to revive sustainable cultural tourism.

Culture also matters to Europe's standing and influence in the world. As a pillar of the multilateral system the EU is well-placed to propose imaginative, path-breaking **international cultural partnerships** among equals that contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals.

The world is witnessing a global trend to roll back human rights, close civic spaces and silence critical voices. A joint approach by the European External Action Service (EEAS), the Commission and Member States to **freedom of cultural expression** is needed to stem the tide. Within Europe culture's power to bring people together should be better integrated into EU policy against racism, antisemitism and Islamophobia. As a beacon of **democracy** the European Union needs to scale up its efforts to defend and promote media freedom, and to speak out when foreign powers block access to European cultural content while interfering with cultural freedoms in Europe.

To harness the power of culture in these and other areas the EU needs a **comprehensive strategy**. Opportunities for synergy with other policy domains – from the Green Deal to economic and foreign policy – should be systematically explored, and culture should be integrated in the Commission's flagship strategies. It is time to connect the stove-pipes. It is time for a Europe of culture.

Introduction

In 2020 Culture Action Europe (CAE), the European Cultural Foundation (ECF) and Europa Nostra (EN) proposed a Cultural Deal for Europe: a transversal, overarching framework that should demonstrate the EU's political commitment to place culture at the heart of the European project. Together, European cultural organizations called on the EU to commit to an umbrella strategy for reviving and reimagining Europe through culture. They proposed to devote at least 2% of the European Recovery and Resilience Funds to culture, to include culture in Europe's implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, and to make sure that funding for culture is mainstreamed into all European programmes and actions.¹

ECF commissioned this discussion paper as part of its contribution to the Cultural Deal Initiative. Its purpose is to invite reflection on the role of culture as a horizontal dimension of EU policy, complementary to its role as a policy area in its own right. Culture, the paper proposes, should be included in each of the six priority areas of the European Commission.²

There are three main reasons why culture matters to Europe and why it should figure more prominently in EU policy. Culture matters intrinsically; it is central to a life worth living. Culture also matters as a central component of our societies and economies. Finally, culture matters existentially, as a principal but vulnerable dimension of our common identity as Europeans.

We can marvel at Chartres Cathedral or smile at The Good Soldier Svejk; we can relish Europe's regional gastronomy or enjoy its endless variety in folk traditions, from Finland's *kansallispuvut* to Bulgaria's *nosiya*; dance to the tune of the Greek *bouzouki*, the Irish *clárseach* or the Spanish *gaita*; we can soar with Bach or Pärt into the sublime, in the company of Van Eyck's musical angels, or we can let Euripides, Hieronymus Bosch or Paul Celan guide us into the abyss of the human mind. Art uplifts and challenges, it transports and transforms, it opens windows onto the world and onto ourselves. It can move us to the depth of

our being and it can simply be fun. Without art, cultural heritage and the humanities our lives would be dim and dull.

From theatre to fashion, from storytelling to film, the cultural and creative sectors employ 7.2 million Europeans and make up 3.6% of the European economy, not counting the indirect economic benefits. Cultural tourism makes our rural communities thrive; all across Europe creative industries regenerate urban communities and attract much needed investment. Culture brings people together; it is an indispensable force of social cohesion and wellbeing.

Third, culture is at the heart of our identity as Europeans. The European Union's founding values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, are deeply rooted in antiquity, humanism, and Europe's spiritual traditions. Whatever differences may exist between us, these are our common values, and they are essentially cultural values. What is more, so are the values on which the EU's flourishing depends, the qualities needed to make us live together in harmony: solidarity, fairness, courtesy, kindness, respect for the truth, and a sense of humour.

Today these values are at risk from religious extremists and unscrupulous political entrepreneurs, from sabotage by foreign governments, and from our own occasional indifference or reluctance to uphold them. As Giuliano da Empoli wrote: "For years, the only people who have been talking passionately about Europe are its enemies. If the pro-Europeans want to be able to fight against their vision, the first thing to do is to stop being boring, by stepping outside the established framework, even if it means risking controversy."³

Culture resonates with Europeans. Every year the European Heritage Days and the activities of the European Capitals of Culture prove hugely popular. During the European Year of Cultural

1. CAE, ECF, and Europa Nostra, Joint Statement: A Cultural Deal for Europe (2020), <https://cultureactioneurope.org/news/a-cultural-deal-for-europe/>

2. This paper contains the author's personal views

3. Giuliano da Empoli, Seven ideas for a European Cultural Recovery Plan (2020), https://legrandcontinent.eu/fr/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/07/GEG_culture_recovery_plan.pdf

Heritage (2018) over 6.6 million people took part in more than 11,700 events organized across all Member States and neighbouring countries. Asked what issues most create a feeling of community between European citizens, a plurality of Europeans answer: “culture” – more than answer “economy”.⁴

The EU should build on these results. To generate a sense of common endeavour the EU must take a fresh look at its role in bringing Europeans together, and thus at the role of cultural policy. Culture and creativity – our living cultural heritage – can inspire transformational change, but not as long as cultural policy is treated as a sleepy political backwater, the Cinderella of public policy. Artists and cultural organizations can help to deliver the Green Deal by raising awareness and by motivating and empowering people to embrace change. The creative economy can be a powerful driver of Europe’s recovery post-Covid. Cultural projects can foster inclusion of migrants and refugees. Joint cultural initiatives based on partnership and mutual respect can be a cornerstone of Europe’s future relations with Africa, Asia, and Latin America. By fostering respect and understanding between Europeans art and heritage can counter bigotry and prejudice.

This paper offers some suggestions on how to translate this holistic vision of cultural policy into action. Its focus is on the six priority areas of the Von der Leyen Commission; it is neither comprehensive nor exhaustive. Although some of the proposals are primarily addressed to EU policy-makers (Commission, Parliament, Council, Committee of the Regions), the paper aims to invite a wider discussion about European cooperation in the field of culture. To secure our common future we must first dare to imagine it; to realize the European dream we must also be ready to act – as individuals, as organizations, and as institutions.

The paper’s proposals are ambitious, but they meet three tests: they do not require new EU competences, they can be implemented within the current budgetary framework, and they do not need additional human resources. What they do require, however, is leadership. Leadership from the European institutions that need to aim higher; and leadership from Europe’s cultural organizations that are invited to work closer together, and to think and act more in European terms.

It is time for the European Commission to make its silos dance. It is time for Europe to free the power of culture.

4. Eurobarometer 93, Summer 2020, <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2262>

The European Green Deal – why culture matters

Humanity is in a race against time to stave off the catastrophic consequences of climate change.

In 2015 world leaders promised to keep the rise in global temperature to within 1.5 degrees of the pre-industrial baseline (Paris Agreement, UNFCCC). That same year all 193 UN Member States signed up to Agenda 2030 and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) to end hunger and poverty, preserve the planet, and "leave no-one behind."

Results so far fall short of the mark. The world is "way off track", UN Secretary-General António Guterres has repeatedly warned. In fact, even before Covid -19 no EU country was on track to meet all SDGs by 2030. Europe's worst performance is in respect of SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 14 (Life Below Water), and SDG 15 (Life on Land).¹

Climate change poses a major threat to cultural expression and diversity. It deeply affects both tangible heritage and intangible heritage. Inundation, soil erosion, drought, and heat waves risk causing irreparable damage to urban areas, historic buildings, monuments, landscapes, books and manuscripts, works of art, and artifacts. In the EU, to name just one example, 37 of the 49 World Heritage Sites on the Mediterranean coast are at risk of flooding.² Climate change poses a similar threat of irretrievable loss to intangible cultural heritage, such as oral traditions, minority languages, local knowledge, and traditional skills – and thereby to cultural rights.³

The EU, through its Green Deal, aims to make Europe climate neutral by 2050 (no net greenhouse gas emissions) and to lead global efforts to limit global warming to 1.5° Celsius.

This global, systemic transformation is a Herculean task which will take all of society to deliver. By far the most difficult challenge will be

to change public attitudes. To decouple economic growth from resource use we must fundamentally change the way we consume, produce, travel, work, live, and above all, think. Such transformational change represents a cultural challenge of unprecedented proportions; one that requires creativity, imagination and innovation, as well as empathy and solidarity. The Green Deal challenges each and everyone of us to change our hearts, our thinking, and our behaviour. Europeans, in other words, need to change their cultural habits.

For cultural transformation of such magnitude to happen artists and cultural organizations will have to play their full part. First of all, cultural organizations and enterprises will need to lead by example: they must green themselves. Many are already doing so, but many more still need to engage fully. Culture's second, and perhaps most important contribution lies in its unique capacity to change hearts and minds. The arts may operate as spaces of possibility that facilitate both reflection and response.⁴ The cultural sector can play a crucial enabling role by raising awareness of the need for change, and by motivating and empowering people to contribute personally. The cultural sector is part of the problem; it is also a crucial part of the solution.

Various cultural actors are already heavily involved in greening and awareness raising, and with considerable success. Numerous others, however, encounter difficulties. The cultural sector is highly diverse; it is also dominated by small companies and organizations. This does not facilitate the sharing of good practices, let alone mutual learning across national boundaries. The economic fragility of the sector also plays a role. Many cultural actors find it difficult to keep their heads above water, so they often have little time to familiarize themselves with public policy developments. Finding out about the work of the European Union is even more of a challenge – as is navigating the maze of EU subsidy rules,

1. SDSN and IEEP, Europe Sustainable Development Report 2020, <https://ieep.eu/publications/europe-sustainable-development-report-2020>

2. Lena Reimann, Athanasios Vafeidis, Sally Brown, Jochen Hinkel, Richard Tol, 'Mediterranean UNESCO World Heritage at risk from coastal flooding and erosion due to sea-level rise' (2018), <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-018-06645-9>

3. Report by the UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Karima Bennouna, on the cultural and cultural rights dimensions of the current climate emergency (2020), <https://www.undocs.org/en/A/75/298>

4. Diego Galafassi et al., 'Raising the temperature: the arts of a warming planet', Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability (2018), 31, pp 71-79, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1877343517300714>

usually in English. To many that game is just not worth the candle.

To unleash the power of culture to drive the Green Deal, the EU will therefore have to reach out purposefully to the cultural sector. Generic measures do not suffice; a targeted approach is needed.

The EU's commitments under the UN Sustainable Development Goals offer a natural way forward. Under SDG 13(1) the EU promised to "strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries"; under SDG 13(3) it agreed to "improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning." To deliver on these two commitments, strengthening resilience and adaptation and awareness raising, the EU needs to engage the power of culture. EU governments, the European Commission, and the European Investment Bank should aim to (a) support cultural actors in **strengthening their resilience and adaptive capacity** (SDG 13.1) and (b) mobilize the cultural sector's unique potential to **raise public awareness** of climate change and empower people to contribute to solutions (SDG 13.3).

Resilience and adaptation

Like other sectors, the cultural sector needs to pull its weight in countering climate change. The average film alone (budget over \$70m) generates around 3,000 tons of CO₂ from transport, electricity and heating, and diesel generators.⁵ Pre-Covid the festival industry generated 100 kilotons of CO₂ and 23,000 tons of waste in the UK alone.⁶ The annual global carbon footprint of the visual arts is estimated at 70 million tons CO₂.⁷ Museums, theatres, libraries, and other creative spaces also contribute to pollution, waste, and global warming.

Fortunately, some cultural sectors have embarked on action to reduce their carbon footprint. In

an effort coordinated by the European Theatre Convention, major theatres have promised to reduce their carbon emissions to zero by 2030. Similar initiatives are under way in the performing arts (IETM), the music industry (REVERB), the film industry (ARUP), the festival industry (A Greener Festival), architecture (ACE), museums (NEMO) and the visual arts (Julie's Bicycle).

Welcome as these initiatives are, they also suffer from shortcomings. Some cultural organizations and institutions have adopted holistic climate mitigation and adaptation policies, but most have yet to do so.⁸ Levels of transparency also differ: of the organizations and institutions with climate strategies not all report the results regularly and publicly. Efforts tend to be silo-based; there is, on balance, little coordination or mutual learning across the various disciplines, whether at national or European level. And opportunities for EU financial support are often left unexplored.

Greening can be costly, so many cultural organizations need financial help. Action to address climate change is a priority in the EU's post-Covid recovery strategy. The Recovery and Resilience Facility will make up to €723.8bn in grants and loans available to support reforms and investments in the Member States. Member States have been invited to allocate 37% of expenditure to climate investments.

Some Member States have opted to earmark some of this massive European support for the greening of the cultural sector. Austria, for instance, will create an investment fund for climate-friendly cultural businesses; France will launch an ecological transition fund for cultural sectors and heritage renovations; Greece intends to protect monuments and archaeological sites from climate change; Italy will support energy efficiency in cinemas, theatres and museums; and Romania will use its Recovery and Resilience Funds to pay for energy efficiency in museums. Unfortunately the Commission did not invite EU Member States to include the cultural sector in the national Recovery and Resilience Plans, as cultural

5. ARUP, A Screen New Deal: a route map to sustainable film production (2020), <https://www.arup.com/perspectives/publications/research/section/a-screen-new-deal-a-route-map-to-sustainable-film-production>

6. Powerful Thinking, The Show Must Go On Report (2015), <https://www.powerful-thinking.org.uk/resources/the-show-must-go-on-report/>

7. Julie's Bicycle, The Art of Zero (2021), <https://juliesbicycle.com/news/the-art-of-zero-report/>

8. In the Netherlands, researchers found that it is "still quite rare" for cultural organizations to have an integral sustainability policy. Boekmanstichting and Bureau 8080, Duurzaamheid in de culturele sector (2020), <https://www.boekman.nl/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Duurzaamheid-in-de-culturele-sector-2020-Inspiratie-voor-toekomstig-beleid.pdf>

organizations had urged⁹, and most governments appear not to have allocated funding to the greening of culture.¹⁰

Looking towards the future, the EU should ensure that any lessons learned in supporting the sustainability of the cultural sector will be shared across borders. The Commission should invite Member States to share their national experience and identify good practices. Any findings should be widely shared with the cultural sector.

At 3% of the European economy the cultural sector is too important to be sidelined by the Green Deal. Due to the sector's structural characteristics many cultural players face hurdles in reaching out to the EU, so Brussels will have to reach out to the sector. The Commission needs to **develop a concerted approach, in dialogue with the sector, to fully harness the power of culture in the Green Deal and the Circular Economy Action Plan**. Such outreach would be in line with the European Parliament's call to 'green' Erasmus+, Creative Europe, and the European Solidarity Corps.¹¹ It would also be a fitting response to the Greek Government's appeal for heritage protection to be mainstreamed into climate change mitigation and adaptation.¹²

Fortunately, several building blocks are already in place. The global Climate Heritage Network supports **arts, culture and heritage organizations in tackling climate change and achieving the ambitions of the Paris Agreement**. ICOMOS and Europa Nostra have proposed ways for the EU to put Europe's

shared heritage at the heart of the Green Deal.¹³ Such an **integrated plan for the greening of heritage** would allow the EU to tap the energy of the thousands of archaeologists, architects, historians, engineers, scientists, teachers and scholars, carriers of indigenous and local knowledge and heritage advocates, whose talents have not yet been mobilized to counter climate change.¹⁴

One welcome initiative would be for the EU to develop an integral approach to cultural landscapes: heritage that is both natural and cultural. Fifty such mixed – and often fragile – sites in Europe are World Heritage Sites, from the Wachau in Austria to the Kernavė Archaeological Site in Lithuania. Seven other sites (in Italy, Portugal, and Spain) have been recognized as Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems.¹⁵ To preserve and manage these cultural landscapes is not only a cultural and environmental necessity. It is also a socio-economic imperative: sustainable cultural tourism can be a lifeline for rural communities. Fully 90% of the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes cross rural areas.¹⁶ In 2019 the Commission published a study on the interdependence between natural and cultural heritage.¹⁷ It would make sense for this interdependence to be factored into EU policy, as proposed by cultural experts.¹⁸ The recent Long Term Vision for the EU's rural areas announces 31 initiatives, but none of them concerns cultural heritage or sustainable cultural tourism.¹⁹

9. Culture Action Europe and 109 other networks and associations, 'Make Culture Central in the EU Recovery', Open Letter' (2020), <https://cultureactioneurope.org/projects/culturaldealeu-campaign/earmark-2-for-culture/>

10. State on 15.10.2021

11. European Parliament, Resolution on effective measures to 'green' Erasmus+, Creative Europe and the European Solidarity Corps (Farreng Report, 2020), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0211_EN.html

12. Government of Greece, Addressing climate change impacts on cultural and natural heritage (2019), <https://ccich.gr/the-proposal-of-greece-on-the-pre-summit-event-addressing-climate-change-impacts-on-cultural-and-natural-heritage/>

13. ICOMOS and Europa Nostra, European Cultural Heritage Green Paper (2021), <https://www.europanostra.org/putting-europes-shared-heritage-at-the-heart-of-the-european-green-deal/>

14. ICOMOS, The Future of Our Pasts (2019), <https://www.icomos.org/en/77-articles-en-francais/59522-icomos-releases-future-of-our-pasts-report-to-increase-engagement-of-cultural-heritage-in-climate-action>

15. FAO, Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS), <https://www.fao.org/giahs/giahsaroundtheworld/designated-sites/europe-and-central-asia/en/>

16. European Commission, Cultural tourism (n.d.), https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/cultural_en

17. European Commission, Natural and cultural heritage in Europe: Working together within the Natura 2000 network (2019), <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/451f788f-de79-11e9-9c4e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

18. Voices of Culture, The role of culture in non-urban areas of the European Union (2020), <https://voicesofculture.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/VoC-Brainstorming-Report-Role-of-Culture-in-Non-Urban-Areas-of-the-EU.pdf>

19. European Commission, Annex to the Communication on A long-term Vision for the EU's rural areas (2021), https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/strategy/strategy_documents/documents/ltvra-c2021-345-annex_en.pdf

Another way forward would be to build on the Bauhaus Initiative. The New European Bauhaus aims to accelerate the green transition in sectors such as construction, furniture, and fashion. Inspired by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, it aims at creating a lifestyle that matches sustainability with good design, that needs less carbon and that is inclusive and affordable for all.²⁰ The main focus of the New European Bauhaus is to showcase good practices through prizes allocated to projects in 10 categories, including mobilization of culture and arts and preservation of cultural heritage. The initiative is imaginative, innovative, and inspiring, and has already attracted much interest, including in political circles.²¹ However, with a budget limited to €85 million the New European Bauhaus is not designed to support sustainable urban development across the board.

In cities all across Europe – indeed, around the world – the power of culture is being harnessed to generate jobs and growth, regenerate neighbourhoods, strengthen social cohesion, and bring joy, inspiration and fulfilment. The EU’s Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor shows how well 190 cities in 30 European countries perform on a range of measures describing the ‘Cultural Vibrancy’, the ‘Creative Economy’ and the ‘Enabling Environment’ of a city.²² It shows that culture is fundamental to the shift from unsustainable to sustainable development. The city of Katowice, for example, is changing its focus from heavy industry and coal production to the cultural and creative industries, notably music. Bologna promotes sustainable cultural and creative entrepreneurship to breathe new life into deprived neighbourhoods. The Dutch city of Eindhoven has built an ecologically sustainable campus to host companies and organizations in the fields of arts, media, and design. Culture, the European Environment Agency forcefully

concludes, is “an essential component of sustainability transitions.”²³

As the Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor shows, culture and creativity are central to urban well-being, sustainability and competitiveness. Elsewhere in the world, cities that belong to UNESCO’s Creative Cities Network show similar results.²⁴ The EU should build on these findings. It should extend the Bauhaus Initiative and include it in a **comprehensive strategy on culture and sustainability in local and regional communities**. Cultural organizations, companies and institutions should be empowered to contribute to urban and rural development and to participatory dialogue and planning around climate change mitigation and adaptation. A **Culture for Climate Coalition**, modeled after the Education for Climate coalition, should seek to **co-create a participatory community** to support the changes needed for a climate-neutral society.

Funding could be provided in several ways. EU cohesion policy contributes to climate expenditure with 100% of the Just Transition Fund, and at least 37% of the Cohesion Fund and 30% of the European Regional Development Fund. These funds can support the National Energy and Climate Plans based on Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action (‘Governance Regulation’) and help alleviate the social-economic cost of the green transition. The Creative Europe Programme could step up its support.²⁵ Additional funding could come from the Life Programme, the Creative Europe Programme, the European Investment Bank, and Horizon 2020, including its proposed mission to create 100 climate-neutral cities by 2030.²⁶ What is needed is an initiative that ties these different strands together with the Urban Agenda in a

20. European Commission, New European Bauhaus (2021),

https://europa.eu/new-european-bauhaus/system/files/2021-09/COM%282021%29_573_EN_ACT.pdf

21. The German Greens, for instance, propose to create a national fund for aesthetics and sustainability. Bündnis 90 – Die Grünen, Bundestagswahlprogramm 2021,

https://cms.gruene.de/uploads/documents/Wahlprogramm-DIE-GRUENEN-Bundestagswahl-2021_barrierefrei.pdf

22. Joint Research Centre, The Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor (2019), <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/641f21a3-e8e4-11e9-9c4e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-238335077>

23. European Environment Agency, Urban Sustainability in Europe (2020),

<https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/urban-sustainability-in-europe-what>

24. UNESCO Creative Cities Network,

25. Only 10.5% of the Creative Europe budget is devoted to the green transition. European Commission, Creative Europe Monitoring Report 2019,

<https://ec.europa.eu/culture/news/european-commission-presents-creative-europe-monitoring-report-2019>

26. Integrating projects such as ARCH, HYPERION and SHELTER, and building on the results of previous projects such as ROCK

comprehensive EU strategy on culture and local and regional sustainability.

Awareness raising and empowerment

Changing public policies is one thing; changing the way people think and act is another. The Green Deal is primarily about policy; the green transition requires all of us to change our habits and lifestyles. The challenge is not only political, it is first and foremost a personal one. In essence the green transition is a cultural transition of unprecedented magnitude.

Artists and other creators and curators of culture are absolutely fundamental to make this cultural revolution succeed. Art and culture can help us to visualize the challenges and dilemmas and help us to imagine the solutions. Art invites us to address our worries and our fears; artists can also encourage and empower us to embrace and shape the necessary changes. Libraries, museums, galleries and monuments can provide spaces and opportunities for reflection and response. On-line as well as off-line, cultural agoras invite people to share their perspectives, find common ground, and design joint solutions. This is another powerful argument for including culture in Europe's Green Deal.

The world of art is already ablaze with initiatives to imagine and shape a more sustainable world. At the 2021 Venice Biennale many contributions revolved around climate change. Italy's pavilion, for instance, focused on urban resilience; Japan invited visitors to rethink sustainability and reuse in architecture; and the UAE presented environmentally friendly cement made of recycled waste brine. Vienna's Biennale for Change (2021) entirely revolved around climate care, with multifaceted contributions from art, design, architecture, urbanism, science and technology. The Austrian DigitalArt4Climate Initiative empowers young artists to create blockchain-powered digital artwork that will inspire the world to take action on climate change.²⁷ In Ireland, the Creative Ireland Programme listed 41 cultural and creative projects and initiatives to engage the public on climate change, from visual art and festivals to

performances, public art conferences, literature, and film.²⁸ Examples are too numerous to list.

Art, heritage and creativity are among Europe's greatest strengths – strengths the EU should build on. It should support artists and cultural organizations to raise public awareness by local storytelling (“Every place has a climate story; every climate story has a human face”), and to amplify marginalized voices, including from cultural minorities. It should work with the visual and performing arts and with cultural sites such as libraries, museums, archives, monuments, schools, and cultural routes to provide access to climate education and to empower people to develop their own solutions.

The European Green Deal should mobilize culture's capacity to raise awareness and empower people to create a sustainable world.

External dimension

Climate change puts cultural assets at grave risk not only in Europe but throughout the world. The risks to the culturally, socially and economically important World Heritage Sites are only the tip of the iceberg; climate-induced poverty directly threatens the livelihood of millions – particularly women and young people – who depend on the formal and informal cultural economy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

In their work outside the EU several national cultural institutes in Europe already focus on culture and climate change. Since 2018 a joint programme by the Goethe-Institut and the Prince Claus Fund (NL) supports international initiatives such as Take Me to the River, 15 interdisciplinary artistic projects about climate change from the river deltas in South Asia and the marshes of the Tigris and Euphrates to the rainforests of South America.²⁹ The Danish Cultural Institute has registered 41 projects that support SDG 13 (Climate Action), including in the Baltic Region and in the Eastern Neighbourhood. In Mongolia the Nagoonbaatar International Eco Art Festival has been selected as a EUNIC-European Spaces of Culture project, and EUNIC has encouraged its

27. <https://forkast.news/un-associated-nft-art-project-builds-on-polkadot/>

28. Creative Ireland, Engaging the Public on Climate Change through the Cultural and Creative Sectors, <https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/app/uploads/2019/12/Engaging-the-Public-on-Climate-Change.pdf>

29. Take Me to the River, <https://takemetotheriver.net/>

members to provide more support for the cultural dimension of sustainable development.³⁰

It is clear, however, that the EU could do much more to protect global art and heritage against the ravages of climate change. Concerted action by the Commission, the European Investment Bank (EIB), and the Member States (“Team Europe”) could go a long way to **preserve and promote cultural sustainability around the world**. Art and heritage sustain millions of jobs around the world, including for women and young people. By supporting the role of artists as social influencers the EU and other donors could promote public recognition of the arts and help to generate much-needed revenues for artists and cultural institutions.

Some EU development projects already focus on culture and climate, and the Commission wants the New European Bauhaus to reach out beyond European borders (albeit “over time”) with the aim of spreading its principles of sustainability, inclusion and aesthetics globally. What is needed now is a genuine sense of urgency. There is little time to lose.

Recommendations

Commission

- Develop a concerted approach, in dialogue with the sector, to fully harness the power of culture in the Green Deal, mobilizing culture’s capacity to raise awareness and empower people to create a sustainable world.
- Propose a comprehensive strategy on culture and sustainability in local and regional communities.
- Facilitate the building of a Culture for Climate Coalition to co-create a participatory community to support the changes needed for a climate-neutral society.
- Invite Member States to share their national experiences in greening the cultural sector under the Recovery and Resilience Plans, and identify good practices.
- Together with partners, develop a ‘Team Europe’ approach to preserve and promote cultural sustainability around the world.

30. EUNIC Knowledge Sharing Workshop Report on the cultural dimension of sustainable development (2021), <https://eunicglobal.eu/news/culture-sdgs-report>

A Europe fit for the digital age: the cultural dimension

Digitalization of Europe's economy and society is front and centre in EU policy. Since 2019 the Commission has launched a broad and ambitious agenda. Its key proposals include a Digital Markets Act, a Digital Services Act, a Data Governance Act, a Digital Compass, a Regulation on Artificial Intelligence, a Regulation on Electronic Identification, a Digital Skills Agenda, a Digital Education Action Plan, and a Cybersecurity Strategy. Digital economy packages, co-financed by European institutions and Member States, will be prepared in cooperation with developing and emerging economies outside the EU. Digitalization is a priority in the EU's long-term budget, which contains the Digital Europe Programme (€7.5bn). As digital progress in the Member States has been very uneven, with many countries progressing at a slow pace, the Commission has urged EU governments to include the digital transition as a priority in their Recovery and Resilience Programmes.

In her 2021 State of the Union President Ursula von der Leyen outlined a Path to the Digital Decade, a roadmap to realize the Commission's digital ambitions by 2030. Building on the Digital Compass, which outlined goals and targets, the Commission will propose:

- multi-annual digital decade strategic roadmaps for each Member State, in which they will state their policies in support of the 2030 targets;
- a structured multi-annual framework to address areas of insufficient progress through recommendations and joint commitments between the Commission and the Member States; and
- a mechanism to support the implementation of multi-country projects.

The proposed governance framework foresees a monitoring mechanism based on an improved Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI). The Commission will also produce an annual report on the 'State of the Digital Decade'.

It is impossible to under-estimate the importance of this agenda. In terms of drive, scale, and ambition the Commission's digital strategy is among the most daring the EU has ever seen, comparable only to the Single Market Programme

(1988-1992). Along with the Green Deal, its parallel flagship initiative, the Digital Decade has the potential to transform the way we work, shop, travel, live, entertain, preserve our health, and secure our societies. Its success is critical to ensuring Europe's place in the world. There is no political sovereignty without economic sovereignty, and there can be no economic sovereignty without digital competitiveness.

In fact the stakes are even higher. The world's Orwellian drift towards digital authoritarianism and digital aggression poses a direct threat to the core European values of freedom of expression, privacy, and reasoned engagement with the truth. Censorship, disinformation, hate speech, and electronic surveillance – bulk data interception by governments as well as surveillance capitalism¹ – fuel distrust in democracy, undermine the rule of law, and pose an existential threat to individual liberty. Freedom and fairness are as easy to erode in cyberspace as they are in physical space – perhaps even more so. To defend and promote these values as Europeans is our individual and collective responsibility.

Art and culture find themselves at the centre of this storm. Liberty and tolerance, fairness and respect are in essence cultural values. Shaped and handed down through the generations, from biblical and classical antiquity through the Renaissance and the Enlightenment to the present, they have elicited great art that has delighted and inspired people throughout the world and continues to do so. But when the flame of liberty is extinguished, art dies with it. Art challenges and provokes; it invites us to see the world in a new perspective, to open our hearts and our minds, to think differently. That is precisely why autocrats and despots tend to fear art and the freedom it represents. There is no art without freedom, just as there is no freedom without art. The more cyberspace is allowed to encroach on civil liberties, the more it will become a hostile environment for art. The EU therefore needs an integral strategy to protect and promote digital liberty, beyond the Digital Services Act.

Such an integral strategy is all the more necessary to counter the manifest risks that algorithms and artificial intelligence pose to art and culture. First, algorithms and artificial intelligence

1. Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* (New York: Hachette, 2019)

(AI) often reproduce and even amplify existing biases (racial, gender, or ideational) as algorithm learning depends on data derived from the internet, which is replete with bias. Such biases risk affecting cultural production and consumption. Second, many cultural products are distributed and controlled by algorithms of large platforms (e.g. FANG algorithms). However, their criteria for recommending cultural products are neither transparent nor auditable, and are based mostly on economic factors that benefit the platforms. In other words, unprofitable artists and independent content are most likely to be hidden by the platforms. The use of algorithms in cultural production therefore risks reinforcing homogeneity and standardisation in the creative sectors. Thirdly, female and ethnic minority professionals, or cultural contents that divert from a primarily white and heteronormative worldview, risk remaining invisible and are unlikely to succeed on the major platforms. These structural inequalities directly affect cultural content produced and can intensify existing structural inequalities in CCIs, such as gender or ethnic imbalances.²

That said, the Internet and social media also offer many exiting and welcome new opportunities for culture. Electronic media have opened up countless new ways to produce art, share heritage, and reach out to new audiences at home and abroad. One prime example is Europeana, where people from across the world can access the digital cultural heritage of some 3,000 European libraries, museums, and audiovisual collections. When the Covid-19 pandemic put a stop to physical contacts, digital media proved a life-line for many cultural organizations and artists. Advanced technologies such as 3D, artificial intelligence, augmented reality, and virtual reality offer unparalleled opportunities to (co-) produce new art, to preserve, conserve, restore and research cultural heritage, and to diversity public participation in art. Clearly, digital fitness

and competitiveness is as important to culture as it is to other sectors of society.

But this fitness and competitiveness does not come easy. First of all, access to digital technology is still highly unequal. Only just over half of the world's population is connected to the internet; Africa remains the world's least connected region, with about 28.2% of Internet users³. In Europe, several digital divides persist. In Central and Eastern Europe 36% of the population is unconnected compared to 19% in Western Europe. Across the EU 82% of the urban population has computer access, against only 66% of the rural population. Many EU countries still suffer from a digital usage gender gap as well as a gender employment gap – EU wide women make up only 17% of the ICT work force⁴. As a glass ceiling and other inequities also affect the cultural and creative sectors offline it is imperative for EU policy to promote the digitalization of culture in Europe to directly - and measurably - counter these divides.

Secondly, pockets of excellence notwithstanding, the European cultural sector as a whole is not yet digitally mature. Digital maturity is where digital activity is embedded across an organization as part of the strategic vision and throughout every part of the business, from its creative output and audience outreach to e-commerce.⁵ Many cultural organizations and institutions lack necessary skills, as do many artists, cultural part-timers and freelancers. Understanding of intellectual property and data analysis tends to be low. In Germany, for example, few cultural institutions have developed a digital strategy, including in relation to skills.⁶ France, too, risks falling behind. French cultural, intellectual, and linguistic influence in the world, the Assemblée nationale has warned, is at risk unless the country embraces the digital revolution.⁷

2. Culture Action Europe, private communication, 29.11.2021

3. UNESCO, The African Film Industry: Trends, Challenges and Opportunities for Growth (2021), p. 24,

<https://en.unesco.org/creativity/publications/african-film-industry-trends-challenges>

4. Eleanor Sarpong, The Digital Divide in Europe: Towards meaningful connectivity (2021), https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/Europe/Documents/Events/2021/Meaningful%20Connectivity/01_Sarpong.pdf

5. Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, Culture is Digital (2018), p. 10,

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/687519/TT_v4.pdf

6. Kulturstiftung des Bundes, Kultur Digital (2021),

https://www.kulturstiftung-des-bundes.de/de/projekte/film_und_neue_medien/detail/kultur_digital.html

7. "Nous sommes dans un changement de paradigme complet, et ne sommes pas en position de leadership, il faut avoir l'humilité de l'admettre." Assemblée nationale, Rapport No 1359/2018 (Herbillon/Sylla) sur la diplomatie culturelle et d'influence de la France, p. 102, https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/15/rapports/cion_afetr/l15b1359_rapport-information#

Europe therefore needs a strategy to bring its cultural sector up to speed. The logical starting point would be to establish a horizontal baseline assessment across the entire sector. Next, the Commission should include culture in all EU digital policies and instruments.

This may not be as simple as it seems. Let us look at the two points in turn.

Measuring culture's digital performance

One of the key instruments in the Commission's toolbox is a seemingly bureaucratic instrument, the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI). DESI is a composite index of indicators about Europe's digital performance. It contains targets and tracks progress in five areas: connectivity, human capital, use of Internet, integration of digital technology, and digital public services. Targets include the percentage of European companies that have taken up cloud computing, big data, and artificial intelligence; the number of small and medium-sized enterprises that have reached at least a basic level of digital intensity, and the number of innovative businesses and scale-ups.⁸

This index is not just a technical tool: it is a key instrument to measure and steer Europe's digital readiness. It will be important to ensure that the cultural sector, in all its diversity – from performing art and other intangible heritage to museums and monuments; from crafts to architecture and design – is fully covered in the index. Gaps in coverage may mean that gaps in the cultural sector's digital performance will be overlooked. That this risk is real is illustrated by the recent Commission analysis of enterprises with at least a basic level of digital intensity. The study concludes that the digital and creative and cultural industrial ecosystems are already close to the target of 90% (represented by the NACE groups “Publishing activities; films & television, sound & music publishing, broadcasting”; “Telecommunications”; “Computer programming, consultancy and related activities, information services”).⁹ However, this analysis is limited to the creative industries. It excludes

vast sways of the cultural sector, from theatres to museums. The EU needs to ensure the digital future of the entire cultural and creative sector, not just parts of it.

As the saying goes: what gets measured gets done; what does not get measured gets neglected. EU Member States do not all collect cultural statistics in the same way. Differences also persist between EUROSTAT and UNESCO. Harmonization is urgently needed – if necessary by means of legislation.

Ensuring culture's digital maturity

In parallel, the cultural sector should be included in all digital policy areas and instruments. Several elements of a holistic approach already exist. Already in 2011 the Commission issued a recommendation for the digitization of cultural heritage and the online availability of cultural material. Among other projects Horizon 2020 supports 4CH, a competence centre for digital preservation and conservation of cultural heritage, and Time Machine, an initiative to digitally map 2,000 years of European history. Creative Europe sustains EUdigiTAC, a social media platform for artisans to share and work with crafts. The Digital Europe Programme extends to education, culture and media, and the European Institute of Innovation and technology (EIT) is planning a knowledge and innovation community in the field of cultural and creative industries.

Beyond these instruments, however, important recent Commission proposals on digitalization do not refer to culture.

The Commission's roadmap to 2030, “Path to the Digital Decade”, sets ambitious, even visionary targets for companies and governments. By 2030 at least 75% of European enterprises should have taken up cloud computing services, big data and artificial intelligence, and public services must be digitally accessible for everyone.¹⁰ However, the cultural sector – which the paper does not mention – is not only composed of companies and public institutions. Why would cultural

8. European Commission, Annex to the Communication on the 2030 Digital Compass (2021), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:12e835e2-81af-11eb-9ac9-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_2&format=PDF

9. European Commission, Staff Working Document accompanying the proposal for a decision establishing the 2030 Policy Programme “Path to the Digital Decade” (2021), p. 57, <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/staff-working-document-policy-programme-path-digital-decade>

10. European Commission, Proposal for a decision establishing the 2030 Policy Programme “Path to the Digital Decade” (2021), <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/proposal-decision-establishing-2030-policy-programme-path-digital-decade>

foundations or other non-profit organizations not need similar support?

The new artificial intelligence strategy is another case in point. Artificial intelligence could play a significant role in the field of culture, such as in protecting and promoting tangible and intangible heritage, or in monitoring illicit trafficking of cultural objects. This is why Member States such as Germany and Italy have explicitly included culture in their national AI strategy. The EU approach so far is different. It is to use artificial intelligence to build strategic leadership in seven high-impact sectors: climate, health, robotics, public sector, migration, mobility, and agriculture.¹¹ The Commission strategy does not mention culture, to the regret of the European Parliament.¹²

At roughly 3% of GDP culture is an important sector of the European economy. Culture also matters hugely intrinsically, as an indissoluble part of our individual and common identity as Europeans. To strengthen the digital resilience of the cultural sector should therefore be high on the EU priority list. The recent Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 rightly aims to enlist education and training as key instruments to improve Europe's overall digital strength.¹³ The Commission already funds some smaller projects to strengthen digital skills in the heritage sector.¹⁴ Europeana offers a MOOC on digital education with cultural heritage.

The Commission's proposal, however, does not yet take the diverse needs of Europe's artists, creative industries and cultural organizations fully into account. It lacks an integral approach to culture. The EU should mainstream support for cultural organizations in the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 across formal (primary, secondary, tertiary, and adult education, including Vocational Education and training), non-formal and informal education (youth work, community-based

organizations, libraries, museums, cultural and creative spaces, and similar initiatives).

It should also **include the cultural and creative sectors in the European Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition and its National Coalitions**. The Coalition aims to train one million young unemployed people for vacant digital jobs through internships, traineeships, apprenticeships and short-term training programmes, and support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) who face specific challenges in attracting and retaining digital talent as well as retraining their workforce – actions highly relevant to the cultural sector. Awareness raising, outreach and inclusion by the EU would help cultural organizations and companies to boost the digital skills of their labour force and transform teaching and learning of digital cultural skills in a lifelong learning perspective.

Artists and other cultural innovators should also be **included in the future European Digital Innovation Hubs**, with due regard for their creative freedom and interdependence, and not merely to help overcome the public's fear of loss of control or of working conditions as a result of digitalization.¹⁵

The newly established expert group on a common European data space for cultural heritage will meet twice a year. It should be tasked to meet in public and given a deadline to deliver its recommendations.

Beyond integrating the cultural and creative sectors in digital innovation and education policies, the EU should develop targeted policies to help the CCIs to reduce their carbon footprint. The entertainment and media sector (TV, gaming, streaming, entertainment, newspapers) currently accounts for 1.2% of global emissions and 3% of global electricity consumption.¹⁶ Although greater digitalization of the CCIs is clearly necessary, it is

11. European Commission, Annex to the Communication on Fostering a European Approach to Artificial Intelligence (2021), <https://www.kowi.de/Portaldata/2/Resources/fp/2021-COM-AI-Annexes.pdf>

12. European Parliament, Resolution on artificial intelligence in education, culture and the audiovisual sector (2021), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0238_EN.html

13. European Commission, Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0624&from=EN>

14. Such as the DigiTraining project (Creative Europe) and EU Heritage (Erasmus+) <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/digital-skills-coalition>

15. European Commission, European Digital Innovation Hubs in the Digital Europe Programme (2021), https://challenge.gov.sk/data/files/49_digital_innovation_hubs_in_digital_europe_programme_25-01-2021_v23pdf-1.pdf

16. Julie's Bicycle, Environmental Sustainability in the Digital Age of Culture (2020), https://juliesbicycle.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/JB_Sustainability-in-the-Digital-Age-7-FULL-REPORT.pdf

equally necessary for the CCIs to be fully included in the European Commission's Green Deal.

The European Union's post-Covid Recovery and Resilience Facility will make up to €723.8bn in grants and loans available to support reforms and investments in the Member States. Member States have been invited to allocate 20% of expenditure to foster the digital transition.

Some Member States have opted to earmark some of this massive European support for the digitalization of the cultural sector. Austria, for example, will spend some of its funding on the digitization of cultural heritage; Belgium will allocate money to digitalize culture and media in its French-speaking Community; France will devote some EU funds to the digitization of cinemas and the book industry; Greece will promote interactive digital services, augmented reality and virtual reality in support of cultural exhibits; Italy's plan includes measures to digitize cultural heritage; Portugal has earmarked funds for the digitization of works of art and cultural heritage, and Spain has allocated €118m for similar purposes; Slovenia will use its funding to create e-platforms for its cultural sector and integrate its content into the European digital library Europeana. The Commission, however, did not invite Member States to include the cultural sector in their Recovery and Resilience Plans, as cultural organizations had urged,¹⁷ and most governments appear not to have allocated funding to the digitalization of culture.¹⁸

Looking towards the future, the EU should ensure that any lessons learned in supporting the digitalization of the cultural sector will be shared across borders. The Commission should invite Member States to **share their national experience and identify good practices**. Any findings should be widely shared with the cultural sector.

Recommendations

Commission

- Assess the digital competitiveness of the cultural sector, and identify gaps and priorities.
- Support the cultural and creative sectors in countering the risks of algorithmic biases inherent in global platforms.
- Include the cultural sector in all digital policies and instruments, including the Digital Education Action Plan, the Digital Skills Initiative, the Artificial Intelligence Strategy and the Digital Innovation Hubs.
- Invite Member States to share their national experiences in digitalizing the cultural sector under the Recovery and Resilience Plans, and identify good practices.

17. Culture Action Europe and 109 other networks and associations, "Make Culture Central in the EU Recovery", Open Letter (2020), <https://cultureactioneurope.org/projects/culturaldealeu-campaign/earmark-2-for-culture/>

18. State on 15.10.2021

An economy that works for people – mobilizing the power of culture

The arts, heritage, and the creative industries are not only indispensable to human well-being, they are equally central to equitable economic growth and sustainable development. The cultural and creative sectors are an important part of the global economy: they employ 29.5 million people and generate 3% of GDP around the world. Global creative economy revenues exceed those of telecom services and surpass India's GDP.¹ Across the EU, 7.2 million people work in cultural employment – 3.6% of total employment. In major EU cities the share of cultural jobs can be as high as 10%.² In 2018, 1.2 million cultural enterprises in the EU generated €155bn of value added – more than the motor trade sector or food and beverage services.³ Creative industries also tend to favour the participation of women compared with more traditional industries. In Europe, women account for a higher share of cultural employment than their share across the whole economy.⁴

Telling as they are, these statistics probably underestimate the importance of the creative economy.

For one thing, they are incomplete. First, as Eurostat notes, its employment statistics do not capture secondary employment, which is widespread in the cultural sector. Eurostat's business statistics also do not include libraries, archives, museums and other cultural activities; they only partially cover cultural heritage, cultural tourism and cultural participation via the internet.

Furthermore, current statistics do not adequately reflect several multiplier effects. There are important spillover effects from the cultural and creative sectors to other sectors of the economy, such as cultural tourism and digital services. Recent UNESCO findings suggest that, overall, for every creative job in the cultural and creative industries 17 non-creative jobs are created.⁵ Other notable multiplier effects are knowledge spillovers, industry spillovers and network spillovers. Knowledge spillovers include increases in employability and skills, innovation, and exchange between communities; industry spillovers include improved entrepreneurship and higher private and foreign investment, and network spillovers include social cohesion, better health and well-being, and creation of an attractive local creative ecosystem.⁶

Third, recent research by the World Health Organization highlighted the important role of the arts sector in improving good health, preventing mental and physical health problems, and supporting the treatment of acute and chronic conditions.⁷ These findings were confirmed during the Covid-19 pandemic when people found that access to arts and culture was critically important to fight loneliness and isolation. Physicians in Brussels – inspired by a similar study in Canada – have built on this experience by organizing free museum visits for patients to alleviate burnout and other forms of psychiatric distress.⁸ Healthier lives

1. UNESCO and EY, Cultural Times: the first global map of cultural and creative industries (2015), http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ERI/pdf/EY-Cultural-Times2015_Low-res.pdf

2. Brussels (6%), Rome (8%), Paris (8%), Amsterdam (8%), Madrid (9%), Milan (12%), Barcelona (12%). World Cities Culture Forum, quoted in UNESCO and World Bank, Cities – Culture – Creativity (2021), <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/publication/cities-culture-creativity>

3. Eurostat, Culture statistics – cultural enterprises (2021), https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Culture_statistics_-_cultural_enterprises

4. Eurostat, Culture statistics – cultural employment (2021), https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Culture_statistics_-_cultural_employment

5. UNESCO and World Bank, Cities – Culture – Creativity (2021), <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/104121621556036559/pdf/Cities-Culture-Creativity-Leveraging-Culture-and-Creativity-for-Sustainable-Urban-Development-and-Inclusive-Growth.pdf>

6. Tom Fleming, Cultural and creative spillovers in Europe (2015), https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/Cultural_creative_spillovers_in_Europe_full_report.pdf

7. World Health Organization, What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review (2019), <https://www.euro.who.int/en/publications/abstracts/what-is-the-evidence-on-the-role-of-the-arts-in-improving-health-and-well-being-a-scoping-review-2019>

8. Daniel Boffey, 'Brussels doctors to prescribe museum visits for Covid stress', The Guardian, 2 Sept. 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/02/brussels-doctors-to-prescribe-museum-visits-for-covid-stress>

tend to be happier lives, and art and culture are fundamental to our happiness and wellbeing. But by contributing to mental and physical health the arts and culture can also help to mitigate the ever-rising costs of health care. These indirect, economic benefits have yet to be recognized in EU policy. It would be logical for the European Commission to **include culture's contribution to health into the EU Health Union and the EU4Health Programme.**

The economic importance of arts and culture is often underestimated – or even unknown. One major reason is that culture's indirect effects – multiplier and spillover effects – do not show up in the official statistics. The statistics, impressive as they are, only tell part of the story. Any assessment of the economic impact of the cultural and creative sectors should therefore take both the direct (quantifiable) and indirect (partly quantifiable) effects into account.

Creative cities

A growing number of cities around the world are mobilizing culture as a driver of sustainable urban development (e.g., UNESCO Creative Cities Network,⁹ Organization of World Heritage Cities,¹⁰ Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities,¹¹ and the cities listed in the UCLG good practice guide¹²). The UNESCO Creative Cities Network covers seven creative fields: Crafts and folk art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Media arts, and Music. In Europe cities such as Limoges (Crafts and folk art), Berlin (Design), Lodz (Film), Bergamo (Gastronomy), Prague (Literature), Linz (Media arts), and Ghent (Music) participate.

The European Commission's Joint Research Centre has measured how well European Cultural and Creative Cities perform. The analysis compares 190 European cities across three dimensions: the presence and attractiveness of cultural venues and facilities (cultural

vibrancy), the capacity of culture to generate jobs and innovation (creative economy), and the conditions enabling cultural and creative processes to thrive (enabling environment). Medium-sized cities were found to perform as well as national capitals, sometimes even better.¹³ One particular strength of the study is its set of 29 measurable indicators, covering performance from employment to cultural participation, diversity, openness and trust. Cultural vitality, in other words, can be measured; it is not the woolly, vague and unreliable notion it is often made out to be. Local governments can use these empirical metrics as a policy planning tool to improve local quality of life and economic competitiveness.¹⁴

The EU has long been keen to help local and regional communities to develop their cultural and creative capacity. Under the Structural and Investments Funds and the European Regional Development Fund around 100 European regions have included cultural and creative industries and/or cultural heritage in their Research and innovation strategies for smart specialization. Aid was also provided by the Creative Europe and Horizon Programmes. From 2017-2020 the Horizon project ROCK developed an innovative approach for the regeneration and adaptive reuse of city centres in Athens, Bologna, Cluj, Eindhoven, Lisbon, Liverpool, Lyon, Skopje, Turin, and Vilnius.¹⁵ Creative Europe's Cultural Heritage in Action Project is empowering cities and regions to strengthen their cultural heritage policies and initiatives to preserve cultural heritage assets.¹⁶

In terms of economic impact, the European Capital of Culture programme has been a notable success. Participation can be highly beneficial: the Dutch city of Leeuwarden, EU Capital of Culture in 2018, found that the economic benefits (€220-310 million) exceeded costs (€102 million) by a factor of 2.2 to 3. This was not an exceptional result. Academic research shows that GDP per capita in hosting regions is 4.5% higher compared to

9. UNESCO Creative Cities Network, <https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/home> (246 cities)

10. Organization of World Heritage Cities, <https://www.ovpm.org/> (250 cities)

11. Council of Europe Intercultural Cities, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities> (147 cities)

12. UCLG Good Practice Guide, <http://obs.agenda21culture.net/en/home-grid> (220 cities)

13. Joint Research Centre, Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor (2019), <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC117336>

14. Valentina Montalto et al., 'Culture counts: An empirical approach to measure the cultural and creative vitality of European cities', *Cities*, 2019 (6), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2019.01.014>

15. ROCK, www.rockproject.eu

16. Cultural Heritage in Action, <http://www.culturalheritageinaction.eu/culture/home>

non-hosting regions, and the effect persists more than 5 years later.¹⁷

There is every reason for the EU to build on these positive results. By 2050 four out of five Europeans (84%) will live in cities, the UN predicts.¹⁸ European well-being and competitiveness increasingly implies local well-being and competitiveness, and the cultural and creative sectors are integral to both. The EU should therefore make it a priority to promote the arts, culture and heritage at local and regional level. Three initiatives would be especially useful: to develop an integral approach, to improve communications, and to reach out purposefully and pro-actively to local and regional communities.

Current EU policy in relation to the creative economy is a mixture of policies and projects launched under different financial instruments and operated by different Commission Directorates-General, from EAC to GROW and from REGIO to CONNECT. Synergies are unpredictable, as is coordination. Current policy is marred with inconsistencies. On the one hand, the Commission rightly counts cultural and creative industries as one of Europe's 14 most important industrial ecosystems.¹⁹ On the other hand, the CCIs are largely missing from the new Strategy on small and medium-sized enterprises²⁰ and from other key policies, from the Green Deal to the European Skills Agenda.²¹ On the one hand, the Commission acknowledged that the cultural and creative sectors were among the hardest hit by Covid-19; on the other hand, it did not ask the EU governments to cover culture in their national Recovery and Resilience Plans. Cultural vibrancy and creative competitiveness are ignored throughout the European Semester, the EU's process of coordinating national economic policies.

An **integral policy to the cultural sector and creative economy** would improve effectiveness and reduce inefficiencies. It would also reflect the EU's obligations under SDG 8.3 to promote entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation. Crucially, it would make the EU much more visible on the ground. Currently, visibility (or '*lisibilité*' in the Brussels' jargon) is generally low: local officials (and others) tend to find the dozens of EU projects hard to access, laborious to explore, and difficult to compare. For the EU to punch its weight it needs to radically improve communication. It should not be up to citizens to find their own way through the maze. The third step would be for Commissioners to speak out directly and personally about the role of culture and creativity in creating "an economy that works for people." This is not just the job of the Commissioner for Culture; it is the responsibility of each and every Commissioner. For culture to count Commissioners must make it count.

Sustainable cultural tourism

Tourism is a mainstay of the European economy. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic Europe attracted 50% of the world's total international tourist arrivals. Tourism is Europe's third largest economic sector;²² it generates on average 10% of the European Union's GDP and represents 9% of EU employment. In 2018 international tourism accounted for 22% of EU service exports and 6% of total exports; it ranked as Europe's fourth largest exporter, after chemicals, automotive products, and food.²³

Much of Europe's attractiveness as a tourist destination stems from its art and heritage: it is estimated that cultural tourism accounts for 40% of all European tourism.²⁴ These tourists do not only come to admire monuments and museums;

17. Pedro Gomes and Alejandro Librero-Cano, 'Evaluating three decades of the European Capital of Culture programme: a difference-in-differences approach', *Journal of Cultural Economics* 2018/42,

<https://doi-org.gate3.library.lse.ac.uk/10.1007/s10824-016-9281-x>

18. UN DESA, World Urbanization Prospects (2018), <https://population.un.org/wup/Publications/Files/WUP2018-Report.pdf>

19. European Commission, Annual Single Market Report 2021,

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021SC0351&from=EN>

20. European Commission, An SME strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe (2020),

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0103&from=EN>

21. European Commission, European Skills Agenda (2020),

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0274&from=EN>

22. European Travel Commission, European tourism 2019: trends and prospects (2020),

https://etc-corporate.org/uploads/2020/02/ETC_Quarterly-Report-Q4-2019_Public.pdf

23. World Tourism Organization, European Union Tourism Trends (2018),

<https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284419470>

24. European Commission, Cultural tourism (n.d.), https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/cultural_en

they also expect to enjoy Europe's immaterial cultural heritage. As the OECD noted, creative sectors such as design, fashion, gaming, fine handicrafts, film and animation, and gastronomy can considerably increase the attractiveness of destinations and the interaction with visitors.²⁵

Europe's coastal regions strongly depend on cultural tourism, from the Greek islands to the Baltics. Several Council of Europe Cultural Routes wind along the Europe's southern coasts; a Maritime Heritage Route in the Baltic Sea Region is under preparation. Many of these tourist destinations are threatened by climate change, as is underwater archaeology. Surprisingly, however, the EU's new approach for a sustainable blue economy contains not a word about cultural heritage or cultural tourism.²⁶

Public support for cultural tourism forms part of the EU's obligations under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 8.9). In 2019 an EU Open Method of Coordination Group adopted proposals to develop cultural tourism in Europe.²⁷ Since then Covid-19 has hit the sector hard; less affluent regions and communities have often been disproportionately affected. An EU response – joint action by the Member States and the Commission – could go a long way to revive cultural tourism and the cultural economy in Europe. Not only is tourism important to culture, culture is essential to tourism. The time is ripe for the EU to develop a **strategy to promote sustainable cultural tourism**.

Employment

The brutal cancellation of cultural events and the closure of countless venues during the Covid-19

pandemic has had a huge knock-on effect on employment in the cultural and creative sector. Countless people were made 'redundant', to use that bitter understatement; the impact on the self-employed has, if anything, been even more severe. This devastating social impact is a direct consequence of social conditions in the cultural and creative sectors. Artists and other cultural professionals often work on a precarious, contractual, freelance, and intermittent basis. Their incomes, social security and pensions are often insecure.

Across the EU, one in every three cultural and creative professionals (33%) was self-employed in 2020, compared with an average of 14% for the whole economy. In Austria, Cyprus, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden the share of self-employed was at least 2.5 times as high as the average recorded for the whole economy. Compared with the rest of the economy the cultural professions also offer fewer opportunities for full-time work.²⁸ As the OECD warns, access to income support, self-employment or business support measures is a challenge, as programmes are ill-adapted to these hybrid forms of employment.²⁹ The European Parliament has called for a European framework for working conditions in the cultural and creative sectors.³⁰ Such a framework would be in line with Sustainable Development Goals 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

UNESCO's Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist³¹ and the 2005 UNESCO Convention³² – which the EU signed – call upon signatories to improve the employment, working and living conditions of artists. European cultural

25. OECD, Culture shock: COVID-19 and the cultural and creative sectors (2020), <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/culture-shock-covid-19-and-the-cultural-and-creative-sectors-08da9e0e/>

26. European Commission, Transforming the EU's Blue Economy for a Sustainable Future (2021), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0240&from=EN>

27. OMC Group, Sustainable Cultural Tourism (2019), <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/164ea9c5-2255-11ea-af81-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-134242774>

28. Eurostat, Culture statistics – cultural employment (2021),

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Culture_statistics_-_cultural_employment

29. OECD, Culture shock: COVID-19 and the cultural and creative sectors (2020), <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/culture-shock-covid-19-and-the-cultural-and-creative-sectors-08da9e0e/>

30. European Parliament, Resolution on the Cultural Recovery of Europe (2020), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-9-2020-0246_EN.html

31. UNESCO, 1980 Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist, <https://en.unesco.org/creativity/governance/status-artist>

32. UNESCO, 2005 Convention, <https://en.unesco.org/creativity/sites/creativity/files/passeport-convention2005-web2.pdf>

organizations have proposed a number of steps to take,³³ and Member States have set up an Open Method of Coordination Group on the status and working conditions of artists. The OMC Group is expected to take its time but the situation is urgent and the Commission should not hesitate to **seize the initiative**. President von der Leyen's ambition for "an economy that works for people" needs to become a reality also for artists and other cultural professionals.

Access to EU financing

The EU uses various instruments to pay for cultural policy. Its flagship programme, the Creative Europe's culture sub-programme, is small: a mere €453 million for the seven-year period 2014-2021 (rising to over €600 million in the 2021-2027 period, or roughly €100 million per year). To put this in perspective: the Paris National Opera House had costs of €200.8 million in 2018 alone.³⁴

Fortunately, other EU instruments also support cultural policy. They include the Horizon Research Programme (€500m for culture and heritage, 2014-2021, rising to an estimated €1.5-€2bn in 2021-2027), the European Social Fund, the Erasmus Programme, the external policy funding instruments, and a lending instrument, the Cultural and Creative Sectors Guarantee Facility (CCF). By 2020 the CCF had granted loans worth over €900 million to small and medium-sized companies in the creative sectors.³⁵ By far the most important EU financial source for culture, however, is the European Regional Development Fund. Over the period of 2010 to 2017 it invested around €750 million per year in cultural sites³⁶ (€4.7bn in the period 2014-2021).³⁷ Estimated conservatively – the Commission has not published a comprehensive overview – total EU grants to the cultural sector between 2014

and 2021 may have exceeded €1bn per year. Although a sizeable sum, in relative terms this is less than 1% of the annual EU budget (in payment appropriations).

The EU's financial complexity has always posed problems to artists, cultural organizations and creative industries. Not only does each EU financial instrument come with its own set of rules and procedures, the instruments are applied by various Commission services, and there is little coordination between the EU funds for investments in cultural projects.³⁸

Knowing when, where, and how to apply, and to whom, can therefore be a headache. Partly as a result the best-known fund in cultural circles, Creative Europe, is heavily over-subscribed and the applicants' success rate is low. For smaller players, such as most cultural initiatives, accessing any EU fund tends to be time-consuming and expensive, particularly when outside (commercial) help is needed to fill in the forms. To artists and arts organizations obtaining EU funding can be a frustrating, Tantalean experience – support so near and yet so difficult to reach. Even institutional actors sometimes struggle: the Network of European Museum Organisations (NEMO) has urged policy-makers to better equip museums to bid for and carry out EU-funded projects.³⁹

Arguably, the EU's financial architecture and its application are ill-suited to the needs and characteristics of the cultural sector. The EU's Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 can no longer be changed, but two measures would enable the EU to give more targeted support to Europe's cultural and creative economy: greater synergy between the instruments (and DGs), and greater transparency. Better coordination between the services would bring greater synergy,

33. Voices of Culture, Brainstorming Report 'Status & Working Conditions for Artists, Cultural and Creative Professionals' (2021), <https://voicesofculture.eu/2021/07/06/brainstorming-report-status-working-conditions-for-artists-cultural-and-creative-professionals/>

34. European Court of Auditors, EU investments in cultural sites (2020), https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR20_08/SR_Cultural_investments_EN.pdf

35. From 2021-2027 the CCF will be replaced by the InvestEU Programme

36. European Court of Auditors, EU investments in cultural sites (2020),

https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR20_08/SR_Cultural_investments_EN.pdf

37. European Investment Fund, Market Analysis of the Cultural and Creative Sectors in Europe (2021),

https://www.eif.org/what_we_do/guarantees/cultural_creative_sectors_guarantee_facility/ccs-market-analysis-europe.pdf

38. European Court of Auditors, EU investments in cultural sites (2020),

https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR20_08/SR_Cultural_investments_EN.pdf

39. NEMO, European museums' participation in EY funding programmes (2019), https://www.ne-mo.org/fileadmin/Dateien/public/NEMO_documents/EU_Funding_for_Museums_Report_Findings_and_Recommendations.pdf

as the Court of Auditors has pointed out. And a one-stop shop, or at least a single web-portal, as repeatedly demanded by the cultural sector, would bring greater transparency. Both steps would benefit Europe's creative economy.

It is also necessary, as the European Cultural Foundation and others have long argued, to associate the philanthropic sector more strategically with EU policy in respect of the cultural and creative sectors by enabling a new legal and fiscal framework for European philanthropy. Nearly half of the members of the European Foundation Centre have a main focus on arts and culture, yet only 20% of them ever applied for EU funding.⁴⁰ New forms of cross-border public-philanthropic partnerships are necessary to tap philanthropy's huge potential to contribute to Europe's cultural vibrancy.

Recommendations

Commission

- Include the competitiveness of the creative economy in the coordination of the national Recovery and Resilience Plans and the Country-Specific Recommendations under the European Semester.
- Propose a European strategy to promote sustainable cultural tourism.
- Include culture's contribution to health into the EU Health Union and the EU4Health Programme.
- Propose measures to improve the status and working conditions of artists.
- Improve coordination between EU financial instruments and enhance transparency.
- Develop a new legal and fiscal framework for European philanthropy.

40. European Foundation Centre, Arts and culture at the core of philanthropy (2018), <https://www.efc.be/uploads/2019/05/Arts-and-culture-2018.pdf>

A stronger Europe in the world: Europe as a global cultural partner

Policy context

The European Union has been involved in external cultural policy and diplomacy for decades. Hundreds of cultural projects have benefited from EU financial support in countries from the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood to Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific. The EU also was a driving force behind the UNESCO Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005).

In 2016, after several years of preparations,¹ the European Union set out its objectives with respect to international cultural relations. The policy paper jointly prepared by the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS)² was embraced by the Council.³ The strategy promised to make the EU “a stronger global actor” by enhancing cultural cooperation with partner countries across three strands: culture as an engine of development; inter-cultural dialogue; and cooperation to preserve and promote cultural heritage.

Since the adoption of the Joint Communication all main EU actors have increased their involvement.

EU Ministers have stepped up their interest in international cultural relations. In 2019 the Council invited the Commission to propose an action plan on the cultural dimension of sustainable development.⁴ It also created an Open Method of Coordination Group on the Cultural Dimension of Sustainable Development which is due to report in 2022. In 2020 the Council

amended its Work Plan for Culture to add a priority on culture as a driver of sustainable development,⁵ and in 2021 it adopted conclusions on an EU approach to cultural heritage in international conflicts and crises (see below).⁶

An increase in EU financial aid since 2016 has enabled EUNIC, the umbrella organization of EU national cultural institutes and governments, to support a growing number of international cooperation projects. Recent EUNIC activities include Spaces of Culture, a ‘preparatory action’ initiated by the European Parliament. A European Cultural Diplomacy Platform (renamed Cultural Relations Platform in 2020) was set up to give advice on external cultural policy, facilitate networking, carry out activities with cultural stakeholders and develop training programmes for cultural leadership. The Commission scaled up cultural development assistance to Tunisia and Ukraine; Ukraine also joined the Creative Europe Programme (2021). In an effort to improve the involvement of EU delegations the EEAS nominated ‘focal points’ among delegation staff charged with cultural diplomacy and cooperation.

Importantly, culture has been included in the financial instruments under the EU’s new long-term budget (2021-2027), such as the new flagship programme for international cooperation, the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI). Under the NDICI, cultural cooperation is part of the Global Challenges window (€2.7bn) of the Thematic Pillar. Financing will in principle also be available the NDICI’s much larger Geographic Pillar (€60.4bn, subdivided into allocations for

1. For background, see Caterina Carta and Richard Higgott (eds.), *Cultural Diplomacy in Europe: Between the Domestic and the International* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020) and Gijs de Vries, ‘A Cultural Superpower? The European Union’s Venture in Cultural Diplomacy’, in Martin Westlake (ed.), *The European Union’s New Foreign Policy* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), pp. 125-138

2. EEAS and European Commission, *Joint Communication: Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations* (2016), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016JC0029&from=EN>

3. Council Conclusions on an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations and a framework for action (2019), <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/04/08/international-cultural-relations-council-adopts-conclusions/#>

4. Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the Cultural Dimension of Sustainable Development (2019), <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6b6c4f71-17f8-11ea-8c1f-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDFA2A>

5. Council Conclusions amending the Work Plan for Culture (2020), [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020XG0609\(03\)&from=GA](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020XG0609(03)&from=GA)

6. Council Conclusions on an EU Approach to Cultural Heritage in Conflicts and Crises (2021), <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/06/21/council-approves-conclusions-recognising-the-key-role-of-cultural-heritage-in-promoting-peace-democracy-and-sustainable-development/>

the European Neighbourhood, Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the Americas and the Caribbean)⁷. Cultural cooperation with candidate and potential candidate countries for EU membership will be covered by the Instrument for Pre-Accession, IPA III (€14.1bn). Cultural cooperation with neighbouring countries is included in the Creative Europe Programme, which has seen its budget increased by one third to €2.4bn at the initiative of the European Parliament.⁸ Furthermore, research on international cultural relations could benefit from the increase in the Horizon 2020 (now Horizon Europe) budget (to €95.5bn).

Welcome as these developments are, implementation of the EU's cultural relations policy since 2016 has been uneven. In each of the three domains mentioned – policy, process, financing – major opportunities have been missed.

Policy-wise, thematic priorities remain underdeveloped. Five years after the Joint Communication it is still unclear, for example, how cultural policy fits in with the EU's approach to climate change and sustainable development. Although cultural heritage around the world is at great risk of climate change, and although cultural initiatives could be instrumental in building public support for adaptation, cultural policy has not been included in the EU's Green Deal. The Commission did not respond to the Council's repeated calls for an action plan on culture and sustainable development, and there has been no EU contribution to the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development (2021).

The EU also lacks a structured approach to cultural policy as a means of addressing the rising tide of authoritarianism around the world. While China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and others actively deploy cultural diplomacy and other means to undercut human rights, the rule of law and democracy around the world – including within the EU – there has been no similarly consistent EU response. Cultural policy is mentioned only

marginally in the EU Democracy Action Plan⁹ and in the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy.¹⁰

There has been a similar lack of synergy between the European strategy on international cultural relations and EU security policy. Arguably, the *vitium originis* is the EU's foreign policy and security strategy (2016). Published in the same year as the Joint Communication, and also prepared by the EEAS, the Global Strategy references cultural policy only in passing.

Geographical priorities too have remained an open question. The EU originally intended to prioritize cooperation with its ten 'Strategic Partner countries'. Some progress was indeed achieved with India and Japan, but EU cooperation with China, based on 'people-to-people contacts', failed to gain any traction, while cultural relations with Brazil, Canada, Mexico, Russia, the Republic of Korea, South Africa and the USA have hardly budged.

Policy coordination has remained patchy in Brussels as well as in the field. At service level in Brussels there is intermittent consultation and cooperation between DGs EAC, NEAR, INTPA, the EEAS, and the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments; contacts with DGs CLIMA, CONNECT, and GROW are infrequent. Outside the EU coordination between Member States and the Commission/EEAS tends to depend on initiatives and good-will of people on the ground; sometimes Member States and the EU compete outright for the most promising local cultural partners. Member States also continue to conceive of Cultural Years or Cultural Seasons with foreign counterparts as purely bilateral activities, without synergy with their European cultural relations strategy.¹¹

Thirdly, the EU has yet to trade in its traditional, top-down approach to international cultural cooperation for one based on "reciprocity, mutual learning and co-creation," as promised in the Joint Communication. Cultural organizations around the world report that they find the EU

7. Cultural cooperation projects can also be supported under the international window of Erasmus+ (€2.2bn, contributed from the NDICI)

8. Contrary to the Commission's May 2020 proposal to reduce Creative Europe's multi-annual budget to €1.5bn

9. Communication on the European Democracy Action Plan (2020),

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0790&from=EN>

10. Joint Communication on the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024,

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020JC0005&from=EN>

11. Examples include the German Year in the USA (2018/19) and the French Saison Afrique 2020

rules and financing mechanisms – except for some smaller projects – as opaque and difficult to navigate as ever. Nor has the Commission responded to the call by European cultural organizations to ensure that culture would be mainstreamed in the EU’s own post-Covid Recovery and Resilience Plans. The Commission thus missed a major opportunity to build Europe’s cultural, economic, and political strength at home as well as abroad. For cultural relations to make the EU “a stronger global actor” Europe must be seen as an attractive cultural partner. This, in turn, critically depends on the vibrancy and financial resilience of Europe’s own cultural sector.

To sum up: the Joint Communication has served to push international cultural relations higher up the Brussels’ agenda. There have also been welcome results on the ground. Still, thematic and geographic priorities remain unclear, synergy between the institutions (Commission, Council, EEAS) remains irregular, policy visibility is limited, and an effective, joined-up approach between the EU and Member States is still to be achieved.

Making culture count

What could be done to mainstream culture across all areas of EU external relations, from diplomacy to development, from human rights to security, and from humanitarian aid to trade? How could the EU’s 2016 strategy be revitalized?

An obvious first step would be to recognize that culture matters to Europe’s standing and influence in the world. Outside Europe, culture is widely regarded as one of Europe’s undisputed assets. Europe’s cultural achievements – past and present – figure prominently among the factors that make Europe attractive as a partner. In terms of international perceptions of the EU culture is an area of high visibility and public resonance, although it is more associated with ‘Europe’ than the EU. Several cultural sub-themes – from heritage and arts to lifestyle and luxury products – as well as European values and images have been found to appeal to publics around the world.¹² It would make sense for the EU and the Member States to build on these positive perceptions. Member States could make better use of EUNIC by increasing their

financial support and by committing EUNIC’s national member organizations to **earmark at least 10% of their annual budget** to European cooperation.

At the same time, the EU should be careful not to come across as lecturing or disrespectful in its external cultural relations. The way forward should be one of equal partnerships, not neocolonial dependencies. If the EU were to launch meaningful international cultural partnerships based on genuine equality, it would find ready partners around the world.

A logical basis and framework for such partnerships would be the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The 17 SDGs have been adopted by all 193 UN Member States. All governments have pledged to implement them: East as well as West, North as well as South. SDG 17 explicitly envisages “global partnerships” to implement this agenda. As a pillar of the multilateral system (and as the world’s major donor) the EU would be particularly well-placed to propose **imaginative, path-breaking international cultural partnerships among equals** in order to secure a world in which, as the SDGs so movingly put it, no-one is left behind. Focus areas for such cultural partnerships could include the Cultural and Creative Industries (SDGs 8, 11, 12), cultural heritage and sustainable tourism (SDGs 8, 11), arts and citizenship education (SDG 4), culture and climate action (SDG 13) and the rule of law, security, and fundamental rights (SDG 16).¹³

By means of illustration this paper will briefly explore policy options in three areas: security, development, and human rights.

Security

The EU has long supported efforts to protect cultural heritage in conflict situations, such as in Cyprus, Iraq, Kosovo, Libya, Mali, Syria, and Yemen. Many of these projects were implemented in cooperation with UNDP, UNESCO, and other partners. As initiatives tended to be developed in an ad hoc fashion the need for a more systematic approach gradually became more apparent.

12. Public Policy and Management Institute, National Centre for Research on Europe, and NFG Research Group, Analysis of the Perception of the EU and EU’s Policies Abroad (European Commission, 2015), p. 34

13. Gijs de Vries, Culture in the Sustainable Development Goals (2020), <https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/handle/document/69719>

In 2021, at the initiative of the EEAS, the Council adopted Conclusions on Cultural Heritage in Conflicts and Crises. This was an important breakthrough: the first time that EU Foreign Ministers acknowledged culture as a dimension of European security policy. Of course, the policy's adoption is only the first step; what matters is how it will be applied in practice. This will require close cooperation between Brussels and Member States such as Italy, France, Germany, and the Netherlands which have long operated national cultural emergency response policies to protect international heritage at risk of conflict. National sensitivities – and rivalries – will therefore have to be managed with care. With that proviso, synergy between the EU and the Member States could bring real benefits on the ground and raise the EU's global profile in the process. Meanwhile the EU should promote international law as a means of protecting culture. Sixty countries have not yet ratified UNESCO's 1954 Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. Interest in Sub-Saharan Africa, South and South East Asia and the Pacific has been particularly low. The EU could use its diplomatic clout to promote universal ratification.

Next steps should include a wider, systematic reflection on the role of culture in EU security policy. Current EU policy on conflict prevention and peacebuilding has been found to lack strategic direction.¹⁴ It also lacks a coherent view on culture. EU guidance on conflict sensitivity in development cooperation, for example, shows only a rudimentary understanding of the role of culture.¹⁵

So how could culture contribute to conflict prevention, conflict management, and post-conflict rehabilitation?¹⁶ There are at least four sub-domains where culture could play a supporting role: conflict analysis,¹⁷ conflict prevention and early warning,¹⁸ peace mediation,¹⁹ and transitional justice.²⁰ Cultural initiatives could be included, for example, in the EU toolbox for early warning and conflict prevention. Violent conflict is often preceded by an increase in rhetoric aimed at exploiting perceived cultural differences, both on-line and off-line. EU delegations should be instructed to note and report such developments and to include, where possible, cultural initiatives in conflict prevention.

In conflict-afflicted and divided communities art enables people to express and share their feelings, including the most traumatic. Music, film, radio, television soaps, storytelling and theatre practices, such as Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, have frequently proven instrumental in promoting post-conflict recovery. Art's transformational power stems from its ability to empower people, generate empathy, rediscover our common humanity, and allow healing.²¹ Theatre-facilitated dialogue, for example, can facilitate reconciliation between survivors, victims and perpetrators, as was shown in Nepal.²² According to recent research, areas where culture could assist post-conflict stability include Cyprus and the Balkans. In Cyprus, "probably the only field that ...was developed between the two communities after the opening of the checkpoints is that of arts and culture."²³

14. External Evaluation of EU's Support to Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding (CPPB) 2013-2018,

https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/cppb-eval-final-report-2020-vol-1_en.pdf

15. DG INTPA, Guidance notes on conflict sensitivity in development cooperation (2021),

<https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/public-fragility/wiki/guidance-note-use-conflict-analysis-support-eu-external-action>

16. See, inter alia, Jordi Baltà, Cultural Relations – Key Approaches in Fragile Contexts (Brussels: EUNIC, 2021),

<https://www.eunicglobal.eu/news/cultural-relations-key-approaches-in-fragile-contexts-report-available>

17. EEAS and European Commission, Guidance note on the use of conflict analysis in support of EU external action,

<https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/public-fragility/wiki/guidance-note-use-conflict-analysis-support-eu-external-action>

18. Joint Staff Working Document: EU conflict Early Warning System (2021),

https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/jswd_eu_early_ews_from_vista.pdf

19. Concept on EU Peace Mediation (2020), https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/st13951_en20.pdf; Council Conclusions on

EU Peace Mediation (2020), <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-13573-2020-INIT/en/pdf>

20. EU Policy Framework on support to transitional justice (2015),

https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/the_eus_policy_framework_on_support_to_transitional_justice.pdf

21. Georgios Terzis, RePAST Deliverable D4.4: Harnessing Arts for European Cultural Diplomacy: Expertise, Experience and Expectations, (2020), https://www.repast.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/D4.4_Policy_Brief_v3_final.pdf

22. Anne Dirnstorfer and Nar Bahadul Saud, 'A Stage for the Unknown? Reconciling Postwar Communities through Theatre-Facilitated Dialogue', International Journal of Transitional justice (2020), 14, pp 122-141

23. Vicky Triga and Nikandros Ioannidis, RePAST Deliverable D6.16: Policy Recommendations for Cyprus (2020),

<https://www.repast.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/D6.16-Cyprus-PolicyRecommendations.pdf>

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, “(t)he field of arts and culture is ... perhaps one of the most relevant in terms of ... overcoming the troubled past.”²⁴

At the same time culture’s role should not be over-estimated.²⁵ Although art therapy and theatre have a proven track record in treating war refugees and other trauma survivors,²⁶ in general cultural interventions in peace-building tend to suffer from a lack of independent evaluation. Where evaluations do exist, they are rarely of the long-term character needed to demonstrate their sustained effectiveness.²⁷ There is an obvious need for the EU (Commission and EEAS) to include independent, non-commercial evaluation in any conflict-related cultural project, and to cover the cost – a major reason why cultural actors often abstain from commissioning evaluations.

The upcoming publication of the EU’s **‘Strategic Compass’** is an opportunity for the EEAS and the Commission to state how culture will be included in security-related policy and action.

Of course, any policy is only as good as its application. This may seem obvious, but sadly it is not. Too often the EU struggles to put its stated policies into operation. Afghanistan and China are cases in point.

The ink on the new EU concept on heritage in crises had hardly dried when the Taliban reconquered Kabul. There is now a serious risk the Taliban will once again destroy or close libraries, museums and archives, as they did before. But in spite of its policy the EU took no action to help preserve the public library in Kabul, the Afghan National Archives, the National Museum, or the university library. Many Afghan books and manuscripts are now likely to be traded

illicitly; is the EU ready to track and intercept them? And what about the people? The poet and historian Abdullah Atefi has been killed, as was top media official, Dawa Khan Menapal. Members of Afghanistan’s unique female orchestra, Zohra, were forced into hiding, as have countless other artists. In the US, the Smithsonian Institute has led efforts to provide safe passage out for Afghan cultural heritage workers and their families. Why is there still no European coordinated effort to do the same? In future crises, will the European Commission and the EEAS lead the evacuation of artists, librarians, and other cultural workers, or will these, once again, be left to fend for themselves?

And what about China? For years Beijing has been engaged in a systematic policy of cultural cleansing in Tibet and in Xinyang. China’s occupation of Tibet has resulted in the destruction of an estimated 60% of Tibet’s written cultural heritage; holy Dharma texts were converted into toilet paper²⁸. In Xinyang, too, cultural and religious rights have been suspended: day by day, step by step, Tibetan and Uyghur cultural, linguistic, and religious heritage is being eradicated systematically. The leading human rights groups Amnesty and Human Rights Watch have published reports accusing China of crimes against humanity.²⁹ At the same time, in 2021 China was allowed to proudly host UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee. EU sanctions against four Chinese officials in 2021 had little effect. Will the new EU policy on heritage in crises make a difference?

Illicit trafficking

Art and heritage do not only contribute to conflict prevention and rehabilitation; they can also be instrumental in fomenting conflict and crime.

24. Rok Zupančič, Faris Kočan and Iris Ivaniš, RePAST Deliverable D6.16: Policy Recommendations for Bosnia-Herzegovina (2020), <https://www.repast.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/D6.16-BosniaHerzegovina-PolicyRecommendations.pdf>

25. Gayle McPherson et al., A Review of the Contribution of Arts & Culture to Global Security & Stability (University of the West of Scotland, 2018),

<https://research-portal.uws.ac.uk/en/publications/a-review-of-the-contribution-of-arts-amp-culture-to-global-securi>

26. See, for example, the Special issue on applied theatre healing and trauma in the South African Theatre Journal, Vol. 28, No. 1 (2015)

27. Geoffrey Crossick and Patrycja Kaszynska, Understanding the value of arts and culture (Swindon: Arts & Humanities Research Council, 2016), p. 8

28. Rebecca J. Knuth, ‘China’s Destruction of the Libraries of Tibet’, in James Raven (ed.), Lost Libraries: The Destruction of Great Book Collections Since Antiquity (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004)

29. Amnesty International, “Like We are Enemies in a War”: China’s Mass Internment, Torture, and Persecution of Muslims in Xinyang (2021), https://xinjiang.amnesty.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/ASA_17_4137-2021_Full_report_ENG.pdf;

Human Rights Watch, “Break their Lineage, Break their Roots” (2021), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/19/break-their-lineage-break-their-roots/chinas-crimes-against-humanity-targeting>;

Some years ago, Daesh/ISIL in Syria and Iraq was found to profit from illicit trafficking in antiquities. Facebook has failed to prevent looters from illegally selling ancient artifacts.³⁰ Today the international art market is still widely considered “rife with opportunities for washing illicit cash.”³¹ According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the underground art market, which includes thefts, fakes, illegal imports, and organized looting, may bring in as much as US\$6 billion annually. The portion attributed to money laundering and other financial crimes is in the US\$3 billion range.³² Action to combat illicit financial flows is an obligation under SDG 16(4).

The EU’s legislative framework against illicit trafficking includes Directive 2014/60/EU on the return of cultural objects unlawfully removed from the territory of a Member State, Regulation (EC) 116/2009 on the export of cultural goods, Directive (EU) 2018/843 on the prevention of the use of the financial system for the purposes of money laundering or terrorist financing (the Fifth Money Laundering Directive, and Regulation (EU) 2019/880 on the introduction and import of cultural goods. Europol and Eurojust regularly act to intercept illicitly traded cultural goods. The European Commission has also financed research, awareness raising conferences, and networks such as NETCHER (2019-2021).³³

Unfortunately, EU policy and legislation may not be working as intended. Two EU Member States, Ireland and Malta, have still not ratified the main international legal instrument against illicit cultural trafficking, the 1970 UNESCO Convention. Gaps also remain in EU legislation. The notion of due diligence, key to checking the provenance of cultural goods, has not

been harmonized.³⁴ The resulting different national approaches provide incentives for illicit trafficking, as the European Parliament has warned.³⁵ What is more, EU Member States have been dragging their feet with respect to their legal obligations. The Commission has launched legal action against 16 of the 27 Member States for partial or non-transposition of the Fifth Money Laundering Directive (in respect of the previous, Fourth Directive it originally had to take such action against all Member States).³⁶ Thirdly, EU policy has proven difficult to apply at the border, where customs checks can be marred by poor knowledge of illicit trade among customs officers, few detections and recorded seizures, limited familiarity with the law, difficulties in working with cultural experts, and insufficient resources.³⁷

The question must be posed: have EU policy and legislation been effective in curbing the trade, and in returning stolen goods to their countries of provenance? Facts and figures are difficult to find.

The Commission is planning to propose an **action plan against illicit cultural trade** in 2022. The action plan should include a frank appraisal of the impact European policy has had so far.

Development

In recent years China has actively nurtured cooperation with Africa, including in culture, journalism, and education. UNESCO is partnering with China’s National Archives to strengthen the resilience of museums in Africa.³⁸ For its part the EU has yet to integrate culture into its cooperation with Africa. The African Union has declared 2021 to be the year of Arts, Culture, and Heritage in Africa, but the EU did not respond. In fact, culture

30. Louise Callaghan, ‘Looters flout Facebook ban to sell ancient artifacts’, *The Times*, July 3, 2021, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/looters-flout-facebook-ban-to-sell-ancient-artefacts-mhrwprh5p>

31. Tom Mashberg, ‘The Art of Money Laundering’, IMF Finance & Development (2019),

<https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2019/09/the-art-of-money-laundering-and-washing-illicit-cash-mashberg.htm>

32. Tom Mashberg, ‘The Art of Money Laundering’, IMF Finance & Development (2019),

<https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2019/09/the-art-of-money-laundering-and-washing-illicit-cash-mashberg.htm>

33. <https://netcher.eu/>

34. Letizia Casertano, ‘Combating the Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property: The Multifaceted Response to a Complex Challenge’, *Global Jurist* (2020), 20:1, DOI:10.1515/gj-2019-0025

35. European Parliament, Resolution of 17 January 2019 on cross-border restitution claims of works of art and cultural goods in armed conflicts and wars, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2019-0037_EN.html

36. Commissioner Mairead McGuinness, statement to the European Parliament, 20 October 2021

37. Siv Rebekka Runhovde, ‘On the front-line: controlling the illicit cultural heritage trade in Norway’, *International Journal of Heritage Studies* (2021), <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13527258.2021.1950028>

38. UNESCO: UNESCO moves to strengthen resilience of African Memory Institutions in the face of COVID-19 and beyond (2021), <https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-moves-strengthen-resilience-african-memory-institutions-face-covid-19-and-beyond>

is missing from the EU's flagship policy on Africa.³⁹

France, Italy, Germany, and Spain take a strong interest in Africa. So do 8 smaller European countries, including Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Sweden.⁴⁰ One way for Europe to reach out would be a joint initiative to support museums, collections, heritage sites and cultural traditions in Africa: a European cultural heritage initiative for Africa. President Emmanuel Macron's decision to restitute African artifacts held in French museums⁴¹ has prompted similar intentions in Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands (but not the UK). It would make sense for a European initiative to build on and complement these national policies by focusing on heritage protection and valorization in a wider sense.

A Heritage Partnership between Europe and Africa, designed as a partnership of equals, would be a highly visible and effective way to win hearts and minds by protecting our common cultural heritage – both yesterday's heritage and the cultural heritage of tomorrow. Europa Nostra and the European Heritage Alliance would be well-placed to support such a Partnership.

In a similar spirit the EU could reach out to Asia and the Americas. One promising avenue, besides heritage, could be cooperation in the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs). In Brazil the creative economy is estimated to represent 10% of GDP.⁴² Argentina, Chile, and Mexico are not far behind. Developing the creative economy is also central to the sustainable development strategy of Indonesia where it represents over 7% of GDP.⁴³ An EU offer of structured cooperation, based on the principle of equality and joint ownership, could

be instrumental in building mutually beneficial artistic and commercial ties as well as trust. The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) and the EU-LAC Foundations could play leading roles.

Cultural partnerships of equals could be a cornerstone of a wider, strategic approach to culture and development, in keeping with the European Parliament call for culture to be systematically integrated into EU development programmes.⁴⁴ The EU recognized culture's role as a driver and enabler of sustainable development⁴⁵ but it did not develop a coherent approach. As noted, the Commission has yet to take up the Council's invitation to propose an **action plan on culture in sustainable development**. Nor did the Commission respond to the proposal by cultural organizations to create a **European Forum for Culture and the Sustainable Development Goals** and enable a regular dialogue with cultural organizations and experts.⁴⁶

Nine years before the UN deadline of 2030 the EU still lacks a view on culture as a force to deliver on the historic commitment to a world in which "no-one is left behind". In Primo Levi's poignant phrase: if not now, when?

Human rights

To create art and protect cultural heritage people must enjoy cultural freedom. We are only truly free if we are free to express ourselves and to share the fruits of our creativity. To protect and promote cultural freedom must therefore be at the heart of Europe's international action. Protecting cultural heritage – material and immaterial – must start with protecting the people who create and preserve it.

39. EEAS and European Commission, Joint Communication Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa (2020),

https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/communication-eu-africa-strategy-join-2020-4-final_en.pdf

40. Giovanni Faleg and Carlo Palleschi, Africa Strategies (Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, June 2020),

<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/african-strategies>

41. In response to the report by Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy, The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage (2018),

http://restitutionreport2018.com/sarr_savoy_en.pdf

42. Margarita Seminario and Arianna Kohan, 'The Creative Economy in Latin America', Washington: CSIS, 2020,

<https://www.csis.org/analysis/creative-economy-latin-america>

43. Eni Lestariningsih, Karmila Maharani and Titi Kanti Lestari, 'Measuring creative economy in Indonesia: issues and challenges in data collection', Asia-Pacific Sustainable development Journal (2019), 25:2, p. 108

https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/APSDJ%20Vol.25%20No.2_pp99-114.pdf

44. European Parliament, Resolution on the role of intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity and education in promoting EU fundamental values (2016), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2016-0005_EN.html

45. European Consensus on Development (2017), paragraph 35,

https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/european-consensus-on-development-final-20170626_en.pdf

46. Voices of Culture, Culture and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (2021), p. 91

<https://voicesofculture.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/VoC-Brainstorming-Report-Culture-and-SDGs.pdf>

This means that Europe must speak out much more forcefully when artists are censored, intimidated, silenced, imprisoned, physically abused, or killed. Too often when artists are oppressed, Berlin, Brussels, Paris and other capitals stay silent, because there are economic or other interests to protect. Yet what use is a policy that protects stones, but not people? The EU has recently gained the power to impose sanctions on individuals that violate human rights – the European version of the Magnitsky Act.⁴⁷ High Representative Borrell and the Council should use it to defend that most European of values, **freedom of expression**, including the freedom to create, share, and enjoy culture.

To **defend cultural rights** the world must root out impunity for wilful destruction of cultural heritage. Under its previous prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, the International Criminal Court (ICC) has played an exemplary role in prosecuting suspects for cultural war crimes and similar atrocities. For the first time an individual, Ahmad al-Faqi al-Mahdi, was convicted for war crimes against cultural property. A second such case is pending. In June 2021 the ICC adopted a comprehensive policy on cultural heritage. The EU should back it up with all the means at its disposal, including by using Galileo and other EU satellite systems to document heritage and assist in the presentation of evidence. In parallel the EU should step up its political, operational, and financial support to the UN Special Rapporteurs on Cultural Rights, Freedom of Expression, and Freedom of Assembly and Association. Their work is a beacon to liberty.

EU ambassadors could be invited to host public events to celebrate UN and UNESCO International Days relevant to cultural freedom in their countries of accreditation, such as World Press Freedom Day (3 May), World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development (21 May), World Day for Audiovisual Heritage (27 October) or World Human Rights Day (10 December). In terms of public diplomacy this would make the EU more visible as a principled partner – and provide much-needed moral support to local artists, academics, journalists, and citizens keen to enjoy their cultural rights.

More EU involvement is also needed to provide safe havens to artists, academics, and journalists at risk. Organizations working in these areas⁴⁸ all have their own, sometimes incompatible rules. Greater coordination would help to improve transparency and ease access. Financial aid is needed too: organizations providing safe havens often struggle to secure the necessary long-term financial support. More EU assistance would be welcome.

The world is witnessing an unprecedented, global trend to roll back human rights, close civic spaces, and silence critical voices. European values are under sustained attack. A joint approach by the EEAS, the Commission and Member States to freedom of cultural expression is needed to stem the tide. It is time for cultural freedom to be moved from the margins of EU human rights policy to its zenith.

47. European Council, EU adopts a global human rights sanctions regime, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/12/07/eu-adopts-a-global-human-rights-sanctions-regime/>

48. European initiatives such as the International Cities of Rescue Network, Artists at Risk, Project Defenders, and the Martin Roth Initiative, and US-based initiatives such as Scholars at Risk, the IIE Scholar Rescue Fund, and Journalists in Distress

Recommendations

EEAS and Commission

- Integrate cultural policy into the new EU Strategic Compass for security and defence (2022).
- Propose a Joint Communication on Freedom of Cultural Expression and prioritize diplomatic and financial support for cultural rights around the world.
- Invite EU ambassadors to host public events celebrating International Days relevant to cultural freedom.

Commission

- Propose an EU Action Plan to promote the role of culture as an enabler and driver of sustainable development.
- Create a European Forum for Culture and the Sustainable Development to

enable a regular dialogue with cultural organizations and experts.

- Review the effectiveness (impact) of EU policy and legislation to combat illicit trafficking in art and antiquities.

Commission and Council

- Propose a broad-ranging and innovative Cultural Heritage Partnership with Africa, based on cooperation among equals.

Member States

- Increase support to EUNIC and invite national EUNIC members to devote at least 10% of their annual budget to European cooperation.

Promoting our European way of life

Promoting our European way of life is one of the European Commission's principal priorities. The Commission specifies it as follows: "The European way of life is built around our values of solidarity, equality and fairness. It is about feeling safe, secure and having peace of mind, supporting the most vulnerable in our society and championing inclusion. It is about finding common solutions to shared challenges and equipping people with the skills they need, and investing in their health and wellbeing. It is about building stronger, more cohesive and more resilient European societies."¹ Commission Vice-President Margaritis Schinas has been tasked, *inter alia*, with "maximizing the potential of culture."

Several elements of this diverse portfolio are particularly relevant to culture: coordinating the Skills Agenda and the European Education area, coordinating work on inclusion, and leading the Commission's fight against antisemitism. How could cultural policy be mainstreamed across these domains?

Skills and education

Education is not a privilege; it is a human right guaranteed by international law. In the EU it figures prominently as Principle 1 of the European Pillar of Social Rights: "Everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market."

Digital skills, intercultural skills, entrepreneurial and managerial skills and similar capacities are as important to the cultural and creative professions as they are to other sectors of society. Artists,

cultural organizations, and creative enterprises need to build and maintain such skills to help build a more sustainable, resilient, and fairer Europe.

The EU has launched an ambitious skills and education agenda. To promote education it proposed, among other initiatives, a plan to achieve the European Education Area by 2025² and a Digital Education Action Plan.³ Skills are promoted through the European Skills Agenda,⁴ the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition,⁵ the Pact for Skills⁶ and other measures. Have the cultural and creative sectors been included?

Under the European Skills Agenda a Centre of Vocational Excellence is being created for the cultural and creative industries. A separate project brings together universities, heritage organizations and the private sector in an effort to professionalize the cultural heritage sector.⁷ Financed by Erasmus, the Centre will be a network supporting a training programme that will focus on entrepreneurship and innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises. Although the focus on private companies in the cultural and creative *industries* is a welcome one, this covers only part of the cultural and creative *sectors*. It will be important to ensure a **holistic approach to skills development**, so that artists, gallery operators, cultural educators and other cultural professionals can also benefit from the new opportunities for vocational upskilling. The Skills Partnership for the Cultural and Creative Industries, initiated on 15.10.2021, should be inclusive and aim at strengthening cooperation and transversal learning across all cultural and creative sectors.

The cultural and creative sectors should in fact be **covered in all 12 flagship initiatives**

1. European Commission, Commission Work Programme 2020: A Union that strives for more,

https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:7ae642ea-4340-11ea-b81b-01aa75ed71a1.0002.02/DOC_1&format=PDF

2. European Commission, Communication on achieving the European Education Agenda by 2025 (2020),

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0625&from=EN>

3. European Commission, Digital Education Action Plan (2018),

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0022&from=EN>

4. European Commission, European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (2020),

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0274&from=EN>

5. European Commission, Digital Skills and Job Coalition (2021),

<https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/digital-skills-coalition>

6. European Commission, Pact for Skills (2020), <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1517&langId=en>

7. European Cultural Heritage Skills Alliance, CHARTER (2020), <https://charter-alliance.eu/about-us/>

under the European Skills Agenda. This would imply, for example, revisiting the current focus on “increasing STEM graduates”, i.e., graduates in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. A more comprehensive and modern approach would be also to recognize the role of creativity as a key economic and social enabler, and would therefore also include Arts graduates (STEAM).

In a similar vein, the EU should make sure that the cultural and creative sectors are adequately represented in the new **European Alliance for Apprenticeships**, which aims to reach over 1 million apprenticeship placements and other learning opportunities.

The Digital Education Action Plan has three priorities, each of which is highly relevant to the world of culture: (1) making better use of digital technology for teaching and learning; (2) developing relevant digital competences and skills for the digital transformation; and (3) improving education through better data analysis and foresight. However, neither the arts, the heritage sector, nor the creative industries are mentioned in the Action Plan. Europe’s cultural sector ranges from literature and music to fashion and gastronomy, so **tailor-make approaches to digital education** will be required to reach all relevant actors. As discussed earlier, support for culture should be provided in formal, non-formal and informal education.

Care should also be taken to involve the cultural and creative sectors in the European Education Area. The recent Commission Communication only refers to culture once, in connection to cross-border cooperation. Where does this leave intercultural education, arts education, heritage education, or citizenship education? As both cultural policy and education policy are part of the remit of DG EAC, opportunities for greater synergy should be within reach. The Commission’s contribution to the EU Leaders’ Meeting in Gothenburg (2017), ‘Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture’, would be a good starting point.⁸

Citizenship education, in particular, deserves a more prominent place on the EU’s agenda. At a time when European values are under sustained attack, both inside and outside the EU, the case for an innovative and purposeful European strategy to promote European citizenship could hardly be stronger. Arts education supports citizenship education by inviting critical (self-) analysis, openness to new ideas, and collaborative creative thinking. Heritage education enables students to appreciate Europe’s cultural achievements and critically discuss our individual and collective responsibility for Europe’s failings to live up to its principles and values. Intercultural education is an EU commitment under SDG 4.7, as is citizenship education. For the benefit of current and future generations the EU should strengthen these connections and interdependencies as part of a **comprehensive approach to European citizenship education**.⁹

Integration and inclusion

The European way of life should be an inclusive one, but to millions of people today it is anything but. Prejudice and discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities is widespread across the Union, from the labour and housing markets to traditional and social media, where hate speech abounds. Bias and bigotry against Jews, Muslims, blacks, Asians, Roma, women, gender minorities and others is cynically promoted and exploited by right-wing political entrepreneurs and social media influencers. All too often, respect for human dignity – proudly and rightly included among the European Union’s founding values – is honoured mostly in the breach. And all too often, opinion leaders and ordinary citizens prefer to look away.

This poison attacks the very roots of the European Union. If the peoples of Europe submit to mutual distrust and recrimination the very existence of the Union is at risk. The EU is far more than a union of interests; it is above all a community of destiny, united on the basis of common ideals, laws, and institutions. Without mutual respect, good-will and solidarity among its peoples the EU cannot subsist. A Council of Europe Eminent Persons Report identifies diversity as the

8. European Commission, Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture (2017),

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52017DC0673&from=EN>

9. This subject will be further explored in a forthcoming paper by the present author

main challenge facing European democracy.¹⁰ Promoting the European core cultural values of dignity, respect, fairness, kindness, civility, and truth must therefore be at the top of any responsible politician's priority list.

The European Commission must be commended for playing its part. Its Action Plan on integration and inclusion¹¹ and its Anti-racism Plan¹² signal the Commission's commitment to a Europe of values; they also include many concrete and useful proposals. Of course, the EU's legal competences in these areas are relatively weak; it is the governments and parliaments of Europe that hold most of the relevant instruments and bear most of the responsibility. Whatever competences the EU does have it should use to the full. The Commission has said it will propose, before the end of 2021, to extend the list of EU crimes under Article 83(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to cover hate crime and hate speech, including online hate speech. This step cannot come soon enough.

European religious institutions such as mosques and cultural organizations such as theatres have been – and remain – a prime target of right-wing verbal and physical violence. Theatres in Berlin, Heidelberg and elsewhere have been deliberately targeted by protesters associated with the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and the National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD); in the Netherlands Geert Wilders has called for all mosques to be shut down, for Korans to be burned, and for all state subsidies to cultural organizations to be scrapped. But many artists and other cultural professionals have fought back in defence of European values.

It is here that the EU anti-discrimination plans fall short. They neither take due account of the threat to artists and cultural organizations nor of the courageous and principled resistance

by European cultural professionals. Just as surprising, the EU Action Plans hardly mention the role of culture in building bridges and common ground between refugees, migrants, and long-time citizens of the EU. And yet, as the Creative Europe Regulation notes, “culture is key to strengthening inclusive and cohesive communities. In the context of migration issues and integration challenges, culture plays a fundamental role in providing opportunities for intercultural dialogue and in integrating migrants and refugees [...]” The Regulation goes on to promise that people belonging to minorities will have access to the cultural and creative sectors and that they will be able to participate in them.¹³

Some years ago, an Open Method of Coordination Group of national experts published a thorough analysis of “How culture and the arts can promote intercultural dialogue in the context of the migratory and refugee crisis.” The 26 experts (Poland and the UK did not participate) drew up a list of recommendations that, along with the analysis, have lost little of their value.¹⁴ Several past projects under Creative Europe, Europe for Citizens, Erasmus and Horizon 2020 have focused on art and culture as ways to facilitate integration and inclusion of newcomers. One good example of the power of culture is EUROCLIO's project ‘Connecting Europe Through History – Experiences and Perceptions of Migration in Europe’.¹⁵

Still, there is more that European cultural organizations could do to reach out to migrants, refugees, and other non-EU nationals. Some 20.9 million non-EU nationals were legally resident in EU Member States in 2019. How many of them have visited a theatre, museum, gallery, or other cultural institution?

At the same time, European cultural organizations and creative companies should be encouraged to

10. Report of the Group of Eminent Persons of the Council of Europe, Living together. Combining freedom and diversity in 21st century Europe (2011), <https://book.coe.int/en/european-debates/5822-pdf-living-together-combining-diversity-and-freedom-in-21st-century-europe-report-of-the-group-of-eminant-persons-of-the-council-of-europe.html>

11. European Commission, Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 (2020), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0758&from=EN>

12. European Commission, A Union of equality: EU anti-racism plan 2020-2025 (2020), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0565&from=EN>

13. Regulation (EU) 2021/818 establishing the Creative Europe Programme 2021-2027, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R0818&from=EN>

14. OMC report on intercultural dialogue (2017), <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/4943e7fc-316e-11e7-9412-01aa75ed71a1>

15. EUROCLIO and EUROPAEUM, Connecting Europe Through History (n.d.), <https://www.euroclio.eu/project/connecting-europe-history/>

lead by example in terms of the diversity of their workforce and their management – leadership that more than a few of them still need to display.¹⁶

Meanwhile ‘intercultural dialogue’ should not be understood as relevant mostly or indeed only to newcomers; it is at least as important as a way to bridge the growing gaps between those that deny European values and those that seek to defend them.

How could the Commission **integrate the power of culture into EU policy to combat racism and promote inclusion**?

One way would be to systematically reach out to cultural professionals, encouraging even more of them to contribute to this agenda and to lead by example. To go beyond a rhetorical commitment this outreach should be embedded in a wider effort to target EU financial support. A project’s contribution to social cohesion and inclusion should be part of the selection criteria. Currently only 1% of projects under Creative Europe contribute to anti-racism and inclusion.¹⁷ To allow for identification of good practices and learning across borders, project allocation should be conditional on a theory of change and an independent evaluation – elements too often missing from cultural projects.

Another way forward would be to strengthen EU cooperation with the Council of Europe and its Intercultural Cities Programme.¹⁸ This programme provides practical, state-of-the-art toolboxes that local and regional authorities find very useful. Barcelona has just used them to create a ten-year Intercultural Action Plan to build a more inclusive community. The EU already supports an Intercultural Integration Plan in Cyprus.

Antisemitism and Islamophobia

The statistics are shocking. Nearly one third of respondents in Austria, Hungary, and Poland think that Jews will never be able to fully integrate into society, a recent poll found. In countries East and West more than one in four

agreed that there is a secret Jewish network that influences political and economic affairs in the world (Czech Republic: 23%; France: 28%; Romania: 29%). In Latvia more than a third (34%) said that Jews exploit the Holocaust for their own purposes; in Germany 23% agreed.¹⁹ Sadly, these results confirm earlier findings. Half of Europeans (50%) consider that antisemitism is a problem in their country; more than half think this in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Sweden.²⁰

The cancer of antisemitism yet again pervades Europe. To the European Union, founded on the promise of “never again”, this is an existential issue. The Commission was right, therefore, to propose a strategy to combat antisemitism. It is a principled and wide-ranging plan of action that reflects suggestions by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and other bodies. Importantly, it also contains proposals for protecting and fostering Jewish life in the EU.

Jewish life is an intrinsic dimension of Europe’s cultural fabric. Yet two out of three Europeans (66%) feel that people in their country are not well informed about the history, customs, and practices of Jewish people in their country. Only 3% think that people are very well informed.²¹ Recognizing that awareness and knowledge of Jewish culture – past and present – among the general public needs to be increased, the Commission proposes initiatives to draw attention to Jewish heritage across Europe. It will also continue EU support for Holocaust education, research, and remembrance.

The education dimension, however, remains regrettably vague. The strategy states that “teachers should be empowered to address antisemitism, the Holocaust, Jewish life and history, also in multicultural classrooms,” but it leaves open how this empowering should be done and by whom. Much evidence shows that teachers often shy away from addressing these subjects. This is another reason why the Commission

16. See, for example, IncArts, Hold on: Diversity and Managing in the Arts (2020), <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5c18e090b40b9d6b43b093d8/t/5fb6967ab3db4d4323bf1f77/1605801598364/Hold+on+Inc+Arts+V19+FINAL+FULL+REPORT.pdf>

17. Bert Jan Buiscool, Andrea Giannetto, Bastiaan Verberne, The role of culture, media and sport in the fight against racism (2020), [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/690905/IPOL_STU\(2021\)690905_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/690905/IPOL_STU(2021)690905_EN.pdf)

18. Council of Europe, Intercultural Cities Programme, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities>

19. Action and Protection League, press release 12 October 2021, <https://apleu.org/the-action-and-protection-league-is-calling-for-an-all-comprehensive-eu-antisemitism-indicator-and-a-legislative-and-educational-action-plan/>

20. Eurobarometer, Perception of Antisemitism (2019), <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2220>

21. Eurobarometer, Perception of Antisemitism (2019), <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2220>

should **re-energize its approach to citizenship education**, as discussed above.

There is another gap in EU policy that urgently needs attention. Racism and antisemitism are not the only blights afflicting Europe. Just as wide-spread and just as worrying is the rising tide of Islamophobia and violence against Muslims. “Hate speech against Muslims is growing and much of it is criminally relevant, involving incitement to violence and death threats.”²² Researchers have identified the ten dominant Islamophobic narratives in Europe that degrade Muslims collectively as a threat to security, unassimilable, a demographic threat, as posing the threat of ‘Islamization’, a threat to local, national and European identity, responsible for women’s oppression, essentially different and violent, incomplete citizens and a risk to the majority, and as inherently homophobic.²³ When derogatory stereotypes of this sort strike root in society, European history tells us, violence is usually not far behind.

Islam is the second largest religion in Europe. Tens of millions of Muslims contribute to Europe’s social, economic, political, and cultural flourishing. Muslims have been integral to European history since the 8th century CE. Arab translators preserved the Greek legacy on which Europe’s Renaissance was founded. Today’s proponents of a ‘clash of civilisations’ would do well to read the *Commedia*, where Dante places Averroes (Ibn Rushd) and Avicenna (Ibn Sina) alongside Aristotle, Plato, and Homer.

Why, then, is there still no **EU strategy to combat Islamophobia and foster Islamic life?**

Recommendations

Commission

- Develop a comprehensive approach to skills development in the cultural and creative sectors.
- Revitalize EU policy with respect to citizen education.
- Mobilize the power of culture in EU policy to combat racism and promote inclusion.
- Propose an EU strategy to combat Islamophobia and foster Islamic life.

22. Report by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, Daniel Holtgen, 23 September 2021, <https://rm.coe.int/dh-s-intervention-cm-23-09-21/1680a3eb6b>

23. Ian Law, Amina Easat-Daas and S. Sayyid, Counter-Islamophobia Kit, September 2018, <https://cik.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/36/2018/09/2018.09.17-Job-44240.01-CIK-Final-Booklet.pdf>

Culture and the new push for European democracy

“Democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights are the foundations on which the European Union is based. Democracy is a core European value, and a precondition for EU membership. The EU’s citizens see democracy, human rights and the rule of law as its most important asset.”¹

Democracy, human rights and the rule of law are at the heart of Europe’s political identity. They also matter hugely from a cultural point of view. First, of course, because these values are cultural values. They are the bedrock of the common European heritage that the EU is committed to uphold (Art. 3(3) TEU). But democracy, human rights and the rule of law also matter more specifically to cultural and creative professionals and their institutions, companies, and organizations. Without cultural freedom – the freedom to create and enjoy the fruits of human creativity – there is no culture worth upholding. And cultural freedom depends on the rule of law and the willingness to apply it.

From a cultural point of view the New Push for Democracy – the sixth pillar of the current Commission programme – is of utmost importance. Among the many aspects worth discussing there are two that warrant particular attention in the present paper. The first is the need to defend freedom of expression and freedom of the media. Without freedom artists, academics, and journalists are doomed to silence. Cultural professionals need freedom as much as they need air – as does society as a whole. Yet in more and more EU countries cultural freedoms are under increasing pressure. By way of illustration this paper will focus on media freedom as a *pars pro toto*.

The second major threat, equally insidious and equally serious, is the campaign by non-EU forces to undermine European cultural freedoms. Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and China openly defy international human rights law on freedom of

expression, including in their policies towards Europe. China’s strategy is a case in point.

Freedom of information and expression

In 1946 the very first session of the United Nations General Assembly declared: “Freedom of information is a fundamental human right and is the touchstone of all the freedoms to which the United Nations is consecrated.”² In 2021 two journalists, Maria Ressa and Dmitry Muratov, were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Freedom of expression and freedom of information, the Norwegian Nobel Committee remarked, are “crucial prerequisites for democracy and protect against war and conflict.” In honouring two courageous journalists the Committee underlined that “(f)ree, independent and fact-based journalism serves to protect against abuse of power, lies and war propaganda.”³

UNESCO’s most recent global statistics show that 400 journalists were killed between 2016 and 2020. Nine in ten cases of killings remained unresolved. This daunting combination spurs self-censorship.⁴ The 2021 Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters without Borders shows that journalism is “totally blocked or seriously impeded” in 73 countries worldwide and “constrained” in 59 others, together representing 73% of those evaluated.⁵

In Europe, the Council of Europe’s Platform for the protection of journalists registered a record number of 201 serious threats to media freedom, including record numbers of physical attacks (52) and cases of harassment or intimidation (70). The Platform found patterns of intrusive surveillance, arbitrary arrest and detention; judicial harassment through vexatious legal threats (SLAPPs) and criminal prosecutions of journalists on spurious charges of terrorism or treason. In many cases the demands of state authorities’ actions to combat Covid-19 were invoked as a

1. European Commission, European Democracy Action Plan (2020),

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0790&from=EN>

2. UN General Assembly, A/RES/59 (1946), <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f0975f.html>

3. Nobel Committee, The Nobel Peace Prize 2021, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2021/press-release/>

4. UNESCO, Threats that Silence: Trends in the safety of journalists (2021),

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf00000379589.locale=en>

5. Reporters without Borders, World Press Freedom Index 2021, <https://rsf.org/en/ranking/2021>

pretext for restrictive measures.⁶ In Hungary a leading Fidesz MP confirmed that the government had used the infamous Pegasus software to spy on government-critical journalists.⁷

Attacks on media freedom are rapidly becoming the new European normal. In the 2021 World Press Freedom Index Romania ranks 48, Croatia 56, Bosnia-Herzegovina 58, Poland 64, Greece 70, Kosovo 78, Malta 81, Albania 83, North Macedonia 90, Hungary 92, Serbia 93, Montenegro 104, and Bulgaria 112.

Concentration of media ownership in state or private hands is a crippling impediment to media freedom and diversity in Bulgaria, Hungary, and Serbia, and a major obstacle to the sustainability of independent media in many other countries.⁸ Three methods of control are particularly onerous: state control of public broadcasters and regulatory authorities tasked with upholding media laws, weak enforcement or abuse of weak regulation on ownership transparency, and use of government subsidies to foster clientelism in media markets.⁹ In Serbia, for example, the Vučić government channels slots for advertising for state companies to outlets that give it favourable coverage, and puts pressure on private companies that still advertise in critical media.

In the face of this onslaught EU governments have mostly stayed mum. The Council of Ministers adopted conclusions on safeguarding free media that were studiously non-committal.¹⁰

The European Commission has taken various steps to address the situation. In the past two years it has funded 18 projects to map violations of

media freedom, defend journalists, and support cooperation and exchange of good practices.¹¹ Under the Creative Europe Programme €75 million has been earmarked for media pluralism and journalism, as well as media literacy. The Commission has proposed a recommendation on ensuring the protection, safety, and empowerment of journalists to the Council.¹² To address the abuse of state advertising to curb free media it advises Member States to set up publicly accessible contract registers, “as supported by the Commission’s 2017 public procurement strategy.” The Commission will also set up a “structured dialogue” with Member States and their media regulatory bodies. And the Commission and the High Representative have issued press statements to mark World Press Freedom Day and other occasions.

Welcome as these initiatives are, none of them is likely to cut much ice with governments intent on stifling domestic criticism. No “structured dialogue” or register will put a stop to the salami tactics of the ruling parties in Hungary, Poland, Serbia, and elsewhere. Current policies lack bite.

To roll back the slow, steady, and systematic erosion of media freedom – indeed, political freedom *tout court* – the Commission must be prepared to act politically. It must be prepared to use its legal and financial powers to the full. And it must start calling a spade a spade.

As to legislation, the Commission has said that it will table a European media freedom act, although it did not give a deadline¹³. At the initiative of the European Parliament the Commission will propose a regulation to curb

6. Safety of Journalists Platform, Wanted: real action for media freedom in Europe (2021),

<https://rm.coe.int/final-version-annual-report-2021-en-wanted-real-action-for-media-freed/1680a2440e>

7. Justin Spike, Hungary admits buying Israeli-made NSO spyware allegedly used against opposition, *The Times of Israel*,

5.11.2021, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/hungary-admits-buying-israeli-made-nso-spyware-allegedly-used-against-opposition/>

8. Safety of Journalists Platform, Wanted: real action for media freedom in Europe (2021),

<https://rm.coe.int/final-version-annual-report-2021-en-wanted-real-action-for-media-freed/1680a2440e>;

for Bulgaria, see i.a., the Report of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe following

her visit from 25-29 November 2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/>

[report-commissioner-human-rights-council-europe-following-her-visit-bulgaria-25-29_en](https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/report-commissioner-human-rights-council-europe-following-her-visit-bulgaria-25-29_en)

9. Balkan Free Media Initiative, The Invisible Hand of Media Censorship in the Balkans (2021), <https://www.balkanfreemedia.org/>

10. Council conclusions on safeguarding a free and pluralistic media system (2020),

[https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020XG1207\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020XG1207(01)&from=EN)

11. Briefing for the CULT Committee, Media Action Plan: key challenges relates to media pluralism, media freedom and democracy (2021), [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/690866/IPOL_BRI\(2021\)690866_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/690866/IPOL_BRI(2021)690866_EN.pdf)

12. European Commission, Recommendation on ensuring the protection, safety and empowerment of journalists and other media professionals in the European Union (2021),

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021H1534&from=EN>

13. European Commission, Work Programme 2022, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/com2021_645_en.pdf

the noxious practice of abusive lawsuits against journalists (SLAPP). It should also **use its legal powers to fight back against politically motivated media concentration and abuse of state advertising**. And it must act to put a stop to the shameful European practice of exporting surveillance equipment and providing surveillance aid to countries that ignore fundamental freedoms.

Second, **Member States that violate freedom of expression should be deprived of EU funding**.

When the Commission threatened to withhold EU funds from Slovenia in response to its repeated attacks on the Slovenian Press Agency STA the Slovenian government quickly backed down.¹⁴

Third, the Commission and the High Representative should be prepared to call out countries by name instead of issuing general statements about the importance of free media. Statements addressed to everyone tend to be taken seriously by no-one. For the EU to have political impact it must have the courage to act politically.

“I want Europe to strive for more in nurturing, protecting and strengthening our democracy,” Commission-President Ursula von der Leyen stated in 2019.¹⁵ It is time to translate this most welcome ambition into effective action in defence of free media throughout the EU.

External interference with European cultural freedom

“Our democratic systems and institutions have come increasingly under attack in recent years from those who wish to divide and destabilise our Union. We need to do more to protect ourselves from external interference,” President von der Leyen wrote.¹⁶

One of the states that interferes most blatantly with European cultural freedoms is China.

China’s “Great Firewall” block Chinese citizens from freely accessing European cultural content. Beijing’s draconic censorship laws also do not allow European cultural professionals to perform freely in China. In 2018 the Schaubühne Berlin company staged an Ibsen play, *An enemy of the people*, in Nanjing. When the audience responded to the play by shouting criticism of their government, the Chinese authorities quickly cancelled all performances.¹⁷ When the French economist Thomas Piketty wanted to publish his book *Capital and Ideology* in China in 2020 the Chinese authorities insisted on cuts in the Chinese version (Piketty refused).¹⁸ Cambridge University Press publishes *China Quarterly*, an academic journal. In 2017 it decided to take down over 300 articles from its Chinese website, at the request of its importer in China. It only agreed to reverse its decision after a storm of academic protest. The German publishing group Springer Nature agreed to remove more than 1,000 articles from the websites of the *Journal of Chinese Political Science and International Politics*, two Springer journals, on the Chinese market. The articles contained keywords deemed politically sensitive by the Chinese authorities, including “Taiwan”, “Tibet” and “Cultural Revolution”.¹⁹

But China also directly interferes with cultural freedom in Europe itself. In return for Chinese funding the universities of Aberdeen, Glasgow and Strathclyde signed agreements promising to respect “cultural custom” and “not contravene ... the laws and regulations” of China.²⁰ In Nantes, the Château des Ducs de Bretagne Museum planned to host an exhibition on Genghis Khan in 2021. The Chinese authorities insisted on control of the exhibition brochure, legends, and maps. The museum refused to include what it saw as

14. Euronews with AFP, Slovenia resumes funding for national press agency after Brussels pressure, 14.01.2021, Slovenia resumes funding for national press agency after Brussels pressure

15. Ursula von der Leyen, My Agenda for Europe: Political Guidelines for the next European Commission (2019),

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/political-guidelines-next-commission_en_0.pdf

16. Ursula von der Leyen, My Agenda for Europe: Political Guidelines for the next European Commission (2019),

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/political-guidelines-next-commission_en_0.pdf

17. Alex Marshall and Zoe Mou, Ibsen Play Is Cancelled in China After Audience Criticizes Government, New York Times,

13.10.2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/13/world/asia/china-ibsen-play.html>

18. Helen Davidson, Thomas Piketty refuses to censor latest book for sale in China, The Guardian, 31.09.2020,

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/aug/31/thomas-piketty-refuses-to-censor-latest-book-for-sale-in-china>

19. Ben Bland, ‘Outcry as latest publisher bows to China censors’, Financial Times, 1 November 2017,

<https://www.ft.com/content/2d195ffc-be2e-11e7-b8a3-38a6e068f464>

20. Daniel Sanderson, Universities ‘sign Chinese gagging clause’, The Times, 5.09.2018,

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/universities-sign-chinese-gagging-clause-q7qz7jpf3>

“elements of rewriting of Mongol culture in favour of a new national narrative” and decided not to stage the exhibition.²¹ In Germany a publisher was asked to stop the publication of a Chinese novel, *Dragonfly Eyes*, unless she agreed to include “corrections”.²² Another publisher, Piper Verlag, was forced to cancel presentations of a book on Xi Jinping at two German universities after interventions by Wuhan University (sic) and the Chinese consul in Düsseldorf.²³

Such flagrant Chinese interventions send a chilling message: comply or be punished. Unfortunately, these menaces sometimes work. When the Disney film *Kundun* displeased the Chinese, Disney’s CEO Eisner apologized, saying that “the bad news is that the film was made; the good news is that nobody watched it ... In the future we should prevent this sort of thing, which insults our friends, from happening.”²⁴ PEN America has documented the many ways in which Beijing influences the US film industry.²⁵ European film-makers, one must assume, will have taken note.

How should Europe react? The Chinese strategy presents EU policy-makers with a conundrum. On the one hand, it is tempting to argue that, as the incidents take place in individual Member States, it is for these Member States to respond – not for Brussels. On the other hand, silence in Brussels makes the EU look weak, if not irrelevant. Obviously, concerted action would be best. The EU and national governments could invite European universities to reveal their financial ties with entities controlled by the Chinese state, such as the Confucius Institutes. Cities and regions enlisted in China’s Belt and Road Initiative could also be encouraged to reconsider their financial dependencies. European media could be invited to discontinue paid advertorials and similar content sharing with Chinese state-controlled news outlets.²⁶ Meanwhile there are good grounds for the Council President, the High Representative, and senior members of the Commission to **address China’s dual strategy openly, publicly, and repeatedly.**

The EU aims for economic sovereignty to promote its interests and to safeguard its place in the world. To uphold its values and retain its self-respect it should be no less ambitious in promoting its cultural sovereignty.

21. AP, French Genghis Khan exhibit put off over interference claims, 13.10.2020,

<https://apnews.com/article/museums-paris-china-archive-01038285061b78f9fd5336af98dc580>

22. Mathias Bölinger, Chinese censors target German publishers, Deutsche Welle.com 25.10.2020,

<https://www.dw.com/en/chinese-censors-target-german-publishers/a-55366269>

23. Guy Chazan, China blamed for cancellation of events for German book on Xi Jinping, Financial Times, 26.10.2021,

<https://www.ft.com/content/8e4af031-6d07-4b3b-816b-1fc9194b6e4a>

24. Elisabeth Braw, How a Swedish pop star took on China’s censors, www.politico.eu, 19.08.2020,

<https://www.politico.eu/article/sweden-pop-star-zara-larsson-took-on-china-censorship/>

25. PEN America, Made in Hollywood, Censored by Beijing (2020),

https://pen.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Made_in_Hollywood_Censored_by_Beijing_Report_FINAL.pdf

26. Sarah Cook, China’s Global Media Footprint (Washington: National Endowment for Democracy, 2021)

Recommendations

Commission

- Use all legal and financial powers to defend and promote media freedom across the EU, including in response to undue media concentration and abuse of state advertising.
- Speak out against infringements of cultural rights such as academic and media freedom in individual EU Member States.

Council, High Representative, Commission

- Speak out against China's dual strategy of blocking and censoring European cultural expressions in China while interfering with cultural freedoms in Europe.

Horizontal aspects

Towards a transversal approach

As this paper shows, the EU does excellent work in the field of culture. The European Year of Cultural Heritage has been a resounding success; prize-winning films supported by the Media Programme have moved audiences in and beyond Europe; the European Capital of Culture distinction helps local communities to boost their revenues and reputation; the Europa Nostra prizes are recognized far and wide as a European label of distinction; EU subsidies promote innovative cultural collaboration and research.

Valuable, indeed essential as the EU's contribution to culture is, much of it remains invisible to citizens. EU cultural policy hardly registers on the political radar, whether in Brussels or in national capitals. Even within the European Commission cultural policy sometimes lacks recognition, as when the Commission proposed to reduce the multi-annual budget for Creative Europe instead of increasing it, as the cultural sector had urged it to do. It took a courageous intervention by the European Parliament to rectify the situation.

Despite the efforts of many, cultural policy still tends to be treated mostly as a sectoral concern, relevant primarily to the responsible Directorate-General. Opportunities for synergy with other policy domains – from the Green Deal to economic and foreign policy – are often missed, and culture barely figures in most Commission flagship strategies. A more integrated, less stove-piped way of working would benefit the European institutions and Europe as a whole.

There are at least six policy areas where a more strategic approach to culture would be beneficial, as discussed above. This is a long-standing demand of the European Parliament, which has called for the cultural dimension to be “integrated in a transversal way in all EU policy areas that impact on shared EU fundamental values and rights such as youth policy, education policy, mobility, employment and social affairs, external policies, women's rights and gender equality, trade and regional development.”¹ But to **connect**

the silos some working habits will have to be revisited, at the level of the services as well as at political level.

Visibility

Information about the EU's many successful cultural projects can be surprisingly difficult to find. Much information is scattered across individual project websites, hosted by project participants and kept ‘live’ only for the duration of the project. Access to these projects is sometimes possible through the Commission website, but usually the quickest way to find them is through an American search machine – Google. The European Parliament has frequently called for a more user-friendly information policy. Remarkably, so has the Council, which asked the Commission to establish “a **single web contact point** with access to information on EU policies, programmes and actions undertaken by the Commission and EEAS regarding international cultural relations.”² For EU cultural policy to pack more punch it needs to be more visible, particularly on the web.

Cultural professionals, political decision-makers and citizens would benefit particularly from more systematic identification and presentation of good practices. Having to re-invent a wheel that turns beautifully in another part of the EU is time-consuming, costly, and – frankly – annoying. Some years ago the Commission published a compendium of successful cultural projects financed by the Structural Funds. An update would be useful. So would systematic external, **independent evaluation** of EU projects. More hard evidence about project impacts is essential to make the case for culture.

Stakeholder relations

The European Parliament, the cornerstone of the EU's democratic legitimacy, needs no convincing about the essential role of arts, heritage, the creative industries and the humanities in bringing Europeans together. The Parliament has long pushed for a more forward-looking, integrated European policy on culture; it has also used

1. European Parliament, Resolution on the role of intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity and education in promoting EU fundamental values (2016), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016IP0005&from=EN>

2. Council conclusions on an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations and a framework for action (2019), [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52019XG0607\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52019XG0607(01)&from=EN)

its budgetary powers to good effect. The CULT Committee, under the dynamic leadership of MEPs such as Doris Pack, Silvia Costa and Sabine Verheyen, has been particularly influential.

The EP could be more influential still if it could get its committees to take a more **transversal approach** to culture. Culture's economic and social importance could be the focus of the ECON and EMPL Committees; the DEVE Committee could take up culture's role in EU development policy; the ENVI Committee could look at how culture could contribute more to EU environmental and health policy; the LIBE Committee could study how Europe can better promote citizens' cultural rights; and the FEMM Committee could push for greater equality in EU cultural policy. By integrating cultural policy into the work of its Parliamentary Delegations the EP could promote culture as a driving force in EU foreign relations. The 2021 joint meeting between the CULT and AFET Committees is a good starting point.

Both the Commission and the Parliament could further improve their outreach to the cultural sector. This is not an easy task: Europe's cultural sector is highly diverse, if not fragmented. Contacts between its various components can be infrequent, even at national level; European cooperation tends to be the preserve of some, often larger organizations. The EU has created regular concertation mechanisms with some cultural sectors (such as heritage and music) but not others. Closer cooperation would allow for more inter-sectoral learning and innovation, and greater administrative and political visibility.

The cultural sector, for its part, should assume its part of the responsibility. We live in an age of rising intolerance and growing nationalism. To defend and promote our common values of solidarity, good-will, and cultural freedom, cultural organizations must work together. They need closer European cooperation, and more support from the Commission and the Parliament. Europe's cultural professionals should ask themselves not only what Europe can do for them, but also what they can do for Europe.

Definitions

Finally, a seemingly technical question. There is considerable conceptual confusion about the difference between cultural and creative *sectors* and cultural and creative *industries*. This distinction matters for legal and financial reasons, as well as in policy terms.

In the Creative Europe Regulation the EU defines the cultural and creative *sectors* as: "inter alia, architecture, archives, libraries and museums, artistic crafts, audiovisual (including film, television, video games and multimedia), tangible and intangible cultural heritage, design (including fashion design), festivals, music, literature, performing arts (including theatre and dance), books and publishing, radio, and visual arts."³

What the EU regards as cultural and creative *industries* is less clear. In 2010 it distinguished between cultural industries and creative industries. *Cultural industries*, it said, include the traditional arts sectors (performing arts, visual arts, cultural heritage – including the public sector), film, DVD and video, television and radio, video games, new media, music, books and press. *Creative industries* consist of "those industries which use culture as an input and have a cultural dimension, although their outputs are mainly functional. They include architecture and design, which integrate creative elements into wider processes, as well as subsectors such as graphic design, fashion design or advertising."⁴ By 2021 the Commission no longer makes this distinction. While noting that the CCI's are "a varied group" it mentions only the "biggest industries": audiovisual (TV, videogames, VOD, cinema, VR/AR), music, books and press publishing, advertising, cultural heritage (museums, historical sites), performance (theatre, dance), and visual arts.⁵

The European Investment Fund uses its own, different definition. According to the EIF the cultural and creative sectors also include tertiary and cultural education and activities of membership organizations.⁶ Eurostat, for its part, sometimes includes luxury goods and

3. Regulation (EU) 2021/818, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R0818&from=EN>

4. European Commission, Green Paper Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries (2010), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52010DC0183&from=EN>

5. Commission Staff Working Document, Annual Single Market report 2021, p. 98, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021SC0351&from=en>

6. European Investment Fund: Market analysis of the cultural and creative sectors in Europe (2021), https://www.eif.org/what_we_do/guarantees/cultural_creative_sectors_guarantee_facility/ccs-market-analysis-europe.pdf

gastronomy. Others include fashion design and manufacturing.⁷ EY excludes cultural education, luxury goods, gastronomy, fashion, jewelry, and industrial design.⁸

EU Member States also use various different definitions of cultural and creative industries.

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that the situation confuses legislators. In its recent resolution on the situation of artists the European Parliament uses two different estimates of the size of the cultural and creative economy: 8.7 million jobs (4-7% of GDP) and 7.6 million people (4.4% of GDP).⁹ Even the Commission itself sometimes seems confounded. According to one of its branches, Eurostat, 7.2 million Europeans work in the cultural sector (2021), another equally recent Commission estimate arrives at 8.02 million.¹⁰

Words matter. How the EU defines the sector determines which companies, cultural organizations, and artists can benefit from EU (financial) support, and which one not. **Clarification** is overdue.

Recommendations

Commission

- Develop an integral approach to culture across policy areas.
- Improve policy visibility online.
- Invest in independent evaluation of project impacts.
- Clarify the legal definition of cultural and creative industries.
- Strengthen outreach to and concertation with cultural and creative sectors.

European Parliament

- Encourage sectoral Committees as well as Delegations to regard culture as a transversal concern.

7. KMU Forschung and VVA Europe, Boosting the competitiveness of cultural and creative industries for growth and jobs, study on behalf of the European Commission (2016),

<https://op.europa.eu/nl/publication-detail/-/publication/723a331a-d6be-45e3-8475-8ce6ca0ee050>

8. EY, Rebuilding Europe: the cultural and creative economy before and after the COVID-19 crisis (2021), <https://www.rebuilding-europe.eu/>

9. European Parliament, Resolution on the situation of artists and the cultural recovery in the EU (2021), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0430_EN.pdf

10. Commission staff working document, Annual Single Market Report 2021, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021SC0351&from=EN>

Recommendations

Commission

Green Deal

- Develop a concerted approach, in dialogue with the sector, to fully harness the power of culture in the Green Deal, mobilizing culture's capacity to raise awareness and empower people to create a sustainable world;
- Propose a comprehensive strategy on culture and sustainability in local and regional communities;
- Facilitate the building of a Culture for Climate Coalition to co-create a participatory community to support the changes needed for a climate-neutral society;
- Invite member states to share their national experiences in greening the cultural sector under the Recovery and Resilience Plans, and identify good practices;
- Together with partners, develop a 'Team Europe' approach to preserve and promote cultural sustainability around the world.

Digital Europe

- Assess the digital competitiveness of the cultural sector, and identify gaps and priorities;
- Support the cultural and creative sectors in countering the risks of algorithmic biases inherent in global platforms;
- Include the cultural sector in all digital policies and instruments, including the Digital Education Action Plan, the Digital Skills initiative, the Artificial Intelligence Strategy, and the Digital Innovation Hubs;
- Invite Member States to share their national experiences in digitizing the cultural sector under the Recovery and Resilience Plans, and identify good practices.

Economic policy

- Include the competitiveness of the creative economy in the coordination of the national Recovery and Resilience Plans and the Country-Specific Recommendations under the European Semester;
- Propose a European strategy to promote sustainable cultural tourism;
- Include culture's contribution to health into the EU Health Union and the EU4Health Programme;
- Propose measures to improve the status and working conditions of artists;
- Improve coordination between EU financial instruments and enhance transparency;
- Develop a new legal and fiscal framework for European philanthropy.

External relations

- Propose an EU Action Plan to promote the role of culture as an enabler and driver of sustainable development (social, economic, environmental);
- Create a European Forum for Culture and the Sustainable Development to enable a regular dialogue with cultural organizations and experts;
- Review the effectiveness (impact) of EU policy and legislation to combat illicit trafficking in art and antiquities.

European way of life

- Develop a comprehensive approach to skills development in the cultural and creative sectors;
- Revitalize EU policy with respect to citizen education;
- Mobilize the power of culture in EU policy to combat racism and promote inclusion;
- Propose an EU strategy to combat Islamophobia and foster Islamic life.

New push for European democracy

- Use all legal and financial powers to defend and promote media freedom across the EU, including in response to undue media concentration and abuse of state advertising;
- Speak out against infringements of cultural rights such as academic and media freedom in individual EU member states.

Horizontal aspects

- Develop an integral approach to culture across policy areas;
- Improve policy visibility online;
- Invest in independent evaluation of project impacts;
- Clarify the legal definition of cultural and creative industries;
- Strengthen outreach to and concertation with cultural and creative sectors.

EEAS and Commission

- Integrate cultural policy into the new EU Strategic Compass for security and defence (2022);
- Propose a Joint Communication on Freedom of Cultural Expression and prioritize diplomatic and financial support for cultural rights around the world;
- Invite EU ambassadors to host public events celebrating International Days relevant to cultural freedom.

Council and Commission

- Propose a broad-ranging and innovative Cultural Heritage Partnership with Africa, based on cooperation among equals;
- Speak out against China's dual strategy of blocking and censoring European cultural expressions in China while interfering with cultural freedoms in Europe.

European Parliament

- Encourage sectoral Committees as well as Delegations to regard culture as a transversal concern.

Member States

- Increase support to EUNIC and invite national EUNIC members to devote at least 10% of their annual budget to European cooperation.

About the author

Gijs de Vries is a Senior Visiting Fellow at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) where his areas of research include international cultural relations. In 2018-2020 he was an external expert in the German Foreign Ministry's Reflection Group on Germany's future strategy for international cultural cooperation (AKBP) and in the European Union's Voices of Culture initiative on culture and the Sustainable Development Goals.

He was a member of the Advisory Council of the European Cultural Foundation (ECF), a trustee of the European Union Baroque Orchestra (EUBO), and a member of the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Gijs de Vries is a former Member of the Dutch Government and of the European Parliament. He was a co-founder of the European Council on Foreign Relations.