



# PREPARATORY ACTION 'CULTURE IN EU EXTERNAL RELATIONS'

Executive Summary

Engaging the World: Towards Global Cultural Citizenship



An initiative funded  
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**preparatory action**

**CULTURE *in* EU EXTERNAL RELATIONS**

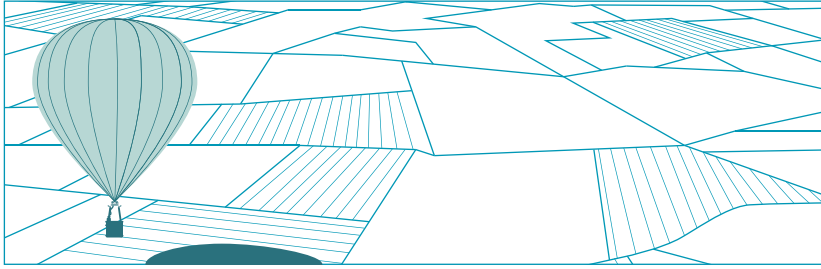


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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is the outcome of a sixteen-month inquiry that has been the centrepiece of the Preparatory Action ‘Culture in EU External Relations’. The inquiry covered 54 countries – the 28 EU Member States, the 16 countries included under the European Neighbourhood Policy<sup>1</sup> and the 10 Strategic Partnership countries.<sup>2</sup> It has uncovered a very considerable potential for culture in Europe’s international relations and has also explored the ways in which culture and cultural expression have been deployed already by European actors in multiple relationships with their counterparts elsewhere. These European actors have included Member States, artists and other professionals in the arts and culture sector (often termed ‘cultural operators’ in EU circles), civil society entities devoted to cultural production and/or delivery, the business sector, and, to some extent, European institutions.

At the same time, the inquiry has analysed how third country stakeholders have partnered with these European cultural actors and how they view their relationships with Europe. It has uncovered their aspirations and expectations for the future. It has confirmed that many people across the world have a strong interest in engaging culturally with Europe. It has shown the various ways in which they are attracted by the European ‘narrative’, to use a currently fashionable term, in particular by Europe’s cultural diversity, as well as by fundamental values, such as freedom of expression, and by the vigour of Europe’s cultural and creative industries.

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1 The ENP countries are the following: Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Moldova, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine.

2 The Strategic Partner countries are: Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, South Korea and the United States of America.

Yet the inquiry has also found that many of Europe's privileged international positions face powerful and growing competition from other countries and regions. Thus it fully validates the European Union's commitment to *enhancing the role of culture in the external relations of the EU and its Member States* – and societies – and the process set in motion by the European Commission's 2007 'Communication on a European agenda for culture in a globalizing world', which was endorsed by the Parliament and the Council in 2008.<sup>3</sup>

The report reveals how ties of cooperation and exchange in different domains of cultural and intellectual expression have been forged with partner countries and regions by Member States, their many, often autonomous institutions and cultural civil societies, and the European institutions. These ties encompass not only all the various domains of the arts and heritage, but also higher education, particularly in the humanities. While Europeans have already succeeded in projecting to the world an image of their shared space as one of cultural creativity and diversity, the inquiry reveals that the time has come for them to go beyond representation alone and engage with the rest of the world through stances of *mutual learning and sharing*. Adopting such stances would mean adopting a spirit of *global cultural citizenship* that recognises shared cultural rights as well as shared responsibilities, hinging upon access and participation for *all* in a framework of cosmopolitan solidarity.

How could it be otherwise, in a world in which all cultural practice is becoming increasingly trans-national and trans-continental, as artists and creative people everywhere remain rooted in their own cultures yet have recourse to globalised repertoires, methods and strategies? The challenge for Europe in this multi-polar world is to remain true to itself, yet to continue to position itself creatively in a globalised world of fluid and multiple identities and permanent cultural and social transformation. The positive forces shaping this transformation include the digital revolution, the exponential expansion of the social media and large-scale political and social changes across the world. Yet there is also a dark side to this globalisation. Cultural actors both in Europe and elsewhere are confronted by the growing concentration of ownership and power in the hands of massive trans-national conglomerates, as well as in a small number of privileged cities and regions. This concentration is already limiting cultural freedom and creativity. It will also restrict the scope of trans-national cultural exchange unless mechanisms are devised to promote small scale and local cultural entrepreneurship.

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3 'Resolution of the Council of 16 November 2007 on a European Agenda for Culture', Official Journal of the European Union (2007/C 287/01). Online. Available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2007:287:0001:0004:EN:PDF>

The report demonstrates the ways in which stepped up cultural engagement with the rest of the world can serve the *interests* as well as the *ideals* of the EU and its Member States. Such engagement would benefit both intercultural dialogue and global solidarity. It would strengthen respect for and the affirmation of cultural diversity. It would also foster trade, investment and competitiveness. Equally, it would promote innovation and development, as envisaged by the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions – provided the EU manages to implement certain key provisions of that international treaty more effectively than it has so far. The report also foregrounds the intrinsic added value of the flourishing of culture and the richness of cultural exchange. This *intrinsic added value* is increasingly recognised across the world today.

On the basis of the inquiry, the report highlights the *strengths* and *weaknesses* of European international cultural relations to date, the *opportunities* that remain to be tapped, as well as the *obstacles* to be overcome. It presents key lessons for policy making in this area. It identifies and explores the ways in which cultural resources, deployed in a spirit of global cultural citizenship, can provide key tools for the strengthening and broadening of the external relations of the EU, its Member States, and their public and civic actors. It also reveals the strong added value that a strategy based on culture can afford all these European actors. It proposes a roadmap for such a strategy, consisting of the principles that should guide this kind of international cultural engagement.

The report's chapter 'recommendations for ways forward', identifies **the key building blocks** of an approach that would bring together multiple stakeholders – European Member States, the European cultural sector and civil society, the corporate world and the European institutions – and become a 'win-win' option for all.

The first set of building blocks concerns key principles of values as well as method. The **value-based principles** include reciprocity and mutuality, notably mutual listening and learning; the more vigorous promotion of cultural diversity in the spirit of the 2005 UNESCO Convention; respect for open expression, critical reflection and free debate, notably regarding the ways in which artists and cultural operators appropriate and adapt cherished European values in their own diverse ways. In a nutshell, 'Europeans must be willing to ask the 'Other' what (s)he really wants'.<sup>4</sup>

In relation to **method**, the report stresses the need to **balance governmental responsibility with the autonomous practice of cultural creators and their organisations**. Hence the planning and implementation of cultural

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4 Sir Martin Davidson, CEO of the British Council, at the International Conference in Brussels, 8 April, 2014.

relations should involve all cultural stakeholders right from the outset, including third country partners: the joint creation ('co-creation') of new projects is the bedrock of deep and lasting ties. Moreover, since meaningful cultural relations unfold in the long term, there can be no 'quick fixes' in this domain. Nor can one size fit all: patterns of cultural relations will have to be modulated on a case-by-case basis. These relations should not be limited to the presentation of European cultures to others and vice versa, although this aspect is of course important. Instead, they should give priority to sharing Europe's multiple and diverse experiences in cultural capacity building and governance. Finally, little benefit can be expected from the deployment of culture in external relations unless procedures concerning applications for EU funding are greatly simplified and made more accessible.

The report also explores the ways in which the imperatives of diversity *and* European commonalities can be reconciled. To make it possible for the rich diversity of European cultures to come to the fore and for broader European interests to be served, more strategic communication and coordination are required; more effectiveness and efficiency in the trans-national dimension is needed, rather than new layers of bureaucracy. The EU itself will need to find coherence amongst its different tools and instruments and the entities and actors responsible for them. Given that competencies for external relations will remain principally anchored to Member States, progress will also depend on the achievement of *subsidiary complementarity*, through which the European institutions support Member States and expert organisations in delivering 'European' projects that are more than just the sum of many national projects.

In the light of these principles, the final chapter goes on to present a series of **operational recommendations**. These concern both **innovations** in the practice of culture in external relations as well as mechanisms that need to be put in place on a priority basis. These may be summarised as follows:

1. **A strategic framework, dedicated staff and proper co-ordination need to be put in place.** Such a strategic framework would require the key actors (EU institutions) to agree upon a small, but sufficiently strong coordination mechanism within the European External Action Service (EEAS) that could work across all the European Commission directorates general concerned, communicating and liaising with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders as well as with civil society. Personnel with cultural knowledge and experience should be assigned to selected EU Delegations to enable and facilitate cultural relations.

2. **Governance:** the structures and modus operandi of the EU institutions need to be flexible enough to adjust to a multi-layered and shared

system of governance. 'Variable geometry governance' has to be the way forward. Decision-making needs to ensure transparency, efficiency and accountability and should address not just the interests of European stakeholders, but also those with whom they are engaging. The facilitating role the EU provides must promote a truly inclusive dialogue. Advocacy of particular values by the EU must be acknowledged and made explicit, so that trust and respect can provide a solid basis for engagement with others.

3. **New methods of funding and fundraising** need to be actively sought, such as co-funding, pooled funding, public-private partnerships, the blending of grants and loans and the establishment of trust funds. The role of the private sector, of philanthropic organisations, corporate sponsors and other independent funding organisations should also be rethought and adapted to the requirements of international cultural relations. The potential is most obvious in fields such as the cultural and creative industries, and in clusters of 'incubators' in areas of need such as urban neighbourhoods.

4. **Resources should be pooled**, in a spirit of 'smart' complementarity based upon mutually agreed cooperation between Member States, notably via their cultural institutes and attachés abroad, as well as across a multitude of cultural civil society linkages and networks that operate in parallel to governments.

5. **Better communication is needed**, which is able to share European societies' sense of commitment to the flourishing of their cultural sectors and explain clearly why the EU itself is also committed to strengthening the role of culture in external relations. The EU's public diplomacy ought to communicate more imaginatively to a variety of audiences about the cultural relations opportunities offered by the EU, the Member States and other actors/institutions. This also implies **multilingualism** in the EU's dealings with the rest of the world, not just within its boundaries.

6. **Barriers to mobility must be removed** in the interest of intensified culture relations and a denser flow of creativity, as envisaged by the 2005 Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. For this reason, reviewing the visa regime applicable to culture operators must become a priority for the Member States of the EU.

7. **Strengthening civil society** in countries where major social and political transformations are occurring should be a cultural priority for Europe. It is essential to deploy more resources through non-governmental channels,

in other words at the 'people-to-people' level. This is particularly needed in countries that lack clearly defined state policies or funding.

**8. A better fit with the cultures of young people is required.**

International cultural relations remain out of fit with the cultural interests and practices of young people. No future EU strategy can hope to succeed if it is not constructed squarely within the cultural environment in which young people across the globe construct their aspirations and pursue their dreams and/or if its agents are unwilling or unable to promote new cultural forms and voices. By the same token, the EU should also establish more exchange programmes for young people in both the educational and cultural domains. It is also at the elementary school level within Europe that the seeds should be sown for building European knowledge and awareness of other cultures.

**9. A focus on cities and towns:** urban cultural actors in all third countries, in cities both large and small, are particularly keen to network with European counterparts, trade cultural goods and services with them or learn from their experiences and skills. Demand for such relations with cities elsewhere is strong among European cities as well, which can also share with the rest of the world the EU's experience with the European Capital of Culture programme.

**10. Alternative models of trans-national peer-to-peer learning:**

independent 'eye-to-eye' forms of collaboration would be a form of much desired 'cultural fair trade' and could provide valuable mutual learning experience. These partnerships could bring together artists, cultural managers, journalists, writers, etc..

**11. Alternative ways of empowering local cultural actors:** the EU could attempt to develop new modes of cooperation between established cultural organisations and/or foundations and local actors in third countries.

**12. Monitoring and evaluation** also require a new 'culture', as it were, of measurement and benchmark based assessment. Many institutional initiatives fail for lack of such tools with which to identify roadblocks and wrong turnings. This is as true of international cultural relations as it is of any other field.

The report also argues that these recommendations should be tested by the design and launch in 2014 of a selected number of *pilot projects*. It therefore provides illustrative outlines of possible projects in the following areas: joint cultural strategy development workshops; a joint translations programme;



the establishment of 'European Creative Hubs' in emerging economies; the development of business and export skills in the cultural and creative industries sector; a young creative entrepreneurs networking programme; training in cultural management; city-to-city cooperation; the development of an online information tool to promote cultural relations; a properly structured EU Film Festivals scheme and, finally, the elaboration of a quantitative EU cultural relations index.

The report urges that, by 2017/2018, these projects be evaluated and the results reported upon, so as to yield a second set of revised recommendations. This phase of evaluation would be coterminous with other EU policy processes, including the mid-term review of the Financial Perspectives. The expertise of many partners will be needed at EU level, notably that of the EEAS, working in closer partnership with the Commission services, in particular those responsible for culture, and the EU Delegations, as well as with the Member States and their leading cultural organisations and networks, such as EUNIC.

The essence of the Consortium's findings and recommendations may be expressed in the following **8 key messages**:

1. Cultural relations have a **huge potential for enhancing European influence and attraction** in the rest of the world as well as for enhancing awareness, in Europe itself, of other cultures and the capacity to learn from them.
2. There is great **demand, in Europe as well as elsewhere, for more and better European cultural relations with the rest of the world** that can also deliver greater prosperity and human development for all.
3. But for this to be possible, the European Union must elaborate a coherent **international cultural relations strategy**. Any such strategy, however, must recognise that people in the rest of the world are not entirely happy with the way Europe currently approaches such relations. They want Europeans to engage with them in new ways, **listening, sharing, imagining and creating together**, rather than simply projecting our individual national cultures in a purely representational logic.
4. Any such strategy also has to be far more congruent with **the cultural interests and practices of young people**, who increasingly communicate with each other and create communities of interest and engagement trans-nationally through digital tools and the social media.
5. EU institutions, national cultural relations agencies and cultural civil society need to work together to build a strategy that is both transversal

and 'joined up' across different sectors and that also respects the ideas and ideals of **global cultural citizenship: reciprocity, mutuality and shared responsibility**.

6. Such a strategy requires political will and commitment. It also has to be adequately funded under the European Union's budget. It should be implemented mainly by cultural professionals.

7. A series of **prototypes and pilot-projects** should be launched forthwith in order to inform and kick start the strategy. The projects selected should also trigger a process of transformative change in the way Europe's international cultural relations are conceived and carried out.

8. The strategy should establish **clear goals, priorities and realistic outcomes**. At the same time, since sustainable impacts in external cultural relations cannot be achieved quickly, it has to **be conceived and designed for the long term**.

In a nutshell, the report reveals the considerable potential of culture in the rapidly changing and multi-polar world of the twenty-first century. The failure to maximise on this potential now would be a huge missed opportunity for Europe.

