

To Make the Silos Dance

Mainstreaming Culture into EU Policy

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**European
Cultural
Foundation**

*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)

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 Svejek; 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 *cláirseach* 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 story-telling 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

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

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.”¹

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 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”.²

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.

1. 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
2. Eurobarometer 93, Summer 2020, <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2262>

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.

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;
- 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 has been a member of the Board 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.