

#CulturalDealEU

Brussels | Amsterdam | The Hague

2024 European Parliament Elections Call For A Cultural Deal For Europe As A Pillar Of Democracy

Dear Members of the European Parliament,
Dear Members of European political parties,
Dear Candidates in the 2024 European elections,

In just a few months' time, we will all be taking part in the 2024 European elections. With more than 400 million people eligible to vote, European elections are the second largest democratic elections in the world. This is a key moment to make sure that culture is placed at the very heart of Europe's future to help bring Europeans together at this pivotal point in our shared history.

The May 2023 edition of the "[European Sentiment Compass](#)", a joint initiative by the European Council on Foreign Relations and the European Cultural Foundation, shows that despite – or perhaps because of – the war on our eastern borders, the EU Member States and their citizens remain strongly attached to the European project. However, the number and complexity of challenges pose the risk of seriously damaging our European sentiment and sense of togetherness, undermining our shared values, rights and responsibilities – and the very future of Europe.

Culture, creativity and cultural heritage are Europe's unique features that underpin European values. Based on [Eurobarometer](#) surveys, an overwhelming majority of Europeans consider cultural heritage to be important to their community, region, country and the European Union as a whole (8 out of 10 respondents in 2017, which is equivalent to around 320,000 potential voters). With this in mind, we call for culture to be explicitly included in the electoral manifestoes and platforms of parties and political groups in the run up to the 2024 elections. Culture must hold a central place in pre-election debates to help bring Europeans together rather than driving them further apart.

As well as bringing people and societies together, the cultural sector also employs 7.7 million people across Europe (3.8% of total employment in the EU), according to Eurostat (2023). These figures are growing year on year, with more than 1.7 million active enterprises in creative, arts, entertainment and other culture-related activities in the European Union in 2023.

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Championing culture across Europe

In November 2020, at the height of the pandemic, the European Cultural Foundation, along with Culture Action Europe – the major European network of cultural networks, organisations and individuals, and Europa Nostra – the leading heritage network and coordinator of the European Heritage Alliance, made a Europe-wide plea for “[A Cultural Deal for Europe](#)”. With COVID-19 devastating Europe’s cultural sectors at large and with the cultural and creative economy losing approximately €200 billion in revenues in 2020, we called on the EU to integrate culture into its actions and policies, making it an overarching strategy similar to the Green Deal. We called for culture to be included in the EU’s recovery and funding programmes, its sustainable development strategies, its relations with the rest of the world, and more.

Endorsed by thousands of individuals and more than 110 European cultural networks and organisations, with strong support from the European Parliament, our initiative was instrumental in setting the symbolic goal of 2% for culture in the National Recovery and Resilience plans. Through this, we were able to mobilise and secure an estimated €12 billion for culture across the EU. Europe’s cultural sectors are already benefiting from these funds through targeted investments, programmes, grants and capacity-building projects carried out locally by individual Member States, albeit not at the same pace in every country.

In 2022, as the pandemic was finally receding, we were all faced with yet another unprecedented challenge – Russia’s brutal and unjustified invasion on Ukraine. This brought war and suffering to Europe, creating dire challenges for Ukraine at large, including its cultural sectors. As well as wreaking death and destruction on cities and civilians, including many artists and cultural workers, the invader has deliberately targeted Ukraine’s cultural assets.

Increasingly, it is becoming apparent that the threats facing Ukraine are spreading across Europe. The rise of populist and extremist parties in many countries is challenging the very foundations of our democracies and the values that citizens have long enjoyed.

Can we count on you?

With Europe’s solidarity put to the test, revisiting and reinforcing our Cultural Deal for Europe’s call to action is more important than ever. **As cultural advocates and dedicated Europeans, we are calling for culture to be prominently featured in the 2024 electoral campaigns: in political groups’ programmes and in public conversations with Europeans about the future of our continent.**

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As the three initiators of A Cultural Deal for Europe, together with our thousands of supporters across EU Member States, we ask you to respond to our call to action and include a strong cultural dimension in your political programmes and electoral campaign trails. We are calling on you to endorse the Cultural Deal for Europe, making sure culture is a pillar of your own political agenda ahead of the 2024 elections.

We have created a union of states and institutions. We still need to craft a union of values and people. It is culture that brings us together as Europeans, igniting the hearts and fuelling the minds of citizens. Without culture, the very future of Europe is under threat.

Can we count on YOU to help us place culture at the heart of Europe?

Yours sincerely,



André Wilkens, Director, European Cultural Foundation



Lars Ebert, Secretary General, Culture Action Europe



Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailovic, Secretary General, Europa Nostra

A Cultural Deal for Europe is open for public endorsements. Express your support, watch Cultural Deal for Europe Annual Policy Conversations, and read the Cultural Deal for Europe 2023 call to actions at www.culturaldeal.eu

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Appeal for A Cultural Deal for Europe! Put culture at the heart of the European Union's future!

We are calling on current Members of the European Parliament and their political groups and affiliated parties, as well as MEP candidates, to champion culture in their political platforms and manifestoes.

With culture placed firmly at the heart of Europe, we can help address some of the biggest challenges of our time: climate change, threats to democracy and freedoms of expression, disinformation, economic and social insecurity, AI/digital shifts and war. Culture cannot solve all woes but it is critical to Europe's unity, solidarity and future.

We appeal to all political forces to approach cultural issues constructively and respectfully within the European elections. **We firmly believe there is no future for Europe without culture!**

Culture, creativity and cultural heritage are Europe's unique features. They are crucial for mainstreaming democracy and European values and rights. They must be explicitly **included in the electoral manifestoes and platforms for as many parties and political groups as possible, and have a central place in pre-election debates.**

Diversity, inclusion and accessibility of culture and cultural heritage will guarantee social and economic value for our present and future. That is why **we are calling on political parties and groups to propose candidates with cultural awareness and expertise.**

We appeal for ambitious, forward-looking **EU policies and a new EU strategy for culture, based on the proposals of the Cultural Deal for Europe, developed in dialogue with civil society.** A new EU strategy for culture must reverse worrying trends of dwindling budgets and regular cuts to public funds for culture and cultural heritage, **while creating meaningful paths of cooperation with private funders and philanthropy.**

Together, we could speed up efforts to realise the potential of **culture and cultural heritage for sustainable development, as drivers of peace and social justice, as well as efforts to fully incorporate culture in the EU's Green Deal.**

Together, we could establish **common standards for working conditions for artists and cultural workers across Europe,** and effectively include a young generation of cultural workers in the job markets.

Together, we could combat the anti-European forces and Euroscepticism, overcome divisive narratives and **encourage more citizens to vote and actively participate in European democracy.**

We look forward to working with you to put culture at the heart of Europe's future!