

# Reflections on the Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations

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Culture Action Europe welcomes the recognition of culture's impact via the recent joint communication 'Towards a joint strategy...'. It also welcomes the opinions being developed by the EESC and CoR, adding additional perspectives to this important topic.

## Culture Action Europe wishes to underline the following issues:

1. In view of the diversity of involved stakeholders and EU directorates and the number of existing distinct programmes and instruments aptly highlighted in the Communication, a clear governance on EU level needs to be guaranteed and implementation ensured.
2. CAE notes that 'culture' can easily be instrumentalised in populist and nationalistic rhetoric. Open artistic exchange demonstrating our cultural diversity on equal footing with other countries and also with minority cultures within Europe is key. Similarly, arts can be misused for propaganda. Educating people to detect propaganda (also in print and digital media) and distinguish it from exchange on the basis of diversity is important, as is developing an understanding of pluralism, (heritage) dissonance and multiple narratives.
3. Distinct strategies need to be elaborated depending on the partner countries. We call for research into the needs of different selected countries, via collaboration with local research institutions and civil society networks.
4. We underline the importance to involve civil society actors in the field of culture on all sides in the planning of the strategy and future exchanges. Organised civil society and cultural networks must play a key role in developing and maintaining exchanges between people. Peerlearning actions between stakeholders should be promoted.
5. Such exchange, if to be developed in the framework also of the Creative Europe programme, necessitates a clear increase in the programme's budget.

6. Culture Action Europe stresses that not only should the exchange of artists and cultural 'products' be promoted but arts education and outreach activities encouraged, also via skills development and exchange in the arts education sector. This ensures a wider reach of cultural programmes, allowing for maximum impact.

7. Exchange on creative issues must be paralleled with an in-depth reflection on the role of culture in sustainable development. (see the Agenda 21 for Culture campaign 'The Future we want includes culture' in cooperation with Culture Action Europe<sup>1</sup>).

8. The development of open exchange in the field of culture goes hand in hand with freedom of (artistic) expression, a right upon which we must insist in international collaboration.

9. Reciprocity and eye-level co-creation processes are crucial, with funding also allowing for translation and intercultural mediation if necessary.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://cultureactioneurope.org/news/cae-sdgwatcheurope-future-we-want-includes-culture/>