Deeds, not words!

Joint Statement - Cultural Deal for Europe

The Cultural Deal for Europe is a trans-national, cross-sector partnership co-initiated by Culture Action Europe, Europa Nostra and the European Cultural Foundation

Ahead of the EU Economic and Financial Affairs Council of 10 November 2026 which will discuss the EU's next budget (2028–2034), we Culture Action Europe, Europa Nostra and the European Cultural Foundation – co-initiators of the Cultural Deal for Europe - call on the EU Council to reject the 30% cut to AgoraEU proposed by the Irish Presidency. Chopping €2.58 billion for culture, media, cultural heritage, and civil society – essential to Europe's democratic resilience and hence the basis for our better future - would not only cause profound damage to an already heavily impacted culture (both arts and heritage) and media sectors but only save just 0.14% of the EU budget.

While we fully recognise the urgency and necessity of strengthening Europe's capacity to defend itself and become a sovereign power, economic and military power alone cannot resolve deeper political, ideological and cultural conflicts which are destabilising our world. Durable peace and security also require the protection of our cultural assets, independent institutions and media, cultural understanding and the patient reconstruction of trust. How can the EU leverage the multiple values of culture for Europe while considering serious reduction of the resources to sustain it? The EU cannot only affirm that culture matters; it also needs to ensure culture is reflected in Europe's strategic choices and priorities.

The proposed massive reduction is in blatant contradiction with the historic political commitment made by the European Commission, European Parliament and Council of the European Union in their Joint Declaration Europe for Culture – Culture for Europe (18 June 2026) acknowledging culture as a strategic asset for Europe, and committing to its support and promotion as a vital asset for building a better future for Europe and its citizens.

The Joint Declaration made a firm commitment, sent a strong signal and clearly embraced the idea of a Cultural Deal for Europe we have been advocating for with thousands of organisations across Europe since 2020. [statement "A Central Place for Culture in Europe's Future", 2023]

Today, the challenge for the EU Institutions and Member States to prove their determination, show courage, adhere to the principles set out in the Culture Compass for Europe presented by the European Commission and endorsed politically by the highest representatives of three main EU Institutions. We must not succumb to pressures for frugality in areas that provide direction, inspiration, security and hope for Europe's citizens and their communities.

#CulturalDealEU

Culture is a strategic resource for peace, democracy, security, competitiveness, and cohesion. It is an investment in our future!

Political recognition without a solid financial backbone is an empty promise. And it might backfire and erode trust between EU institutions, as well as between institutions and citizens, reinforcing the growing distance between politics and people. Deeds, not words, please!

Culture – both arts and cultural heritage - are strategic assets for Europe – as highlighted by the Joint Declaration Europe for Culture - Culture for Europe. The next EU budget 2028-2034 must reflect it. We therefore call on the EU institutions to:

- **Increase rather than reduce the budget of the future AgoraEU programme by securing a budget for culture, media, journalism, cultural heritage and civil society of at least €10.7 billion (cf. EP proposal).**
- **Allocate at least 2% of the EU long-term budget to culture, recognising it as an investment in democracy, security, and prosperity.**
- **Guarantee dedicated funding for culture across key EU programmes which contribute to Europe's sovereignty, competitiveness, prosperity and stability, including research and innovation, youth, education, union of skills, and digital transformation, urban and regional development including housing, climate mitigation, enlargement and external action.**
- **Guarantee dedicated cultural funding across all major EU programmes, from research, innovation, and competitiveness to education, regional development, external action, and the green and digital transitions.**
- **Protect artistic freedom, independent media, cultural rights, and open civic space as essential foundations of democratic and inclusive societies.**
- **Establish permanent and meaningful structured dialogue with culture, cultural heritage, and wider civil society sector organisations for the design, implementation and evaluation of EU policies that directly or indirectly affect them.**

We count on you to deliver for Europe and its citizens: not only in words, but in deeds.

#StandupforAgoraEU #NamePlaceFund #AskPayTrust #FutureofEurope #CulturalDealEU

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