

**CULTURAL DEAL FOR EUROPE:  
ANNUAL POLICY CONVERSATION 2025**

**CULTURE:  
THE COMPASS  
FOR  
EUROPE'S  
FUTURE**

**4 February 2025, Centre for Fine Arts Brussels – Bozar**

**REPORT AND POLICY MESSAGES**

**#CulturalDealEU**



**“No culture, no future! No culture, no life!”**  
*Sam Alekksandra, poet & multidisciplinary artist*

**We are in a storm.** Our European project, founded as a collective endeavour for peace, now faces choppy waters: wars on its borders, growing inequality, deepening polarisation and the devastating impact of floods and storms. As internal and external pressures threaten the European Union (EU)’s fundamental values and destabilise democratic systems, Europe’s greatest strength lies in its rich culture and heritage. These are the foundations that will empower us to actively reimagine and rebuild a more inclusive, democratic and united Europe – one that embraces both its current and aspiring members. **To secure its future, Europe needs to underpin its strategy and future internal and external actions in a strong cultural vision – a Cultural Deal for Europe.**

On 4 February 2025 at Bozar (the Centre for Fine Art in Brussels), the founders of a [Cultural Deal for Europe](https://culturaldeal.eu/)<sup>1</sup> the European Cultural Foundation (ECF), Culture Action Europe (CAE) and Europa Nostra - hosted the fifth annual policy **conversation: “Culture: The Compass for Europe’s Future”**. They welcomed the European Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture & Sport, Glenn Micallef; the Chair of the European Parliament Committee on Culture and Education, Nela Riehl; four Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) of the Committees on Culture (CULT) and Budget (BUDG); as well as representatives from the EU Council Presidency, cities, young artists and civil society. More than 120 participants attended the event in person, and over 1,000 people followed the conversation online from all corners of Europe. The event was the first public discussion about the EU’s future “Culture Compass” – a strategic framework announced by the President of the European Commission to be delivered by Commissioner Micallef in 2025.

This report aims to capture the key contributions from the day, as well as highlighting the policy messages from the **eight policy conversations**. We hope this will inspire and inform the upcoming consultations and debates on EU policies for culture and heritage. We would like to see a [Cultural Deal for Europe](https://culturaldeal.eu/)<sup>2</sup> embedded in the “Culture Compass” – with culture and cultural heritage ranked as a top priority among EU policies.

The following summary also seeks to amplify calls for allocating **at least 2% of the next EU budget for culture and cultural heritage**. Investing in these areas is essential for strengthening Europe’s democracy, security and sustainability.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://culturaldeal.eu/>  
<sup>2</sup> <https://culturalfoundation.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Statement-CDEU-2024.pdf>  
<sup>3</sup> Key messages and highlights of the event are available here: [https://culturalfoundation.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/CULTURAL-DEAL-FOR-EUROPE\\_KEY-MESSAGES\\_FEB2025.pdf](https://culturalfoundation.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/CULTURAL-DEAL-FOR-EUROPE_KEY-MESSAGES_FEB2025.pdf).

# WE NEED A COMPASS IN TURBULENT TIMES

*“Let culture not be the fifth wheel but the steering wheel!”*  
 André Wilkens, European Cultural Foundation

*“Today, Europe needs a reliable compass, not only for a Security Compass or a Competitiveness Compass, but it needs above all a Democracy Compass and a Cultural Compass, which need to be overarching to all other compasses and strategic priorities.”*  
 Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailovic, Europa Nostra

In their welcome address, the three Cultural Deal partners and Bozar shared their visions and aspirations about how **culture can act as a compass for Europe** to guide us through troubled waters – helping to translate democratic and ethical values for citizens and engaging them in democratic practices. They argued that Europe should be a polyphonic space, fostering diverse ideas and trust through transnational collaboration, co-production and mobility (Christophe Slagmuylder, CEO and Artistic Director, Bozar).

In these turbulent times, the only right course to steer is one based on our **values**. The EU remains an advocate of the core values of sustainability, inclusion, diversity, equality and human rights. While the European Commission focuses on competitiveness, we emphasise that our core and non-negotiable values are what truly make us competitive. Culture gives these values meaning, and civil society safeguards them – both within and beyond the EU (Lars Ebert, Secretary General, CCAE). **“We are in a battle for Europe!”** (André Wilkens, ECF). This is a critical emergency, and we must be prepared to face it head on. Culture may not be a battlefield, but it is essential for Europe’s resilience. To move forward, we need fresh ideas and innovative thinking.

*“We need places to come together, shared space for imagination, negotiation, conversation. Inspired by artists and artworks, breathing inspiration out to our visitors and to the society at large.”*  
 Christophe Slagmuylder, Bozar

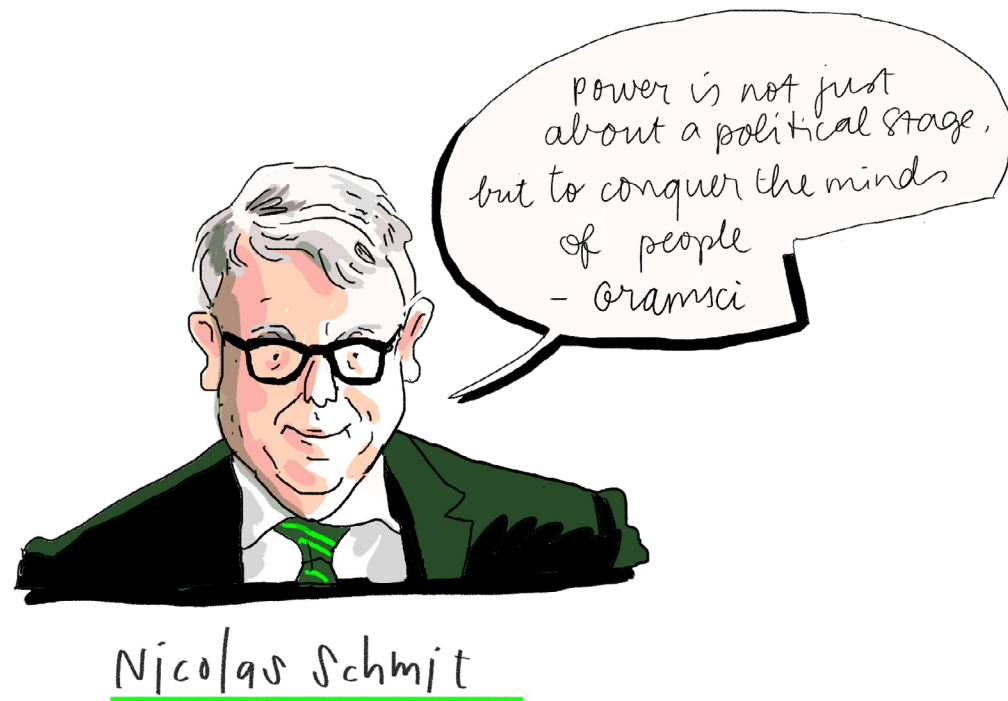
*“Let the people on the streets in Europe be our motivation to challenge outdated structures, embrace new alliances, and ensure that culture is recognised not just as an asset, but as a necessity.”*  
 Lars Ebert, Culture Action Europe

The “Three Musketeers” of the Cultural Deal (Lars Ebert from CAE, André Wilkens from ECF and Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailovic from Europa Nostra) reminded us that what they started five years earlier (in 2019) in Bozar had successfully amplified the voices of cultural and heritage civil society. The Cultural Deal had catalysed greater ambitions in terms of demands to place culture and heritage at the heart of the European project – where they truly belong.



# CULTURE AS A CORE VALUE IN AND FOR THE EU

Conversation with Nicolas Schmit (former European Commissioner for Jobs & Social Rights) with Isabelle Schwarz (Head of Public Policy, ECF).



**Culture as a core European value** is needed today more than ever, to foster European unity. What makes us European is not the internal market or the common currency, but a shared sense of belonging and values that have been fought for and reclaimed over time. Nicolas Schmit (former European Commissioner for Jobs & Social Rights and lead candidate of the European Socialists in the 2024 European Parliamentary elections) emphasised that the battle for Europe's future is a battle for people's minds, beliefs and values (echoing Gramsci's idea of power). **It is a cultural battle** as culture shapes people's perspectives, especially in the context of polarisation and migration. There is a need to defend and promote cultural values against rising threats of neo-nationalist or extreme right-wing views. In addition, Europe is losing the global technological battle, putting its prosperity, values and democratic systems at risk. To close the technological gap with the US and other global powers, Europe must take two key steps: **first**, it must invest in its own tech and media infrastructure ("What is the European alternative of X?"); and **second**, it must implement educational reforms that provide media literacy and new digital skills to children and people of all ages.

Europe's global role should focus on building strong partnerships with its neighbours, as well as with Africa and the Global South, rather than pursuing territorial dominance. This must be both a cultural and geopolitical endeavour, rooted in international solidarity and co-creation models for sustainable global development – countering neocolonialism and focusing on positive engagement.

# CULTURE: THE COMPASS FOR EUROPE'S FUTURE

The "Culture Compass" is expected to set the strategic agenda and direction for European cultural policy, while also paving the way towards more ambitious financial support for culture beyond the Creative Europe programme to create meaningful and sustainable impact. While the EU is often seen as an economic and technical project, culture has the power to connect people – giving the EU a human face and a shared identity.

Georg Haeusler (Director, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission) took the opportunity to shed light on the future Culture Compass, which will include the following five pillars:

- **Freedom of Expression** – Defending artistic and media freedom across the EU and beyond.
- **Safeguarding Cultural Heritage** – Protecting heritage under threat, with a focus on Ukraine.
- **Access to Culture in the Regions** – Ensuring culture is not elitist but a common good for all.
- **Intellectual Property & AI** – Addressing the impact of AI on cultural creation and artists' rights.
- **Working Conditions for Artists** – Improving fairness and sustainability for cultural workers and heritage professionals.

Haeusler explained that various stakeholders would be invited to debate the new strategic framework:

*"We need a lot of debates with different stakeholders, to ask real questions and to not agree on everything. The Compass should be tangible."*

Georg Haeusler, Director, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission

# CULTURE AND DEMOCRACY CONVERSATION

With André Sobczak (Secretary General, Eurocities); MEP Laurence Farreng (CULT Committee, Renew); Tamara Janashia (Executive Director, Culture and Management Lab, Georgia); and Ivana Jovanović Arsić (Co-founder of KulturIs, Novi Sad Library, Serbia); facilitated by Natalie Giorgadze (General Director, CAE).

*“Culture is actionable hope. Our colleagues are in the streets defending democracies.”*

Natalie Giorgadze, CAE

Amid growing democratic backsliding, shrinking civic spaces and threats to the rule of law, culture plays a vital role in upholding democratic values, amplifying diverse voices, fostering civic engagement and inspiring hope for a more positive future, thus strengthening actionable hope. Across Europe and its neighbouring countries, young people, cultural workers and wider civil society are mobilising to defend their fundamental rights and European values. Cultural actors are at the forefront of democratic movements in countries across Europe, especially where the rule of law and fundamental freedoms are under threat.

Delegates brought up several examples to illustrate the challenges. For example, the people of **Georgia** have been taking to the streets for over three months, following the fraudulent elections in October 2024. CAE member Tamara Janashia from Georgia spoke about the oppressive actions of the Georgian parliament towards civil society and against civic freedoms, by introducing a Russian-style “Foreign agents’ law”. They have arrested journalists and civic activists, as well as putting Georgia’s EU membership application on hold. Tamara’s **call for action** to EU institutions and diplomatic representations of EU Member States was to protect democracy and support the battle of Georgian people for their European goal.

Ivana Jovanović Arsić from the Novi Sad Library (part of The [Europe Challenge](#)<sup>4</sup>, an ECF initiative) emphasised that the EU must break its silence and show support for the ongoing large-scale students’ protests against corruption in **Serbia**. Libraries are spaces of civic literacy; they can be the beating hearts of their communities, re-focusing their work from their book collections to the users, by organising citizens’ laboratories to provide local solutions. Cities have a key role to play because they deal with the local challenges of democracy daily, such as migration, inclusion, political and demographic divides. André Sobczak, Secretary General of Eurocities, believes there are strong and vibrant cities that have culture at their core. Cities and mayors often oppose central governments and come under political pressure.<sup>5</sup>

How can the Culture Compass effectively address the democracy issue, and ensure funding in the future Multiannual Financial Framework? MEP Laurence Farreng (CULT Committee) emphasised that a lack of ambition today could be used against us in the future. **We must be more ambitious** with our demands for culture at a European level, she added, as this has not yet been given by the Commission. We therefore, expect the Compass to provide a bold strategic direction.

*“We need ambition!”*

MEP Laurence Farreng

*“Cities believe in strong Europe which can’t happen without culture.”*

André Sobczak, Eurocities

## CALL TO ACTION:

**The Cultural Deal for Europe recommends making “Culture & Democracy” a pillar of the future Culture Compass:**

- Recognise and support culture’s vital role in democracy, both within the EU and its neighbourhood, through emergency grants, mobility support and enhanced pan-European cultural exchange and cooperation opportunities for (at-risk) artists, cultural and heritage professionals, and displaced individuals.
- Make culture and cultural heritage a strategic pillar of the European Democracy Shield.
- Ensure and support open, inclusive and safe spaces for public debates and democratic expression, empowering citizens to actively engage in democratic processes.
- Strengthen international cultural cooperation, using culture as a tool for resilience and solidarity, with a focus on Ukraine, as well as on other countries from the EU neighbourhood that are striving for peace, freedom and democracy.
- Prioritise cultural participation across all communities and generations, embedding it in EU, national and local policies to create stronger, healthier societies.
- Empower cities and local governments to drive culture-focused policy-making, promoting diversity, multilingualism and artistic mobility through initiatives that enhance media literacy, foster inclusivity and provide accessible public spaces for artistic expression.

The Cultural Deal partners issued joint statements in support of civil society in [Georgia](#)<sup>6</sup> and Serbia.



<sup>4</sup> <https://theeuropechallenge.eu/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://cultureactioneurope.org/knowledge/eurocities-new-culture-manifesto/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://cultureactioneurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Statement-of-Solidarity-with-the-People-of-Georgia.pdf>



# CULTURE AND SECURITY CONVERSATION

With Marta Cienkowska (Deputy Minister of Culture and National Heritage in Poland); MEP Zoltán Tarr (Member of the CULT Committee, EPP); Ihor Poshyvailo (General Director of the National Museum of Revolution of Dignity – Maidan Museum, Ukraine); facilitated by Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailovic (Secretary General, Europa Nostra).

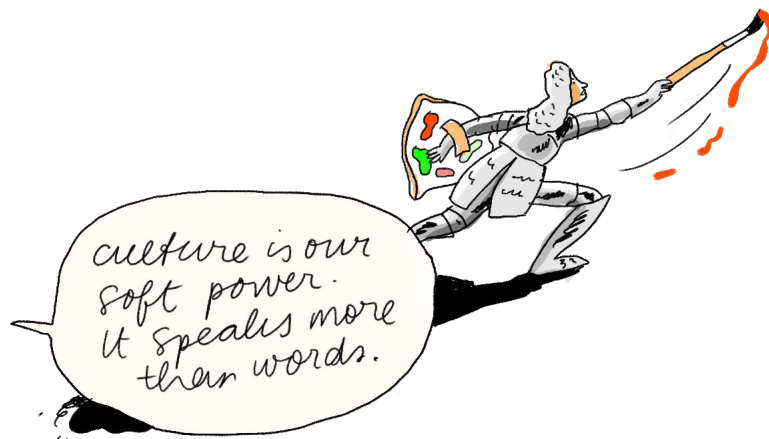
*“Culture speaks more than words. We have to create a global perception through culture. With soft power, without battles, we can create narratives.”*  
Marta Cienkowska, Deputy Minister of Culture and National Heritage in Poland

*“If you want to destroy a civilisation, you attack its culture.”*  
Glenn Micallef, European Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture & Sport

*“Culture is about ideas, conviction and values.”*  
MEP Zoltán Tarr

Our world is increasingly shaped by power struggles. International principles, rules and treaties are being challenged or discarded. What once seemed unimaginable has become our daily reality, with the frontiers of the battles running through our monuments, universities, media and social media channels. In a traumatised, conflicted and fragmented world, what role can culture and heritage play in fostering peace and

security? In armed conflicts, cultural heritage is often attacked and destroyed, leading to the destruction of identity and the erasure of shared histories. Culture is overlooked as a value, as well as a vital source of well-being for communities, whereas military language is used more often in daily life. Digital public spaces and public discourses are dominated by private media owners, as well as by governments, often weaponising culture to propagate divisive, anti-European and anti-human narratives.



**Culture sparks unity rather than division**, argued Marta Cienkowska, Deputy Minister of Culture of Poland. Culture and cultural heritage offer opportunities to imagine a different world where peace flourishes for everyone. Through soft power – cultural diplomacy, shared heritage and cultural exchanges – we can transform Europe into a more powerful player in international politics, as well as in its security strategies. The Polish Presidency’s priorities in culture address the safety of artists in a world of insecurity; discussions were held around AI and disinformation, as well as how to rebuild Ukraine after the war.

Governments use culture, media and heritage as tools of warfare by investing in the “big business” of changing people’s minds, warned MEP Zoltán Tarr, adding that it is cheaper investing in culture than in arms. Culture is used for disinformation and propagating anti-European values. The EU has developed some tools to counter that through fact-checking and the Media Freedoms Act as well as through education exchanges (e.g. the Erasmus programme). Culture and heritage can be part of the EU’s **hard power** for influencing public/media narratives and for fighting disinformation, as well as providing **soft power** mechanisms for imagining a common future, conflict prevention, building resilience and recovery.

## CALL TO ACTION:

**The future Culture Compass must include an ambitious security and international relations dimension:**

- Culture is a powerful diplomacy tool in both hard and soft power. The EU must strengthen its international defence and security capabilities while investing in international cultural relations to build lasting, meaningful connections with global populations, as well as to establish high security, preparedness, prevention and recovery standards.
- The EU should support: pan-European transnational exchanges and cooperation fostering international cultural relations through people-to-people exchanges, as well as the protection of cultural heritage at war; international monitoring and data collection; development capacities in the management of cultural heritage and recovery; improving coordination on preventing the illicit traffic and trade of cultural goods and heritage artefacts; international cooperation and supporting cultural diversity; leveraging and scaling educational initiatives like Erasmus to enhance people-to-people connections promote shared democratic values, and foster a common European sentiment.
- The EU must invest in and promote safe, reliable (disinformation-free) and democratic media spaces for people to use. The European Democracy Shield and the Media Freedom Act are important steps forward in that direction. Implementation and monitoring will be key.
- The EU must develop policies to safeguard cultural heritage, particularly in conflict zones like Ukraine, as well as zones prone to crisis, and ensure their effective implementation.
- The EU should promote security in the cultural sector, including addressing job safety and the role of AI, while also addressing digital security and heritage protection.
- The EU should foster interagency cooperation to combat the use of culture and heritage as a weapon by authoritarian regimes as well as supporting international collaboration on safeguarding cultural heritage.

# CULTURE AND SUSTAINABILITY CONVERSATION

With MEP Hannes Heide (Member of the CULT Committee, S&D); Bailie Annette Christie (Glasgow City Council, and Chair of Glasgow Life); Silja Fischer (Secretary General at the International Music Council); facilitated by André Wilkens (Director, ECF).

The climate crisis is one of the biggest threats of our time, and it should be the first priority for us to address. Culture and heritage are sectors that directly support the sustainable development of our planet and provide a vector that intersects with other sectors and enhances their effects, e.g. in healthcare, research and innovation, education, regional development, external relations and more. Culture and creative sectors significantly improve the quality of life and make places more beautiful, inclusive, and sustainable. They make spaces more desirable for people and businesses to thrive. As a factor for our sustainable future, culture and cultural heritage must be central in public policies with sufficient resources for cultural activities, cross-sector synergies, fair working conditions for cultural and heritage practitioners, as well as safe and culture-friendly AI and digital development.

**Sustainability is not a priority in the current EU policy agenda.** Politicians deny climate change – warned MEP Hannes Heide. MEPs and stakeholders must create momentum and show how important it is. The vital social and economic effects of culture and creative sectors cannot unfold if there is insufficient investment in culture. There is also a need for green investment in cultural infrastructure. This could come from outside Creative Europe – from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and other programmes that address greener European cities, nature restoration etc.

Sustainability needs action at city, national, EU and international levels. Silja Fischer emphasised the long-standing global issue the cultural sector has been addressing: the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) do not include sustainable development for culture. For the process development to be sustainable and effective, it needs to be culturally informed, culturally relevant and culturally empowered. The **#Culture2030** campaign has drafted a [Zero Draft](https://culture2030goal.net/our-culture-goal-proposal)<sup>7</sup> with ten targets for ensuring cultural sustainability for the well-being of all, which could be an inspiration for the EU's Culture Compass.

The city of Glasgow invested in culture-led regeneration, which transformed it from a post-industrial city to a cultural city, inspiring more cities and EU initiatives. Bailie Annette Christie introduced the guiding principles and achievements of [Glasgow's Cultural Strategy 2024-2030](https://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do-for-glasgow/glasgows-culture-strategy-2024-2030)<sup>8</sup>, which invests in people (participation, education, skills), as well as in sustainable culture – both environmentally and economically. Culture is embedded in every single plan of the city's strategy – economy, international relations, city centre regeneration and neighbourhoods. The foundations of this development were made three decades ago when Glasgow became the European Cultural Capital in 1990. It has since become an attractive destination for people, creatives and visitors alike.

*"2% for culture is not enough!"*

MEP Hannes Heide

<sup>7</sup> <https://culture2030goal.net/our-culture-goal-proposal>  
<sup>8</sup> <https://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do-for-glasgow/glasgows-culture-strategy-2024-2030>

## CALL TO ACTION:

**The future Culture Compass must prioritise Culture and Sustainability for Europe's future – as the most urgent issue of our time – and envisage mechanisms for timely action:**

- We call for Culture and Cultural Heritage to be recognised as a standalone UN Sustainable Development Goal beyond 2030. In this capacity, culture and heritage can underpin sustainable development by providing individuals and communities from around the globe with knowledge, arguments and tools for more effective, inclusive, equitable and sustainable development policies and actions.
- We urge the EU institutions, Member States and local and regional governments to embed culture and cultural heritage in their sustainable development strategies to enhance cohesion, health, well-being and prosperity for individuals and communities alike.
- We call for transparency in spending recovery funds and cultural programmes and link them to sustainability goals.
- We advocate for the recognition of sustainable cultural development within international frameworks like the 2030 Goal Campaign, focusing on cultural rights and expressions. We support cultural inclusion for indigenous peoples and would like to see cultural sustainability integrated into wider national and global policies.
- We emphasise the role of culture and heritage in city regeneration and post-industrial transitions (e.g. following Glasgow and Bilbao models) focusing on bottom-up co-creation strategies.



# “DEMOCRATIC BODY”

Leander Kämpf (dancer) & Sam Alekksandra (poet) in conversation with Stephanie Bonnici (Changemaker: “Pop the Vote”, Public Policy Coordinator, ECF).

*“Without imagination, how can we imagine a better future together? Imagining together is power!”*

Sam Alekksandra, poet & multidisciplinary artist

A performative piece combining dance and poetry “Democratic Body: Let Your Move Be Resistance” by the German dancer Leander Kämpf and the Maltese poet Sam Alekksandra acknowledges the realities of young people’s disenchantment with democratic processes. It was co-created for “Pop the Vote: Culture on the Ballot”, which was a Culture Action Europe initiative, co-funded by the European Parliament in the framework of the EP Elections 2024. The work carries a powerful emotional tone – frustration, anger, hopelessness – shaped by the real experiences of the two young artists, who sensed the huge distrust between political processes and the lived experiences of young people today. Young people’s voices are not heard enough in political processes. It is hard for young people to suppress their anger and grief, while facing a grim future. They feel powerless in the face of the systemic inaction of the political elites towards the global challenges. Culture allows people to feel. Artists process their feelings of grief and frustration, find clarity and from there they move towards action for change.

Sam and Leander believe that culture creates spaces for collectively imagining the future, to dream beyond the structures that confine people now. **Imagining together is power!** To achieve one common goal, people in theatre arts come together, and put their differences aside. At the EU level, we gather around the table with different perspectives and with all our diversity for a European goal, which is the beauty of our democracy. Young people’s voices should be heard, and they should be allowed to dream of a better future ahead. **No culture, no future!**

Sam Alekksandra



#CulturalDealEU

# CULTURE IN THE EU’S MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK (MFF) – THE AIM IS 2%

Conversation with Georg Haeusler (Director, DG EAC); Jeanne Brunfaut (General Administrator ad interim of General Administration of Culture – Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles; Managing Director of Centre du Cinéma et de l’Audiovisuel); facilitated by Luiza Moroz (Policy Advisor, CAE).

The European Union is preparing its next long-term seven-year budget (known as the Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2032) envisaging simplification and streamlining of EU programmes, including a new Competitiveness Fund. In the last week of January 2025, the Competitiveness Compass of the EC was launched. The cultural and heritage sectors are eager to know how these European Commission plans will affect the future of the Creative Europe programme and whether there will be space in the next MFF to support culture’s intrinsic value.

Georg Haeusler (Director, DG EAC) clarified that “simplification” on the one hand means reducing the bureaucratic burden on the sectors concerned. Our arguments in favour of the EU’s support for the intrinsic value of culture is the utmost necessity to boost the European cultural environment and the original and diverse European content – something national and local budgets would not be able to cover alone, argued Jeanne Brunfaut. We need to articulate the intrinsic added value of the diverse, multilingual and original European content beyond the economic arguments, as culture cannot make profit or compete with the commercial production from the US or China.

The **Cultural Deal for Europe calls for a minimum of 2% of the EU’s future budget to be earmarked for culture, cultural heritage and creative sectors via a dedicated Culture programme.** According to estimates of the European Parliamentary Research Service, each euro (€) invested in the creative and cultural sector at an EU level generates a return of up to €11 of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). (The Creative Europe programme currently is worth less than 0.2% of the total EU budget). To achieve this, **we need to be more ambitious, as culture is worth much more than 2%** – argued MEP Helder Sousa Silva (BUDG Committee, EPP). Culture is a pillar of European identity.

*“We need a flagship programme for culture in the next MFF – like Erasmus!”*

MEP Helder Sousa Silva



#CulturalDealEU



## CALL TO ACTION:

- **Europe needs a stronger Creative Europe programme, a European flagship that safeguards the freedom of creation.** We must continue to care for artists and fund projects that may not generate immediate profit. Creative Europe has the power to humanise the EU's image and help young people discover European content.
- **Raise ambitions! Culture deserves more than 2%.** It is the umbilical cord for the EU's five main pillars: cohesion, agriculture, competitiveness, security and defence, and neighbourhood and enlargement. Cohesion is the cultural force that connects all five pillars. Competitiveness is the culture that drives better and more efficient production. Security and defence provide the culture that keeps us safe. Culture and heritage are structural prerequisites for other EU policies and should receive significantly more funding to deliver the potential they have to keep Europe together.
- **To advocate for cultural funding, we must highlight its unique European added value.** EU investment enables what national, regional and local budgets cannot – translating poetry from/to niche languages, promoting independent films internationally, supporting cross-sectoral projects and fostering unexpected exchanges between those who might not have connected otherwise. All this enriches Europe's cultural space.
- **Public funding for culture should support risk-taking.** Artists should be able to take risks, research and develop works that may never generate profit – or may eventually gain global recognition and bring in revenues.
- **We should not rely solely on statistics and economic arguments.** If culture is justified only by its market value, we risk funding only what sells. Values are what should guide policy-making in the first place.

See also Culture Action Europe's [Paper on the future of EU Culture Funding](https://cultureactioneurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Future-of-EU-Culture-Funding_Pretty.pdf.pdf)<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> [https://cultureactioneurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Future-of-EU-Culture-Funding\\_Pretty.pdf.pdf](https://cultureactioneurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Future-of-EU-Culture-Funding_Pretty.pdf.pdf)

## CONVERSATION WITH GLENN MICALLEF (EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER FOR INTERGENERATIONAL FAIRNESS, YOUTH, CULTURE & SPORT)

With the proponents of a Cultural Deal for Europe: Lars Ebert (Secretary General, CAE); Sneška Quaadvlieg-Mihailović (Secretary General, Europa Nostra); and André Wilkens (Director, ECF).

The consultation and cooperation between policy-makers and the culture and heritage sector on the Compass started during this 4 February event. More consultations with youth and stakeholders will follow, where special attention will be paid to listening and understanding young people. Culture Action Europe have consulted their members from across Europe, and outlined proposals for areas and elements, to be addressed in the Culture Compass – as a new Cultural Deal for Europe:

- **Address the working conditions in the cultural and heritage sector:** in a sector that employs millions of people, and contributes to society and the economy, people need to work in several jobs and young people cannot afford the basics.
- **Recognise that new technologies** pose opportunities but also challenges. The EU must address the disproportionate effects of AI on artists and cultural professionals.
- **Value culture as an enabler and a promoter of values (intrinsic value of culture)** – in international diplomacy, in competitiveness, as well as in sustainability and climate action.
- **Encourage ambitious funding for culture in the MFF** as well as improved funding mechanisms; EU culture ministers are also committed to supporting culture in their recent [joint letter](#)<sup>10</sup>.
- **Address youth disengagement:** What would an Erasmus programme for culture look like? How can we promote culture, inclusion and belonging?
- **Recognise that culture is not only an industry: it is an enabler in other policy areas and instruments**, such as the European Democracy Shield and the Green Deal. Ensure more coherence in the criteria of the numerous programmes in which culture and heritage are eligible to apply.
- **Reinforce external action and enlargement policies**, in which culture has an important place (see the example of the British Council's [Cultural Protection Fund](#)<sup>11</sup>); build bridges with the neighbouring regions and countries.
- **Enable ever-stronger European creative content platforms** for the distribution and dissemination of European films and music internationally (Music Moves Europe).

<sup>10</sup> [https://cultureactioneurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Letter\\_CreativeEurope\\_final.pdf](https://cultureactioneurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Letter_CreativeEurope_final.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> <https://cultural-protection-fund.britishcouncil.org/about>



In June 2024, the proponents of a Cultural Deal for Europe published an opinion piece in which they suggested an ambitious Cultural Commissioner's portfolio – [culture as the 'chefsache'](#)<sup>12</sup> – as a major portfolio in the future European Commission.<sup>13</sup> **Could we aspire for all transversal values of culture and cultural heritage to be duly highlighted in the Compass and integrated in all other compasses?** The Culture Compass should guide how culture is addressed in other policy areas. There is a mention of culture in the Competitiveness Compass. In areas with rich culture, investments are attracted and jobs are created, emphasised Glenn Micallef. There could be many more policy areas where culture and heritage should be promoted, such as the enlargement policy, external action, youth policy and more.

*"Culture is so much more than an industry. It creates positive energy."* Glenn Micallef, European Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport

A Cultural Deal for Europe would expect **a united front between cultural stakeholders, the European Commission, the Member States and the European Parliament.** The role of culture and heritage in our society is more crucial than ever, especially during these tough times. In Ukraine, for example, culture and heritage have been intentionally destroyed. Culture is linked to our values (diversity, inclusion, democracy), which are now at risk in many countries.



<sup>12</sup> <https://www.euronews.com/culture/2024/06/11/what-we-need-is-a-cultural-deal-for-europe>  
<sup>13</sup> What we need is a Cultural Deal for Europe (op-ed by A. Wilkens, L. Ebert, S. Quaedvlieg-Mihailovic), Euronews, June 2024.  
<https://www.euronews.com/culture/2024/06/11/what-we-need-is-a-cultural-deal-for-europe>

## CLOSING CONVERSATION WITH NELA RIEHL (CHAIR, CULT COMMITTEE)

MEP Nela Riehl (Chair of the CULT Committee, Greens) with Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović (Secretary General, Europa Nostra).

For the cultural and heritage sectors, the European Parliament's CULT Committee is crucial, as it needs to build bridges to the other important committees and areas. For Nela Riehl, to be elected as Committee Chair is a great responsibility. A teacher by background, elected from the transnational European party – Volt (part of the Greens group at the EP), she is aware of how urgent it is to fight for democracy now, through culture.

Culture is what keeps Europe together and makes us strong. Culture is a valued but also an underused tool.<sup>14</sup> Amidst the current global challenges and threats, culture as a value is not safe; pluralism is endangered – big tech is turning away from democracy. Governments in Germany and other European countries seem to value culture and freedom of expression less in their policies. The CULT Committee should be a guardian of cultural values, and Europe should be a safe space for culture to thrive. International cultural relations must be taken seriously, particularly the promotion of collaborations with neighbours and the enlargement policies. On this path, keeping the dialogue with civil society will be crucial for the European Parliament. Nela Riehl would welcome the opportunity for civil society to join the future stakeholders' exchanges at the EP before the summer.

*"Thank you for caring about culture!"*  
 Menah, visual storyteller

As the Commission's work on the Culture Compass advances, we see more opportunities for launching a *Cultural Deal for Europe* that would foster the transversal value of culture and heritage in addressing political, social, digital and ecological challenges. In the forthcoming EU budget, the EU must prioritise cultural values and invest in people, democratic spaces, closing the technology gap, reshaping education, cohesion, innovation, civil society, as well as building strategic partnerships for international cooperation and solidarity.

We must be ambitious and join forces – as the European Parliament, the Commission, the EU Council, cultural and heritage workers, and youth – to continue the dialogue, build stronger arguments and develop alliances for achieving a central place for culture and the 2% goal. This event was only the start of a journey. We will let the positive energy from the policy conversations drive our future actions!



<sup>14</sup> CULT: An often 'overlooked' role (interview with Nela Riehl, [Euroobserver 2025](#)).  
<https://euobserver.com/whos-who-in-the-eu-parliament-committees/arc0f1dba3>



Welcome!  
Méabh McMahon

The political climate is causing very turbulent times.

FAR-RIGHT MOVEMENTS

Without culture, we don't know our history. And without history, we don't know our future.

brings us together

An autonomous space

"Democratic Body"

Leander Kämpf & Sam Aleksandra

let your move be Resistance

NO CULTURE NO FUTURE  
NO CULTURE NO LIFE 123

take a breath with me

I'm looking at my black screen and I'm looking at my white democracy.

young people will survive

yes, but at what cost?

we cannot do it for free

flashes obscene

we need artists that take risks. And risks are expensive. So we need money for it.

Europe as Political and Cultural Project

Nicolas Schmit

culture values

power is not just about a political stage, but to conquer the minds of people - Gramsci

Either we are colonized by Silicon Valley, or we create equality.

Where is our European TikTok?

framing of the culture compass  
Georg Häusler

CULTURE: THE COMPASS FOR EUROPE'S FUTURE

2% for Culture in the MFF & post-2027 Budget

Georg Häusler  
MEP Helder Sousa-Silva  
Jeanne Brunfaut

but better than the current 0.2%

culture sparks unity

a key pillar of the human identity

the key to

democracy & citizenship

Closing

MEP Nela Rieal

CULTURE IS CRUCIAL IN FIGHTING FOR DEMOCRACY  
I promise I will fight for it.

we are in a battle for Europe. This is URGENT

A cultural Deal for Europe

Glenn Micallef  
Lars Ebert  
Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović  
André Wilkens

musketiers

Why do artists have to work two jobs?

We are here to put culture & heritage where they truly belong: at the heart of the European project. If not now, when?

We've never had so many participants! + 1600 ONLINE

European Cultural Foundation

CE culture action europe

#CulturalDealEU

visual by Menah.nl

@MENAHMENAHMENAH

what makes us European

We have to get out and be Voltaires!

There has been a loud silence from the EU about our student protests.

from Belgrade, Serbia

CITIES, LANGUAGE, MOBILITY

The EU lacks a human face

We are losing freedom of expression

the inner being within us

AI is having disproportionate influence in the sector.

our country is intrinsically linked to our values.

If you want to destroy a civilization, you attack its culture.

I don't like all this martial language. We need fierce debates.

We need something tangible

CULTURE &

Lack of ambition

art creates POSITIVE ENERGY

better and cheaper than weapons!

yes, but it's also being used as a hard power, propaganda, etc.

creativity takes courage

SUSTAINABILITY

MEP Hannes Heide  
Bailie Annette Christie  
Silja Fischer

scraw yer courage to the sticking place!

If we don't solve this one, there will be nothing else

Young musicians bring a city to life

three

Art transcends cultures & borders.  
- Christophe Slegelmüller

SECURITY

Marta Cienkowska  
MEP Zoltán Tóth  
Leon Poshvaylo

culture is our soft power. It speaks more than words.

A few years ago in Poland, we were fighting for our democracy, and I can tell you: it's worth it.

ask us how we are!

fund our documentary makers

freedom collaboration creativity

attempts to silence governments often happen through artists

EVERYTHING IS FINE!

war makes people not less but more focused on culture

Georgia is taking to the streets

04 02 2025



# #CulturalDealEU

<https://culturaldeal.eu/>

Please, check our updated website for event videos, [key messages](#), [photos](#) and more!  
A full recording of the event is available [here](#).

European  
Cultural  
Foundation

