

Lars Ebert, Secretary-General at Culture Action Europe  
10 March 2025, Brussels



To:

***Ursula von der Leyen**, President of the European Commission*

***Kaja Kallas**, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission*

***Roxana Mînzatu**, Executive Vice-President for Social Rights and Skills, Quality Jobs and Preparedness*

***Henna Virkkunen**, Executive Vice-President for Tech Sovereignty, Security and Democracy*

***Hadja Lahbib**, Commissioner Equality; Preparedness and Crisis Management*

***Michael McGrath**, Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection*

***Glenn Micallef**, Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport*

***Marta Kos**, Commissioner for Enlargement*

***Andrius Kubilius**, Commissioner for Defence and Space*

***Piotr Serafin**, Commissioner for Budget, Anti-Fraud and Public Administration*

Dear President von der Leyen,

Dear High Representative / Vice-President Kallas,

Dear Executive Vice-President Mînzatu,

Dear Executive Vice-President Virkkunen,

Honourable Commissioners,

I am writing on behalf of [Culture Action Europe](#), a pan-European network that brings together 250 cultural networks, organisations, artists, and activists from 35 European countries.

Given the multiple emergencies the European Union is currently confronting, and in light of President von der Leyen's announcement of the first-ever Security College, I want to highlight the crucial role of culture and the cultural sector in strengthening Europe's security, preparedness, resilience, and democratic values.

**Cultural participation directly enhances democracy and social cohesion.** According to the European Commission's [study](#), people who engage in cultural activities are more likely to vote, become involved in their communities, and volunteer. They also develop a stronger sense of belonging, empathy, and trust, especially towards people from diverse backgrounds.

**The promotion of European cultural content is a strategic defence against disinformation, hybrid threats, and psychological warfare from authoritarian regimes.** When the EU fails to invest sufficiently in culture, it leaves itself vulnerable to external manipulation: authoritarian regimes do not treat culture as soft power—they treat it as power. For example, [Russia](#) allocated more than €1 billion on propaganda through culture and media in 2024 (whereas the Creative Europe budget amounted to €335 million in 2024). China has similarly expanded its global cultural influence through initiatives such as the Confucius Institutes, the Belt and Road cultural exchanges, TikTok, and media expansion. Romania's experience during the 2024 presidential elections shows how gaps in digital cultural and creative infrastructure can be quickly filled with disinformation spread via tech platforms. Investing in robust, independent cultural content rooted in democratic values and developed through cross-border European cooperation is therefore critical for safeguarding European democracy.

**Culture significantly contributes to emergency preparedness.** It strengthens Europe's ability to respond to crises by encouraging cross-sector collaboration, mobilising communities, and providing essential infrastructure for social cohesion. For example, [Finland](#) explicitly recognises maintaining cultural services and protecting cultural heritage as part of its psychological resilience and comprehensive security model, while [Ukraine](#) has identified culture as a key pillar of its Internal Resilience Plan. During emergencies, cultural centres become trusted hubs for communication and resources, helping communities come together for response and recovery. Culture Action Europe's [Culture for Health](#) report suggests that participation in cultural activities significantly improves both individual and collective mental health and well-being, thereby making people more resilient and promoting a stronger community spirit.

Given the EU's ongoing efforts to strengthen its defence, security, and global leadership as a guardian of democratic values, we argue that culture should be a fundamental component of this agenda. Culture Action Europe proposes streamlining culture's contribution to the EU's priorities by:

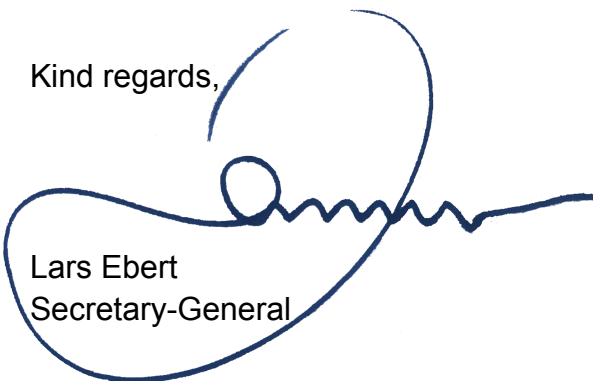
- Recognising cultural participation as a strategic pillar within the **European Democracy Shield** to mitigate the threats of disinformation and manipulation while promoting democratic values.
- Integrating culture and cultural participation into the **EU Preparedness Union Strategy** to maintain social cohesion and mobilise communities during crises.
- Positioning culture within the **White Paper on the Future of European Defence** and the ReArm Europe plan as a fundamental pillar of psychological resilience, critical thinking, and a deterrent against hybrid threats.
- Incorporating the **Artistic Freedom dimension in the Rule of Law report** and monitoring freedom of artistic expression and the autonomy of cultural organisations across the EU.

- Leveraging the upcoming [Multiannual Financial Framework \(2028-2034\)](#) to invest €30 billion in the creation of European cultural content and the strengthening of Europe's democratic cultural ecosystem through:
  - a strong, **standalone Creative Europe programme** with a distinct budget line to support European cross-border cultural cooperation;
  - **National Plans** that link reforms and investments to strengthen cultural infrastructure and support small and independent creators in member states;
  - a **global cultural cooperation fund** within the MFF's external action funding pillar, designed to promote cultural collaboration with strategic partners across the world.
- Updating the **EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations** to address culture's role in security, counter the weaponisation of culture by authoritarian regimes, support at-risk cultural professionals, and boost EU competitiveness in the global cultural economy.
- Allocating 2% of Russia's frozen assets for the **cultural recovery of Ukraine**.
- Ensuring the ethical **implementation of the AI Act** and other AI policies that respect human intellectual property, personal data, and cybersecurity.

We hope you will consider these proposals as the Security College paves the way toward a stronger, more secure and resilient European Union.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kind regards,



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Secretary-General

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