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A Sector Contribution to the Work Plan for Culture 2027–2030

July 2026

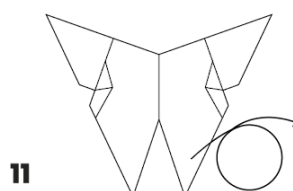
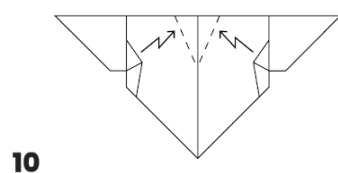
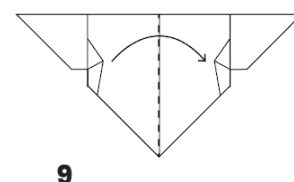
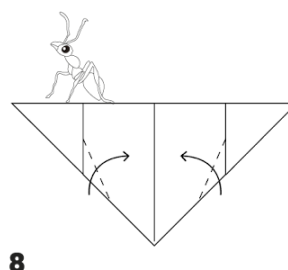
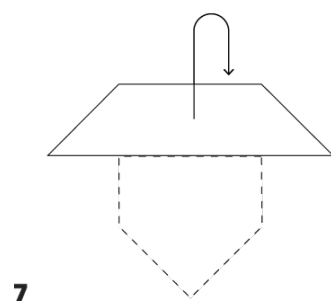
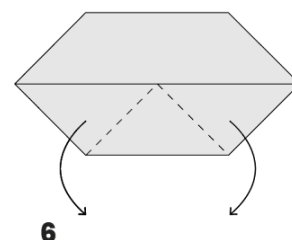
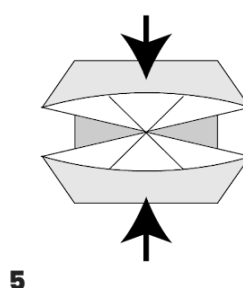
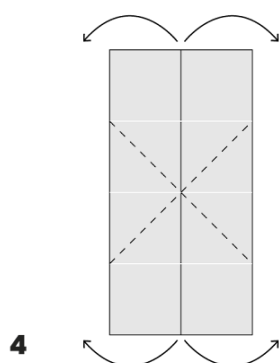
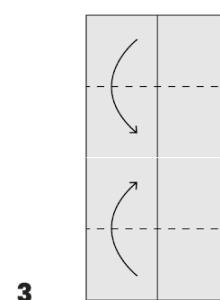
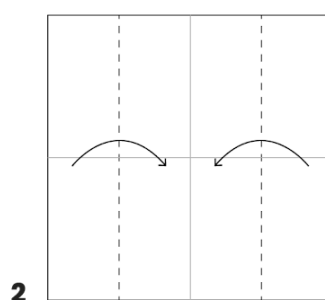
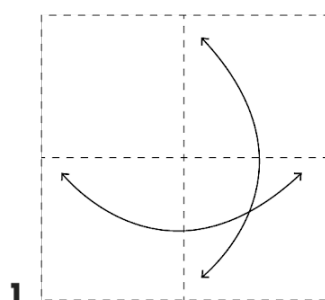
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Introduction

This document outlines Culture Action Europe's recommendations for the Work Plan for Culture of the Council of the European Union 2027-2030. [Culture Action Europe](#) is a pan-European cross-sectoral network that brings together over 300 cultural networks, organisations, artists, and activists from 35 European countries. It is focused on advocacy and based in Brussels.

Culture Action Europe ran consultations with its members on the future Work Plan for Culture during the [BEYOND Satellites](#) in spring 2026. Satellites are regional gatherings hosted by Culture Action Europe members in collaboration with local institutions or networks across Europe: in **Riga** (14-16 April 2026), **Las Palmas de Gran Canaria** (21-22 April 2026), **Istanbul** (4-6 May 2026), **Amsterdam** (8-9 May 2026), **Skopje** (14-16 May 2026), and **Gdańsk** (19-20 May 2026). A further consultation with European cultural networks took place online on 1 June 2026. In total, around 120 Culture Action Europe members and network representatives participated in these consultations.

Members were asked two questions: which topics/issues/priorities need coordination among Member States between 2027 and 2030, and which national practices could be useful for other Member States to learn from. The participants of the Satellites described what is happening on the ground, what is and is not working. The consultations were grounded in principles of decentralisation, proximity, and contextual sensitivity.

Across all six regional gatherings and the networks consultation, the same problems emerged repeatedly: a sector under pressure from political shifts, funding cuts, shrinking civic and cultural space, precarious work, unequal access to European cooperation, and a public





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discourse that frames culture as discretionary or suspect, or views it mainly through the lens of profit. The consultations also sharpened several cross-cutting needs: secure cultural infrastructure, a better balance between project and operational support, recognition of socially engaged and community practice, and stronger integration of culture across other policy areas. We believe the Work Plan for Culture cannot reverse negative trends on its own, but it can build the coordination, peer learning, accountability and political ambition that Member States need to defend and support the sector. That is the spirit in which we are submitting these recommendations.

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1. Artistic freedom

Artistic freedom was the concern raised most frequently across Satellites and the one members most clearly believed should be addressed at the EU level.

In Germany, members raised concerns after the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media [banned](#) gender-inclusive language in his department's official communications and encouraged publicly funded cultural institutions to follow the same approach. Major German artists' associations issued a [joint statement](#) in May 2026 'Art needs freedom – Democracy needs art', where they warned against political interference in cultural funding and called for unrestricted artistic freedom, the arm's-length principle in public funding, independent juries, and pluralistic cultural institutions.

In France, cutting culture has become a [political signal](#) in itself: members reported that some newly elected mayors use culture cuts to demonstrate alignment with parts of their electorate (culture is considered 'elitist'). L'Observatoire des politiques culturelles [reports](#) widespread reductions in local and regional cultural budgets. Pays de la Loire became an emblematic case (proposed cuts [of over 70%](#) to regional culture support).

In Lithuania, members described a cumulative deterioration in funding [since 2019](#) and shared a feeling that protests, however large, [no longer influence](#) political decisions.

The Swedish [cultural canon](#), released in September 2025, was backed by the right-wing coalition and Sweden Democrats and sparked





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criticism from the cultural sector which raised concerns about exclusion and ideological bias.

In Gdańsk, participants also warned of a 'double punishment': independent actors can be excluded from national funding and then lose European resources because of measures directed at their government.

In Skopje, the disappearance of independent venues and youth spaces was described as a direct constraint on the ability to assemble, create and express dissent. Participants raised concerns about the politicisation of Skopje 2028 European Capital of Culture, including limited genuine participation and proposals to give its projects exceptional legal and funding priority.

The discussion also highlighted the exclusion of queer and feminist cultural initiatives from public funding and the wider institutional and media hostility they face.

In Serbia, after the Novi Sad railway station canopy collapse on 1 November 2024 and the student and civic movement that followed, members reported that public cultural funding has been cut and that public institutions face political pressure and dismissals. Members referred to cases in which foreign civil society and cultural actors were expelled, denied entry or issued one-year entry bans.

Before censorship or the dismissal of cultural leaders, **funding cuts and restrictions on artistic programming are seen as the main tools used to limit artistic freedom. Members observe a clear gap between what is happening and the tools available at the EU level.**





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In Amsterdam and Skopje, members mentioned a proposal to incorporate artistic freedom in the Commission's annual Rule of Law report (the simplest way is to broaden the current 'Media Freedom and Pluralism' category into 'Freedom of Expression' with three sub-pillars: media, artistic, and academic freedom). At the same time, civil society initiative groups advocate for the [EU Artistic Freedom Act](#).

Members linked artistic freedom directly to the survival of cultural venues and spaces: when independent spaces close, programming and assembly go with them. Secure space can be protected through non-cultural policy instruments. [London's Creative Land Trust](#) secures affordable artist workspace for the long term. [Scotland's Community Empowerment Act](#) gives eligible community bodies routes to request ownership or lease of public assets. These models show why premises should be treated as part of the artistic freedom policy rather than only as capital investment.

Recommended actions

- Develop a methodology and indicators for the artistic freedom monitoring foreseen by the Culture Compass in the State of Culture report. It should be designed jointly by the Commission, Member States, and civil society, produce a country-specific analysis and concrete recommendations (like in the European Semester), and function as an active reporting tool that Member States use. The methodology should also map existing protective mechanisms in Member States (legal, institutional, etc.). The monitoring should capture indirect restrictions, including politically motivated funding decisions and abrupt changes in public support, appointments and dismissals, access to venues, programming interference, etc.





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- Adopt Council conclusions on artistic freedom in the 2027-2030 cycle. They can build on the [Council conclusions on at-risk and displaced artists \(2023\)](#) but be broader in scope and address freedom of expression, autonomy of cultural organisations, political conditionality in public funding, the role of arm's-length bodies, and non-interference in content design.
- In light of the MFF negotiations and in order to align the Work Plan for Culture with EU culture funding, we propose including in AgoraEU a dedicated funding scheme for the protection of artists at risk. Although the Council's partial general approach of 12 May 2026 recognises artistic freedom, it does not establish a dedicated objective or funding scheme for the protection of artists at risk. The scheme could build on the [models](#) already developed by the sector and on the precedent of the [Media Freedom Rapid Response](#) scheme.
- In the next MFF, allow funds suspended or decommitted from National and Regional Partnership Plans due to breaches of the rule of law to be redirected to AgoraEU and made accessible to independent cultural actors.
- Recognise access to secure, affordable and autonomous premises as a prerequisite for artistic freedom. Launch peer learning on long leases, community ownership and asset transfer, interim use of vacant premises ('meanwhile use'), renovation and accessibility of cultural spaces.





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2. Working conditions of artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors

Working conditions came up in every Satellite. The recurring point was that addressing precarity in the sector cannot be the responsibility of artists or individual organisations alone. Member States hold the main competence and should lead in tackling issues related to cross-border work, mobility, taxation, social protection, etc.

In this spirit, many members (especially at the Satellites in the Netherlands and Spain) were concerned that the forthcoming EU Artists' Charter may place too much responsibility on the sector itself without sufficient leverage to change the status quo across Member States. **Participants stressed that the Charter should set out clear commitments and principles for Member States, regional and local authorities, public funders and large employers. For this reason, the Charter should not remain only a Commission Communication, but should also be politically endorsed by Member States**, for example through Council conclusions or as an annex to Council conclusions.

The precarity of working conditions in the cultural and creative sectors is already documented at the EU level, including in the 2023 OMC report ['The Status and Working Conditions of Artists and Cultural and Creative Professionals'](#) following the Work Plan for Culture 2019–2022. The current Work Plan for Culture 2023–2026 followed up on this work under the action 'Status and working conditions of artists and cultural and creative professionals' through thematic workshops and a conference (under the Belgian Presidency).





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During the consultations, members reiterated several additional and more recent issues.

Members from Latvia described the patchwork of self-employment and royalty regimes and the very low effective income floor for small self-employed artists ([€780 per month in 2026](#), which is the national minimum wage that also serves as a threshold for calculating social insurance contributions). In Denmark, members also highlighted artists' 'patchwork economy' (national [data shows](#) that half of artists combine several income sources).

In Sweden, a 2023 report [Ett trygghetssystem för alla](#) proposed new rules for calculating sickness benefit qualifying income, counting historical income and cultural grants in certain cases. According to our members, these rules haven't entered into force yet, the regulations are not in place.

Members from France mentioned that mediators, audience engagement and education staff in cultural institutions remain underrepresented in discussions on working conditions despite being the main interface between cultural work and the public. Many of them are engaged through external providers without sufficient protection.

Differences in withholding-tax regimes and the implementation of Article 17 of the OECD Model Tax Convention through bilateral treaties continue to create obstacles to artists' mobility.

Members raised the circulation of artists and cultural workers as a recurring concern: social security, visas, and the way the Temporary Protection Directive for Ukrainians is implemented across Member States. Many called for the portability of social protection for mobile workers, so that entitlements built up in one country are not lost on moving to another. A European artist passport was raised as a longer-term idea, given the absence of a common legal status. Members also





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stressed that working conditions vary significantly across disciplines and that data collection should capture these differences. Dance, for example, has specific working realities that are often overlooked when it is grouped together with other performing arts.

One relevant practice is Spain's adaptation of its tax rules to irregular artistic income. [Law 7/2024](#), in force since 1 January 2025, applies a [30% reduction](#) to the share of an artist's annual income that exceeds 130% of their average earnings over the previous three years (capped at €150,000 per year). It is part of the Estatuto del Artista.

Another example was from Gdańsk: a group supervision model for cultural workers. Around ten participants meet regularly over six months with a qualified psychotherapist who also understands cultural and community work. The sessions give them a confidential space to reflect on difficult situations, emotional pressure and work with vulnerable groups. Similar forms of professional supervision are common in the social sector and could be tested as part of continuing professional development for cultural workers.

Members called for a better balance between project funding, multiannual operating support, mission-based grants and individual income support. Their core argument was that people and organisations are part of cultural infrastructure. Good examples include [Ireland's successor Basic Income for the Arts scheme](#); [Flemish operating subsidies](#) that support structural activity of a continuous and permanent character, and the [Danish Arts Foundation](#), which offers three-year operating grants in performing arts.





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Recommended actions

- Continue the Working Conditions priority from the 2023-2026 Work Plan. The next Work Plan should explicitly invite Member States to take responsibility for the structural conditions of cultural work. Fair practice should not be treated as a matter of sector self-regulation alone.
- Ensure, during the preparatory phase before 2027, that the EU Artists' Charter covers the full range of artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors. The Charter should include a clear set of principles and commitments for different endorsing parties (including Member States, regional and local authorities, funders, cultural organisations and sector representative bodies). It should also refer to social conditionality in EU funding and establish an effective governance and implementation model with proportionate review and accountability mechanisms, regular exchange of experience and knowledge-sharing. Ensure that monitoring of Member States' implementation of the EU Artists' Charter is reflected in the upcoming EU Cultural Data Hub and State of Culture report.
- Introduce a social conditionality mechanism in the AgoraEU legal base (currently absent from the Council's partial general approach of 12 May 2026) for beneficiaries of EU funding, and link it to the EU Artists' Charter.
- Support research and peer learning on social protection for cultural workers (focus on income aggregation for self-employed artists), withholding tax for touring artists, more flexible funding models (operating grants, individual income support, multiannual grants, pre-financing and coverage of indirect costs,





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etc.), and other mechanisms addressing fragmented, cross-border and intermittent cultural work.

- Recognise health and well-being of cultural workers as part of working conditions; map and pilot professional supervision, counselling, safeguarding and mental health support for cultural workers, with particular attention to freelancers, small organisations and workers engaged in community, mediation and trauma-related practice.





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3. International cultural relations

The Istanbul and Skopje Satellites brought the strongest contributions on international cultural relations. Members noted that the EU often engages with its neighbourhoods inconsistently. They pointed to a preference for 'comfortable' interventions (studies, mapping exercises, capacity-building projects) that end without a clear plan for what follows. Funding priorities are set more by the institutional agenda than by the needs of partner regions. The EU tends to bring in its own people and structures rather than build shared ownership with local partners.

Members from the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership countries described a structural gap: organisations there cannot compete on equal terms with well-established Western European ones, and EU funding for the region stays thin and intermittent. The [Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans](#) (€6 billion for 2024-2027, under Regulation (EU) 2024/1449) names the green and digital transition, human capital and the rule of law among its priorities, but not culture. The 2019 European cultural cooperation call for the Western Balkans (EACEA/39/2019) was funded from IPA II through DG NEAR; it ran under Creative Europe rules, [selected thirteen projects](#), involving 54 cultural organisations from the Western Balkans, and was not repeated. Members asked that culture be made visible in enlargement funding rather than left to one-off calls.

Members also described barriers that are not only financial. The language of EU applications came up repeatedly: partners can state a clear idea and still be told to rewrite it in 'Eurospeak', a skill that is unevenly distributed. At the same time, participants argued that different and difficult contexts (weaker infrastructure, less co-financing,





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fewer intermediaries and less access to the administrative language and networks) should be recognised as producers of knowledge: experience developed under chronic underfunding, institutional instability, repression or conflict can inform wider European policy.

These observations rest on a wider tension between cultural diplomacy (promoting EU culture and values abroad) and international cultural relations (built on reciprocity and mutual learning, listening, and understanding). This distinction also shapes the current discussions about the updated Strategy on International Cultural Relations.

When it comes to AgoraEU, members raised concerns about the language on participation of organisations from non-associated third countries. Under the current text, their participation can be funded only by way of exception, where it is 'strictly necessary for implementing the action, contributes to AgoraEU objectives, and is in the Union's interest.' The Council's partial general approach of 12 May 2026 contains one welcome change: it drops the wording from one of the earlier compromise versions that third countries not associated with the Programme 'shall in principle bear the cost of their participation' (present in the current Creative Europe base too). Removing this assumption is welcome.

Recommended actions

- Include international cultural relations as a pillar of the next Work Plan for Culture built around continuity, transparency, and reciprocity, and feeding directly into the updated Strategy on International Cultural Relations. The pillar should take the 2019 [Council conclusions on an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations and a framework for action](#) into account and extend it to the new challenges that have emerged with





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geopolitical crises: weaponisation of culture, foreign information manipulation and interference, disinformation, artistic freedom and artists at risk, culture and security.

- Under NDICI-Global Europe, culture is currently implemented through a fragmented architecture. Cultural actions may appear in geographic programmes managed through EU Delegations, or in thematic programmes on civil society, human rights, peacebuilding or global challenges. Members reported limited transparency on priorities and insufficient coordination between EU Delegations, EEAS, and Commission services. The next EU Strategy on International Cultural Relations should clarify how cultural priorities under NDICI are programmed, consulted, and implemented, and should establish more systematic dialogue with independent cultural actors in partner countries. There is a need to better integrate organisations from the partner countries in the programming of such support.
- Give culture a clear place in EU enlargement and neighbourhood funding. Ensure dedicated support for culture through the [Ukraine Facility](#), the Reform and Growth Facilities for the [Western Balkans](#) and [Moldova](#), and the EU's wider pre-accession and neighbourhood instruments, including their post-2027 successors (Global Europe). Lower the barriers to entry for organisations in the neighbourhood and accession countries (help with application language and co-financing, stronger pre-financing, micro-grants, advisory support, etc.).
- Move EU cooperation on illicit trafficking of cultural goods (e.g. the 2022 EU Action Plan against Trafficking in Cultural Goods, the 2023 Council conclusions on the fight against trafficking in cultural goods) towards implementation. Consider an expert group





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bringing together culture ministries, museums, archives, customs,
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4. Cultural rights, cultural democracy, socially engaged arts

Several Satellites highlighted the connection between cultural participation, education, and democratic life. Members described that access to artistic education is unevenly distributed across the EU, and noted that this gap reinforces the gap in cultural participation. Socially engaged arts (community-rooted, site-specific and territorially embedded practices) came up as a practice that connects people across borders and communities.

Socially engaged artistic practices often operate across health and well-being, education, ecological transition, social cohesion, democratic participation and territorial development. However, stronger mainstreaming of culture across public policy should preserve artistic autonomy and intrinsic cultural value and avoid treating culture only as an instrument for targets set by other sectors.

In the UK, [NHS social prescribing](#) connects people with community activities, groups and services. The [National Academy for Social Prescribing](#) is a national charity created to connect healthcare systems with community-based activities, including arts and culture. It works directly with the NHS and cultural organisations to embed arts and heritage into social prescribing.

In Portugal, the [Plano Nacional das Artes](#) is a joint mission structure of the culture and education ministries for 2019-2029, designed to create bridges among schools, cultural institutions, artists and communities.





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Norway's [Den kulturelle skolesekken](#) (the Cultural Schoolbag) was mentioned as another good practice. Every child in the Norwegian school system is guaranteed visits from professional cultural workers as part of the curriculum, centrally funded. However, members noted that in some Member States, arts education for children is partly subsidised through cultural rather than education budgets, which drains cultural funding.

Socially engaged arts also require a wider understanding of cultural value. [Rotterdams Wijktheater](#) addresses institutional racism and creates theatre for, by and with people from the community; its production [Verloren Onschuld](#) was developed with people affected by the [Dutch childcare benefits scandal](#) and based on first-hand testimony. [Liminal](#), a Greek non-profit cultural organisation that promotes equal participation in culture, combines accessibility services, inclusive arts education and training for cultural organisations. It reportedly contributed to a change in the presidential decree on theatre education.

These examples show that process, trust, access, care, co-ownership and institutional learning are part of artistic quality and public value. However, socially engaged and community-rooted practice stays largely invisible in cultural data, evaluation and funding frameworks. Current systems still privilege short-term outputs, quantifiable deliverables and economic indicators, while practices based on long-term relationships, care, and local participation often struggle to fit existing definitions of cultural value.

Wales's [Well-being of Future Generations Act](#) was raised as an example of how culture can be built into wider public policy. The Act requires Welsh public bodies to work towards seven well-being goals. One of them is 'A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.' Public





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bodies must show, in practical terms, how their decisions contribute to these goals.

Spain was often referenced in the context of the [Plan de Derechos Culturales 2025-2030](#) (cultural rights) and its focus on access, participation, equality, territorial cohesion, education, cultural democracy.

Heritage, libraries and archives were discussed as part of Europe's democratic infrastructure. They support media literacy, public memory and access to trustworthy information, especially where reliable public information is under pressure.

Participants in Gdańsk added public service and community media, as well as public-interest digital spaces independent of big tech. The European Media Freedom Act offers a relevant link because it includes safeguards for the independent functioning and stable funding of public service media.

Recommended actions

- Make cultural rights one of the pillars of the next Work Plan, building on the concept of cultural democracy ([Porto Santo Charter](#)). The Work Plan should work towards the development of a shared understanding of cultural rights for Europeans and people living in Europe, including the rights to access, participate in and contribute to cultural life. It should also explicitly invite Member States to strengthen access to artistic and cultural education.
- Launch peer learning and research on national cultural passes schemes and guaranteed cultural participation models, with the aim of establishing a voluntary framework for the mutual recognition of culture and cultural heritage passes for young people issued at national level





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(one of the Culture Compass deliverables). Focus on participation of people from marginalised backgrounds, people with disabilities and communities facing structural barriers to cultural life.

- Recognise libraries, archives and museums as part of Europe's democratic infrastructure in the language of the Work Plan, and link their role to the wider EU agenda on media literacy, access to trustworthy information, public memory and democratic resilience.
- Ensure that the future monitoring tools (such as the EU Cultural Data Hub and State of Culture report proposed in the Culture Compass) include indicators and methodologies capable of recognising socially engaged, participatory and community-rooted cultural practices, to support the development of funding and impact assessment frameworks that move beyond short-term quantitative outputs and better integrate qualitative, relational and long-term dimensions of cultural value.
- Strengthen action on arts education through a dedicated conference or peer-learning process, and improve comparable data on access, provision, artistic research and the relationship between education and cultural participation.
- Encourage Member States to proactively include a cultural strand in National and Regional Partnership Plans, with clear objectives, actions, financing, and indicators. This cultural component should be developed by cultural authorities together with civil society and sector representatives. The way funding is allocated should safeguard artistic freedom and the autonomy of cultural organisations, ensure a balanced geographical spread, and remain accessible to small and independent creators and organisations, not only large institutions. The design and allocation of NRPP funding should build on lessons learned





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from the implementation of cultural funding under the Recovery and Resilience Facility during the pandemic.

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5. Rights-first approach to AI in the cultural sector

Members discussed whether the cultural sector can shape the AI conversation, rather than simply be shaped by it. One member framed this as a question of whether the sector can own the discourse on AI and culture, instead of remaining subordinate to the industries that currently dominate it.

There is, clearly, a copyright conversation around the fact that AI companies use creators' data without asking or paying, and that the current framework, including the AI Act and the Digital Omnibus, does not fix the problem. The development of AI systems is built on an extractive logic. Members reported that generative AI is displacing professional work across the sector, and the heaviest pressure is falling on independent artists and small organisations, which have the least capacity to adapt.

Beyond copyright, the discussion focused on more structural questions. First, the cultural rights mentioned above should guide the development of AI in Europe. A rights-based approach is what should distinguish European AI policies from an 'innovation-first' approach. Second, the sector's right to refuse (to decide which AI systems it adopts, on what terms, and whether to integrate AI at all) should be explicitly protected. Members described strong pressure towards uncritical adoption of AI.

Case: Spain drafted a Royal Decree that would let AI developers train their models on copyrighted works through extended collective licensing. This would allow collecting societies to grant licences on behalf of artists who never authorised them to do so, on the unproven assumption that most rightsholders would accept this trade-off if





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remunerated. The Ministry of Culture withdrew the draft Royal Decree in January 2025 after strong opposition in the cultural sector.

Finally, members argued that AI should sit within a wider move towards European digital sovereignty. A positive cultural digital agenda should therefore support public-interest and non-commercial digital spaces, trustworthy cultural data infrastructure independent of big tech companies, interoperability, discoverability and linguistic diversity.

The EU Cultural Data Hub should be governed with the cultural sector, with clear rules on access, reuse, commercial exploitation, etc. Cultural actors should be able to benefit from shared data without being required to surrender control over their knowledge or content.

Recommended actions

- Explore redistribution models from AI to the cultural sector (AI levy / contributions to a dedicated cultural fund / digital fines redirected to the cultural sector or other mechanisms that ensure creators benefit from the economic value generated through AI systems trained on cultural content).
- Adopt Council conclusions on cultural rights in the AI era (focus on consent and remuneration for the use of cultural works in AI training; the protection of artists from AI-driven job displacement; the right of cultural institutions, artists and cultural workers to decide whether and how to adopt AI tools, etc.).
- Commission an impact assessment on AI-driven job displacement in the cultural and creative sectors (with a focus on independent artists, freelancers and small organisations). The assessment should cover not only direct job losses, but also pressure on fees, substitution of





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commissioned work, changes in working time, and the effects on emerging professionals.

- Continue peer learning and research on national approaches to AI provenance, transparency, labelling, remuneration, licensing, including tools that help identify whether cultural works have been used in AI training and whether outputs are fully or partly AI-generated (following up on the [Council's policy questionnaire on lessons learned from Article 15 of the CDSM Directive and on licensing in the age of AI](#), as well as the [EYCS Council policy debate on AI and the cultural and creative sectors of 14 May 2024](#)).
- Convene a summit on AI in the cultural and creative sectors to identify common principles and help consolidate Member State positions on the forthcoming AI Strategy for the Cultural and Creative Sectors and its implementation.
- Address artificial intelligence within the broader framework of cultural digital sovereignty, including questions of data governance, public interest digital infrastructure, interoperability, discoverability, linguistic diversity and fair conditions for creators and rightsholders.





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Other topics proposed for the Work Plan for Culture

- Continue the work on the relationship between culture, health, and well-being by involving experts from the Member States and exploring key thematic areas, such as: 1) culture and mental health; 2) culture and youth care; 3) culture and older persons' care; 4) culture, skills development, and workers' well-being; 5) culture and preventive health; 6) culture and primary care; and 7) culture and resilience in humanitarian contexts;
- digital public infrastructure and data spaces not only for cultural heritage (Europeana), but for the cultural sectors more broadly;
- a better conceptualisation of the relationship between culture and security (without jeopardising the values and autonomy of the sector);
- a reconsideration of competitiveness, which is still understood primarily in economic terms, acknowledging that culture and creativity are fundamental dimensions of innovation and should be recognised as such in EU policy;
- a stronger contribution to the debate on the post-2030 SDG agenda and the prospects for establishing a standalone Culture Goal in the post-2030 framework;
- a new generation of cultural indicators (connected to the Cultural Data Hub and the future State of Culture report) going beyond descriptive statistics;





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- the governance of cultural statistics, including the roles of Eurostat, the national statistical institutes and the OECD, and the place of sector networks in data collection;
- core and operational funding alongside project funding. During discussions on the proposal to introduce operating grants under Creative Europe/AgoraEU, it was noted that the current support for European networks is provided through action grants, which offer a high degree of flexibility. The introduction of operating grants could entail certain limitations (for example, indirect costs may no longer be eligible under other projects where beneficiaries cannot demonstrate cost separation). Therefore, any operating grant scheme should be accompanied by safeguards to ensure continued access to other EU funding programmes, preserve the eligibility of indirect costs, and maintain the scale and flexibility of existing support for European networks;
- cultural infrastructure and spaces, connected to the New European Bauhaus and to housing policy;
- education and creative skills in the era of AI: reconsidering the role of arts education as a foundation of human creativity, innovation, and cultural expression.





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Suggestions on actions beyond the traditional Work Plan toolkit

A structured civil society dialogue with the Council

Cultural civil society currently engages with the Council on an ad hoc basis (ministries of individual Member States, occasional Presidency events, informal exchanges). There is no equivalent to the Commission's structured dialogue, nor to the Parliament's more public-facing role as the EU's only directly elected institution.

Culture Action Europe proposes that the next Work Plan formally establish a structured dialogue between cultural civil society and the Council. It could take the form of a forum/round table convening twice a year, in line with the Presidency rhythm, and bring together both cultural attachés and leading cultural organisations active at the EU level.

Involvement of practitioners

Members across the Satellites raised the same concern: discussions on working conditions are led by experts, academics, networks, cultural institutions, and intermediaries, while artists and cultural practitioners themselves often remain underrepresented. Without undermining the role of experts and representative organisations, Culture Action Europe proposes that expert groups, peer-learning activities, workshops, and similar formats systematically include artists and practitioners (from different backgrounds and regions, young and emerging artists, etc. who could be invited through open calls) and that their participation be properly funded.





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Representation

Members from the Western Balkans, the Eastern Partnership countries and the newer Member States raised the question of representation. While the Council formation comprises the 27 Member States, Culture Action Europe encourages the next Work Plan for Culture to more actively involve the representatives of candidate countries in an appropriate capacity. The current framework already allows third countries to be invited to OMC groups, but their involvement remains discretionary and varies between actions.

Implementation

Members supported a more ambitious Work Plan toolkit, but also questioned how the outcomes of reports, conferences, and Council conclusions can be effectively followed up after their adoption.

A useful national example is [Slovenia's National Programme for Culture 2024-2031](#), which created a cross-sectoral group to monitor implementation and propose inter-ministerial adjustments, alongside permanent dialogue groups with public institutions, NGOs, artists and other cultural workers. The current Work Plan already provides for reports and recommendations to be presented to the Cultural Affairs Committee for discussion and possible follow-up.

The recommendation is that evidence generated through Work Plan activities should, where methodologically appropriate, feed into the State of Culture report and the EU Cultural Data Hub. The Commission, in cooperation with Member States and successive Council Presidencies, could consolidate this information in a concise public annual progress report. In doing so, knowledge produced through the Work Plan could also become more visible to the public.



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