

António Costa, President of the European Council
Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission
Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament
Henna Virkkunen, Executive Vice-President for Tech Sovereignty, Security and Democracy
Piotr Serafin, Commissioner for Budget, Anti-Fraud and Public Administration
Glenn Micallef, Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport
Members of the General Affairs Council
Permanent Representatives of the Member States to the European Union (COREPER II)
Emma Rafowicz, AgoraEU co-rapporteur, Committee on Culture and Education (CULT), European Parliament
Alice Bah Kuhnke, AgoraEU co-rapporteur, Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE), European Parliament

Brussels, 7 July 2026

Dear Presidents, Executive Vice-President, Commissioners, Ministers and Members of the European Parliament,

Nine cents. That is culture's share of every hundred euros the Commission proposes to spend in the next budget cycle. For seven years, for a Union of 450 million people, the Culture strand of the AgoraEU programme is set at €1.8 billion, about €260 million a year. That is roughly the [annual budget](#) of a single national library, the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

The Cyprus Presidency's negotiating box is even more modest. It sets AgoraEU at €8.2 billion, and if the Commission's strand share were maintained, culture would be left with €1.7 billion.

Meanwhile, the conditions for cultural work are becoming more precarious.

UNESCO [warns](#) that generative AI could cut creators' revenues by 24% in music and 21% in audiovisual by 2028. The works that train these models were taken without consent or payment. Creators supply the fuel, but keep none of the value.

Almost half of artists and cultural professionals [report](#) poor working conditions, and more than two thirds lack sufficient social protection.

Artistic freedom is deteriorating too. The Council of Europe [points](#) to legal restrictions, political pressure, online threats and growing self-censorship.

The prominent role of culture is recognised in the Joint Declaration ‘Culture for Europe – Europe for Culture’, signed by the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the EU. The Declaration affirms that Europe’s cultural diversity and vibrancy are fundamental to EU values and identity, and that culture and cultural heritage create spaces where desirable futures can be imagined. We share this understanding: culture is a public sphere in which our democratic future can be imagined freely, critically and in our full diversity. **This foundation must be funded accordingly.**

We therefore invite the EU institutions to act on their commitments set out in the Joint Declaration by ensuring adequate funding for their implementation: the protection of artistic freedom, cultural and linguistic diversity, access to culture and cultural participation, cultural rights, support for young and emerging artists, and the promotion of Europe’s cultural and natural heritage.

AgoraEU is the central EU programme capable of turning these commitments into concrete action. It builds on the legacy of Creative Europe, whose Culture strand has, since 2014, supported almost 6500 projects and more than 13000 organisations, and created a unique framework for cross-border cooperation with clear European added value.

However, year after year, Creative Europe turns away high-quality applications because its budget is too small. The most recent Culture cooperation call could fund only 5-6% of more than 1600 applications.

As representatives of Europe's cultural sector, we call for a more ambitious budget for culture. More than [2000 cultural and creative professionals](#) have already put their names to the demand for a well-resourced programme for culture in the next EU budget, urging the EU policymakers to Ask, Pay and Trust the Artists.

Ahead of the negotiations on the next EU budget between the European Commission, European Parliament and the Council of the EU, we, the undersigned cultural organisations, networks, institutions, practitioners, are calling for:

1. An increased AgoraEU budget, with at least 25% secured for its culture component. The Parliament’s €10.72 billion proposal for AgoraEU must be the baseline, not the ceiling. In addition, the culture budget of AgoraEU should be supplemented with [digital fines](#) collected under the Digital Markets Act, Digital Services Act and AI Act. AgoraEU needs to engage more private funding from foundations and other third parties, as envisaged by Article 13 of the proposal.

2. The strand supporting culture in AgoraEU should be autonomous and visible. This means a budget that cannot be redirected to other strands, with a separate budget line,

separate work programmes, dedicated governance and a distinct visual identity. It must serve the full diversity of Europe's cultural ecosystem and ensure a balanced approach across sectors, disciplines, organisation sizes, and territories.

3. Artists and all staff involved in AgoraEU projects must be paid fairly and covered by social security. Social conditionality should be included in the programme and linked to the upcoming EU Artists' Charter, applied proportionately and with resources so it does not add to the burden on the smallest organisations. Artistic freedom and experimentation must be respected and safeguarded. EU cultural funding must set the standard it wants the sector to meet: fair remuneration for artists and cultural workers as a condition of public funding.

4. Funding for culture should be more accessible, including for smaller organisations, socially engaged arts, grassroots initiatives and cultural actors working outside institutional frameworks. This means operating grants designed to strengthen organisations' long-term capacity without restricting access to other EU funding lines or the possibility to claim indirect costs under separate projects; two-stage applications, so applicants develop a full proposal only after their concept note is accepted; more cascading grants redistributed among smaller organisations; and the possibility of a 100% co-financing rate, so that EU funds cover the full cost of a project. Currently, cultural organisations need to provide part of the costs themselves, which often excludes smaller ones.

5. AgoraEU must enable people-centred international cultural cooperation and apply an inclusive approach to territoriality. Participation as artists, cultural professionals, experts, speakers, residents, mentors or other end beneficiaries in projects should not be restricted to people residing in programme-participating countries. Project holders should be trusted to involve individuals from third countries when their contribution is essential to the project.

AgoraEU must be funded as the programme for Europe's future. It must be bold enough to protect artistic freedom and experimentation, broad enough to reach people across territories and generations, and strong enough to develop the cultural sector that makes European democracy visible, liveable and resilient.

Culture Action Europe

1. A25 Cultural Foundation
2. AEDCORO - Spanish Choral Conductors' Association
3. AERCO - Associazione Emiliano-Romagnola Cori
4. albaKULTUR
5. Amateo

6. Angharad Cooper Consultancy and Coaching Ltd
7. ANIMA - Brussels International Animation Film Festival
8. Araisi Ezerpils Archaeological Park
9. Architects' Council of Europe (ACE)
10. Artists at Risk (AR) / Ecologists at Risk (ER) by Perpetuum Mobile (PM)
11. ARTS for HEALTH AUSTRIA
12. Asociación Cultural Reyes Bartlet
13. Asociación Española de Gestores de Patrimonio Cultural (AEGPC)
14. Associação UniversAutista
15. Associazione Theatrica ETS
16. Association des Centres culturels de rencontre
17. Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen
18. Austrian Museums Association
19. Austrian Music Council
20. Basemental ICC
21. Be.Time SCA
22. Belgian Museum of Freemasonry
23. Boarve konsult AB
24. Bozar, Centre for Fine Arts
25. BQ Consulting / Diagonal
26. Brave New Alps
27. Bulgarian music association
28. Cappella Pratensis
29. Casa de Cultura Ion Luca Caragiale Poiesti
30. Center for Music Ecosystems
31. Cēsis Museum
32. Circostrada network
33. Circus Futures (UK)
34. circusnext - European Platform for contemporary circus
35. CKI - Center for Kunst & Interkultur
36. Cluj Cultural Centre
37. Concerto Copenhagen
38. CrafTopia Creative Hub
39. Create
40. Cultural and Creative Federation of the Czech Republic
41. Culture and Sustainability Lab
42. Culture for Change
43. Culture Management Centre "Lauska"
44. Culture Next ECoC Cities Network
45. CulturFACE - Associação Cultural para o Desenvolvimento

46. Curso de Música Silva Monteiro
47. Das Nonseum
48. Die Bäckerei - Kulturbackstube
49. Dvor Trakošćan
50. EcocNews.com / Matera Letteratura
51. Economía Creativa
52. EJM Europe Jazz Network
53. ELIA
54. Estonian Choral Association
55. Euradia Italia
56. Europa Nostra
57. EuroPro
58. European Association for Music in Schools (EAS) / University of Bristol UK
59. European Choral Association (ECA)
60. European Concert Halls Organisation (ECHO)
61. European Cultural Foundation (ECF)
62. European Dance Development Network (EDN)
63. European Festivals Association (EFA)
64. European Folk Network (EFN)
65. European Music Council (EMC)
66. European Music School Union (EMU)
67. European Network of Cultural Centres (ENCC)
68. European Network on Cultural Management and Policy (ENCATC)
69. European Performing Arts Students' Association (EPASA)
70. European Shakespeare Festivals Network (ESFN)
71. European Theatre Convention (ETC)
72. EUROZINE
73. EUSEC (ITI / IGBK)
74. Fabbrica Europa
75. FARO Flemish Institution for Cultural Heritage
76. FEDEC - international Network for Professional Circus Education
77. Federació Catalana d'Entitats Corals (FCEC)
78. Finnish Music Council
79. FiraTàrraga
80. Fondation Art Explora
81. Fondazione Nuovo Teatro Verdi
82. FusionACT Centre
83. German Music Council
84. Goethe-Institut Brussels
85. Hungarian Music Council
86. ICOM FRANCE

87. IETM
88. IFCM
89. IGET
90. IHECS Academy
91. IMZ International Music + Media Centre
92. Irish Street Arts, Circus & Spectacle Network (ISACS)
93. Inside Spaceman
94. Insula orchestra / LaDocumenta.eu
95. INTERCOM ICOM
96. Interpret Europe
97. Interessengemeinschaft Freie Theaterarbeit
98. International Association of Music Libraries, Archives and Documentation Centres
99. Jeunesses Musicales International
100. Kasteel van Gaasbeek
101. Kids Meet Art
102. KIE - Associação Conhecimento, Inovação e Educação
103. KIKK Festival
104. Kooperativa – Regional Platform for Culture
105. Kuner
106. Kunsten '92
107. La Grainerie
108. Liv.in.g. s.r.l. impresa sociale
109. Live Music Now Scotland
110. Machineria s.r.l.
111. Malopolska Institute of Culture in Krakow
112. MAM Media Art Museum
113. Mammoth House Ltd
114. Mapamundi Música
115. Materahub
116. Materiaviva APS
117. MICHAEL CULTURE ASSOCIATION
118. Miramiro
119. Mobility Arts & Culture Austria
120. Moviment Coral Català
121. Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas
122. Museums Association UK
123. Muzeon Association
124. National Museum of the History of Ukraine
125. NEMO – The Network of European Museum Organisation
126. Nicolas Bertrand
127. NoOx Worldwide

128. Norsk sangerforum
129. Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture
130. On the Move
131. Opera Europa
132. Pearle-Live Performance Europe*
133. Peripatos Sociocultural Enterprise
134. Pinkica consulting and services
135. Piranha Arts
136. Podiumkunst.net
137. RABKO (Réseau des arts à Bruxelles / Brussels Kunstenoverleg)
138. REMA - European Early Music Network
139. RESEO
140. Reset! network
141. Royal Dutch Museum Associaton
142. Scottish Music Centre
143. sineglossa
144. Slovenian Museum Association
145. Space-time Works
146. State Agency of Ukraine for Arts and Art Education (State Art)
147. Tarot Interviews
148. Tartu City Government
149. The Green Room
150. Trac Cymru
151. Trans Europe Halles
152. Transylvanian Museum of Ethnography
153. Ukrainian Museum Association
154. Unison - Croatian Music Alliance
155. We Move Music Croatia
156. Working Industrial & Mobile Heritage Platform (WIMH)
157. Zone Franche, le Réseau des Musiques du Monde