

Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on ‘Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions A New European Agenda for Culture’

(COM(2018) 267 final)

(2019/C 62/25)

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Referral	European Commission, 18.6.2018
Legal basis	Article 167 TFEU
Section responsible	Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship
Adopted in section	26.9.2018
Adopted at plenary	17.10.2018
Plenary session No	538
Outcome of vote	182/1/0
(for/against/abstentions)	

1. Conclusions and recommendations

1.1. The EESC holds the view that Europe is a cultural community based on shared values and that the **social market economy** is a hallmark of the European way of life, one that combines economic freedom with social rights and the principles of respect for the person.

1.2. The EESC considers it vital to consolidate and develop the EU cultural dimension based on the common values enshrined in the Treaties, as a key factor in the integration process and the cornerstone of the cultural identity of Europe as it seeks to build an inclusive, pluralist, cohesive and competitive society.

1.2.1. According to the EESC, only by strengthening the sense of belonging in Europe and a common cultural identity will it be possible to promote European construction and cultural and linguistic diversity.

1.2.2. Europe’s tangible and intangible cultural heritage is, in the EESC’s view, the cement that holds the peoples of Europe together, representing a very strong bond in terms of identity and a valuable strategic resource for social cohesion.

1.3. Precisely because of the political and identity crisis currently assailing Europe ⁽¹⁾, the EESC thinks that it is extremely important to restore culture’s key role in transmitting links with identity and giving meaning to the common values enshrined in the Treaties.

1.4. Whilst welcoming the initiative to position culture at the heart of the Agenda, the EESC calls for the launch of the Agenda to provide an opportunity to reflect on the vision of a **New European Renaissance** aimed at creating a European Cultural Area (ECA) ⁽²⁾ founded on many common values, including solidarity, trust and shared responsibility.

1.5. A revitalised European Agenda for Culture must, in the opinion of the EESC, be based on a shared strategic vision comprising the following in order to bring about the ECA:

- common values of identity and on freedom and solidarity;
- pivotal principles of freedom of movement, establishment and provision regarding persons, goods and services operating in the cultural sphere in Europe;

⁽¹⁾ As can be seen from the widespread populist and sovereignist movements and aspects.

⁽²⁾ Along the lines of, and in support of, the European Research Area (ERA).

- schemes for managing and planning initiatives focusing on the cultural heritage;
- **practical measures to restore and preserve the vast artistic heritage, bringing European culture to life for future generations** ⁽³⁾;
- making full use of European culture in international relations;
- more robust governance of European policies, giving greater scope to those who produce and shape culture in its expressive forms and in the cultural and creative industries;
- support for bringing together small creative enterprises, particularly those with social objectives;
- cultural synergies and exchanges, as these contribute to sharing European society's myriad forms of expression.

1.6. **On the cultural supply side**, initiatives must be clear and readily accessible to recipients, making use of new channels of multilingual communication so that the European Cultural Area is in practice the heritage of everyone.

1.7. **On the cultural demand side**, the Committee believes it is essential for action to be geared directly to the end users of culture, so as to increase the level of participation in the development of a European value-based identity, through initiatives such as a **'cultural citizenship Erasmus'** and the launch of a **European Cultural Charter** for the people of Europe.

1.8. The EESC firmly believes that it can play a proactive role in a structured cultural dialogue, to strengthen democratic citizenship, cultural identity and the sharing of multiple creative expressions of society, including through joint initiatives, such as the launch of a European Week of Culture, European Cultural Nights, and the nomination of European Ambassadors for Culture.

1.9. The Committee is committed to monitoring the data in the roadmap for the new Agenda and to completing the ECA, based on regular reports to be submitted by the Commission.

2. Introduction

2.1. Culture lies at the heart of the European project and is the foundation of the European Union's 'unity in diversity'. It represents an essential component of communal life and, as an indispensable element of our behaviour in society and the day-to-day expression of our citizenship, a value that can enrich our humanity.

2.2. Culture therefore represents the ideal strategic resource for social cohesion and intercultural dialogue and a major opportunity to enhance Europe's common history, with the immense wealth inherent in the cultural diversity of Europe's regions and its shared tangible and intangible heritage.

2.3. The Treaty of Lisbon attaches great importance to culture: in the Preamble to this Treaty on European Union, it explicitly refers to the wish to draw inspiration from **'the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe'**, with objectives prioritising, for example, the commitment to respect 'its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and [...] ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced'.

2.3.1. Many of these values, underpinning European society, are highlighted in the Treaty: 'The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights[...]. These values — now an integral part of European culture — are coming to the fore and must continue to gain prominence in a society defined by pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice and solidarity.

2.3.2. The Charter of Fundamental Rights, an integral component of the Treaty, brings together, highlights and summarises a wealth of values, some of which are already referred to in the Treaty.

2.3.3. The EU's initiative is thus designed to encourage cooperation between Member States so that their specific competence in the field of cultural policy increasingly takes as its reference the common values to which they have subscribed, **weaving them into the fabric** of social relations.

⁽³⁾ Cf. Specialist restoration services: www.opencare.it

2.3.4. Human behaviour, in social relations and day-to-day interactions, follows models that have been pre-established in the individual intellect ⁽⁴⁾. However, these models are acquired through instruction ⁽⁵⁾ and teaching ⁽⁶⁾, and are enhanced by developing relations with the world around us.

2.3.5. Hence the importance of disseminating and emphasising values which are the common basis of European civilisation. This is particularly important as regards young people, from pre-adolescence onwards, for the consolidation of the **'mirror neurons'** simulating action, sensations and emotions observed in others ⁽⁷⁾.

2.4. The concept of culture ⁽⁸⁾ is by definition dynamic and therefore calls for a series of initiatives to be developed by European and national policies, through education and by example. The values listed above, taken up by the Treaty, do not spring up spontaneously but are rather the fruit of social reflections and experiences, determining peaceful cohabitation and gradually gaining people's trust. They must be the subject of **educational processes and social interaction**, addressed above all to the younger generations so that they can subscribe to and share society's ethical values.

2.5. Over and above its value in terms of society and identity, culture is gaining recognition as a strategic economic driver in increasing Europe's per capita wealth, welfare and overall GDP, not to mention its role in international relations.

2.6. It is estimated that the cultural and creative sectors contribute 4,2 % to the EU's GDP, accounting for a 1,5 % increase in jobs growth. In absolute terms, culture generated EUR 89,9 billion in 2016 — the equivalent of a 1,8 % increase on 2015 — bringing in, thanks to its knock-on effect on ancillary sectors, more than EUR 250 billion and providing jobs for 1.5 million people ⁽⁹⁾.

2.7. Cultural participation is an essential aspect of the EU's efforts, but with the economic and financial crisis that beset Europe in 2008, subsequently spreading to the social and political arenas, this has declined in all European countries, especially those of southern Europe ⁽¹⁰⁾.

2.8. Under the 2007 European Agenda for Culture ⁽¹¹⁾, the EU and Member States pledged to:

- promote cultural diversity;
- preserve the cultural heritage;
- overcome obstacles to the free movement of professionals in the sector;
- support the contribution of cultural and creative industries.

2.8.1. In terms of European cooperation, the EU Work Plan for Culture (2015-2018) established four main priorities for cooperation in the area of cultural policies:

- culture that is accessible and open to all;
- safeguarding and enhancement of cultural heritage;
- support for cultural and creative sectors in an innovative economy;
- promotion of cultural diversity.

2.9. The European Parliament has adopted a number of resolutions ⁽¹²⁾ and recommendations on equal access to cultural services, on culture in the EU's external relations and mobility, and on the cultural and creative industries.

⁽⁴⁾ Nihil est in intellectu quod prius non fuerit in sensu (J. Locke).

⁽⁵⁾ From the Latin 'instruere', to prepare, to build.

⁽⁶⁾ Imprinting signs and models.

⁽⁷⁾ Cf. Neuroscience findings illustrating the mimicking of actions and the imitation of models.

⁽⁸⁾ From the Latin 'colere', to cultivate.

⁽⁹⁾ Source: Eurostat.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Report on Cultural access and participation http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_399_en.pdf

⁽¹¹⁾ See OJ C 287, 29.11.2007.

⁽¹²⁾ See OJ C 377 E, 7.12.2012, p. 142; OJ C 93, 9.3.2016, p. 95, texts P8_TA(2016)0486.

2.10. At its meeting of 23 May 2018, the European Council adopted conclusions on mainstreaming cultural heritage into the other EU policies as well, and on strengthening dialogue with civil society organisations.

2.11. For its part, the EESC has on several occasions expressed its views on promoting the cultural and creative sectors and its support for a strategy for international cultural relations⁽¹³⁾, including the contribution of rural areas to Europe's cultural heritage⁽¹⁴⁾.

3. The proposals in the new Agenda

3.1. The main elements of the new Agenda proposed by the Commission can be summed up as follows:

- promoting cultural participation, professional mobility and protection of the heritage, harnessing the power of culture and cultural diversity for social cohesion and well-being;
- promoting the arts and culture in education;
- strengthening international cultural relations;
- strengthening links with industrial policy;
- making the most of the role of culture in reinforcing European identity;
- engaging in close cooperation with the Member States and civil society.

3.2. The key dimensions proposed can be summarised as follows:

3.2.1. *Social dimension*: harnessing the power of culture and cultural diversity for social cohesion and well-being.

3.2.2. *Economic dimension*: supporting cultural creativity in education and innovation, growth through new jobs and the development of cultural industries and skills⁽¹⁵⁾;

3.2.3. *External dimension strengthening international cultural relations*: supporting culture in the Enlargement countries and the Western Balkans, in the Mediterranean countries and through ACP Development Fund activities⁽¹⁶⁾.

3.2.4. *Cross-cutting dimension*: 'European Year of Cultural Heritage' and 'European Capitals of Culture' initiatives, new European Action Plan for Cultural Heritage 2019-2022, development of Digital4Culture, online directory of European films and support for digital transformation.

3.3. Strategic cooperation under the new Agenda will be supported by Creative Europe and other EU programmes.

4. General comments

4.1. The EESC considers the consolidation and development of an EU cultural dimension based on the common values enshrined in the Treaties a vital way of consolidating the sense of being a part of the process of creating an inclusive, cohesive and competitive society.

4.2. Europe's tangible and intangible cultural heritage is the *cement* that holds the peoples of Europe together, forming a very strong bond in terms of identity particularly at times when European identity and solidarity are in crisis.

4.3. The EESC believes that, precisely because of the political, identity and governance currently affecting Europe, it would make sense to restore European culture's role in transmitting values associated with identity, including through enhanced European training courses.

⁽¹³⁾ OJ C 288, 31.8.2017, p. 120.

⁽¹⁴⁾ NAT/738 (OJ C 440, 6.12.2018, p. 22).

⁽¹⁵⁾ Particularly with the P.I.S.A conversion of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) to STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) and in the digital field.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

4.4. The process of incorporating values must be the launchpad for a quantum leap in a New Agenda for Culture and give rise to a fully-fledged European Cultural Area — ECA ⁽¹⁷⁾ — based on shared values, along the lines of and in tandem with the European Research Area.

4.5. The new ECA should comprise the following, accompanied by a timeframe:

4.5.1. Bolstering European cultural policies and instruments to support and disseminate identity values, based on the sense of belonging to a shared set of values.

4.5.2. Full roll-out of freedom of movement, of establishment and of the right to provide a service, across the whole of Europe, for individuals and firms operating in the cultural sphere.

4.5.3. An 'economy of culture' centred on socially inclusive systems, promoting new models for preserving and restoring the cultural heritage and developing the creative industries, including through new types of business with a strong social value.

4.5.4. The promotion of European culture in international relations as a tool for revitalising cultural diplomacy, as a 'soft power' mechanism in Europe's external relations and as an economic multiplier in international trade, capable of transforming artists/creators into '**European Cultural Ambassadors**'.

4.5.5. Bottom-up mechanisms, giving greater scope for all those who directly produce, create and shape culture, in the arts and in the cultural and creative industries;

4.6. In the Committee's view, common challenges need to be addressed by creating a fully-fledged 'cultural internal market' promoting:

— mobility of artists, services and cultural enterprises

— mobility of works of art

— cooperation through transnational projects

— inter-cultural dialogue

— targeted measures to enhance European cultural identity

— measures to restore and preserve the Europe's vast artistic heritage, with strands dedicated to multimedia R&I ⁽¹⁸⁾ and to sustainability

— greater creative independence

— the development of a humanistic digital culture capable of scaling back the manipulative domain of fake news algorithms and online disinformation.

4.7. In the Committee's view, it is crucial to promote — especially among young people, through education — the firm belief that cultural diversity and the multiplicity of art forms represent essential elements of human development and fundamental freedoms, and that cultural exchange helps to strengthen democratic citizenship.

4.8. The EESC emphasises the need for the new European Agenda for Culture — as part of a new, strategic vision that is shared and enriched — to be incorporated into and embedded in the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework.

4.9. In the view of the EESC, the beneficiaries of regulatory, structural and financial support programmes and measures must have access to clear and transparent information about them on social networks.

4.10. In the same vein, the Committee considers it essential to undertake action directly targeted at the final beneficiaries of European cultural policy to increase participation levels, as these have been severely affected by the economic and financial crisis, which then spread to the social sphere.

⁽¹⁷⁾ See also Council of Europe — Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (CETS No 199) 18/03/08 Faro, 27 October 2005.

⁽¹⁸⁾ See footnote 14.

4.10.1. The EESC thinks the launch of a **citizenship Erasmus** to boost cultural tourism in the EU and a **European Cultural Charter**, with easier access to Europe's cultural treasures — together with the launch of **European Cultural Weeks and Nights** — could be useful initiatives, particularly for the younger generations.

5. Specific comments

5.1. A **digital user guide**, with a user-friendly website that is updated in real time and is available in all EU languages, should ensure that the many EU instruments now available can be accessed. An initial list of examples includes:

- **DCI II**, development cooperation instrument⁽¹⁹⁾
- **Interreg Med Programme**⁽²⁰⁾ and **Med Culture Programme** (2014-18)⁽²¹⁾
- **ENI**, the European neighbourhood instrument, formerly ENPI⁽²²⁾
- **IPA II** (2014-20)⁽²³⁾
- **Natura 2020 Network**⁽²⁴⁾
- **Natura 2000 Action Plan for nature, people and the economy**⁽²⁵⁾
- **LIFE** (2014-20)⁽²⁶⁾
- **the Structural Funds**⁽²⁷⁾
- **EMODnet, Phase III**, marine observation and data network on underwater sites⁽²⁸⁾
- **EU's Blue Growth** strategy in the marine, transport and tourism sectors⁽²⁹⁾
- **Leader plus**, upgrading of the rural and cultural heritage⁽³⁰⁾
- **Europe for Citizens** (2014-20), for the history and diversity of the EU⁽³¹⁾
- **State aid** in the area of cultural and heritage conservation⁽³²⁾
- **the illicit trafficking of cultural goods**⁽³³⁾
- **Copernicus** (former GMES), satellite information for monitoring the cultural heritage⁽³⁴⁾
- **EDEN** (*European Destinations of Excellence*)
- **COSME**, funding initiatives in support of culture and tourism⁽³⁵⁾
- **Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe** and the European Commission;

⁽¹⁹⁾ Regulation (EU) No 233/2014 (OJ L 77, 15.3.2014, p. 44).

⁽²⁰⁾ Interreg Med Programme.

⁽²¹⁾ Med Culture Programme.

⁽²²⁾ Regulations (EU) No 232/2014 (OJ L 77, 15.3.2014, p. 27) and (EU) No 236/2014 (OJ L 77, 15.3.2014, p. 95).

⁽²³⁾ Regulation (EU) No 231/2014 (OJ L 77, 15.3.2014, p. 11).

⁽²⁴⁾ Habitat Directive 92/43/EEC (OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7) and Birds Directive 2009/147/EC (OJ L 20, 26.1.2010, p. 7).

⁽²⁵⁾ COM(2017) 198 final.

⁽²⁶⁾ Regulation (EU) No 1293/2013 (OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 185).

⁽²⁷⁾ The five Funds: ERDF, ESF, Cohesion, EAFRD and EMFF.

⁽²⁸⁾ Decision (EU) 2017/848 (OJ L 125, 18.5.2017, p. 43).

⁽²⁹⁾ EP Resolution of 2 July 2013 (2012/2297(INI)) (OJ C 75, 26.2.2016, p. 24).

⁽³⁰⁾ Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 (OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 487).

⁽³¹⁾ Regulation (EU) No 390/2014 (OJ L 115, 17.4.2014, p. 3).

⁽³²⁾ Regulations (EU) No 651/2014 (OJ L 187, 26.6.2014, p. 1) and (EU) No 2015/1588 (OJ L 248, 24.9.2015, p. 1).

⁽³³⁾ Fight against trafficking of cultural goods.

⁽³⁴⁾ Regulation (EU) No 377/2014 (OJ L 122, 24.4.2014, p. 44).

⁽³⁵⁾ Regulation (EU) No 1287/2013 (OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 33).

- **C3 Monitor**, monitoring and comparing **Cultural Vibrancy**, the **Creative Economy** and the **Enabling Environment** in some 170 cultural and creative cities in 30 European countries
- public-private partnership (PPP) in the area of **energy efficiency of historic buildings**
- cultural heritage for sustainable development under **Horizon 2020**
- **Europeana** digital platform with more than 50 million digitised items, including books, music and works of art, using advanced research methods
- **Digital Agenda** for the study of European film heritage ⁽³⁶⁾
- **investments in cultural heritage**, made possible thanks to the rules on cohesion policy ⁽³⁷⁾
- **Erasmus+** ⁽³⁸⁾
- **European Heritage Label**, conferring recognition on sites in the European Union ⁽³⁹⁾
- **Creative Europe** programme (2014-20) with: a media component dedicated to the audiovisual sector (**Media sub-programme**); a cultural component dedicated to the creative and cultural sectors (**Culture sub-programme**); and a cross-sectoral component dedicated to all creative and cultural sectors (**Cross-sectoral strand**) ⁽⁴⁰⁾.

Brussels, 17 October 2018.

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⁽³⁶⁾ COM(2010) 487 final and COM(2014) 477 final.

⁽³⁷⁾ OJ L 347, 20.12.2013.

⁽³⁸⁾ Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 (OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 50).

⁽³⁹⁾ Decision No 1194/2011/EU (OJ L 303, 22.11.2011, p. 1).

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Regulation (EU) No 1295/2013 (OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 221).