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## NOTE TO THE ATTENTION OF ALL EU HEADS OF DELEGATIONS

**Subject: Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council –  
Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations**

On the 8th June the Commission has adopted by written procedure the Communication “Towards a EU strategy in international cultural relations”. The innovative approach of this joint EEAS – Commission Communication provides a new framework for culture in external relations and offers the EU the opportunity to forge a more coherent and effective cultural strategy, in full coherence with the aim to reinforce its role as a global actor.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>1</sup> adopted by the international community last September and universally applicable, pledges to foster intercultural understanding, tolerance, mutual respect and an ethic of global citizenship. It recognizes that all cultures and civilisations can contribute to, and are crucial enablers of, sustainable development. While there is no specific Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on culture, it is explicitly mentioned in targets relating to SDG 4 (Education), SDG 5 (Gender), SDG 8 and 9 (Inclusive and sustainable growth) and SDG 11 (Cities).

Our guiding principle must be that the diversity of cultural expressions at the core of the European project and is for Europe and our partner countries an invaluable asset contributing to build resilience and dynamism in our societies. In addition to traditional showcasing, such as film festivals, exhibitions and concerts, we wish to extend and deepen our cultural action developing a people-to-people dimension more adapted to a globalised world of multiple actors. Furthermore, we should aim to develop the full potential of culture as an enabler and driver of development.

As the HRVP recently said: *“We should not be afraid to say we are a cultural super-power. And it is our openness that made us great, our freedom that made culture a European excellence. Our culture inspired the world because it was itself inspired by the world. The way to the future is this. Proud of our heritage, open to the world.”*

To foster the concrete involvement of EU cultural operators in cooperation activities with their counterparts in partner countries, we intend to work together with national cultural institutes, as well as with private and public actors in activities that highlight the value of

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<sup>1</sup>A/RES/70/1. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2015.

culture as a tool for the promotion of European values, an economic resource and a common wealth, taking into account the principles of the Communication.

Culture here is intended in a broader sense, involving also education, training and the creative industries sector. Culture is not just entertainment. It is an instrument for growth and jobs. In the EU itself, the creative industries sector, and in particular, fashion, design and audio-visual productions, account for important shares of national GDP and are booming in many of our strategic partner countries. Likewise, in developing countries, the cultural and creative industries contribute to promoting sustainable development and inclusive growth.

National ownership and the involvement of local authorities are essential for successful interventions. For this reason the strategy envisages an enhanced role for EU delegations, which are very well-placed to ensure that interventions are tailored to local needs. Drawing inspiration from this Communication, with their knowledge of a region and a country, they can conceive and develop projects to be carried out, contribute to adequately shape programmes in Commission services, suggest lines of action, engage with partner countries, interact with local stakeholders and offer coordinated support to the activities of national cultural institutes, providing them an EU added value.

The EU has been financing programmes having cultural contents for decades. But too often this has been done with a lack of coordination between different services, with no clear vision and perspective. With this Communication, we now have the opportunity to launch a coherent and sustainable strategy, to define goals and pursue concrete targets, to the advantage of all actors involved, both from the EU and from partner countries.

We want to draw your attention to this document and invite you to consider thoroughly the perspectives it opens in your respective countries and regions. With this new instrument, you are invited to organise a policy dialogue with EU missions and with local actors, fully employ development instruments and engage concretely with governments and civil society, liaising with the different Commission services involved and securing complementarity with Member States' action.

We must improve our capacity to take the cultural context into account in the planning and design of development actions from a comprehensive human development perspective. We have to work together, to maximise the potential of the sector in promoting sustainable development and peace.

We kindly ask you to come up with inputs and suggestions as soon as possible and in any case immediately after the summer break, so that we can draw together a set of concrete proposals and new activities as of next autumn.



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