

Statement on the fortieth anniversary of the Solemn Declaration on European Union: towards a strengthened European identity

We, the undersigned:

- having regard to Articles 6 and 167 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to the Stuttgart Solemn Declaration on European Union of the European Council of 19 June 1983 (hereafter ‘the Declaration’),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 22 May 2018 entitled ‘A New European Agenda for Culture’ ([COM\(2018\)0267](#)),
- having regard to its resolution of 17 September 2020 on the cultural recovery of Europe⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 20 October 2021 on the situation of artists and the cultural recovery in the EU ([2020/2261\(INI\)](#)),
- having regard to the European Parliament report of 18 November 2022 on the implementation of the New European Agenda for Culture and the EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations,
- having regard to the Council Resolution of 7 December 2022 on the EU Work Plan for Culture 2023–2026 [2022/C 466/01](#),

A. Whereas, forty years ago, the Declaration put forward as one of the objectives of the Union to promote closer cooperation on cultural matters, in order to affirm people’s awareness of a common cultural heritage as an element of European identity;

B. Whereas it underlined the necessity to reinforce European political cooperation through Member States’ involvement in cultural activities as a way to address challenges in both its internal and external dimension; whereas it praised a concerted ‘commitment to progress towards an ever closer union among the peoples and Member States of the European Community’;

C. Whereas such an approach, bringing closer the peoples of Europe and fostering a common feeling of belonging to a shared culture and identity, remains fully relevant in view of today’s challenges, from economic difficulties and financial disturbances to democratic crises in Europe, as well as conflicts and wars at its borders, and will contribute to give a new impetus into the process of integration of our Union;

D. Whereas at the time of its signature, the Declaration set specific objectives for cultural cooperation, namely:

- development of the activities of the European Foundation and the European University Institute in Florence, as well as closer cooperation between establishments of higher education, including exchanges of teachers and students;
- intensified exchanges of experience, particularly among young people, and development of the teaching of the languages of the Member States of the Community;
- improving the level of knowledge about other Member States of the Community and of information on Europe’s history and culture so as to promote a European awareness;

- examination of the advisability of undertaking joint action to protect, promote and safeguard the cultural heritage;
- examination of the possibility of promoting joint activities in the dissemination of culture, in particular as regards audio-visual methods;
- more extensive contacts between writers and artists of the Member States and wider dissemination of their works both inside and outside the Community;
- closer coordination of cultural activities in third countries, within the framework of Political Cooperation,

E. Whereas some of these political objectives are fully accomplished and others are still in progress;

F. Whereas the Erasmus Programme, established 35 years ago, has become a flagship project of the Union, giving answer to the will of EU leaders to develop closer cooperation between establishments of higher education, including exchanges of teachers and students; yet its financial endowment is markedly insufficient to enable the participation of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds; whereas an ambitious implementation of the European Education Area (EEA) can help to modernise European education systems; whereas the objective to develop the acquisition of foreign languages can be aided by the EEA, in particular as regards learners from a disadvantaged background;

G Whereas following the establishment of the programmes KALEIDOSCOPE (1996), ARIANE (1997), and RAPHAEL (1997) in the late nineties, the Creative Europe Programme is the main instrument for EU action in the area of culture; whereas some of its objectives contribute to the fulfilment of the Declaration, in particular, promoting joint activities in the dissemination of culture, in particular as regards audio-visual methods as well as the promotion and safeguarding of cultural heritage; whereas cultural heritage is also supported by specific actions, such as the European heritage label, and through the mainstreaming in regional and innovation policies; whereas Creative Europe is severely underfunded, which undermines its ability to reach its true potential; whereas in its current format it does not support extensive contacts between writers and artists of the Member States and wider dissemination of their works both inside and outside Europe;

H. Whereas the European Solidarity Corps contributes to fulfil the goal of promoting exchanges of experience, particularly among young people; whereas its limited budget cannot achieve a significant impact as regards to the development of European solidarity among European youth;

I. Whereas the Declaration's objective to improve the level of knowledge about other Member States of the Union and of information on Europe's history and culture so as to promote a European awareness is the most underdeveloped and no substantial action has been taken in this regard;

J Whereas the next EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026 foresees, among its guiding principles, that "Culture, including cultural heritage, has an intrinsic value and contributes to

strengthening European identity”; whereas one of the proposed priority actions is “Culture and the promotion of democracy: towards cultural citizenship in Europe”;

K Whereas at the EU Leaders Summit on Education and Culture (Gothenburg, 17 November 2017), concrete ideas were discussed by Heads of State to further enhance the EU's education and culture agenda;

L. Whereas the Rome Declaration of 25 March 2017 and the European Council of 14-15 December 2017 stated that education and culture are key to building inclusive and cohesive societies for all and to sustaining European competitiveness;

M Whereas the Conference on the Future of Europe concluded in 2022 that common minimum standards in education should be adopted, without prejudice to national and regional competences, focusing on citizenship education including Union values and history of Europe, among others;

1. Call on the Commission and the Member States to put forward again the fundamental role of culture for the future of the European project, its societies and democracies, and to translate this recognition into enhanced political engagement and proper financial support for and structural cooperation on cultural policy,

2. Call on the Commission to respect the cultural compatibility of any European legislation with particular regard to and respect for the principle that all cultural goods and services have an inherent dual cultural and economic character; recall in this regard that the European Union has joined the UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions as a legal entity in its own name;

3. Call on the European Council to pursue and update the Declaration's objectives, taking into account historical, economic, technological and societal changes that have happened since then;

4. Call on the Commission to update its strategic framework in the field of EU cultural policy to include, at least, the following:

- Ensure the recovery of the cultural and creative sectors after the ‘polycrisis’ they have faced in the last decades, while developing the sustainability and resilience of the cultural ecosystem in the face of possible challenges ahead, including by developing further policy frameworks;
- Support the role of artists’ contribution to our shared European cultural history by recognising their professional status of cultural and creative workers and ensuring fair working and social conditions so as to enable the sustainability of their careers and livelihoods;
- Promote the role of culture as a component of well-being and social justice, recognising its function as part of the social infrastructure that brings communities together on the basis of EU values, with a particular emphasis on young people cultural engagement and their artistic education; integrating in that respect, cultural participation objectives beyond cultural policy, and to adopt a

- cultural rights approach shifting away from a narrow focus on access towards meaningful participation, leaving no one behind;
- Developing EU wide citizenship education and volunteering initiatives, placing culture as an integral element of our shared European history;
 - Have culture and cultural heritage horizontally mainstreamed in all EU policies, especially in the Digital and Green policies; in particular, by embedding culture as a driver of sustainable development, and accompanying the cultural and creative sectors in becoming more sustainable with dedicated support adjusted to the characteristics of the sectors;
 - Strengthening the effective development and implementation of a common international cultural relations strategy, placing European values at its heart, and fostering shared dialogue and cultural cooperation;
 - Meet the pressing needs of the artistic, academic and media sectors for artistic, academic and media freedom through well-funded and effective policies;
 - Estimate the financial implications of the above-mentioned objectives and answer related needs for their implementation in its mid-term review of the MFF, thereby increasing accordingly the support for key MFF programmes Erasmus +, Creative Europe, European Solidarity Corps as well as CERV and present it to the Culture and education committee.

5. In this respect, call more specifically on the Commission and Member States to:

- Fully apply the principle enshrined in Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and recognise the right to cultural, artistic and scientific life as human rights for all; in this regard, call on the Member States to take all appropriate measures to eliminate any obstacle to the enjoyment of such rights, and to ensure the necessary conditions for everyone to engage freely in cultural activities;
- Accelerate the alignment of policy priorities and investments at EU, national, regional and institutional levels in order to achieve the implementation of the European strategy for universities by 2024; further support the development of European Universities Initiative across borders and operation of a European exchange platform for higher education content and educational data, as set out in the European Digital Education Action Plan; facilitate the creation of European partnerships and promote among others the cooperation between teacher education institutions and training providers through Erasmus+ Teacher Academies;
- Develop a common European citizenship education curricula, including our shared cultural links, history and values, , among others; strengthen EU action regarding EU citizenship education by developing common evaluation objectives and benchmarks, introducing EU citizenship modules on all EU mobility and training activities and by expanding initial and ongoing training opportunities for the educational community at EU level ; recall that the cultural dimension of EU citizenship must be treated as a priority action in application of the EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026;

Establish an European Academy of the arts and sciences to promote contacts between writers and artists of the Member States and wider dissemination of their works both inside and outside the Union and promoting the emergence of independent shared approaches to Europe's interlinked history;

- Reinforce those actions in the Creative Europe Programme aimed at supporting the circulation and translation of literary works and exchanges between writers, as well as to facilitate exchanges between artists across borders and the wider dissemination of their works both inside and outside Europe; maintain an independent and self-reliant European book industry, countering the threats to freedom of expression and pluralism and addressing the risks and opportunities offered by digital tools;
- Bring to the fore the European dimension of cultural heritage actions by, among others, decidedly investing in the development of European cultural routes and developing its synergies with tourism and education policy; highlight the European dimension of the European heritage label sites;
- Develop EU actions grounded in EU values, as for example enabling schools to visit Nazi death and concentration camps;
- Raise awareness of the democratic nature of the European project by promoting a critical stance to the study of the history of Europe, including past totalitarian regimes, its crimes and concentration sites from, among others, the soviet and fascist regimes;
- Build on the European framework for action on cultural heritage with focus on the contribution of tangible and intangible cultural heritage to social cohesion and sustainable development;
- Decidedly strengthen European cultural cooperation in third countries by promoting bidirectional cultural exchange and endowing it with adequate financial and human resources;
- Further support and take into account research activities in the field of media freedom, media pluralism and related economic models as set out in the Media Audiovisual Action Plan; recall the relevance of activities carried out in the field to help shape EU media policy, including those by the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom (CMPF) of the European Institute in Florence, including its media pluralism monitor, as well as the repository in its observatory on proposed legislation to protect media pluralism and independence in the European Union;

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