

# The Power of Culture and the Arts

An urgent appeal to put Culture at the forefront of the European project

This appeal – signed by the European Alliance for Culture and the Arts, is urging policy makers to rethink the European approach and include culture and the arts in the long-term strategic goals of the European project. By doing so, the EU acknowledges their essential role in the development of European societies.

If you want to support this appeal:  
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European  
Alliance  
for  
**CULTURE**  
and the  
**ARTS**

*"Even before Europe was united in an economic level or was conceived at the level of economic interests and trade, it was culture that united all the countries of Europe. The arts, literature, music are the connecting link of Europe".*

Dario Fo<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Europe as a distinct cultural Union

In public opinion, the European Union is often perceived as a political and economic entity, but the feeling that a common society has been created seems to be missing. We strongly believe that culture and the arts can fill this gap. They are the essence of every civilisational development. They are substantially important to our identity, give meaning to human existence and reflect our shared history.

Indeed, European culture and the arts refer to 3000 years of shared cultural heritage while bringing contemporary relevance to people's lives today. Flourishing in dialogue with other cultures, they reflect our "living together", interconnect people in society, transmit knowledge and values. At the same time, they safeguard tangible and intangible evidence of the manmade and natural world for current and future generations.

*Art allows for something that cannot be defined. [...] It is a subtle power that changes the world one perception at a time.*

Katherine Gregos<sup>2</sup>

Culture and the arts are the essential drivers of creation and appropriation of meaning. In today's digital world, the arts present the unforeseen and open new perspectives beyond market-led solutions. Through the diversity of intellectual and emotional experiences they can teach individuals about complexity. They contribute to the constructive experience of otherness. In this sense, they are an important response to the cultural, social, economic and religious tensions existing inside societies, within the EU and outside European borders.

The European Union finds its basis in a shared culture.  
This is Europe's abiding strength.

## 2. Culture and the arts, relevant for the quality of our life and the European project

*Some values can never be put into economic numbers. Numbers on arts are wrong as they miss a part of the story.*

Tomáš Sedláček<sup>3</sup>

While global challenges intensify and have an impact on European societies, Europe needs to preserve its interlinked economic and social model and enrich it with cultural awareness.

The Europe 2020 strategy as well as the Union's foremost goals and emerging priorities are unattainable without culture and the arts. They are deeply embedded in society and thus play a fundamental role in this context.

*"The power of the greatest art is the power to shake us into revelation and rip us from our default mode of seeing. [...] We apprehend the world differently."*

Simon Schama<sup>4</sup>

1 - Italian playwright, theatre director, comedian, singer, stage designer, songwriter, painter, political campaigner

2 - Artistic director of Art Brussels, Belgium

3 - Czech economist

4 - English historian specialising in art history, University Professor of History and Art History at Columbia University, New York

### 3. Culture and the arts to be at the heart of EU policies

Culture and the arts enable the creation of a thriving European society and sustainable economy.

The signatories of this appeal therefore feel the urgency for Europe to put culture and the arts at the heart of European policies and nourish the EU's political project with a cultural one.

They request that European institutions, by which we mean the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council, and policy makers in all Member States ensure that:

*"What would happen if culture succeeded in giving the European project a completely different meaning or sense?"*

Pascal Gielen<sup>5</sup>

- ★ the EU takes culture and the arts into account in an integrated way in all areas of policy making, ensuring a sustainable environment for cultural activities today and in the future
- ★ the EU includes the development and the protection of culture and the arts in its strategic goals and overall political priorities and action plans (such as the investment plan, the further implementation of the EU2020 Strategy, the future EU2030 strategy)
- ★ the Commission checks the cultural impact of its policy and regulatory proposals, alongside the economic and social impact. This way culture would be taken into account horizontally, in line with article 167 paragraph 4 TFEU.
- ★ the EU promotes European culture and arts outside the Union and fosters not only political and economic but also cultural relations with neighbouring and other third countries
- ★ the EU acts as guarantor for fundamental rights including the freedom of expression, creation and programming
- ★ cultural policies of the Member States are supported by the EU through adequate programmes which truly address the needs of the cultural sectors
- ★ future proofed cultural policies are developed at EU and Member State level

The existing legal framework of the Union allows and requires the European Union to support this ambition.

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5 - Author and editor-in-chief of the book series 'Arts in Society', director of the Arts in Society research centre at Groningen University, where he is Associate Professor of the Sociology of Art

# Culture and the Arts I EU Priorities

## European values and human rights

Day to day, artists and art professionals defend the values addressed in the Charter of fundamental rights. Access to and participation in cultural life has been recognised as being a fundamental right for individuals, helping to create individual and collective fulfilment in societies.

**Economic benefits and growth:** The cultural sector is a proven driver for the economy and sustainable growth. As an example, in France, it brings an added value of € 57,8 bn to the economy, which is 3,2% of the sum of all added values. This “cultural GDP” is twice as high as the telecommunication sector and 7 times larger than the automobile industry.

**Education:** Participation in structured art activities increases cognitive abilities and studies prove that students from low income families who take part in arts activities at school are three times more likely to get a degree than children with the same background who do not engage in arts activities in school.

**Social cohesion:** Participation in cultural activities is an essential tool for individuals and communities to communicate, to define and develop their own identity, to distinguish themselves from others. It allows isolated or marginalised people to acquire skills, self-confidence and self-esteem.

**Migration and citizenship:** Culture and the arts teach individuals about complexity and contribute to the constructive experience of “otherness”. They reflect our “living together”, they stimulate us to celebrate differences and discover affinities. At local level artists and arts professionals are committed and to tackling new societal challenges.

**Innovation:** New technological platforms are being developed to give access to culture to the global audience and vulnerable groups in society.

**Health and wellbeing:** People who attend cultural events are more likely to report good health and research has evidenced that a higher frequency of engagement with culture and the arts is generally associated with a higher level of wellbeing.

**Regional and urban development:** Culture is a powerful tool for urban regeneration, development and social cohesion. The presence of cultural activities is a major factor in the attractiveness of regions and cities – high-human-capital employees are keen to settle and they in turn stimulate regional growth.

**External relations and neighbourhood policy:** Cultural diplomacy strengthens the bi-lateral relations between European and third countries and builds bridges between societies – as it is a tool to exchange ideas and thereby foster better mutual understanding. Cultural exchange creates an open environment within which political and social issues as well as liberal values can more easily be addressed.

**International cooperation and development:** The cultural dimension is a key element of any development strategy. In general, culture and the arts enable a sustainable social, economic and human development. They also facilitate the dialogue between cultures which appears to be an essential condition of peaceful coexistence.