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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

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ENFOCUSTOM 143 EDUC 314 COHOM 119

Subject: Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations
- *Policy debate*
(Public debate in accordance with Article 8(2) of the Council's Rules of
Procedure [proposed by the Presidency])

Following consultation of the Cultural Affairs Committee, the Presidency has prepared the attached discussion paper, which is submitted as the basis for the policy debate to the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting on 21-22 November 2016.

Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations

Presidency discussion paper

INTRODUCTION

On 8 June 2016 the Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy adopted a joint communication "Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations" (hereinafter "joint communication")¹. The Presidency has invited the Commission and the High Representative to present the communication at the EYCS Council on 22 November. The presentation will be followed by a ministerial policy debate.

MINISTERIAL INTERVENTIONS

As additional input to the policy debate, the Presidency has prepared this discussion paper.

Ministers are invited to share their views on how the EU and its Member States can cooperate, in a concerted manner and in full respect of their competences, to bring about a more strategic approach to culture in external relations. In this regard, cooperation between ministries of culture and of foreign affairs is crucial. Ministers could therefore also share their successful national experience and cases where the two ministries have succeeded in working together to achieve concrete results.

Additionally, given the long list of actions listed in the joint communication, Ministers could highlight the areas where the added value of concerted action between the EU and its Member States has potential to be strongest. Ministers are encouraged to share good examples from their national experiences and express their views on whether the lessons learnt at national level can be used in developing a strategic approach to culture in external relations at EU level.

¹ Doc. 10082/16

In order to stimulate an interactive debate, the Presidency has invited an external speaker, a representative of **UNESCO**. UNESCO has a long-term practical experience in the area of international cultural relations. UNESCO will be invited to introduce the debate and give its perspective on this issue and illustrate it with concrete cases.

In their interventions Ministers should be guided by the indications in the above text box as well as by the presentation of the external speaker. Ministers are encouraged to intervene freely in response to the speaker, without scripted interventions, by asking questions or commenting.

In order to give all Ministers an opportunity to contribute as well as to promote an interactive and free-flowing discussion, interventions should be as brief and concise as possible (maximum two minutes). In such a way, Ministers will have an opportunity to intervene more than once.

BACKGROUND

1. The policy framework

Culture in EU external relations is one of the three main pillars of the 2007 European Agenda for Culture. When endorsing the European Agenda, the Council agreed that it is important to enhance the role of culture in the EU's external relations and development policy². Since then the development of a strategic approach in this field has become a priority for the Council's work. In the current Council Work Plan for Culture (2015-2018), one of the four priority areas is the “promotion of cultural diversity, culture in the EU external relations and mobility” with specific actions being proposed including “strengthening of a strategic approach to culture in the EU external relations”³.

² Resolution of the Council of 16 November 2007 on a European Agenda for Culture (OJ C 287, 29.11.2007, p. 1).

³ OJ C 463, 23.12.2014, p. 4.

In the Council conclusions on culture in the EU's external relations with a focus on culture in development cooperation⁴, adopted in November 2015, the Council specifically invited the Commission to “develop and present, jointly with the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, to the Council a more strategic approach to culture in external relations”.

In line with the above mentioned invitation, the Commission and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy adopted on 8 June 2016 the joint communication to the European Parliament and the Council "Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations"⁵. It outlines a strategic approach to the EU international relations in the cultural area.

2. Concrete steps towards a more strategic approach

The joint communication outlines five main principles for an EU action. They are the following: promoting cultural diversity and respect for human rights, fostering mutual respect and intercultural dialogue, ensuring respect for complementarity and subsidiarity, encouraging a cross-cutting approach to culture, and finally promoting culture through existing frameworks for cooperation.

The joint communication proposes three main strands of external cultural cooperation activities: supporting culture as an engine for sustainable social and economic development, promoting culture and intercultural dialogue for peaceful inter-community relations and reinforcing cooperation on cultural heritage. In addition to these principles and cooperation activities, the joint communication also envisages a strategic EU approach to cultural diplomacy through enhanced EU cooperation.

⁴ OJ C 417, 15.12.2015, p. 41.

⁵ Doc. 10082/16

The above mentioned building blocks of the proposed strategic approach describe many ongoing relevant activities and propose also new ones, always taking into account the potential for their enhancement through increased cooperation. But transforming a theoretical strategic approach into a reality is always the most difficult part. Any EU strategy cannot really work without the strong involvement of the Member States. Therefore the views of the ministers of culture on how to put this strategic approach into action could provide a strong indication of the potential of the approach proposed.

In this whole process it might be useful to draw also on the experience of different international organisations active in this field already for a long time. In particular UNESCO and its activities could be a good source of best practices. UNESCO's numerous activities are in particular relevant in the areas of building of intercultural understanding through protection of heritage and support for cultural diversity. It also needs to be highlighted that the EU and its Member States have acceded, and thus committed themselves, to the implementation of the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the protection and the promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions.
