CULTURE

The European Union’s action in the field of culture supplements Member States’ cultural policy in various areas: for example, the preservation of European cultural heritage, cooperation between various countries’ cultural institutions, and the promotion of mobility among those working creatively. The cultural sector is also affected by provisions of the Treaties which do not explicitly pertain to culture.

LEGAL BASIS

The Treaty of Lisbon places great importance on culture: the preamble to the Treaty on European Union (TEU) explicitly refers to ‘drawing inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe’. One of the EU’s key aims, as specified in the Treaty, is to ‘respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and […] ensure that Europe’s cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced’ (Article 3 TEU). Article 6 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) states that the EU’s competences in the field of culture are to ‘carry out actions to support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States’.

Article 167 TFEU provides further details on EU action in the field of culture: the EU must contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore. Action by the Union should encourage cooperation between Member States and support and supplement their action in improving the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European peoples, conserving and safeguarding cultural heritage of European significance, and fostering non-commercial cultural exchanges and artistic and literary creation, including in the audiovisual sector. The Union and Member States may also foster cooperation with third countries and the competent international organisations. Respect for, and promotion of the diversity of, European cultures need to be taken into account when taking action under other provisions of the Treaty.

Article 13 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union stipulates that ‘the arts and scientific research shall be free of constraint’. Article 22 of the same charter lays down the requirement that ‘the EU shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity’.
ACHIEVEMENTS

A. Policy developments

1. European Agenda for Culture

On 22 May 2018 the Commission adopted a New European Agenda for Culture, which succeeds the current European Agenda for Culture adopted in 2007, continuing the provision of the strategic framework for EU action in the cultural sector. The New Agenda proposes three strategic objectives, with social, economic and external dimensions: (1) harnessing the power of culture for social cohesion and well-being; (2) supporting culture-based creativity in education and innovation, and for jobs and growth; and (3) strengthening international cultural relations. The Agenda sets out enhanced working methods with the Member States, civil society and international partners. It is realised through a new Work Plan for Culture (2019-2022), adopted by the Council on 27 November 2018. The 2019-2022 Work Plan for Culture sets out five priorities: (1) sustainability in cultural heritage; (2) cohesion and well-being; (3) an ecosystem supporting artists, cultural and creative professionals and European content; (4) gender equality; and (5) international cultural relations. The priorities are put into practice in 17 concrete actions.

The Joint Communication ‘Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations’ presented by the Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) in mid-2016 is aimed at encouraging cultural cooperation between the EU and its partner countries and promoting a global order based on peace, the rule of law, freedom of expression, mutual understanding and respect for fundamental values.

Intercultural dialogue is an ongoing priority of the EU. With the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, this dimension has become even more significant. In the specific area of culture policy, initiatives such as those on Roma culture, intercultural cities, and dialogue with the Platform on Intercultural Europe are in the spotlight. Other EU policies promoting intercultural dialogue include, to name but a few, those relating to the audiovisual sector, multilingualism, youth, research, integration and external relations.

B. Action programmes and secondary legislation

1. Creative Europe

The current Creative Europe programme (2014-2020) has a budget of EUR 1.46 billion for the programming period (9% higher than the previous level). Under its umbrella it brings together earlier Union programmes: the MEDIA programmes (1991-2013), the MEDIA Mundus programme (2011-2013), and the Culture programmes (2000-2013). It also includes a cross-sectoral sub-programme consisting of (1) a financial guarantee, managed by the European Investment Fund, to make it easier for small operators to access bank loans, and (2) funding to support studies, analysis and better data collection with a view to improving the evidence base for policymaking.

Under its CULTURE sub-programme (for the MEDIA sub-programme, please see the fact sheet on audiovisual and media policy (3.6.2)), there is funding available for (1) transnational cooperation projects between organisations active in the cultural and creative sectors; (2) European networks that aim to enable the workforce in
the culture and creative sectors with specific skills and experience, international cooperation and new professional opportunities; (3) European platforms facilitating the mobility and visibility of creators and artists, Europe-wide programming of cultural and artistic activities and audience development and visibility; and (4) literary translation of (packages of) works and their promotion.

On 30 May 2018 the Commission published its proposal for a regulation establishing the future Creative Europe programme (2021-2027). The Commission proposal is aligned with the objectives of the New European Agenda for Culture and builds on the structure and achievements of the current Creative Europe programme. While the Commission had proposed a budget of EUR 1 850 billion, on 28 March 2019 Parliament proposed that it be increased to EUR 2 806 billion[1]. The Council is currently reviewing the proposal.

2. European Capitals of Culture (ECoCs)

The European Capitals of Culture is one of the EU’s most successful and best-known cultural initiatives. Two cities — in two different EU countries — are given ECoC status each year. The cities are selected by an independent panel of experts on the basis of a cultural programme that must have a strong European dimension, involve local people of all ages and contribute to the long-term development of the city. Over the years, the ECoCs have also become a unique opportunity to regenerate cities, boost their creativity and improve their image. More than 40 cities have been designated as ECoCs so far. The procedure for choosing a city starts some six years in advance, although the order of the Member States entitled to host the event is established before then, and is organised in two stages.

The rules and conditions for holding the title, up to and including 2019, are set out in Decision 1622/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council.

Decision 445/2014/EU extended the chance to participate in ECoC to candidate and potential candidate countries, provided that they are already participating in the Creative Europe Programme by the date of publication of the call for applications.

For the period between 2020 and 2033, rules have recently been revised. In 2016, the Commission proposed to open up the action to EFTA/EEA countries. Parliament and the Council adopted the decision in 2017.

3. European Heritage Label

The European Heritage Label was initially brought into being as an intergovernmental initiative between several Member States in 2005. At the request of the Member States, the Commission proposed in 2010 to formally make the European Heritage Label an EU initiative. The label was established by Decision 1194/2011/EU. Its overarching objective is to strengthen intercultural dialogue and European citizens’ sense of belonging to the Union. In order to achieve these aims, sites are selected for their high symbolic value, the role they have played in the history and culture of Europe and the European Union, and their relation to democratic principles and human rights. So far 29 sites have been designated.

4. European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018

On 30 August 2016, the Commission put forward a proposal to Parliament and the Council calling for 2018 to be designated the European Year of Cultural Heritage, in response to requests from both the Council and Parliament. The proposal was adopted by Parliament and the Council in the first half of 2017. The Year seeks to highlight the role of Europe’s cultural heritage in fostering a shared sense of history and identity. The European Year has had a specific financial envelope of EUR 8 million for the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2018.

5. Unlawful removal of cultural objects

With Directive 2014/60/EU, a recast of Directive 93/7/EEC, the EU aims to protect national treasures and reconcile their protection with the principle of free movement of goods. It provides for the physical return of cultural objects that have been unlawfully removed from the territories of EU countries.

It sets out cooperation mechanisms and return proceedings against the possessor to secure the return of a cultural object unlawfully removed from the territory of one EU country to the territory of another EU country on or after 1 January 1993. It covers all cultural objects identified as ‘national treasures possessing artistic, historic or archaeological value’ under national legislation.

6. Prizes

The EU’s cultural policy supports the awarding of prizes in the fields of cultural heritage, architecture, literature and music. The objective of these EU prizes is to highlight the excellent quality and success of European activities in these sectors. The prizes put the spotlight on artists, musicians, architects, writers and those working in the field of cultural heritage, and on their work. In doing so, they showcase Europe’s rich cultural diversity and the importance of intercultural dialogue and cross-border cultural activities in Europe and beyond.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Parliament has, in various resolutions[2], expressed its long-standing interest in the potential and development of cultural and creative industries (CCIs). Not only are CCIs the expression of cultural diversity, but they also employ 7.5% of the EU workforce, creating approximately EUR 509 billion in value added to GDP. In its resolution of 13 December 2016 on a coherent EU policy for cultural and creative industries, Parliament called for a strategic approach to unleash the potential of CCIs[3]. It asked the Commission to adopt measures on a coherent EU policy for cultural and creative industries, developing a comprehensive, coherent and long-term industrial policy framework for the cultural and creative sectors. It called for the adoption of several measures to improve the working conditions in the cultural and creative sectors, for example by including CCIs in the Youth Employment Initiative and by providing funds to facilitate careers, entrepreneurship and training in these sectors.

Parliament has also pushed for a strategic approach to the role of culture in external relations. In its Preparatory Action in the 2013 and 2014 budgets, entitled ‘Culture in EU External Relations’, it highlighted the considerable potential for culture in Europe’s external relations, and underlined that the European Union and its Member States stand to gain a great deal by better streamlining their cultural diplomacy. Its resolution of 12 May 2011 on the cultural dimensions of the EU’s external actions[4] pointed in the same direction. In 2016 it issued a resolution on intercultural dialogue[5]. In response to the Commission and EEAS Joint Communication ‘Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations’, Parliament adopted in July 2017 a resolution[6] drafted jointly by the Committees on Foreign Affairs (AFET) and Culture and Education (CULT). The resolution proposes several concrete initiatives, grouped under four strands: objectives; governance and tools; a people-to-people approach; and the EU global strategy. Recognising that culture is a powerful bridge between peoples, Parliament believes that culture should become an essential part of the EU’s political dialogue with non-EU countries, as it can help strengthen civil society, prevent radicalisation and conflicts, and disseminate EU values. MEPs recommend developing an effective EU strategy for international cultural relations, providing a separate EU budget line for this, launching an EU programme on international mobility and creating a Cultural Visa Programme.

In its role as co-legislator, Parliament has recently adopted the Commission proposals to open the European Capitals of Culture initiative to EFTA and EEA countries, and to make 2018 a European Year of Cultural Heritage. In the previous legislature, it shaped, together with the Council, the European Heritage Label and the Directive on the return of cultural objects removed from the territory of a Member State.

Parliament took up the subject of cultural heritage in its resolution of 8 September 2015 towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe[7], and stressed that while the main value of cultural heritage remains its cultural significance, it also has a role to play in growth and jobs.

In negotiations on the 2014-2020 multiannual financial framework (MFF), as well as throughout the annual budgetary procedures, Parliament fought consistently for increased budgetary allocations for the cultural and creative sectors, in particular for the Creative Europe programme. An implementation report on the Creative Europe programme was voted through by the CULT Committee in January 2017 and the corresponding resolution was adopted in plenary on 2 March 2017[8]. This resolution underlined the need for an appropriate budget and simplified administrative procedures in order to achieve greater impact. MEPs also underlined the importance of easing access to funding for small-scale projects. In its draft opinion on the Commission’s proposal for a new 2021-2027 MFF, voted on in October 2018, the CULT Committee called for a doubling of resources for the new Creative Europe programme. As regards its amendments to the Commission proposal on the 2021-2027 Creative Europe programme:

programme voted on in plenary in March 2019, Parliament proposed that funds be distributed to different programme strands in percentages rather than figures, ensuring a special allocation for cooperation projects in the cultural sector. Furthermore, MEPs suggested amendments in order to better support the competitiveness of the creative market, promote greater inclusivity and communicate the importance of culture for the development of European societies and citizens as a whole.

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