Cultural leadership at supranational level
Instrumentalisation of culture and exercise of power

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Abstract
This essay highlights the relation of cultural leadership at supranational level with instrumentalisation of culture using key funding schemes and cultural policy and diplomacy documents within the process of making and breaking of Europe. Following the development of the EU cultural policy agenda since 1990, it discusses the role and use of culture as an instrument of influence and highlights how it serves as a means for the European Union to exercise power and assert a leading position in the European and global arena.

Keywords
cultural leadership, European Union, cultural policy, instrumentalisation of culture

1. Introduction

We are witnessing a crucial era both in Europe and globally, marked with a multitude of crises, as well as political shifts and changes. In Europe, culture has always been treated as a common denominator and common ground for the citizens even before explicit actions on cultural policy have been implemented by the European Union. This essay discusses the role of culture in an on-going process of making and breaking of Europe, aiming to identify relations between cultural leadership and instrumentalisation of culture and open up a field of discussion on the associations between cultural leadership, instrumentalisation of culture and exercise of power. The development of the EU cultural policy agenda is discussed using policy initiatives as well as funding schemes; the use of the latter is justified because of their interventionist role at both policy and funding levels. The particular schemes discussed here are those with a clear orientation on arts and culture, rather than those that fall under the umbrella of structural and investment funds.

The text is divided in two parts: the first shows the development of cultural policy and funding agenda through time; to make this relation clearer, Table 1 (appendix) is used as a schematic overview. The course

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of the EU is divided in three periods, all marked with significant events that have acted as milestones for its development: the first from the early 1990s when the Maastricht Treaty establishing the European Union was signed until the financial crisis of 2008; the second from 2008 until 2015 with the peak of the refugee crisis; and the third after 2016, marked with internal conflicts and Brexit. Based on the first part, the second part discusses the way the EU is using culture to exercise power and act as a leader, in Europe and globally.

2. The three phases of the making and breaking of the European Union

During the first stages of European integration in the 1950s and 1960s, there was an extensive effort to identify the meanings of Europe; the discourse of a common European culture with shared artistic and cultural ideas and values provided a supporting instrument for peace in Europe as well as an important ideal useful for the integration process (TAGIURI 2014). Historically, reference to culture at European level is already made in the Treaty of Rome (1957), with regards to the protection of works of artistic value. The first explicit reference to culture in the framework of the European Union is made in the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 (European Communities 1992) in the Article 128, stating the “flowering of the cultures of the Member States” and the conservation of cultural heritage of “European significance”. The creation of a series of cultural symbols such as the European Anthem and the European flag contributes towards a view of European integration as a cultural project (SHORE 2000; TAGIURI 2014).

Provision of and support for culture was paramount for the EU and initiatives started before the Maastricht Treaty in 1985 with the European City of Culture, now European Capital of Culture. One of the oldest EU initiatives (SASSATELLI 2009), which has acquired a central role in EU cultural policy (PATEL 2013: 74), its aim was to highlight the life of the city, encourage cultural co-operations, enhance the cities’ economic and social life and urban regeneration, but also promote European cultural diversity (European Commission 2016; SASSATELLI 2009).

2.1 From 1990 until 2008

The period from the 1990s until the economic crisis of 2008 is highlighted by the war in ex-Yugoslavia, the 9/11 events in the US and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The EU policy focus is on enlargement with the incorporation of Eastern European countries, as well as the introduction of the Euro and strengthening of the Eurozone. In 1995 Austria, Finland and Sweden join the EU; Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia join in 2004 and Bulgaria and Romania one year later. In 2002 the Euro was introduced as a common currency.

During this period, the European Commission has funded culture and artistic creation through the Media and Culture programmes. The first Media programme was established in 1991 (Council Decision 1990) and was created to support the film industry, offer assistance in production and distribution of European audiovisual products and increase competitiveness with emphasis on small and medium-sized undertakings, countries and geographic and linguistic areas. Media II (Council Decision 1995) and Media Plus (Council Decision 2000) followed, aiming to prevent the domination of the European market mainly from the US, support competitiveness, transnational mobility, promotion and access to audiovisual works, linguistic and cultural diversity, and encourage the use of new technologies. The Media programme run from 2007 until 2013 with a total budget of €755 million to support the audiovisual sector, increase the circulation of European audiovisual works inside and outside the European Union and strengthen the sector with opportunities for financing and use of digital technologies.

The Culture programme, with a budget of €400 million (European Parliament 2006), run from 2007 to 2013; its aim was to promote European culture and cultural heritage, support transnational mobility of creative players and circulation of artistic works, and encourage European citizenship (European Union 2010: 1). Through the Culture programme the Commission also funded organisations that acted as Ambassadors of European culture (European Union 2010); criteria for selection were the abilities of these organisations to exercise influence and impact at European level (European Union 2010: 66; European Commission 2010a: 204/9).

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3 See also <http://ec.europa.eu/culture/programme/about_culture_en.php>. 
The Communication on a European agenda for culture in a globalizing world that paved the way for the European Agenda for Culture in 2007, emphasises the mainstreaming of culture in all relevant EU policies (Commission of the European Communities 2007). The Agenda itself was established as a strategic approach that connects culture with creativity, international relations and employment (Council of the European Union 2007). Several cultural initiatives were introduced as part of the Agenda such as the 2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, Europeana and the 2009 European Year of Creativity and Innovation (European Commission 2010b).

2.2 From 2009 until 2015

The period between 2009 and 2015 is a period of turbulence for the EU, marked by the financial crisis towards the beginning and the refugee crisis towards the end, as well as the wars in Syria and Ukraine. Croatia was the last country to join in 2013 and the enlargement process stopped so as to concentrate to the economic consolidation of the EU, with President Juncker stating in 2014 that there are no plans to expand the Union for the next five years (European Commission press release 2014).

Succeeding Lisbon Strategy, the Europe 2020 strategy (European Council 2010; European Commission 2010c) acknowledges the contribution of the cultural and creative industries in the European economy and must ensure the cultural sector is in line with Europe 2020 and contributes to the strategic aims with reference to employment and growth 4. The Work plan for culture 2015-2018 (Council of the European Union 2014), also introduced during that period, builds on the European Agenda for Culture and focuses on access to culture and audience development, cultural heritage, creative economy, cultural diversity and the positioning of culture in the EU external relations.

Funding programmes during that period include Media International (2008-2010) with a budget of €8 million (European Union 2011), and Media Mundus (2011-2013) with a budget of €15 million to support the European film sector connect with its global counterparts. Emphasis is on European identity, global possibilities for the European film sector and co-productions and collaborations between European and non-European partners and between independent production companies and broadcasters (European Commission 2013; European Union 2011). Creative Europe is the new funding scheme from 2013, merging the cultural and

audiovisual sectors (*European Commission Press Release 19.11.2013*). The programme has two strands, Culture and Media, with 56% of its budget going to the latter, out of a total budget of €1.46 billion, a 9% higher than the previous programmes (*European Commission Press Release 19.11.2013*).

### 2.3 From 2016 onwards

This is a time of internal upheaval for the EU with internal conflicts and challenges to democracy. Brexit, the tensions with Hungary and Poland and the rise of far-right parties in countries such as Austria, France, Greece and Italy are developments that highlight the course of the Union since then.

In 2016 the EU adopts the *Strategy on International Cultural Relations* (*European Commission Press Release 2016*), where culture is endorsed as part of the EU foreign policy and as vehicle for economic growth, and a more strategic approach to culture in the EU external relations is highlighted (*European Commission 2016a*) next to the importance of the global trade of creative products and the creative sectors’ input to jobs and GDP. The document also recognizes the changes in the global cultural landscape and sets out the main streams of the EU policy with regards to the geographical co-operation framework, the neighbouring policies and the development cooperation instrument (*European Commission 2016a*).

The *conclusions on a strategic approach to international cultural relations* published in 2017 (*Council of the European Union 2017*), describe the main principles of a bottom-up approach that would respect the independence of the cultural sector. The document stresses the role of cultural diversity for citizens’ empowerment, freedom of expression and artistic integrity, the contact between arts practitioners and the civil society and the role of flexibility in the rapidly changing global circumstances (*Council of the European Union 2017*). The *New European Agenda for Culture* was introduced in 2018 with an aim to “harness the full potential of culture to help build a more inclusive and fairer Union, supporting innovation, creativity and sustainable jobs and

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growth” (European Commission 2018: 1). For a schematical description see Table 1 in the appendix.

3. The EU politics in culture

The European Union has been predominantly a financial construct, built upon the Coal and Steel Community (Treaty Constituting the European Coal and Steel Community 1951). It was important to find a common ground to bridge the significant financial, social and political differences among the various Member-States and this appeared to be culture. The perception that the EU was a community united by culture since the beginning of its existence is not correct, but is reproduced in EU policy (VIDMAR-HORVAT 2012). In the 1980s, as Tagiuri (2014) argues, a narrative of European cultural policy was used to provide a tool for political cooperation and assist integration. As the integration process was developing, though, there seemed to be a need for stronger and more powerful legitimizing tools; the Commission saw culture as an instrument for integration (PATEL 2013: 87) and also later associated it with the creative industries as a driver for growth, economic and regional development and tourism.

The role of the cultural and creative industries as a sector contributing to the Lisbon Strategy was recognized for the first time in an intergovernmental level in the European Council in 2007 (LITTOZ-MONNET 2012). The same year, the European Agenda for Culture acknowledged culture as key to European integration, underlined its role in the economic, social and political life of the citizens and identified three priorities for action: a. supporting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, with an additional focus on lifelong learning, b. stimulating creativity also in relation to the Lisbon strategy, and c. promoting culture in international relations (Council of the European Union 2007).

Later, Creative Europe focused on three directions: the digital age and globalisation, economic indicators such as jobs, sustainable growth and social cohesion and international markets and audiences.7 In Creative Europe, the Commission also acknowledged that SMEs in the cultural sector, including non-for-profit and non-governmental, are facing difficulties in accessing funds to sustain, develop and internationalise

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their activities and should therefore be supported by the financial sector (Establishing Creative Europe 2013: 3).

Budget allocation demonstrates a strong support to the media sector, with funding of more than €1 billion for the Media programme in the period 1991-2007. Culture was introduced much later and was allocated a lower budget, not even as much as that offered through EU Structural Funds (VARBANOVA 2007). The EU spent approximately €1.5 billion in both Media and Culture during the period 1991-2013 and the significant increase of funding to €1.46 billion for just the years 2013-2020 with Creative Europe demonstrates the investment to culture as an instrument of policy intervention. Funding allocation through the various schemes is thus a good example of the interventionist role of the EU and the directions it wants to focus on, depending on its wider policy objectives and the problems it needs to solve- which is the actual reason for using the funding schemes on the first place. Media Mundus is a good example of this, explicitly acknowledging one of its aims to be “to enable Europe to play its cultural and political role in the world more effectively” (European Commission 2012: 1).

Since early on, there seems to be a protectionism of the EU towards European culture against Hollywood domination. This is manifested on one hand by the early appearance of funding schemes and allocation of funding in that direction, and on the other via the resistance to expand the list of eligible countries in the Media schemes – as Table 1 shows, even in Creative Europe eligibility for the Media strand is different than for the Culture strand. This value placed on the audiovisual sector is long lasting and expressed in later policy documents such as the Communication on a European agenda for culture in a globalizing world where extensive references to the EU audiovisual policies are made (Commission of the European Communities 2007).

The eligibility criteria of the various schemes are instruments for the EU to establish relations in Europe; they can be interpreted as means towards inclusion and cohesion, as tools to exercise cultural diplomacy, but also as revealing hegemonic tendencies. The Commission has supported programmes in accession countries since 1989 as a means to communicate that these countries are culturally part of the European Union family (VOS 2017), but opening up the eligibility list to accession countries and third countries in its main cultural funding schemes only started with Culture in 2007, whereas for Media it remained largely constraint.
Implicit cultural diplomacy was exercised by the EU before explicitly formulated with policy documents and directions. The Cultural Ambassadors strand of the *Culture* programme was an early cultural diplomacy initiative, as Patrons of these organisations comprised also of political figures: Honorary Patrons of the European Union Youth Orchestra for example are the Heads of State of all EU Member States <www.euyo.eu/about/honorary/honorary-patrons/>. The importance given to this strand is also mirrored in the three-year funding also covering operating costs allocated to the selected organisations, rather than the usual one-year in the other strands (*European Commission* 2010a: 10).

It was only recently that the EU adopted an explicit strategy on international cultural relations and foreign policy, linking culture with enlargement, development and neighbourhood policies. Explicit mentions of and initiatives in cultural diplomacy come after 2015, during the time the EU is positioning itself in the global scene with interventions in Iraq and Palestina as well as approaches to China, with the *Strategy on International Cultural Relations* for example explicitly stating the goal of the EU to become a "stronger global actor" (*European Commission* 2016a: 3). It is also the time its internal problems are growing- political issues, a legitimacy crisis and rise of nationalistic governments. As these issues are shaking the Union from the inside, it is becoming extrovert, turning to policies that would enhance its international image and profile.

The EU seems to adopt a governmentalisation of culture⁸ approach, setting strategies and practices, making culture governable and using it for manifold purposes: as a mechanism to address political interests and respond to external or internal challenges; as a means to solve problems via the various funding schemes; but also as an instrument of leadership and exercise of power. The various funding schemes and their budgets show the EU priorities but also the interventionist role it wished to play in the European area. Until a few years ago, a commodified role of culture (*Pyykkönen* 2012) was visible in the EU policy acknowledging culture as a good associated with functions and principles of the market and the early cultural funding programmes adopted an economic view of culture to assist in the enlargement process.

The development of the cultural policy agenda, though, demonstrates a shift from this predominantly economic view of culture to one focusing on societal values and citizenship. When the Union is faced with

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⁸ For more on governmentalisation of culture see Pyykkönen (2012), but also Patel (2013) for governmentality and integration by interpellation.
internal issues and conflicts such as the nationalistic tendencies of the recent times, the narrative of cultural policy shifts to societal values as a means to approach citizens and the civil society and strengthen European identity.

This is the case of the European Year of Cultural Heritage celebrated throughout the EU in 2018. Heritage has been used before as a cultural policy instrument to serve political purposes (LÄHDESMÄKI 2014); here the rationale was to encourage citizens to explore and engage with Europe's cultural heritage, as well as create and foster a common sense of belonging (https://europa.eu/cultural-heritage/about#2.1.2019). The initiative involved all EU institutions and dedicated an extra €8 million funding for projects, in addition to other funding initiatives on cultural heritage actions (European Commission 2017).

The New Agenda for Culture adopted in 2018 has social, economic and external objectives: to put culture and cultural diversity to action for social cohesion, support creativity and innovation and strengthen international cultural relations (European Commission 2018); and five dimensions, namely social, economic, external, heritage and digital. In addition to that, the New Work Plan for Culture due to start in 2019, evolves around five strategic aims: cultural heritage sustainability, cohesion, support to artists and European cultural content, gender equality and international cultural relations (Council of the European Union 2018: 4).

The trajectory of EU cultural policy shows an instrumentalisation of culture to serve many different purposes, among which the legitimisation of policies, processes and institutions (for more on instrumentalisation of culture see HADLEY/GRAY 2017). Culture appears to be increasingly included in other sectors (VARBANOVA 2007) and incorporated into areas such as innovation, competitiveness, growth and jobs, reshaping the policy agendas (LITTOZ-MONNET 2012). As Mangset argues though (2018: 10), legitimising cultural policy for its external effects such as for example the benefits on the economy and regional development has been an increasing tendency in the past few years, but these effects of culture in non-cultural sectors do not appear to be supported by research results.

EU support of culture is driven by political and economic purposes: strengthening European heritage and identity but also putting Europe at the forefront of global capitalism (VESTHEIM 2012: 495). It seems the EU adopts a commodified use of culture when it comes to address external issues such as the enlargement process, but turns to societal
values and democratic principles when it comes to internal issues such as nationalistic tendencies. In any case, the EU interventions in the form of cultural policy and cultural funding schemes demonstrate how culture serves as a means to contribute to the creation of common content and as tool to assist wider policy aims such as the enlargement, but ultimately highlight its wish for recognition as a leader at the European and global level.

References


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LÄHDESMÄKI, Tuuli (2014): The EU’s Explicit and Implicit Heritage Politics. – In: European Societies, 16/3, 401-421.

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### Appendix

Table 1: Main EU developments since 1990 and policy actions and documents related to culture (Table author’s own)

Schemes with an (F) are funding schemes, all others are policy. Eligibility refers to countries other than EU Member States.

Relevant electronic sources, where available, are in footnotes.

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<th>Timeframe</th>
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<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td></td>
<td>European Capitals of Culture¹</td>
<td>Highlight city, encourage cultural co-operations, enhance economic and social life and urban regeneration, promote European cultural diversity. Combine industry and urban development, produce different kinds of values and capital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-2008</td>
<td>Enlargement Euro</td>
<td>1991-1995 F Media I²</td>
<td>Support film industry, make it competitive, assistance in production and distribution of European AV products, increase competitiveness with emphasis on small and medium-sized undertakings and countries with smaller production and/ or a particular geographic and linguistic area.</td>
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<td>1992</td>
<td></td>
<td>Maastricht Treaty³</td>
<td>Establishment of European Union and three pillars: 1. economic and monetary Union; 2. common foreign and security policy; 3. justice and social affairs.</td>
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<td>1995: Austria, Finland, Sweden join</td>
<td>1996-2000</td>
<td>F Media II⁴</td>
<td>Same aims as MEDIA I but also prevent domination of European market mainly from the US.</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lisbon Strategy⁵</td>
<td>Aided to make EU “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion” by 2010. Intended to deal with low productivity and stagnation of economic growth in the EU through policy initiatives. Main fields economic, social and environmental renewal, sustainability. Followed by Europe 2020 strategy (2010).</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004: Czech Republic,</td>
<td>2001-2005</td>
<td>F Media Plus €350 million</td>
<td>Support competitiveness, particularly of small and medium-sized businesses, transnational mobility of works, linguistic and cultural diversity. Emphasis on enhancement of AV heritage, support sector in restricted linguistic and geographical areas, enhance use of new technologies, assist in promotion and access of AV works.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia,</td>
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<td>Hungary, Lithuania,</td>
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<td>Malta, Poland, Slovakia,</td>
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<td>Slovenia join</td>
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<td>2007-2013</td>
<td></td>
<td>F MEDIA programme €755</td>
<td>Support AV sector, increase circulation of European AV works inside and outside the EU and strengthen AV sector by providing opportunities for financing and use of digital technologies. Eligibility: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina under the condition of the finalization of the negotiation process and participation to MEDIA programme</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>million</td>
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<td>2007: Romania, Bulgaria</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>European Agenda for</td>
<td>Connects culture with creativity, international relations and employment sector. Acknowledges and underlines role of culture in the economic, social and political life of the citizens. Three action priorities: 1. support cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, also lifelong learning, 2. stimulate creativity and promote culture in international relations. Strong reference to the EU AV policies.</td>
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<td>join</td>
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<td>Culture €400 million</td>
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<td>2007-2013</td>
<td></td>
<td>F Culture programme</td>
<td>Promote European culture and cultural heritage, support transnational mobility of creative players and circulation of artistic works, encourage European citizenship. Eligibility: Ireland, Lichtenstein, Norway, candidate countries benefiting from a pre-accession strategy in view of accession to EU: Turkey, Croatia, FYROM, countries of Western Balkans including Serbia and Montenegro, third countries.</td>
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<td>€400 million</td>
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7 <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/previous-programmes/media_en>
8 <https://ec.europa.eu/culture/policy/strategic-framework_en>
9 <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/previous-programme/culture_en>
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<tr>
<td>2008-2015</td>
<td>Financial crisis, no enlargement, refugee crisis</td>
<td>F Media International*</td>
<td>Aims at exhibition and circulation of European AV works in third countries and vice versa from AV industry between EU countries and third countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2010</td>
<td></td>
<td>€8 million</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Europe 2020 Strategy*</td>
<td>Successor of Lisbon Strategy. Acknowledges contribution of Cultural and Creative Industries in the European economy, must ensure that the cultural sector is in line with Europe 2020 and contributes to strategic aims re: employment and growth.</td>
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Eligibility: at least one co-beneficiary linked to AV sector with its registered office in a non-EU country other than Croatia and Switzerland.  
"To enable Europe to play its cultural and political role in the world more effectively" |

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<tr>
<td>2013:</td>
<td>2013-2020</td>
<td>F Creative Europe°                                      €1.46 billion                                                9% higher than previous programmes. Merging Culture and MEDIA, 56% of its budget going to the latter. Aims: Help cultural and creative sectors seize opportunities of digital age and globalisation; Enable them to reach their economic potential, contribute to sustainable growth, jobs, social cohesion; Give Europe’s culture and media sectors access to new international opportunities, markets, and audiences. Eligibility: Iceland, Norway, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FYROM, Montenegro, Republic of Serbia, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Tunisia, Armenia, Kosovo. The last six can participate in Culture stream but either partially or not at all (for the last two) in the Media stream. Turkey was in the list in 2015 but taken out a year later.°°</td>
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<td>2015-</td>
<td>2015-2018</td>
<td>Work Plan for Culture°                                              Builds on European Agenda for Culture, focuses on access to culture and audience development, cultural heritage, creative economy, and cultural diversity and positioning of culture in the EU external relations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016-</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Strategy on international cultural relations°                     Culture part of EU foreign policy, acknowledged as vehicle for economic growth. Highlights importance of global trade of creative products, the creative sectors' input to jobs and GDP, goal of EU to become “stronger global actor”. Sets out main streams of the EU policy, presenting policies regarding geographical co-operation framework as well as neighbouring policies and development cooperation instrument. Acknowledges changes in the global cultural landscape.</td>
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<td>2017</td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>on a strategic approach to international cultural relations*</td>
<td>Describes main principles of a bottom-up approach that would respect independence of the cultural sector. Acknowledges cultural diversity for citizens' empowerment, freedom of expression and artistic integrity, contact between arts practitioners and civil society and the role of flexibility for the rapidly changing global circumstances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>Cultural Heritage*</td>
<td>Encourage people to discover and engage with Europe's cultural heritage, reinforce a sense of belonging to a common European space. Tangible, intangible, natural, digital. Dedicated call for cooperation projects relating to the year has been launched under the Creative Europe. Additional funding opportunities available under Erasmus+, Europe for Citizens, Horizon 2020, and other EU programmes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>New European</td>
<td>Agenda for Culture*</td>
<td>Aims to utilize the potential of culture towards a more inclusive and fairer Union. Support innovation, creativity, sustainable jobs and growth. Three strategic objectives: 1. Social dimension: Harnessing power of culture and cultural diversity for social cohesion and well-being; 2. Economic dimension: Supporting culture-based creativity in education and innovation, and for jobs and growth; 3. External dimension: Strengthening international cultural relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019-2022</td>
<td>New work</td>
<td>plan for culture*</td>
<td>5 priorities: includes sustainability of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, contribution of culture and heritage to social cohesion, framework conditions for artists and the creative sector with a focus on the digital economy, gender equality and the development of a strategic approach to EU international cultural relations.</td>
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18 [https://europa.eu/cultural-heritage/about_en].