

All CCS and Cross-sectoral

Everything Everywhere All at Once: Culture for the future

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The upcoming European Parliament elections are an opportunity to set a new direction and focus on what matters: people, culture and the climate - By Isabelle Schwarz - Head of Public Policy at the European Cultural Foundation

Now, you might just see a pile of problems but I see a story. I can see where this story is going... and it does not look good! As we head to the next set of European Parliament elections, the world's second largest democratic exercise, we must ask ourselves: What kind of Europe do I want? What difference can I make? What can be done together, regardless of personal and political ambitions to build a better, less frightening, and more sustainable future?

Culture is not the answer for solving everything, everywhere, all at once. But none of Europe's big issues can be critically addressed without culture. Be it populism and other threats to our democratic system, climate change, digital challenges, rising social, demographic and regional inequalities, and even the war in Ukraine have deeply cultural dimensions.

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In November 2020, Covid-19 hit all economic sectors, but none more so than the cultural and creative sectors and industries. The European Cultural Foundation (ECF), Culture Action Europe, and Europa Nostra – three advocates representing thousands of networks, organisations and individuals across Europe –

therefore made a plea for a Cultural Deal for Europe.

Inspired by Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, the Cultural Deal for Europe emphasises the interrelatedness of culture with all aspects of life, not the separateness of a rarefied art and cultural world. It calls on the EU to embed culture into all relevant policies and actions – from research to social policies, migration to employment, development to international relations, making it an indispensable asset to solving today's challenges.

With strong and firm support of the European Parliament, the Cultural Deal campaign succeeded to secure a €12 billion investment in culture from Member States' National Recovery and Resilience Plans, albeit not everywhere at the same pace or creating the same opportunities.

There is still a long way to go for the EU and the Member States to place culture at the heart of their policies but as for the Green Deal, at some point there is no other way. Declarations on the importance of culture for Europe coming from high-level European politicians are important, but actions need to follow.

The upcoming European Parliament elections are an opportunity to set a new direction and focus on what matters: People – Culture – Climate. It is not naïve but hard-core realism: if we fail to reset the course and leave culture at the margins of EU policy design, it will be impossible to build a Europe which is creative, inclusive and cohesive whilst competitive and sustainable.

> There is no democracy without culture, no freedom without culture, no peace without culture.

We call on the current Members of the European Parliament, their political groups and affiliated parties and the candidates running for the elections to embrace and mainstream culture in your political manifestos and programmes. Culture and cultural heritage are crucial to our way of living and our way of being. There is no democracy without culture, no freedom without culture, no peace without culture.

At our eastern borders, culture is being fought against and cultural heritage is systematically attacked. Russia's war in Ukraine is also a war on culture and all its manifestations. There could not be any clearer or more concrete evidence of the importance of culture to democracy, our European way of life

and our future.

We call on you, the leaders of political parties, Members of the European Parliament and candidates to the 2024 European elections, to include culture in your election debates and campaigns, to endorse the Cultural Deal for Europe, and to make it a pillar of your own political agenda of the future.
There is no future for Europe without culture!

The Cultural Deal for Europe calls on the European Parliament for the following:

- Including culture in EP election debates, programmes and actions;
- Mainstreaming culture in the EU's six priority areas: climate, digital, economy, justice, democracy, international relations;
- Promoting culture in the Green Deal and in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda;
- Investing in better employment and working conditions of artists and cultural workers;
- Working with philanthropy for greater impact, through strategic co-investments, aligned strategies, new and innovative funding models connecting public, private and philanthropic funding;
- Working hand-in-hand, result-oriented and in a collaborative spirit with civil society on achieving the campaign goals.

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