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22 Ministers of Culture defend “our European and cultural sovereignty” from Cannes 2025

Ministers of Culture of 22 European countries published a letter during Cannes 2025 to affirm their support for strengthening the co-production and distribution of European films, amidst rising uncertainty for the future of the European film industry.

by Eirini Polydorou

The Ministers of Culture of 22 European countries joined forces and published a common letter calling for strategic actions on "urgent issues" threatening the future of European films.

"These two urgent issues - creating better together and sharing our cinema more effectively - will be a priority for us on the European agenda in the months ahead. We affirm them today as absolutely strategic actions for our European and cultural sovereignty. We affirm them in the same way as we affirm what brings us together and who we are as Europeans" was the final phrase of the letter.

The letter came amidst a foggy climate as the [78th Cannes Film Festival](#) got finalized with mixed feelings for the Europeans.

Creators, sector representatives and policy-makers celebrated for the European films showcased. However, [celebrations were shadowed](#) by Trump's announcement about tariffs over European films, as well as by rumours questioning the future of the funding of European films by the Commission.

A Threat for our European and Cultural Sovereignty

The term of "our European and cultural sovereignty" apparently echoed the Ministers' strict response against a relevant threat? One may suggest as such, [the imposal of tariffs over European](#)

[films](#), as announced by [Donald Trump](#) right before the opening of the Cannes festival. After all, in their letter the Ministers do made a reference to a "commercial war" and to the [UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions](#).

Uncertain Future for Creative Europe

At the same time, [there are whispers about the Commission's plans on the Creative Europe programme](#). It is heard that the programme is not going to be continued as a standalone programme in the upcoming budget of the EU. If this is the case, the consequences will fall upon the Media strand as well, which is the Creative's strand for European films.

Versus Celebrations for European Presence in Cannes 2025

On the other hand, earlier this month, the [European participation in the festival was welcomed by the Commission](#), since the award nominations for Cannes 2025 had included 23 films supported by the Creative Europe Media programme.

These were celebrated and linked with the success of the Media programme. [Henna Virkkunen, Executive Vice-President for Technological Sovereignty, Security and Democracy](#), had stated: "For over 34 years, the Creative Europe Media programme has been helping European creators nurture their talent and tell their stories woven into Europe's history. We are thrilled to see some of them in the spotlight at one of the world's most prestigious film festivals".

In this context, the Ministers' initiative perhaps brings some hope for the creatives in the film sectors. Here is the letter.

European cinema only accounts for a third of cinema admissions in Europe - and a little less for streaming service audiences. And yet, our seventh art has historically been a driving force behind our union, with a melting pot of creators and talents who have entered our shared cinematic pantheon, as well as the world's heritage. But today, from Lisbon to Helsinki, from Dublin to Athens, if each country remains attached to its national cinema, it is, in fact, the Hollywood imaginary that European audiences have more in common - and the Asian imaginary for new generations.

We know the causes: while other cinematographies move forward in close ranks in the global competition for images, our

cinema is advancing in dispersed order, with a multitude of actors dreaming in different languages and cultures. For it is the very essence of European cultural identity to be diverse, and to assert this diversity. The challenge that must unite us today is to make this cinematic diversity an integral part of a European cultural sovereignty, in a context where the threat of a commercial war imposed on the cultural sectors is emerging, the cinema in particular.

This 78th edition of the Cannes Film Festival gives us the opportunity to be aware of our extraordinary collective success. Of the last 10 Palmes d'Or, 7 were European. Among the films in this year's selections, 62 percent are European. The great names of cinema - Joachim Trier, Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, Mario Martone - rub shoulders with a whole new generation of directors - Zuzana Kirchnerová, Tarik Saleh, Julia Ducournau, Mascha Schilinski, to name but a few. Fresh blood has never stopped flowing in the veins of the Old Continent.

We're sitting on a gold mine, and we are not sufficiently aware of it. Our commitment to fiercely defending the diversity of our cultures - which took concrete form 20 years ago with the UNESCO Convention for Cultural Diversity - has enabled us to preserve an abundant, ever-changing, unclassifiable cinematic landscape.

When it comes to cinema, Europe believes in diversity, surprise, and sometimes shock. We believe in films rooted in a historical, social or human reality that resonates with those who have experienced it and attracts those who discover it. We believe in small cinematic miracles that bring people together across borders. We believe in films that don't appeal to everyone. The Cannes Film Festival can attest to this: we have a long tradition of legendary, Homeric, lively cinematic disputes, which we wouldn't trade for anything in the world for a monochrome film landscape.

Admittedly, it's difficult to define the precise contours of a European imaginary, unlike other imaginary worlds that are geographically clearly identifiable. But this is without doubt the greatest compliment we can pay our filmmakers, for whom we fight tooth and nail for the freedom to create in the singular, an absolute freedom that we also defend for others.

The world's cinemas are aware of this : they are also looking for partnerships with Europe, which is attractive for international film shoots thanks to our know-how and the European spirit that characterizes us.

At a time when the words “diversity” and “freedom” are being

turned against themselves, in an incredible reversal of values, at a time when Europe is rediscovering the urgency of defending what it is and what it holds most dear, we, the European Ministers of Culture, are calling for a collective response in favor of a Europe of Culture, of which cinema must be a central component.

We need to broaden the horizons of what is possible, by encouraging European audiences to become more familiar with the filmography of their close neighbors. Much has already been done in this direction. But we can and must - the international context demands it - go even further.

And to do this, we must first of all move away from the rhetoric that assumes the worldwide success of a film on its cinematographic qualities alone, pretending not to see the financial, commercial and even political armada required for it to conquer every port. Cinema is an art; it is also an industry. Consequently, getting films to circulate beyond their borders requires a coordinated strategy and a strong political will. We have that will, now more than ever.

We want to combine our efforts to give greater support to the distribution of films throughout Europe, whether they be recent works or heritage cinema. We want European cinema to take its rightful place on every distribution medium in Europe, to be promoted and editorialized, to be found when you want it, and even when you don't, whether the algorithms like it or not.

We also want Europe to continue to be that great territory of co-productions that has given us so many common references, shared narratives and familiar faces. Just recently, in the cinema and audiovisual sectors, we have demonstrated what we are capable of when we join forces: the films *L'Enlèvement* or *The Square*, the animated film *Flow*, the documentary *Timestamp*, the series *Parlement* or *Kaboul* are all gold nuggets born of European collaboration and proof that our filmmakers know how to do it all.

These two pressing issues - creating better together and sharing our cinema more effectively - will be a priority for us on the European agenda in the months ahead. We affirm these today as absolutely strategic actions for our European and cultural sovereignty. We affirm these in the same way as we affirm what brings us together and who we are as Europeans.

Germany – Dr. Wolfram Weimer, State Secretary to the Federal Chancellor for Culture and Media

Austria – Andreas Babler, Vice-Chancellor and Federal Minister for Housing, Arts, Culture, Media, and Sports

Belgium – Caroline Gennez, Flemish Minister for Welfare, Poverty Reduction, Culture, and Equal Opportunities. Minister Gennez (Flemish Community) signs also on behalf of her colleagues, Minister Elisabeth Degryse (French Community) and Minister Gregor Freches (German-speaking Community).

Bulgaria – Mr. Marian Bachev, Minister of Culture

Cyprus – Dr. Vasiliki Kassianidou, Minister Responsible for Culture

Croatia – Dr. Nina Obuljen Koržinek, Minister of Culture and Media

Denmark – Jakob Engel-Schmidt, Minister of Culture

Spain – Ernest Urtasun i Domènech, Minister of Culture

Estonia – Heidy Purga, Minister of Culture

Finland – Mari-Leena Talvitie, Minister of Science and Culture

France – Rachida Dati, Minister of Culture

Greece – Dr. Lina Mendoni, Minister of Culture

Ireland – Patrick O'Donovan, Minister for Arts, Culture, Communications, Media, and Sport

Italy – Alessandro Giuli, Minister of Culture

Latvia – Agnese Lace, Minister of Culture

Lithuania – Šarūnas Birutis, Minister of Culture

Luxembourg – Éric Thill, Minister of Culture

Malta – Dr. Owen Bonnici, Minister for National Heritage, the Arts, and Local Government

Netherlands – Dr. Eppo Bruins, Minister for Education, Culture, and Science

Poland – Hanna Wróblewska, Minister of Culture and National Heritage

Portugal – Dalila Rodrigues, Minister of Culture

Slovenia – Dr. Asta Vrečko, Minister of Culture

Slovakia – Martina Šimkovičová, Minister of Culture

Sweden – Parisa Liljestränd, Minister of Culture

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