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Tripartite Agreement on The Culture Compass for Europe

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EU institutions have reached a provisional agreement on the "Europe for Culture — Culture for Europe" declaration, establishing a strategic framework that positions culture as a fundamental right and key priority in European policymaking through 2034.

Today, the three EU institutions have reached a provisional agreement on the Joint Declaration "Europe for Culture — Culture for Europe", according to the official Cyprus presidency of the Council announcement. The declaration reaffirms important principles for the cultural policies of the EU, including, inter alia, in areas such as freedom of artistic expression, cultural and linguistic diversity, access to culture, and working conditions.

This moves the declaration from the interinstitutional negotiation phase to near-final adoption. "Provisional agreement" in EU institutional terminology means the trilogue negotiators have hammered out a consensus text that will now proceed to formal adoption and co-signature by the Parliament, Council, and Commission.

The declaration, titled "Europe for Culture — Culture for Europe", was proposed by the Commission alongside the Culture Compass for Europe, which it unveiled on 12 November 2025 as the successor to the New European Agenda for Culture that had guided EU cultural policy since 2018. It represents an unprecedented tri-institutional commitment to place culture at the heart of EU policymaking rather than at its margins.

The Compass, described by the European Parliament's research service as the most ambitious EU strategic framework for culture to date, was launched by Glenn Micallef, the Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport, together with Roxana Mînzatu, the Executive Vice-President for Social Rights and Skills. Mr Micallef framed the exercise in notably direct terms, declaring that "culture is the next strategic frontier for the European Union" and that "a society that invests in culture invests in democracy, in peace and in resilience".

In his post on LinkedIn Glenn Micallef thanks everyone who believed in this vision and commits to turning it into a real opportunity as the MFF negotiations continue and culture is a part of that negotiation. "Over the past year, artists, creatives and cultural organisations helped shape that vision, speaking openly about artistic freedom, fair opportunities and the impact of AI on creativity," he writes and concludes, "Now comes the real task: turning this vision into real support and real opportunities for Europe's cultural and creative sectors."

The draft joint declaration sets out 13 principles committing the institutions to treat culture as a public good and a fundamental right, covering artistic freedom, linguistic diversity, fair working conditions for artists, and the responsible use of artificial intelligence in the creative industries.

It draws its authority from the supporting competencies granted to the EU under the Treaties, which constrain Brussels to coordinating and supplementing member states' cultural policies rather than directing them – a distinction that shapes both the declaration's language and its legal weight.

The Commission has indicated that the Compass is intended to serve as the strategic anchor for culture within the next Multiannual Financial Framework, covering the period 2028 to 2034 — meaning its ambitions will be tested directly in the budget negotiations now getting under way.

The Commission's case is reinforced by survey data: a recent Eurobarometer on culture found that 87 per cent of respondents across the EU believe culture and cultural heritage should occupy a very important place in the Union. After the formal adoption, an official signature ceremony by the presidents of the three institutions is envisioned to take place in June 2026.

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