



All CCS and Cross-sectoral

Von der Leyen's 2025 Vision calls for "Independence Moment" but omits culture

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen declared Europe must fight for peace, freedom, and democracy in her 2025 State of Union speech, announcing AI investments and media resilience programs while notably omitting culture.

“[Europe is in a fight](#)” were the first words of President von der Leyen. “A fight for a continent that is whole and at peace. For a free and independent Europe. A fight for our values and our democracies” she continued.

Her speech called for unity as a “New Europe must emerge” in a world of “imperial wars” and “major powers that are either ambivalent or openly hostile to Europe”. Highlighting Ukraine, Gaza, security, competitiveness, economy, society and democracy matters, she voiced that “This must be Europe's Independence Moment”.

“When we talk about competitiveness and independence we must talk about our relations with the United States” she stated introducing the summer deal with the USA, as “The best agreement. Without any doubt”. Addressing scepticism towards the deal she clarified that “Whether on environmental or digital regulation. We set our own standards. We set our own regulations. Europe will always decide for itself.”

Massive investments to Europe's AI, Digital and Clean Tech Sovereignty

She underscored “massive” investments in “digital and clean tech”, including the future Competitiveness Fund and the doubling of Horizon Europe. She emphasised on “massive investing in European AI Gigafactories”, a collaboration with private investors on a multi-billion euro Scaleup Europe Fund”

and an official meeting with European tech CEOs adopting a European AI & Tech Declaration to express their commitment to “invest in Europe's tech sovereignty”.

Democracy under attack

Stating that “Our democracy is under attack” the President of the European Commission announced her plans for establishing a European Centre for Democratic Resilience, to monitor and detect information manipulation and disinformation, in the context of the European Democracy Shield.

She also introduced the launching of a “new Media Resilience Programme” to support independent journalism and media literacy as “A free press is the backbone of any democracy”. The President reiterated her proposal to significantly boost funding for media in the next budget, as well as strengthening “the link between funds and respect for the rule of law”. She stated that “with the next long-term budget we will go even further. Respecting the rule of law is a must for EU funds”.

European Values must be defended

“Thank you for your strong leadership” said [Marrie Bjerre](#), representing Danish presidency and stating that this is Europe’s independence moment for security, economy, democracy and for “standing up for its values”.

The need to defend European values was mentioned in [MEPs’ reactions](#) but under different meanings. European values were linked with taking more concrete action for Ukraine as well as for Gaza. Defending practicing Christians’ faith, in “too many countries in the world” where there are obstacles, was underscored by Nicola Procaccini, Co-Chair of the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR) of the European Parliament. Standing up in a hostile world as we are “the last bastion of democracy and freedom” was highlighted by Valérie Hayer, Chair of Renew Europe Group of the European Parliament, who stated that “It is a cultural war. Our way of life, our values, our freedom and our independence are all under threat. And that cultural war is not only coming from the east”.

Culture was not included in the SOTEU 2025

“Ursula von der Leyen promises “AI gigafactories” and funding for start-ups. But not a word about the protection of creators.” said Emma Rafowicz, Vice-Chair in the Cult Committee of the European Parliament in a LinkedIn [post](#).

Ahead of the SOTEU 2025 speech, Culture Action Europe (CAE) had sent a [letter](#) to the President calling for an Artistic Freedom Act, a Year of Contemporary European Culture, Culture as Security, a Charter on Working Conditions, and to set culture as “one of the union’s strategic priorities for a truly democratic future”.

The President’s speech was a “pitch for unity” and started urging to “fight for our values”. However, no reference was noted on the Union’s symbols, including the official motto “United in Diversity”, nor to culture, arts or heritage.

Find the speech [here](#)

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