



PRESS RELEASE

Joint Meeting at the European Parliament on “Culture in the EU External Relations” 23 March 2015

Brussels, 30 March 2015

Members of the European Parliament fully recognised the fundamental role of culture and intercultural dialogue in the EU external relations and called for further concrete action from the European Union, in a joint meeting co-organised by the parliamentary committees on Culture & Education and on Foreign Affairs.

On 23 March 2015, Director of *MORE EUROPE – external cultural relations* **Ms. Sana Ouchtati** and special advisor to *MORE EUROPE* **Mr. Gottfried Wagner** presented the main conclusions of the **Preparatory Action on “Culture in the EU external relations”** in a joint meeting of the committees on Culture & Education and on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament.

This joint meeting was attended by a large number of members of both parliamentary committees as well as representatives of the **European Commission** (DG-EAC, DG-DEVCO, DG-NEAR and the EEAS), and featured a lively debate where MEPs shared their thoughts on the urgency and topicality of designing a **new strategic framework** for more structurally involving culture in the EU external relations.

“Culture is the best ambassador to promote the values that the EU embodies and supports” said Italian **MEP Fabio Massimo Castaldo**, who reminded that *“now more than ever, it is particularly important to strengthen the cultural cooperation to contrast extremist and terrorist movements that target culture as a symbol”*. The need, shared by all MEPs, is to **tighten the links between culture and diplomacy**, and to do it together at European level to maximise the effectiveness of the action.

To this regard, and amidst other proposals, the possible setting-up of a **Rapid Culture Reaction Mechanism Fund**, which would allow the EU to intervene promptly in areas of conflict whenever cultural heritage or cultural expressions are threatened, was very enthusiastically received.

Of particular relevance have been the closing remarks of Vice Chair of Committee on Foreign Affairs **Andrej Plenkovic** and Chair of Committee on Culture & Education **Silvia Costa**, who stressed how such a meeting represented a first, concrete step towards the establishment of a strategic approach for a **shared cultural policy engagement**. A **systematic collaboration** between the two parliamentary committees, along with the European Commission and the EEAS, on the subject of culture in the EU external relations, including a **key axis on culture and conflict** (focused on the preservation of cultural heritage in times of conflict,

cultural sensitiveness, intercultural dialogue, etc.) was also advocated, to address a need for improved intercultural dialogue and more and better cultural cooperation.

The large attendance and participation, as well as the **positive, unanimous response by both parliamentary committees** represented a remarkable success for *MORE EUROPE*. The debate has envisioned a **very promising future** for the topic of culture in the EU external relations, which we hope soon will see also the adoption of **further concrete actions** by the European Parliament and other EU institutions.

Highlights of the debate are available on our [Vimeo channel](#).

The full meeting is also available on video streaming on the [website of the European Parliament](#).

Notes for the editor

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About the Preparatory Action “Culture in EU External Relations”

The Preparatory Action “Culture in EU External Relations” was an initiative funded by the European Union. It was initiated by the European Parliament and implemented in 2013-2014 by the European Commission, Directorate General for Education and Culture, with the support of a consortium of independent experts (Prof. Yudhishtir Raj Isar, Rod Fisher, Dr. Damien Helly and Gottfried Wagner) and eight cultural institutes and organisations (Goethe-Institut, Centre for Fine Arts Brussels/BOZAR, British Council, Danish Cultural Institute, ECF/European Cultural Foundation, IFA/Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Institut français and KEA European Affairs). The objective of this initiative was to formulate policy recommendations on how culture can be better and more strategically integrated in the EU's external relations.

For more information about this initiative go to: www.cultureinexternalrelations.eu.

About *MORE EUROPE – external cultural relations*

MORE EUROPE is a cultural and civic initiative that seeks to permanently anchor the role of culture in the EU international policymaking. It calls on EU institutions, Member States, and civil society as a whole to work together to pool their resources and coordinate their vision and activities, towards the achievement of a strategic approach on culture in the EU external relations.

For more information about *MORE EUROPE* go to: www.moreeurope.org.



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