Culture in EU external relations

In order to promote cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue in European Union’s (EU) external relations, the Council is encouraging the Commission and Member States to define coherent approaches. It provides for the development of a number of working methods and instruments for pursuing the related policy objectives.

ACT


SUMMARY

Cultural exchanges and cooperation at the global level, together with intercultural dialogue, are essential not only for bringing people closer together, strengthening the role of civil society, fostering democratisation and promoting fundamental rights, but also for strengthening the economic impact of the cultural sectors. Therefore, with these conclusions, the Council is requesting that Member States and the Commission take steps to attain three policy objectives:

• incorporation of culture in the European Union’s (EU) external relations policies and programmes as well as in the Union’s collaboration with third countries and international organisations;
• global ratification and implementation of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions;
• promotion of intercultural dialogue via projects and awareness-raising activities taking place in and outside the EU that were initiated during the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008).

A comprehensive European strategy should be created for incorporating culture in the EU’s external relations policies in a consistent and systematic manner. In addition, to clarify the aims and approaches of cultural cooperation, specific strategies should be set up with third countries and regions. With this in mind, the Commission and Member States should enhance support given to:

• third countries in the sphere of cultural cooperation activities taking place at all levels (local, regional, national);
• the promotion of European culture in all its forms at the international level, as well as to the international mobility of European cultural professionals;
• the development of multilingualism and intercultural skills;
• young people’s mobility, cultural and artistic education, as well as access to culture;
• protecting copy- and related rights as well as combating counterfeiting and piracy internationally;
• actions that protect, preserve and promote cultural heritage, as well as to international cooperation on combating theft and trafficking of cultural goods.

With a view to better defining their strategies, the Commission and Member States should analyse together with third countries the cultural sectors of the latter. These analyses should also include evaluations of the development prospects and the regulatory frameworks of the sectors concerned. Advantage should be taken of Member States experiences, so that Community activities may complement those of the Member States and so that new international joint activities in the field of culture may be initiated. The specific characteristics of the cultural sectors must be taken into account when defining new operational programmes, as should the specific strategies set up with third countries and regions when negotiating international agreements.

Finally, cultural professionals and civil society should be involved in drafting and implementing external cultural policies. Furthermore, networks should be established to promote wider international cooperation among cultural institutions.

**Background**

In June 2008, the European Council confirmed the essential role of cultural cooperation and intercultural dialogue in the Union’s external policies.

This summary is for information only. It is not designed to interpret or replace the reference document, which remains the only binding legal text.