

ACADEMY

**IHECS**

Journalism & Communication

**Culture at European Union Level: identifying possible obstacles in the European Institutions to increase the effectiveness of cultural advocacy campaigns.**

**Author:** Marie-Sophie Volkenner

**Supervisor:** Paul Culley

**Executive master in European affairs and communication 2020-2021**



# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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CAE	Culture Action Europe
Commission	European Commission
Council	Council of the European Union
DG	European Commission Directorate General
DG CONNECT	Directorate General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology
DG EAC	Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
DG INFSO	Directorate General for Information Society and Media (renamed CONNECT)
EC	European Commission
EEAS	European External Action Service
EEC	European Economic Community
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
EP	European Parliament
EPP	European People's Party
EU	European Union
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MFF	Multiannual financial framework
VDL	Ursula von der Leyen
TEU	Treaty on European Union = Maastricht Treaty
WWII	World War 2

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I started this journey because there was this big black fog and I imagined that going inside would help me to understand what it is made of. The further I went, the more I saw that it was a lava field, and balancing wires the only way through. I am sincerely grateful for all the help and support I received, and for all people who were so kind to give me their time and expertise to navigate on this path, and I apologize to them in case they would feel that I got little burns here and there.

First and foremost, Paul Culley, my supervisor who was the best guide.

The teachers of the Executive Master who have given me the keys to understand the world of the European Institutions and Public Affairs.

Kim Oosterlinck, supervisor of my first Master Thesis in Cultural Management and who was so kind to have a look at my work in progress and give me precious advice.

Laura Leprêtre, for updating me on the current research tools and helping me to circumscribe the field.

And all people who answered my many questions. Bernard Philippe. Jean-Eric de Cockborne. Stella Tutunzi. Juliette Prissard. Eric van den Abeele. Salima Yenbou. Isabelle Schwarz. Sabine Verheyen.

Last but not least my colleague Sarah, who volunteered to check last mistakes and possible improvements.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The recent pandemic highlighted the crucial role of culture in our everyday life. What would we have done during lockdown without the music, without the books, without the films, and without the creativity which feeds on all that? The cultural and creative sector was hit particularly hard by this crisis and a study from Ernst & Young revealed the scope of the disaster<sup>1</sup>. Still, organisations such as Culture Action Europe, European Cultural Foundation and Europa Nostra had to advocate hard at EU level to enforce the idea that 2% of the EU Recovery Fund should be attributed to the cultural sector. And since culture is only a supporting competence on which the EU can't legislate, in the end, it's up to each Member State to do as he pleases.

Why isn't the European Union able to take stronger action on culture? Is it a question of competence mainly? But then, why would it stay a supporting competence? Is it a question of interest for culture and good will of policy makers and politicians? What is really behind all that?

In order to understand and cautiously formulate some answers, this thesis looks into cultural policy at EU level, to identify possible obstacles in the three main Institutions (the Commission, the Parliament and the Council); with the idea that highlighting these obstacles might contribute to increase the effectiveness of cultural advocacy campaigns.

Since there are 164 different definitions of "culture"<sup>2</sup>, this work starts by limiting the conceptual field and analysing why it is such a particular policy field. This alone allows to identify several obstacles in the EU and its Institutions, based on the variety of different approaches.

To understand mechanisms at work, it needs a global perspective. By diving into the History, all the way back to the end of World War II, we can extract relevant events and moments which orient our understanding of how culture was dealt with alongside the evolution of the European Union and its Institutions. This part underlines the tension between the need for more culture, as cement for the European "soul", and the apparent lack of levers and absence of concretisation in fundamental legislative acts.

This brings us then to an analyse of the current situation of culture at EU level. Looking at what happened during the covid crisis, the negotiations on the budget for the Creative Europe Programme and analysing a cultural advocacy campaigns give

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<sup>1</sup> "Performing arts (-90% between 2019 and 2020) and music (-76%) graphic arts, architecture, advertising, books, press and audiovisual are facing declines of -20% to -40% in turnover". EY. (2021). Rebuilding europe - the cultural and creative economy before and after the Covid-19 crisis.

<sup>2</sup> Gao, F. (2006). Language is culture—on intercultural communication. *Journal of Language and Linguistics*, 5(1), 58-67.

us further keys of understanding. By that point, we will have the impression that culture is a schizophrenic topic in the EU: very low in the priorities, very minor in the budget, very powerless because of its status as supporting competence; but then, existential and untouchable as soon as it is brought up.

This research confirms that the main obstacles are in the Council and that the Parliament is often a precious ally when it comes to advocating for culture, but also points to obstacles there. The commission is not left out, of course and in all three of them lie “intangible obstacles”, related to the very nature of culture. The question whether the limited competences are a real obstacle for reinforcing culture at EU level stays open.

Finally, based on all these points, recommendations are drawn. Working with proven methods. Working on the narrative to push the mental boundaries regarding European culture. And a warning to be careful with the arguments deployed, so that they don't backfire.

Culture reveals a malfunctional aspect of the EU and its Institutions, lacking global perspective and a common vision on a long term, lost in internal struggles of interests and power. Thus, reinforcing culture at European level is also a fight for a vision of the EU.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

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*The European Union was built on common economic interests but in an everchanging world context and to face current challenges, it has become something else, something more. “What exactly?” lies very much in the eyes of the beholder and depending on each single point of view, from Member State to citizen, the expectations differ and with them, the degree of approval and criticism. The European Union is thus more than an objective definition of an economic and political union between 27 Member States, it entails in spite of itself a subjective part, as if the direction it should take was part of how we define it.*

*The following work thus inevitably bears the mark of my vision of the European Union.*

## 1.1. Background

In her State of the Union Address made on September 15th, President von der Leyen (VDL), talked about the many challenges the European Union (EU) was facing: the health crisis, the climate change, the strategic threats and many more. She mentioned a “strong soul” and “common values”. But little was she talking about culture. It would have taken a cough at a bad time to miss the only short sentence about the New European Bauhaus.

More than sixty years after the Rome Treaty, this is symptomatic of the place given to culture on the EU Agenda, which also reflects in the MFF (Creative Europe, the only EU programme specifically dedicated to the cultural, creative and audiovisual sectors accounts for less than 0,15% of the overall EU budget<sup>3</sup>).

What happened to the “if I were to do it again from scratch, I would start with culture” attributed to Jean Monnet?<sup>4</sup> What about Barroso’s “the EU has reached a stage of its history where its cultural dimension can no longer be ignored”?<sup>5</sup> What about “culture and education are what link our history with our future. This is what makes us unique.

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. MFF 2021-2027: Creative Europe 2,4bn€ on a total budget of 1.800 bn€

<sup>4</sup> “In fact, it was H el ene Ahrweiler, former rector of the Paris academy, who attributed it to him in a speech on the occasion of the general assembly of European students in 1988: ‘If I had to do it all over again, I would start with culture,’ Jean Monnet could exclaim if he were to return to us.” [DeepL translation]. Tronc, J-N. (2019). Et si on recommen ait par la culture ?. Editions du Seuil.

<sup>5</sup> Barroso, J. M. (2004). Speech by Jos e Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, on “Europe and Culture”. Berliner Konferenz f ur europ aische Kulturpolitik. Berlin, 26 November 2004

Our soul, our culture, our diversity, our heritage”, pronounced by VDL herself two years ago in the Parliament?<sup>6</sup>

Whilst several speeches and extensive reports underline the crucial role of culture and the cultural sector for the European Union, the lack of concrete reinforcement of the action of the EU in that field, makes us question: what is blocking?

## **1.2. Purpose of the research**

This research aims to investigate the position that culture has in the EU Agenda, politic- and budget wise; and to identify the gaps between words and actions, between opportunities and means, in order to highlight possible obstacles in three main institutions, the European Parliament (EP), the European Commission (EC) and the Council of the European Union (the Council).

“Culture” is complicated to define, and the way it is understood has a direct influence on policy decisions. Therefore, the first step takes us into the very heart of the question: what is culture? what is European culture? and what is (European) culture in the eyes of the Institutions?

The next step is then to understand the evolution of the position of culture at European level and in particular in European policies, by digging into history and observing the current situation.

Once the frame is clearer, we will confront the findings of the first parts with the interviews and discussions conducted with professionals in order to expose obstacles found.

The overall objective is to find ways to dismantle and deconstruct the opposition that can exist to culture at European level and strengthening thus the effectiveness of future cultural lobbying campaigns.

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<sup>6</sup> Europa Nostra. (2019) Culture is back : The new President of the European Commission announces extended title of EU Commissioner Mariya Gabriel

### 1.3. Methodology

As someone bi-cultural<sup>7</sup>, who has studied cultural management and worked in film production for more than ten years, I have integrated the benefits of culture in society as an unquestionable and universal truth. One important aspect for this research was thus to take one step back from my personal considerations, in order to be able to see all the nuances of the findings.

I conducted a **literature review** first, in different databases (Cairn, Persée, Erudit, Google Scholar, etc.), read relevant books and book extracts, researched relevant documents and communications from the EU, reports and position papers by key stakeholders, and visited many websites.

I then confronted the information and ideas from these resources in **discussions and interviews** with different people working (or having worked) in relation to culture and the European Union.

### 1.4. Choices and limitations

“Culture at EU Level: identifying possible obstacles in the European Institutions to increase the effectiveness of cultural advocacy campaigns”. This title reveals a starting hypothesis, which will soon be confirmed along the research: it’s not about finding out if there are any obstacles, it is about finding out what they are. This shortcut is meant to be able to dig deeper, faster and in all three corners of European decision making. That choice cut me from other interesting considerations which wouldn’t have had a place in this research: obstacles outside of the European Institutions, such as the weak means available for cultural lobbying, the fragmented advocacy, etc.

The European Union’s biggest contribution to cultural projects budget wise, goes through the European structural and investment funds and not through the Cultural programs<sup>8</sup>. But since it only concerns heritage, that the funds allocation is made at

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<sup>7</sup> I am German but grew up in France. I still put butter on my croissants.

<sup>8</sup> Pecqueur, A. (2019). À Bruxelles, la culture lost in translation: L’Europe en panne de politiques culturelles. *Revue du Crieur*, 12, 122-131. +

*“A report by the Senate’s European delegation, submitted in 2001, estimates that 400 million euros per year in cultural credits pass through the cohesion policy, i.e. more than twelve times the amount consumed (33 million euros) over the same period by the Community’s “Culture 2000” programme (Senate, 2001, 46)”* [DeepL translation]. « *Un rapport de la délégation européenne du Sénat, remis en*

regional level and not at EU level and that the issues are very different, this aspect will not be treated here.

There has already been a “considerable body of literature in a range of disciplines” on the topic of “culture as an area of European public policy”<sup>9</sup>, so another limitation - due to the possible timeframe given to the research- is quantitative. I oriented my research on recent publications (after 2000) to benefit from information on the most current stand and the most recent analyses on past stands. In the same way, I did not have access to all the people I would have liked to interview.

Another limitation is due to the languages I speak: only French, English and German texts are quoted here. This orients the analyse I can make of the situation since it comes with a bias. This is true for every research, but it is even more significant on a cultural topic.

I am very much aware of possible blind spots due to those limitations and this work is not meant to be exhaustive. What matters, is to understand the dynamics since the first steps of the European Union and to make those resonate with the testimonies of interviewed professionals to reveal obstacles and eventually identify how to overcome them.

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*2001, évalue ainsi à 400 millions d'euros par an les crédits culturels transitant par la politique de cohésion, soit plus de douze fois le montant consommé (33 millions d'euros) sur une même durée par le programme communautaire « Culture 2000 » (Sénat, 2001, 46) ». Helie Thomas, « Cultiver l'Europe. Elements pour une approche localisée de l'« européanisation » des politiques culturelles », Politique européenne, 2004/1 (n° 12), p. 66-83. DOI : 10.3917/poeu.012.0066.*

<sup>9</sup> Calligaro, O. & Vlassis, A.. (2017). The European Policy of Culture, Politique européenne 2017/2 (No 56), p. 3. Translated and edited by Cadenza Academic Translations

## 2. DEFINING CULTURE

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### 2.1. Defining Culture

“Culture” is a “trap word”<sup>10</sup>, since it has several different meanings, in science just like in the everyday vocabulary. Edgar Morin, French philosopher and sociologist, distinguishes between different definitions of culture: anthropological (culture as opposed to nature, anything with a meaning), ethnographic (beliefs, rites, norms, values, models of understanding, etc.), sociological (culture as in “cultivated”) and everything lying in between those definitions<sup>11</sup>.

The European Commission in its “European Agenda for Culture in a Globalizing World” in 2007 acknowledges that “‘Culture’ is generally recognised as complex to define” and gives a very close definition<sup>12</sup> but the EC reminds on its website that “none of the founding documents of the European Union proposes a strict and restrictive definition what culture is, leaving it at the discretion of the Member States and individuals to define it, based on their national, local and individual sensibility”<sup>13</sup>.

“Culture” in a political context is generally used in a narrower definition and even if the Institutions recognized that “culture is no longer restricted to “highbrow” culture (fine arts, music, dance, theatre, literature)” but also covers “popular culture, mass-produced culture, everyday culture”<sup>14</sup>, this isn’t applied and “*when the Commission, beyond its functions of harmoniser and economic regulator, undertakes to highlight Europe’s common culture, the scope explored remains relatively circumscribed, privileging historical heritage and institutional artistic forms*”<sup>15</sup>. A visit on the website of the funding opportunities for the cultural and creative sectors illustrates this<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> “Un mot piège” [free translation]. MORIN, E. (1969). De la culturanalyse à la politique culturelle. Communications, 14(1), 5-38.

<sup>11</sup> MORIN, E. (1969). De la culturanalyse à la politique culturelle. Communications, 14(1), 5-38.

<sup>12</sup> “*It can refer to the fine arts, including a variety of works of art, cultural goods and services. ‘Culture’ also has an anthropological meaning. It is the basis for a symbolic world of meanings, beliefs, values, traditions which are expressed in language, art, religion and myths. As such, it plays a fundamental role in human development and in the complex fabric of the identities and habits of individuals and communities*”. European Commission. (2007). European Agenda for Culture in a Globalizing World.

<sup>13</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/culture/policies/eu-competences-field-culture>

<sup>14</sup> European Commission (1998). First European Community Framework programme in support of culture (2000-2004)

<sup>15</sup> “*Lorsque la Commission, au-delà de ses fonctions d’harmonisateur et de régulateur économique, entreprend de mettre en lumière la culture commune de l’Europe, le périmètre exploré reste relativement circonscrit, privilégiant le patrimoine historique et des formes artistiques institutionnelles*”

The blurry contours of the meaning of “culture” make it difficult to apprehend and create a space for misunderstanding and subjectivity. Therefore, and probably more than any other political field, its defence and valorisation depend crucially on the individuals behind policy making. It explains also why the concept evolves with time and context.

By default, the definition of “culture” in this work is in line with the definition given by the EU in its wide understanding: highbrow culture and lowbrow culture, from graffiti in the street to exclusive contemporary art exhibitions. From the small atelier of a ceramist in the countryside to the big audiovisual studio in a capital. But the obstacles we will come across, show the porosity of the concept, since culture includes much more than that and that it is entangled with another complicated concept: identity. Thus, referring to the “cultural and creative sector” will be helpful sometimes, even though “culture” can’t be resumed as a sector.

## 2.2. European Culture and Culture at European level

Faithful to its slogan « United in diversity », the European Union had one hurdle more to overcome when mentioning its field of action regarding culture, and solved it in the first paragraph of Article 128 in the Maastricht Treaty (which would become Article 151 of the Amsterdam Treaty) as followed : “The Community shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore”<sup>17</sup>.

This common cultural heritage is considered as European culture<sup>18</sup>, whereas the cultures of Member States, dealt with at European level, can be referred to as “culture at European level”.

The obvious contradiction between both levels is not really one if we follow Edgar Morin’s idea that our society is “polycultural”<sup>19</sup>.

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[DeepL translation] Calligaro, O. (2017). Quelle(s) culture(s) pour l’Europe : Les visions contrastées du Conseil de l’Europe et de l’Union européenne de 1949 à nos jours. Politique européenne, 56, 30-53.

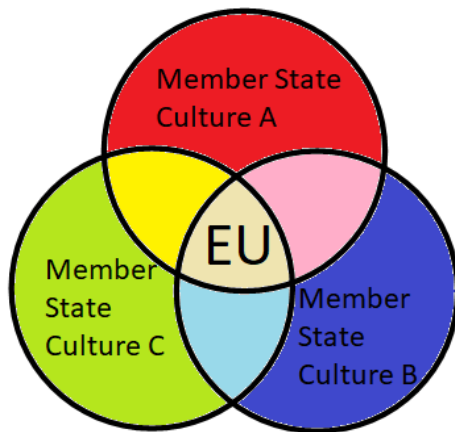
<sup>16</sup> On October 1<sup>st</sup> 2021: Music (13 calls), Cultural heritage (9), International cooperation (5), Literature (4), Labour mobility (3), Intellectual property (2), Audiovisual industry (1), Culture industry (1), Data collection (1), European Capitals of Culture (1), Performing art (1), Regional policy (1).

<sup>17</sup> Maastricht Treaty, TEU or Union Treaty: Treaty on European Union, 7 February 1992, 1992 O.J.

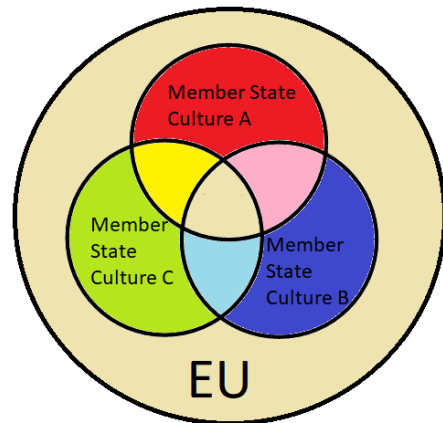
<sup>18</sup> Calligaro, O. (2017). Quelle(s) culture(s) pour l’Europe : Les visions contrastées du Conseil de l’Europe et de l’Union européenne de 1949 à nos jours. Politique européenne, 56, 30-53.

In fact, considering that culture comes with different layers and that those do not exclude each other<sup>20</sup>, would help clarifying the understanding of what European culture is:

“European Culture” in its tightest understanding:



“European Culture” in a larger understanding:



From an exterior point of view, there is a unity in Europe, which could very much benefit to the EU. “No American goes to France, he goes to Europe ...”<sup>21</sup>. And when the Arc de Triomphe is wrapped up as Christo’s legacy, it shines on Paris and France, but the rays go all the way up to Europe and the EU.

From an inside point of view, *“beyond the differences, each of the Europeans deeply feels that he or she belongs to a world of common, visible, tangible meaning. A certain conception of Man and his Freedom is clearly at the heart of what makes European culture and makes it so infinitely multiple”*<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> “Notre société est polyculturelle”. MORIN, E. (1969). De la culturanalyse à la politique culturelle. Communications, 14(1), 5-38.

<sup>20</sup> “Breaking the exclusive link between state and nation, writes essayist Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa, the construction of Europe has helped us to understand how multiple the societies to which we belong are: city, region, nation, Europe, world. Each of these levels has its own history and is a source of culture; we belong to each; each one nourishes us and imposes duties on us.” Pire, J. M. (2000). *Pour une politique culturelle européenne*. Fondation Robert Schuman.

<sup>21</sup> “Aucun Américain ne va en France, il va en Europe...” [Free translation] Guéhenno in *Diplomatie culturelle : culture de France, culture d'Europe*. (In: *Politique étrangère*, n°1 - 1986 - 51<sup>e</sup>année. pp. 165-171).

<sup>22</sup> *“Par-delà les différences, chacun des Européens ressent profondément son appartenance à un monde de sens commun, visible, tangible. Une certaine conception de l’Homme et de sa Liberté est clairement pour les Européens au fondement de ce qui fait la culture européenne et la rend si infiniment multiple”*. [DeepL translation] Pire, J. M. (2000). *Pour une politique culturelle européenne*. Fondation Robert Schuman.

## 2.3. Cultural policy and European Cultural policy

If the understanding of what culture is differs and the understanding of what European culture is as well, there are other aspects of differentiation to consider: the approach of what cultural policy should be; and the political level in charge of it in every Member States.

When it comes to culture, the distance at which it is kept from political power has a huge impact on how it is dealt with. On both extremes, there is on one side the French approach, where culture is a tool of national policy, and on the other side, the Anglo-Saxon approach, where culture is kept at reasonable distance from power<sup>23</sup>.

In Sweden for instance, the Parliament sets the overall budget for culture, but it is the Swedish National Heritage Board of Culture which allocates the funds<sup>24</sup>, and the majority of decisions are made locally by the 21 County Administrative Boards<sup>25</sup>, which ensures “the independence of decision-making and implementation”<sup>26</sup> from the Government.

With 27 Member States, the European Union experiences a variety of conceptions on this scale, which do not work well together.

And then comes the question: who is in charge in the different Member States? France has a Ministry of Culture. In Belgium, the governments of the communities are mostly responsible for culture. In Germany, it's the regions (Länder) and municipalities. As an example, it takes an inter-Länder treaty between the 16 German Bundesländer to sign a European Directive on an audiovisual matter<sup>27</sup>.

Regularly, not even the politicians in charge of culture sit around the table to discuss about cultural affairs, but their comrades from Foreign affairs or Trade.

“The diverging preferences and institutional constraints of these national policy models have always been in evidence in negotiations with the Community”<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Chenal, O. (2005). L'Europe et la culture: combien de politiques?. *La pensée de midi*, (3), 65-71.

<sup>24</sup> Blin, M. (2001). L' Europe et la culture. (s. d.) Rapport d'information fait au nom de la délégation du Sénat pour l'Union européenne.

<sup>25</sup> Assignment of the Swedish National Heritage Board.

<sup>26</sup> Menger, P.-M. (2009), Cultural policies in European time and space. Models and evolutions

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Jean-Eric de Cockborne, former advisor at DG Connect and former Head of Unit Audiovisual and Media Policies.

<sup>28</sup> Patel, K. K. (Ed.). (2013). *The Cultural Politics of Europe: European capitals of culture and European Union since the 1980s*. Routledge.



Renaud Denuit underlines a related pitfall: there is no “club spirit”, unlike the ones Ministers for Economy and Finance or Agriculture have for instance<sup>29</sup>.

The European Union is equipped with an official competence in culture only since the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, and it is a sheer supporting competence. That means that the EU “does not have the power to conduct its own policy in this field”<sup>30</sup>. And “just as the 'cultural sector' is not in itself 'culture', Community action in the cultural sector does not constitute a cultural policy”<sup>31</sup>, mentioned a Communication from the Commission in 1977. So the EU is not equipped to conduct a real cultural policy and the question whether it is possible or not to talk about “European cultural policy” is cleaving. There are those for which the European cultural policy started with Maastricht in 1992, those who see its start with the first Culture 2000 Program, and those who underline that even if there was a will to build a European cultural policy, the actual budget would not allow for one, since the budget for the Creative Europe programme only slightly exceeds the one from a single national cultural institution, like the Opéra de Paris<sup>32</sup>.

## **2.4. Place of Culture in the different member states**

How does it look like in the different member states budget wise? Eurostat figures unfortunately include “recreation, culture and religion”, not allowing for a precise overview on the cultural budget in each country, but it is the closest existing comparative tool.

The statistics from 2019 show that Hungary is amongst the European member states allocating the biggest share to recreation, culture and religion (3%), and Italy and Greece amongst those allocating the least (0,80%). And indeed, Hungary doubled its culture budget in 2017<sup>33</sup>. Given Hungary’s position toward the EU, one could

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<sup>29</sup> Denuit, R. (2017). *Politique culturelle européenne*. Bruylant.

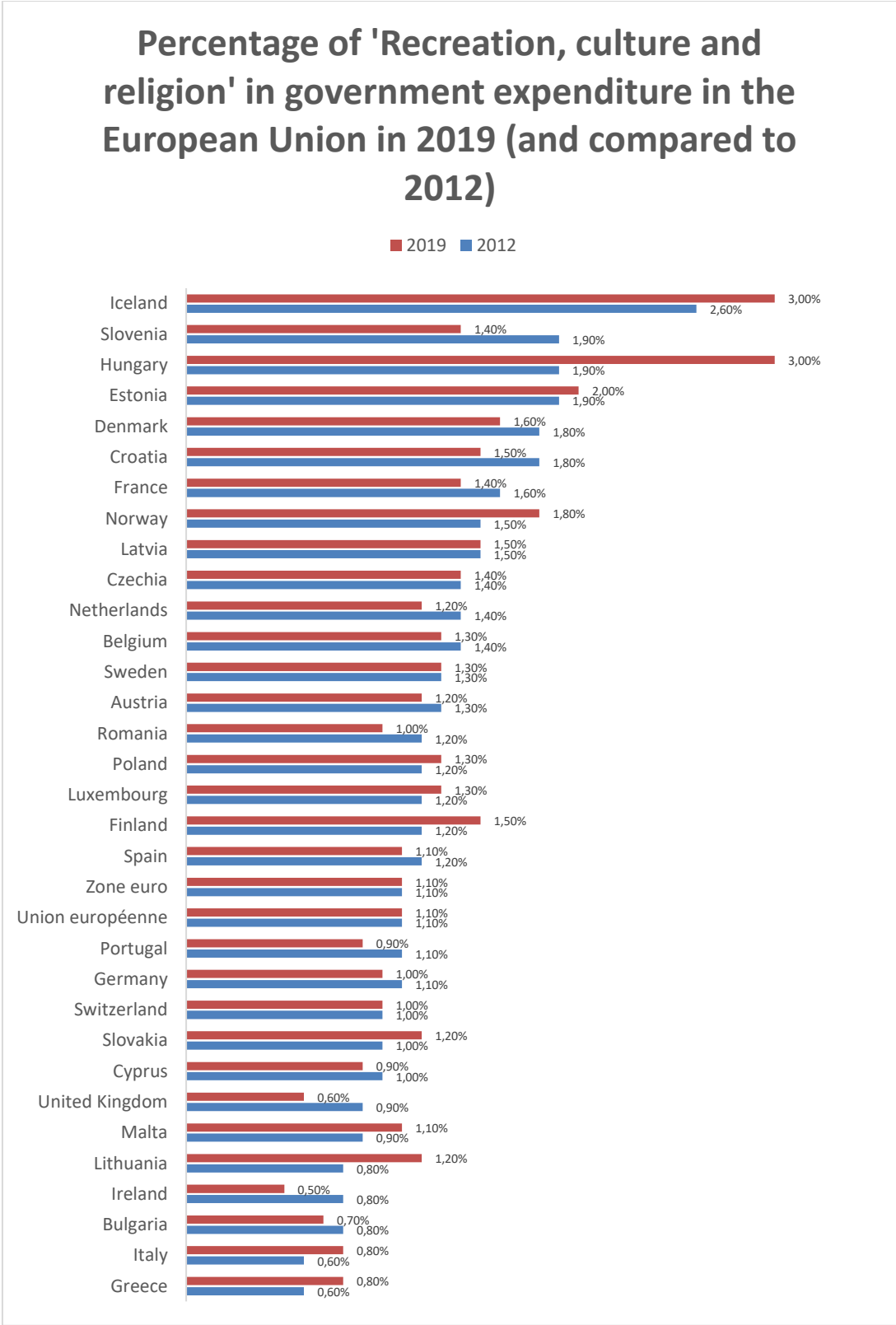
<sup>30</sup> Chenal, O. (2005). *L'Europe et la culture: combien de politiques?*. *La pensée de midi*, (3), 65-71.

<sup>31</sup> European Communities (1977) *Community action in the cultural sector*. Commission communication to the Council. COM (77) 560 final, 2 December 1977. *Bulletin of the European Communities*, Supplement 6/77.

<sup>32</sup> Chenal, O. (2005). *L'Europe et la culture: combien de politiques?*. *La pensée de midi*, (3), 65-71.

<sup>33</sup> News, D. (2017, January 22). *Day of Hungarian Culture – Spending on culture up by EUR 397m, says state secy*. *Daily News Hungary*.

speculate on the fact that this interest in culture wouldn't necessarily reflect at a supra-national level.



<sup>34</sup> Eurostat. General government expenditure by function (COFOG). 2019

This is a first hint that the share in national budgets is not a reliable indicator when it comes to the position of member states in the Council toward reinforcing culture at EU level. Are there other indicators to evaluate this position? That would be an interesting research as well, but it exceeds the scope of this work. Going through the history in the next part, we will see that the support at national level and at European level can be disconnected, and even opposed.

Comparing the share of culture in national budgets with the one at European level would be an intellectual shortcut, but one can wonder: should it be higher or lower at EU level?

In 2019, the Health Programme<sup>35</sup> represented 0,04% of the total EU budget, whereas the average share in the 27 member states reached 7%. The Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (Life)<sup>36</sup> represented 0,21% compared to a national average of 0,8%<sup>37</sup>. Thus, culture is not an exception in having a lower share at EU level than at national level, which -in case of Health specially- makes perfectly sense since the responsibilities and competences differ a lot.

But what shines through these numbers in any case, is that culture is rarely a priority at national level, so why should it be at European level?

## **2.5. Why Culture matters at EU level**

In 2018, Culture Action Europe (leading policy network for culture in Europe, representing over 80,000 organisations in 24 countries<sup>38</sup>) published a sixty-page guide on “the value and values of culture”<sup>39</sup>, gathering evidence to demonstrate “without doubt the EU added value of culture and the subsequent need to properly support the cultural ecosystem”. It includes reinforcing democratic principles and values, supporting social inclusion, enhancing the quality of life and the wellbeing, etc., and lists very tangible arguments on economic value and in the sphere of cultural diplomacy.

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<sup>35</sup> Health is a supporting competence, just like culture.

<sup>36</sup> Environment and climate change is a shared competence between the EU and the member states.

<sup>37</sup> Comparison between national figures (General government expenditure by function) on Eurostat and the MFF.

<sup>38</sup> <https://cultureactioneurope.org/>

<sup>39</sup> CAE. (2018). The value and values of culture

It could be taken with caution, since it is the work of an organisation advocating for culture, but the Commission, the Parliament and the Council have all published over time several resolutions and other texts, acknowledging exactly those values<sup>40</sup>, proving that they have all necessary knowledge within reach, to answer the question why culture matters at EU level.

Recently, in its joint motion for a resolution on the cultural recovery for Europe, the Parliament reminded: “A. whereas culture is a strategic sector for the European Union, not only constituting an important part of our economy, but also contributing to democratic, sustainable, free and inclusive societies, and reflecting our European diversity, values, history, freedoms and way of life. B. whereas culture and the freedom of the arts contribute significantly to the vibrancy of a society and enable all segments of society to express their identities, contributing to social cohesion and intercultural dialogue paving the way to an ever closer European Union”<sup>41</sup> and the enumeration goes on.

Beside the added value of culture at EU level, there is a pragmatic aspect of reinforcing cultural policy at EU level, linked to challenges member states have to face in that field. “*Beyond national diversities, in the face of national and international tensions, in the face of an increasingly aggressive market, in the face of globalisation, the cultural policies of European countries share important common challenges*”<sup>42</sup>.

## 2.6. Conclusion

Whereas “culture” is difficult to define, that it is dealt with in every member state in a different way and with different means, having in common only the fact that it is a priority nowhere; it is a policy field which is recognized by the Institutions and policy makers as being helpful, even crucial<sup>43</sup>, to reinforce the European project. Still, the EU has a very limited competence on it, which limits legislative power as policy tool and devotes less than 0,15% of its direct budget to it.

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. European Parliament. (2016). European Parliament resolution of 13 December 2016 on a coherent EU policy for cultural and creative industries // Council. (2010). Council conclusions on the role of culture in combating poverty and social exclusion

<sup>41</sup> European Parliament. (2020). Joint motion for a resolution on the cultural recovery for Europe.

<sup>42</sup> “*Au-delà des diversités nationales, face aux tensions nationales et internationales, face à un marché de plus en plus agressif, face à la globalisation, les politiques culturelles des pays d'Europe partagent d'important défis communs*” [DeepL translation] Chenal, O. (2005). L'Europe et la culture: combien de politiques?. La pensée de midi, (3), 65-71.

<sup>43</sup> Sassoli D. (2020).- My message for @europanostra's #CulturalDealEU debate – 18/11/2020

To better understand mechanisms at work and the possible obstacles in the Institutions which could explain this gap, it is necessary to go back to the creation of the European Union.

## 3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

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**What has been the place of culture in European politics so far and what does this historical background tell us about possible obstacles in the European Institutions?**

### 3.1. STAGE 1 - CULTURE: AN INCONVENIENT TOPIC

#### 3.1.1. General frame

"Even before Europe was united in an economic level or was conceived at the level of economic interests and trade, it was culture that united all the countries of Europe. The arts, literature, music are the connecting link of Europe" mentioned the Italian writer Dario Fo<sup>44</sup>.

But when culture is misused for ideologies sake, it turns into deadly efficient propaganda: culture stops being a link and starts being a threat.

When the foundations of the European Union were laid on the warm ashes of the Second World War (WWII), there was only one way: forward. Culture and education having been largely instrumentalized by the fascist and the communist regimes, "*integrating culture in the missions of the nascent European Institutions could seem impossible*"<sup>45</sup>.

From 1957 to 1973, culture was absent from the European political agenda.

At the same period, André Malraux, the first Minister of Cultural Affairs in France from 1959 to 1969, set out the frame for an ambitious cultural policy in his country: protection of national heritage, democratisation of culture with the launch of "Houses of culture" all around France, support of French cinema industry, support of contemporary art, etc. "Malraux considered culture an important instrument of politics"<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> European Commission. (2007). European Agenda for Culture in a Globalizing World.

<sup>45</sup> "intégrer la culture dans les missions des institutions européennes naissantes pouvait sembler impossible" [free translation]. Tronc, J-N. (2019). Et si on recommençait par la culture ?. Editions du Seuil.

<sup>46</sup> Marlowe, L. (s. d.). Malraux ascends to French civic heaven. The Irish Times.

When culture is highly praised and used as instrument of politics by one of the main member states, but not on a European level, this would highlight the fact that the issue was not culture, but culture at European level.

Interestingly, Caroline Sägeser mentions that, at that time, *“the very idea of the existence of a European culture is not unanimous: the weight of the colonial heritage and the liveliness of the critics in the face of what can be perceived as a European-centric withdrawal, contribute to the timidity in this matter”*<sup>47</sup>. And indeed, Malraux himself mentioned in an interview: *“I have never believed in the existence of a European culture. European culture does not exist”*<sup>48</sup>.

After WWII, Europe was “ruined”<sup>49</sup> and focused on economic recovery. The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) launched in 1951, as well as the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic and Energy Community (Euratom) established in the Rome Treaty in 1957, did have very defined targets, it is not “surprising, therefore, that culture, like education or health, was not an explicit field of EEC concern at the time”<sup>50</sup>.

These elements combined: the impossibility to integrate culture in the missions of the European institutions, the reserves about the very idea of a European culture, and the missing scope in the Communities, explain the absence of culture in the European political agenda at the beginning of the European Union.

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<sup>47</sup> “L’idée même de l’existence d’une culture européenne ne fait pas l’unanimité : le poids de l’héritage colonial et la vivacité des critiques face à ce qui peut être perçu comme un repli européenocentrique contribuent à la timidité en cette matière” [DeepL translation]. Sägeser, C. (2008). La diversité culturelle. Dossiers du CRISP, (2), 9-97.

<sup>48</sup> “Je n’ai jamais cru à l’existence d’une culture européenne. La culture européenne n’existe pas”. [DeepL translation] Silva, M. O. (1999, août 1). André Malraux : « la culture européenne n’existe pas ». Le Monde diplomatique.

<sup>49</sup> CVCE.EU by UNI.LU. L’Europe ruinée à la fin de la Seconde Guerre mondiale—Événements historiques de la construction européenne (1945-2014).

<sup>50</sup> Gaio, A. (2015). Policy formation in the European Community—the case of culture (Doctoral dissertation, City University London).

### 3.1.2. Outside the frame: the Council of Europe

This absence of culture in the European political agenda cannot be interpreted though as a complete absence of cultural activities at European level, nor as a complete absence of political will.

The Council of Europe was founded in May 1949, following resolutions of the Hague Congress as “a forum of national parliaments and a committee of ministers”<sup>51</sup>, by ten states: Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, the Netherlands, the United-Kingdom and Sweden. Its objective, as written in the Statute was “to achieve a greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and realizing the ideals and principles which are their common heritage and facilitating their economic and social progress. This aim shall be pursued through the organs of the Council by discussion of questions of common concern and by agreements and common action in economic, social, cultural, scientific, legal and administrative matters and in the maintenance and further realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms”<sup>52</sup>.

The Council of Europe, in the first decades after WWII, has thus been the organ for cultural projects at supranational level for the members of the European Economic Community (EEC) which were members of it.

In December 1954, the member states adopted the European Cultural Convention <sup>53</sup>, in which they agreed on taking measures to safeguard and encourage their “national contribution to the common cultural heritage of Europe”, “encourage the study” of languages and history of other contracting parties, and “facilitate the movement and exchange of persons as well as of objects of cultural value” amongst others. It was followed in 1962 by a Council for Cultural Co-operation, which was equipped with a budget: the Culture Fund<sup>54</sup>.

Until the signature of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, which established a legal competence on culture for the member states of the newly constituted European Union, the Council of Europe was the flagship for cultural cooperation between

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<sup>51</sup> Barblan, A. (2002). Academic co-operation and mobility in Europe: How it was and how it will be. *Higher Education in Europe*, 27(1-2), 31-58.

<sup>52</sup> COUNCIL, O. E. (1949). Statute of the Council of Europe. London, May, 5.

<sup>53</sup> COUNCIL, O. E. (1954). European Cultural Convention. Paris: CoE.

<sup>54</sup> COUNCIL, O. E. (1963). Résolution 28 (1962) relative à la participation des pouvoirs locaux à la coopération culturelle européenne



member states. And whereas it helped building the ground for a cultural policy, one can wonder if it wasn't also responsible for slowing down the process at EU level.

One example can be found in the sixties, with the "Fouchet Plan". Charles De Gaulle was convinced that culture would help strengthening the ties "between the states of western Europe" and he pushed to include culture in the political agenda of the EEC. But ultimately, he pushed too hard, and his personality did not help to convince other member states<sup>55</sup>.<sup>56</sup>

Ultimately, the negotiations for the cultural cooperation agenda were trusted to a new committee, the Fouchet Committee<sup>57</sup>, which had its first session on March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1961. But the more discussions there were in this Committee and the more the Council of Europe felt threatened. "The Council of Europe claimed problem ownership of – and consequently institutional authority over – European international cultural cooperation and mobilised to defend its turf"<sup>58</sup>. The creation of the Council for Cultural Co-operation in 1962 (inside the Council of Europe) can be seen a direct response to that. The political Fouchet negotiations failed. Interestingly, the cultural component of the plan was the only one member states had agreed on, but since the Council of Europe already had competences on that, and that cultural cooperation was not seen as "high priority", the member states didn't feel the need to pursue this issue.

The position of the Council of Europe is a very interesting one, since it has this double position of having launched and developed cultural collaboration between European member states on one side, but slowed down the development of a European cultural policy on the other.

The absence of legislative power in the Council of Europe was probably reassuring for most of the member states and until today, some may consider this Institution as the best fitted one for cultural matters. But precisely because of its absence of legislative power, and also because its members differ from the Member States of the EU, one can state that the Council of Europe would never be in the position to offer a strong cultural policy for the EU.

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<sup>55</sup> Gaio, A. (2015). Policy formation in the European Community—the case of culture (Doctoral dissertation, City University London).

<sup>56</sup> Dutch foreign Minister Joseph Luns apparently said: "Cultural cooperation seems innocent enough but not when proposed by the French" (Luns quoted in Vanke 2001: 99).

<sup>57</sup> Christian Fouchet, was French ambassador to Denmark, former Gaullist député and close politically of De Gaulle

<sup>58</sup> Gaio, A. (2015). Policy formation in the European Community—the case of culture (Doctoral dissertation, City University London).

## 3.2. STAGE 2 – CULTURE: AN UNAVOIDABLE TOPIC

### 3.2.1. The spectre of “nation-building”

Culture might not be a direct competence of the EEC, but it is linked to economic and social aspects and as such, falls under the scope of its competences. That is how Robert Grégoire, member of DG Research and Development (DG XII)<sup>59</sup>, managed to put a memorandum “For Community action in the cultural sector” on the table of the Commission, backed up by commissioner for Industrial policy, Altiero Spinelli<sup>60</sup>.

This was the starting point for the creation of a “Cultural Sector Division” in the Commission in 1973 under DG XII (called in French “*Problèmes du Secteur culturel*”, “*Problems of the Cultural Sector*”).

The same year, the European Parliament set up a Committee on Cultural Affairs and Youth<sup>61</sup>. (The Council would need ten more years to follow that movement<sup>62</sup>).

In May 1974, the EP adopted unanimously a “resolution on measures to protect the European cultural heritage”<sup>63</sup>, which lead the Commission to draft a working document on “Community action in the cultural sector”, which was approved by the Parliament in March 1976 in another resolution. The final communication from the Commission on this matter was sent to the Council on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1977. The sum charged to the Community Budget for cultural actions as detailed in the communication<sup>64</sup> (Promotion of specialized training for restorers of historic buildings and sites, Promotion of nuclear conservation and the Development of cultural exchanges) was 180.000 u.a.<sup>65</sup>. This appears to be rather a tight budget and the training budget concerned only three organizations: the College of Europe in Bruges, the University of Rome, and the European Centre for training craftsmen in the conservation of the architectural heritage in Venice.

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<sup>59</sup> Denuit, R. (2017). *Politique culturelle européenne*. Bruylant.

<sup>60</sup> Drici, M., & Drici, M. (2021, septembre 19). *L'Europe en manque de culture*. Le Taurillon.

<sup>61</sup> Calligaro, O. & Vlassis, A.. (2017). *The European Policy of Culture*, *Politique européenne 2017/2* (No 56), p. 8-28. Translated and edited by Cadenza Academic Translations

<sup>62</sup> Blin, M. (2001). *L' Europe et la culture*. (s. d.) Rapport d'information fait au nom de la délégation du Sénat pour l'Union européenne.

<sup>63</sup> (1974). *Official Journal of the European Communities* No C 62..

<sup>64</sup> Commission communication to the Council. COM (77) 560 final, 2 December 1977

<sup>65</sup> More or less 150.000€ but this information couldn't be confirmed a 100%.

The Council refused to discuss it, as some points “reeked of nation-building”, which was not what Member States were expecting the EEC to be<sup>66</sup>.

Here, we can see the process of obstacles at work, the main one being a conceptual one, linked to what member states (and thus the Council) projected on what culture is and where its place should be.

### **3.2.2. Declaration on European Identity – 1973: national cultures as a fundamental part of the European identity**

Parallel to that episode, in 1973, the EEC expanded from six initial member states to nine, by integrating Ireland, Denmark and the United-Kingdom. And this same year, the Declaration on European Identity (Copenhagen, 14 December 1973) mentioned culture as a key element: “The Nine wish to ensure that the cherished values of their legal, political and moral order are respected, and to preserve the rich variety of their national cultures. (...). All of these are fundamental elements of the European Identity”<sup>67</sup>.

That declaration had the effect of “firing a starting pistol”<sup>68</sup>. It opened the field of reflection and was a first step toward an acceptance of EEC missions in the cultural field and a recognition of the central role culture can play for a European identity. What is a European identity if not built on European culture?

### **3.2.3. Tindeman’s Report – 1976: culture as cement for the European construction**

The Head of States and Governments of the EEC instructed Belgian Prime Minister Leo Tindemans to draw a report to define a global perspective on the European Union. Tindemans opens his report by saying that the “European concept lost a lot of its force and initial impetus”, because European citizen in 1975 do not “view the reasons for the construction of Europe in exactly the same way as in 1950”. And in a sentence which still sounds very relevant today he mentions: “No one wants to see a technocratic Europe. European Union must be experienced by the citizen in his daily

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<sup>66</sup> Van Middelaar, L. (2013). *The passage to Europe*. Yale University Press.

<sup>67</sup> Europeia, C. (1973). Declaration on European Identity. *Bulletin of the European Communities*, 12, 118-122.

<sup>68</sup> Van Middelaar, L. (2013). *The passage to Europe*. Yale University Press.

life. It must make itself felt in education and culture, news and communications, it must be manifest in the youth of our countries, and in leisure time activities”.<sup>69</sup>

According to the Centre virtuel de la connaissance sur l'Europe (CVCE) a research center of the University of Luxembourg, “the Tindemans Report failed to arouse much enthusiasm in the Member States’ governments”<sup>70</sup>.

### **3.2.4. Solemn Declaration on European Union - 1983**

“On 19 June 1983 in Stuttgart, the ten<sup>71</sup> Heads of State or Government of the member states of the European Communities, meeting within the European Council, signed the Solemn Declaration on European Union”<sup>72</sup>.

In this nine-page document, under the section “scope”, just after “Foreign policy” comes “Cultural cooperation”, listing eight priorities which went further than what had been laid out in the Copenhagen Declaration.

These priorities illustrated a new awareness toward culture at European level and how it could also be used as a tool for foreign affairs. It suggested the development of the activities of the European Foundation and the European University Institute in Florence, more exchange for students, teachers and artists, a closer coordination of cultural activities in third countries and cautiously mentioned the “examination of the advisability” or “possibility” regarding joint action to “protect, promote and safeguard the cultural heritage” and to promote “the dissemination of culture, in particular as regards audiovisual methods”<sup>73</sup>.

Comparing to the Copenhagen Declaration ten years earlier, this was a huge step forward. Tindeman’s report or at least the same context who drove him to his conclusions, seem to have had an impact here.

The Stuttgart Declaration was partly built on a Draft European Act known as the Genscher–Colombo Plan, by the name of the German Minister for Foreign Affairs

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<sup>69</sup> Tindemans, L. (1976). European Union. Report by Mr. Leo Tindemans, Prime Minister of Belgium, to the European Council. Bulletin of the European Communities, Supplement 1/76.(commonly called the Tindemans Report).

<sup>70</sup> The Tindemans Report—Historical events in the European integration process (1945–2014). (s. d.). CVCE.EU by UNI.LU

<sup>71</sup> Greece joined in 1981.

<sup>72</sup> European Council. (1983). Solemn Declaration on European Union. Bulletin of the European Communities, 6, 24-29.

<sup>73</sup> European Council. (1983). Solemn Declaration on European Union. Bulletin of the European Communities, 6, 24-29.

Hans-Dietrich Genscher and his Italian counterpart Emilio Colombo<sup>74</sup>, which they submitted in November 1981 to their partners in the European Communities. In this plan, Genscher and Colombo went so far to suggest that “a Council of Ministers responsible for cultural cooperation (...) shall be established” and “shall hold regular exchanges of views on close cooperation in order to harmonize their positions on cultural matters as far as possible”<sup>75</sup>.

The UK, Germany and Denmark were the strongest opponent to this idea, but such a Council came into life in 1984, under the pressure of the EP, the influence of new member states such as Greece and a certain need for coherence<sup>76</sup>.

By 1984, all three Institutions were thus equipped with an organ responsible for cultural matters. But the EEC had still no direct competence. In order to move things forward, Melina Mercouri took the back door and pushed for a “European Capitals of Culture” programme, which came into life outside of the EEC Institutions, even if benefiting from its financing<sup>77</sup>.

The European Parliament has affected, on his own budget, “more and more to different cultural projects”<sup>78</sup>, as well, as if it was looking to compensate for the hole left by the Commission.

### **3.2.5. The Single European Act – 1986: the difficult path from ideas to regulation**

The Single European Act (SEA) was an agreement enacted by the EEC signed in 1986. It entailed significant provisions to revise the Treaty of Rome, and “expanded the powers of the then European Community in a number of policy areas”<sup>79</sup>.

After the Solemn Declaration on European Union made three years earlier, one could have expected that culture would have been on the agenda. But it wasn't. It was not mentioned at any point.

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<sup>74</sup> La genèse de l'acte unique | Fiches thématiques sur l'Union européenne | Parlement européen. (s. d.).

<sup>75</sup> Bulletin of the European Communities. (1981). "Draft European Act". Luxembourg: Office for official publications of the European Communities. November 1981, No 11. p. 87-91.

<sup>76</sup> Denuit, R. (2017). *Politique culturelle européenne*. Bruylant.

<sup>77</sup> Patel, K. K. (Ed.). (2013). *The Cultural Politics of Europe: European capitals of culture and European Union since the 1980s*. Routledge.

<sup>78</sup> Johnston, R. (1996). *European cultural co-operation: activities of the European Union and relations with the Council of Europe*. DOCUMENTS-COUNCIL OF EUROPE, 9, 7575-7575.

<sup>79</sup> EUR-Lex—Xy0027—EN - EUR-Lex. (s. d.).

Around that time, Italian MEP Guido Fanti mentioned : *“It must be said straight away, without prevaricating, but clearly and unequivocally that, despite general and sporadic assertions, culture or, better still, a European cultural policy, has not found its place in the E.E.C., that it does not exist, and that present or past attempts to give it a basis that is not occasional or sectoral run the risk, in the current grave situation, of diminishing and disappearing”*<sup>80</sup>. History will prove him wrong. Or will it?

### **3.2.6. Musical chairs in the EC and differentiation between culture and audiovisual**

If the culture division started in the EC under DG XII (Research, Science and Education), it moved to the General Secretariat in 1981 and was then integrated to DG X in 1986, Information, Communication and Culture, where it was renamed “Cultural action and Audiovisual policy”, which underlines a clear distinction between both, *“the audiovisual sector immediately gains the status of a policy, but when it comes to culture, we only talk about action”*<sup>81</sup>.

### **3.2.7. The Council opening up**

Up to 1988, the Ministers of Culture of the member states meeting within the Council, “adopted 15 resolutions, covering such fields as the fight against audiovisual piracy, the European Cities of Culture, preservation of the European architectural heritage, etc.”<sup>82</sup>

In May 1988, the Cultural Ministers established a Cultural Committee, based on the model of the Education Committee (set up under the resolution of 9 February 1976).

They adopted a resolution “identifying the priorities for future European Union action in the cultural field. The four priority areas were:

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<sup>80</sup> “(...) *il faut dire tout de suite, sans tergiverser, mais de façon claire et nette que, malgré des affirmations générales et sporadiques, la culture ou, mieux, une politique culturelle européenne, n’a pas trouvé sa place dans la C.E.E., qu’elle n’existe pas, et que les tentatives présentes ou passées de lui donner une base non occasionnelle ou sectorielle risquent, dans la grave situation actuelle, de diminuer et de disparaître*”. [DeepL translation] Fanti, G. (1987), « L’espace culturel européen : structure et coordination des politiques culturelles nationales et communautaires », in Delcourt, Jacques et Papini, Roberto (ed), Pour une politique européenne de la culture, Paris, Economica, p. 61-7.

<sup>81</sup> “(...) *l’audiovisuel gagne d’emblée le statut de politique, mais s’agissant de culture, on ne parle que d’action*”. [DeepL translation] Denuit, R. (2017). Politique culturelle européenne. Bruylant.

<sup>82</sup> Johnston, R. (1996). European cultural co-operation: activities of the European Union and relations with the Council of Europe. DOCUMENTS-COUNCIL OF EUROPE, 9, 7575-7575.

- promotion of the European audiovisual sector,
- the book sector,
- training in the cultural sector,
- business sponsorship.”<sup>83</sup>

This move from the Council, which was until then the most radically opposing Institution of the EU regarding culture, translated an opening, which would result in the following chapter.

### **3.3. STAGE 3 – CULTURE: A COMPETENCE OF THE EU**

#### **3.3.1. The Treaty on European Union**

The Treaty on European Union (TEU), as signed in Maastricht on 7 February 1992, was the first milestone toward a cultural policy at European level, by giving the European Union an actual competence in this field. Unlike Agriculture and Justice, which are shared competences between the Union and the Member States, Culture is a supporting competence, meaning that the EU “can only intervene to support, coordinate or complement the action of EU countries. Legally binding EU acts must not require the harmonisation of EU countries’ laws or regulations.”<sup>84</sup>

In his report, Sir Russell Johnston implies that this limitation was not due to the Commission’s will: “In return for explicit European Union competence in the fields of education and culture, the Commission had to accept subsidiarity, which, at least in principle, set some limits to further expansion of the European Union in these two fields”<sup>85</sup>. He doesn’t mention to whom the Commission had to make this concession, but the Council and the member states most probably have something to do with it.

Culture figured in three other ways after the TEU: as an economic sector subject to single market rules, as a field where these rules could be constrained for protective

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<sup>83</sup> Johnston, R. (1996). European cultural co-operation: activities of the European Union and relations with the Council of Europe. DOCUMENTS-COUNCIL OF EUROPE, 9, 7575-7575.

<sup>84</sup> EUR-Lex—Ai0020—EN - EUR-Lex. (s. d.).

<sup>85</sup> Johnston, R. (1996). European cultural co-operation: activities of the European Union and relations with the Council of Europe. DOCUMENTS-COUNCIL OF EUROPE,

reasons, and as a basis for market-correcting measures and direct intervention through subsidies or regulation<sup>86</sup>.

A poll from the Eurobarometer<sup>87</sup> gives us an interesting insight on the mindset of the population in the different member states at that time. To the question: “which of the following areas of policy do you think should be decided by the National government, and which should be decided jointly within the European Community?”, the results on Cultural Policy are following:

	DK	IE	UK	GR	FR	LU	BE	NL	PT	SP	DE	IT
National	78%	69%	64%	62%	59%	58%	55%	53%	53%	49%	47%	45%
European	18%	23%	29%	30%	35%	31%	/	41%	32%	39%	49%	43%

Only the Germans have a majority in favour of a shared competence. And except Greece, the southern populations (Portugal, Spain, and Italy) seemed more inclined to it than the northern ones (Denmark, Ireland, United-Kingdom and France).

In her report on Cultural Diversity, Caroline Sägeser confirms that there were some disagreements between member states: “*during the drafting of the European Constitution, differences of opinion emerged between the countries. France wanted to see the unanimity rule maintained for the negotiation and conclusion of agreements in the field of cultural and audiovisual services, which gives it a veto right, while others wanted to bring them under the qualified majority rule. Those in favour of the unanimity rule won out*”<sup>88</sup>. In other words: those concerned about the fact that cultural decisions at European level could interfere with their own cultural policy, won.

Considering that Jack Lang was Minister of Culture in France at that time, who -under Mitterrand- managed to push culture at a level which was never achieved before and which would never be achieved after him and keeping in mind Malraux’s words about the fact that European culture does not exist<sup>89</sup>, this illustrates the conflict between a strong cultural policy at national level and a possible cultural policy at

<sup>86</sup> Patel, K. K. (Ed.). (2013). *The Cultural Politics of Europe: European capitals of culture and European Union since the 1980s*. Routledge.

<sup>87</sup> Standard Eurobarometer 39 - Spring 1993

<sup>88</sup> “*Cependant, lors de l’élaboration du projet de Constitution européenne, des divergences de vue sont apparues entre les pays membres. La France souhaitait voir maintenue la règle de l’unanimité pour la négociation et la conclusion d’accords dans le domaine des services culturels et audiovisuels, qui lui assure un droit de veto, tandis que d’autres souhaitaient les faire basculer sous la règle de la majorité qualifiée. Les partisans de la règle de l’unanimité l’ont emporté*”. Sägeser C. (2008). [DeepL translation]. *La diversité culturelle. Dossiers du CRISP*, (2), 9-97.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. 1) Culture, an inconvenient topic



European level. This protective attitude might be obvious in other fields, but it is questionable when it comes to culture, because as seen in the introduction, culture is not mutual exclusive, it builds on one another. If the best advocates for culture were on the protective side, and the others -at best- on the indifferent one, what could come out for culture in this Treaty?

“The Community shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore”<sup>90</sup>, states Article 128 of a new title on culture. It further entails measures for the improvement of the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European people, the conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage of European significance, non-commercial cultural exchanges, and artistic and literary creation (including the audiovisual sector).

Article 128 is the expression of a discomfort: on one hand, it is acknowledged that culture could help uniting people from different member states, but still “there is an explicit exclusion of any harmonisation of national legislation in the cultural field in order to protect the cultural, linguistic, national and regional diversity and to prevent any attempt to introduce European cultural policy through the adoption of directives”<sup>91</sup>.

Depending on the point of view, one could praise the Treaty for finally integrating culture as a competence or be disappointed by the fact that it took more than thirty years to materialize such a small step.

For Jean-Noël Tronc, president of the Sacem since 2012, “*this great symbolic step forward remains concretely timid, as shown by the low financial means still devoted by the Union to culture and the marginal character of these resources in the presentation of European financial documents*”<sup>92</sup>.

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<sup>90</sup> Maastricht Treaty, TEU or Union Treaty: Treaty on European Union, 7 February 1992, 1992 O.J.

<sup>91</sup> Johnston, R. (1996). European cultural co-operation: activities of the European Union and relations with the Council of Europe. DOCUMENTS-COUNCIL OF EUROPE, 9, 7575-7575.

<sup>92</sup> « Cette grande avancée symbolique reste concrètement frileuse comme en témoignent les faibles moyens financiers consacrés encore aujourd'hui par l'Union à la culture et le caractère marginal de ces ressources dans la présentation des documents financiers européens. » [DeepL translation]. Tronc, J-N. (2019). Et si on recommençait par la culture ?. Editions du Seuil.

### 3.3.2. First programmes, trial and errors

“Between 1996 and 1999 these new powers gave rise to three cultural programmes: **Kaleidoscope** (1996-1999), intended to encourage creative activities and artistic and cultural cooperation having a European dimension; **Ariane** (1997-1999), intended to provide support in the field of books and reading, including translation; and **Raphael** (1997-2000), intended to support and supplement, through cooperation, the action taken by the Member States in the field of cultural heritage of European importance”<sup>93</sup>.

According to Russel Johnston, the launch of these programmes four years after the Treaty illustrated “well the problems caused by the complicated institutional structure and legislative procedure in the European Union”, and he mentions other programmes “stucked” in the procedure.<sup>94</sup>

With the benefit of hindsight (and evaluation), the Commission further noted, that the actions in the 1994-99 period were “many and varied but often fragmented which can be detrimental to the Community's image among the European public, who are unaware that such efforts are being made to preserve and promote their cultures or that the cultural dimension is taken into account in furthering European integration”<sup>95</sup>. Moreover, the cultural cooperation failed to “create lasting structures” according to the same communication and since it was very broad, it “led to a certain fragmentation of budgetary resources and actions, reducing the visibility of Community intervention”. The conclusion is quite deceptive, as it mentions that “as a result of the very nature of the programmes (...) the overall impact of Community intervention has been less than expected”<sup>96</sup>.

### 3.3.3. State of mind before the years 2000

In January 1998, the European Commission organised a Cultural Forum of the European Union, meant to evaluate the first cultural programmes and prepare

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<sup>93</sup> European Commission, Report on the implementation of the Community programmes Kaleidoscope, Ariane and Raphael, COM (2004)

<sup>94</sup> Johnston, R. (1996). European cultural co-operation: activities of the European Union and relations with the Council of Europe. DOCUMENTS-COUNCIL OF EUROPE, 9, 7575-7575.

<sup>95</sup> European Commission, (1998) Proposal for establishing a single financing and programming instrument for cultural cooperation (Culture 2000 programme). 98/0169 (COD 98/0169 (COD)

<sup>96</sup> idem

Europe's cultural framework programme for the years 2000-2005. *“The aim of the forum was to clarify the European concept of Culture”*<sup>97</sup>.

Seven main points emerged from the consultation process, reflecting common positions and concerns. Some of them are worth mentioning to understand the state of mind before the first cultural framework was set up:

- “Culture is of fundamental value to Europe” and “awareness needs to be increased in order to promote European integration”<sup>98</sup>.
- “Culture is increasingly emerging as a driving force in society, a source of vitality, dynamism and social development. Cultural creation should therefore be made a priority”<sup>99</sup>.
- “Culture is unique” and requires a “regulatory framework which respects cultural diversity and promotes creation”<sup>100</sup>.
- “Culture, through cultural exchange and dialogue, consolidates peace, which is one of the primary goals of European integration”<sup>101</sup>.
- “Culture is an asset for the Union 's external policy”<sup>102</sup>.

This acknowledgment is strong and long awaited since the Rome Treaty. Were they empty words or the beginning of a new era for the European Union?

Important fact: in 1999, DG X was transformed into “DG Education and Culture” and the information and communication went into the newly created DG INFSO, which directly dealt with aspects of the audiovisual sector related to competition, single market, new technologies and international negotiations around the GATT<sup>103</sup>.

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<sup>97</sup> “Le but du forum était de préciser le concept de Culture propre aux Européens”. [DeepL translation]. Humbert-Droz Swezey, A. (1999). L'Europe de la culture ou des cultures?. Communication & Langages,

<sup>98</sup> Second message in European Commission, (1998) Proposal for establishing a single financing and programming instrument for cultural cooperation (Culture 2000 programme). 98/0169 (COD 98/0169 (COD)

<sup>99</sup> Third message.

<sup>100</sup> Fourth message.

<sup>101</sup> Fifth message.

<sup>102</sup> Sixth message.

<sup>103</sup> Denuit, R. (2017). Politique culturelle européenne. Bruylant

## 3.4. STAGE 4 – CULTURE: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE EU

### 3.4.1. Culture 2000: EU's first cultural framework program

The millennial turn was a crucial period for the EU, with the introduction of the Euro and the preparation for the next phase of the enlargement (including former USSR countries).

In the cultural field at EU level, there was an important shift as well, regarding the conception of culture and the tools put into place.

Based on the evaluation of the former cultural programmes and to respond to the “requests and wishes of the Parliament and the Council, the latter having asked the Commission, in its Decision of 22 September 1997 regarding the future of European cultural action, to set up “a guiding, comprehensive and transparent approach for cultural action, [...] including, inter alia, the establishment of a single instrument for programming and financing””, the EC set up the “Culture 2000” program<sup>104</sup>. It was not exactly a single instrument considering that the audiovisual sector was not part of it though and had still its own program: MEDIA Plus (2001-2005), worthy successor of MEDIA (1991-1995) and MEDIA II (1996-2000).

“Culture 2000” had a €167 million budget<sup>105</sup> (= €33,4 million per year), and “MEDIA Plus” a €350 million budget<sup>106</sup> (= €70 million per year).

*“This will reveal the contradiction between the stated ambition and the low level of resources allocated”*<sup>107</sup>, as it has always been the case so far.

A new aspect was the mention that “Culture 2000” should emphasises the role of culture “as an economic factor and as a factor in social integration and citizenship”<sup>108</sup>.

Many analysts show a “paradigm shift” following the Lisbon Strategy in 2000, which inscribed culture in the overall objective of growth and competitiveness<sup>109</sup>. It was less

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<sup>104</sup> European Commission, (1998) Proposal for establishing a single financing and programming instrument for cultural cooperation (Culture 2000 programme). 98/0169 (COD 98/0169 (COD)

<sup>105</sup> Report on the implementation of the « Culture 2000 » programme—Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport—A5-0018/2002. (s. d.).

<sup>106</sup> MEDIA Plus (2001-2006): Programme d'encouragement au développement, à la distribution et à la promotion des œuvres européennes. (s. d.).

<sup>107</sup> “On fera apparaître ainsi la contradiction entre l'ambition affichée et la faiblesse des moyens alloués.” [DeepL translation]. Pire, J. M. (2000). *Pour une politique culturelle européenne*. Fondation Robert Schuman.

<sup>108</sup> EUR-Lex—L29006—EN - EUR-Lex. (s. d.).

about what culture could do for the identity and more about what it could do for the economy. “Under the pressure of a globalization shaped by neoliberal norms, the function of culture has been reduced to that of a resource, a mere “expedient” (Yúdice 2003)”.<sup>110</sup>

On a political side, during the Nice European Council (December 2000) there was still a strong opposition to the instauration of a “qualified majority” when deciding on cultural matters<sup>111</sup>. The unanimity vote “further hampered” this program<sup>112</sup>.

For the drafting of the “Culture 2000” program, “cultural program”, “cultural action”, “cultural collaboration”, were acceptable words. “Cultural policy” was still a no go. Scandinavian Member States and the Netherlands were strongly opposed to it. <sup>113</sup>

Some obstacles have thus been overcome, to the price of an instrumentalization of culture for economic purposes in some eyes, but budget wise and institutional wise, progress was not obvious.

### **3.4.2. 2007 – A turning point?**

2007 was an important year for the European Union with the signature of the Lisbon Treaty in December, and on the culture front, there were another two major steps: the EU ratified the Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions<sup>114</sup> (adopted by UNESCO in 2005) and launched an “European agenda for culture in a globalised world”, a new strategy aimed to intensify cultural cooperation.

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<sup>109</sup> Calligaro, O. & Vlassis, A.. (2017). The European Policy of Culture, *Politique européenne* 2017/2 (No 56), p. 8-28. Translated and edited by Cadenza Academic Translations

<sup>110</sup> Calligaro, O. & Vlassis, A.. (2017). The European Policy of Culture, *Politique européenne* 2017/2 (No 56), p. 8-28. Translated and edited by Cadenza Academic Translations

<sup>111</sup> Helie Thomas, « Cultiver l'Europe. Elements pour une approche localisée de l'« européanisation » des politiques culturelles », *Politique européenne*, 2004/1 (n° 12), p. 66-83.

<sup>112</sup> Pire, J. M. (2000). *Pour une politique culturelle européenne*. Fondation Robert Schuman.

<sup>113</sup> Pire, J. M. (2000). *Pour une politique culturelle européenne*. Fondation Robert Schuman.

<sup>114</sup> Calligaro, O., & Vlassis, A. (2017). La politique européenne de la culture. *Politique européenne*.

## From the conference “A soul for Europe” to the “European year of intercultural dialogue”

This “major boost” which was the Agenda<sup>115</sup>, followed a conference hold in Berlin in 2004 “A soul for Europe”, an event organised by civil society around the idea of “placing sustainable cultural growth at the heart of the European project”<sup>116</sup>, where President Barroso said “in the hierarchy of values, the cultural ones range above the economic ones”<sup>117</sup>. During the conference, a declaration was signed to call for a European Charta on culture and a few months later, the Paris conference for a Europe of Culture was hold in May 2005 in the French capital, organised by the French government<sup>118</sup>. These events built up to the “European agenda for culture in a globalised world” and could have accelerated the signature of the UNESCO convention as well. While the event in Berlin was a “private” initiative, the Paris one already showed a large support from France to culture at EU level. Would the Paris event have taken place without the Berlin one? Probably<sup>119</sup>. But would it have been as effective? Probably not. It was not solely a French initiative anymore, it had become a German issue as well, somehow.

Another impacting factor<sup>120</sup> was the report made by KEA (“an international policy design research centre specialised in culture and creative industries as well as sport, education and youth”)<sup>121</sup> for the EC in October 2006 about “The Economy of Culture in Europe”, a “first at European level”<sup>122</sup>, which highlighted direct and indirect contribution of the cultural and creative sectors toward the Lisbon Agenda.

The Commission Communication on a European Agenda for Culture in a globalizing World was effectively the Community’s “first comprehensive policy statement on

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<sup>115</sup> European Commission. (2018). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. *A New European Agenda for Culture*.

<sup>116</sup> <https://asoulforeurope.eu/events/bc2004/>

<sup>117</sup> Barroso. J.M. (2004) Speech at the Europe and culture conference, Berlin, on 26 November 2004.

<sup>118</sup> Sägeser, C. (2008). La diversité culturelle. Dossiers du CRISP

<sup>119</sup> Given the timeframe between the two events, it is likely that the meeting in Paris was organised in parallel to the Berlin conference.

<sup>120</sup> Denuit R. (2017). Politique culturelle européenne. Bruylant.

<sup>121</sup> <https://keanet.eu/about/#who-we-are>

<sup>122</sup> <https://keanet.eu/publications/?term=The+Economy+of+Culture+in+Europe>

culture”<sup>123</sup> and the Agenda itself “the first policy framework in cultural matters adopted on an EU-wide scale”<sup>124</sup>.

This new Agenda for culture summarized that “the cultural sector plays a key role in terms of its numerous social, economic and political implications. Consequently, culture has a fundamental part in the process of European integration” and built its objectives around three core priorities: cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue; stimulating creativity for its economic value (growth and jobs); and culture as a tool of external politics, diplomatically phrased “culture as a vital element in international relations”<sup>125</sup>.

Concretely, following the adoption, the European Union called out the year 2008 as “European year of intercultural dialogue”, equipped with a 10M€ budget amongst which 2.4M€ went into the co-financing of seven flagship projects<sup>126</sup>. The awareness raising effect the EC was looking for seemed to have worked, since there were over 1,000 partners registered on the website, which reached 4.6 million page-views during the year and 11,000 printed articles<sup>127</sup>.

## **The Lisbon Treaty**

The Lisbon Treaty was signed in 2007 and replaced the draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, rejected by the French and Dutch people who had their say per referendum. The discussions about its content thus started already more than five years before<sup>128</sup>.

Having seen the interest that the EU has had on culture since the beginning of the millennial, it is relevant to see if and how this interest showed through the text.

There is a first insertion in the preamble: “drawing inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, from which have developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person,

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<sup>123</sup> Patel, K. K. (Ed.). (2013). *The Cultural Politics of Europe: European capitals of culture and European Union since the 1980s*. Routledge.

<sup>124</sup> Calligaro, O. & Vlassis, A.. (2017). *The European Policy of Culture, Politique européenne 2017/2* (No 56), p. 8-28. Translated and edited by Cadenza Academic Translations

<sup>125</sup> European Commission. (2007) *European agenda for culture in a globalising world*

<sup>126</sup> European Commission. (2008). *Highlights of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue*.

<sup>127</sup> European Commission. (2008). *Highlights of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue*.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Giscard d'Estaing Valéry, « Présentation de l'avant-projet d'un traité constitutionnel. (Session plénière, 28-29 Octobre 2002) », *Cités*, 2003/1 (n° 13),

freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law”<sup>129</sup>, acknowledging a central place for culture in the construction of the EU, symbolically.

It further adds that the Union: “shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced”. (At that point, it is worth mentioning that both the French and the German version of the Treaty don't use the passive formulation, but an active one: the Union (...) “*ensures the preservation and development of Europe's cultural heritage*”<sup>130</sup>, which has not exactly the same reach).

Furthermore, the Treaty replaces the unanimity vote with a qualified majority vote, except when it comes to “the field of trade in cultural and audiovisual services, where these agreements risk prejudicing the Union's cultural and linguistic diversity”<sup>131</sup>.

That's about it. We have seen in the past that the unanimity rule was a strong obstacle, so its abandonment here seems to be good news for culture, but it doesn't feel like the breakthrough one could have expected with the context of the European Agenda for culture.

In order to highlight possible obstacles explaining that gap, it is interesting to see what wasn't in the Lisbon Treaty.

We learn for instance that for the Constitution project, “*the Commission, especially through Viviane Reding, Commissioner for Culture, Media, Education and Sport*”, spoke out to identify culture as a shared competence and not a supporting one, which would be like relegating “*culture to the bottom of the EU's policy hierarchy*”<sup>132</sup>.

Some MEPs were very motivated by the opportunity of this upcoming Constitution for culture, and Olivier Duhamel for instance, advocated to include “freedom of expression” and “media pluralism” in the core values of the Constitution<sup>133</sup>.

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<sup>129</sup> Official Journal of the European Union. (2007). Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community.

<sup>130</sup> French version of the Treaty: “*Elle respecte la richesse de sa diversité culturelle et linguistique, et veille à la sauvegarde et au développement du patrimoine culturel européen*”.

<sup>131</sup> Official Journal of the European Union. (2007). Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community

<sup>132</sup> “*A cette époque, la Commission s'était exprimée, spécialement par la voix de Vivianne Reding, commissaire pour la culture, les médias, l'éducation et le sport, pour demander, dans le futur traité, un titre intitulé “Education, formation, jeunesse, culture et sport”, où la culture, entre autres, serait ainsi identifiée comme compétence complémentaire, et non plus comme “domaine d'appui”, auquel cas, estimait la précitée, il y avait comme une façon de reléguer la culture au dernier rang de la hiérarchie des politiques de l'Union*” [DeepL translation]. Denuit, R. (2017). *Politique culturelle européenne*. Bruylant.

<sup>133</sup> Denuit, R. (2017). *Politique culturelle européenne*. Bruylant.



The backstage discussions taking place in those years would probably be highly enlightening about what was fundamentally blocking, but we could safely assume that the member states and the Council were not ready for the move that some members of the Parliament and the Commission were ready to do, and that the recent extension to the East (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia in 2004 and then Bulgaria and Romania in 2007) wasn't favourable for a big step toward more cultural power at EU level.

### 3.4.3. Creative Europe

After the programs "Culture 2000" and "Culture 2007-2013" which run alongside MEDIA, the program dedicated for the audiovisual sector, the EC launched "Creative Europe" in 2014, which reunited both and included an intersectoral component<sup>134</sup>.

The budget for the Creative Europe program amounted 1,46 bn€ for the six years period 2014-2020, which represented an increase of 26% compared to the previous program, but still represented 0,12 - 0,13% of the MFF<sup>135</sup>.

The Creative Europe program came with a conceptual shift, which worried the cultural and creative sector. *"Many cultural players have emphasised the strongly economic and business-oriented coloration of the Commission's proposal, some of whose terms seem to seek to renew the professional culture of the players, or in any case, the objectives of Community cultural intervention"*<sup>136</sup>.

It starts with a reference in the regulation establishing the program, to the Europe 2020 Strategy: "cultural and creative sectors are a source of innovative ideas that can be turned into products and services that create growth and jobs and help address societal changes"<sup>137</sup> but it also shines through expressions like "audience

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<sup>134</sup> This new feature was meant to facilitate access to funding for small entities, to produce studies and analyses on European cultural policies and to finance the Program Contact Centres in the Member States.

<sup>135</sup> See MFF.

<sup>136</sup> *"De nombreux acteurs culturels ont souligné la coloration fortement économique et business-oriented que véhicule la proposition de la Commission, dont certains termes semblent vouloir renouveler la culture professionnelle des acteurs ou, en tous les cas, les objectifs de l'intervention culturelle Communautaire"*. [DeepL translation] Perrin, T. (2013). Vers une Europe Créative ? Analyse du programme culturel de l'Union européenne pour 2014-2020. *L'Observatoire*, 42, 3-7.

<sup>137</sup> Regulation (EU) No 1295/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing the Creative Europe Programme (2014 to 2020) and repealing Decisions No 1718/2006/EC, No 1855/2006/EC and No 1041/2009/EC, OJ L 347 of 20.12.2013 with changes

development” in a sector which was used to speak about “access” of the audiences, up to the evaluation criteria.

The Commission was thus going further in a direction taken since 2000, seeing culture “through the prism of competitiveness” and using it for its economic values and for the influence it could bring in the World<sup>138</sup>.

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<sup>138</sup> Perrin, T. (2013). Vers une Europe Créative ? Analyse du programme culturel de l'Union européenne pour 2014-2020. *L'Observatoire*, 42, 3-7.

## 4. EUROPEAN CULTURAL POLICY TODAY

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Building on the information and knowledge acquired from the previous part, we can take the temperature on where we are now with culture at European Union level, especially since two major events catalysed the debate around it: the covid crisis and the vote on the MFF 2021-2027, with the new budget for the Creative Europe Program.

### 4.1. General Overview

The general orientation for culture today was set in a Communication from the Commission in May 2018 about “a New European Agenda for Culture”. Like its predecessor in 2007, the agenda focuses on three core priorities. The economic and external dimensions are still there, but the “Cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue” aspect from 2007 is included in “Social dimension - harnessing the power of culture and cultural diversity for social cohesion and well-being”<sup>139</sup>. This indicates an evolution, showing that cultural diversity in itself is not an objective anymore, but a means to an end and here, the end is “social cohesion and well-being”. It underlines the idea “that the adoption of the rhetoric of exceptionality and diversity by a wide range of actors involved in the European policy of culture goes hand in hand with an instrumental use of culture for the pursuit of broader objectives of economic development, intended to encourage social, or even democratic, development”<sup>140</sup>. One can also notice that “cultural sector” mainly used in the 2007 Agenda becomes here mostly “cultural and creative industries”, which is also tinged with economic spirit.

On the other hand, ideas like “fair remuneration of authors and creators” are mentioned for the first time.

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<sup>139</sup> EC. (2018). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - A New European Agenda for Culture

<sup>140</sup> Oriane Calligaro, With the contribution of Antonios Vlassis. (2017). The European Policy of Culture, *Politique européenne* 2017/2 (No 56), p. 8-28. Translated and edited by Cadenza Academic Translations

A possible issue with considering the instrumental use of culture alone, is that it doesn't stand on its own.

When Ursula von der Leyen announced her political guidelines in July 2019, there weren't many references to culture<sup>141</sup> and when she announced her team of Commissioners in September, the word "culture" disappeared completely in the portfolio of the "Commissioner for Innovation and Youth", creating an outcry in the sector<sup>142</sup>, which succeeded and led to the rebranding in: "Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth".

Putting aside all the evolution which has happened since 1992 for culture at EU level, this recent episode questions: is there an intrinsic will and sincere interest in culture at EC level today?

## **4.2. Creative Europe 2021 – 2027**

### **4.2.1. Lessons from the past**

The mid-term evaluation of the Creative Europe Program 2014-2020, conducted by an independent and external organisation, gives valuable information. Overall, the Program "has delivered EU added value", contributed "to the creation of a 'European cultural space' and thus helped promoting cultural diversity" and "most supported activities would have been significantly reduced in scope and size or would not have happened" without it<sup>143</sup>.

Still, some concerns are raised about the insufficient budget, which fails "to bring about a major impact at European scale and /or sectoral level" and it is mentioned that "the funding is spread too thinly among many beneficiaries"<sup>144</sup>.

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<sup>141</sup> Three references actually: "The diversity of landscape, culture and heritage is one of Europe's most defining and remarkable features" and "I want to reaffirm the European perspective of the Western Balkans. We share the same continent, the same history, the same culture and the same challenges" + "our various national and cultural identities are the patchwork of our identity".

<sup>142</sup> CAE. (2019). Bring Back Culture, Ms. President!

<sup>143</sup> European Commission. (2018). Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and The Council - Mid-term evaluation of the Creative Europe programme (2014-2020)

<sup>144</sup> European Commission. (2018). Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and The Council - Mid-term evaluation of the Creative Europe programme (2014-2020)

#### 4.2.2. The budget, open battlefield

As a result, the Commission “had proposed a 17% overall increase to the Creative Europe budget in May 2018”, but the “overall figure for EU budget proposed by the Finnish presidency” in the second semester of 2019 was lower than the Commission's proposal, giving a glimpse of a reduction in the Creative Europe Program<sup>145</sup>. In February 2020, Council President Charles Michel confirmed drastic cuts, which were balanced by the Commission in a revised proposal in May, bringing the CULT Committee in the Parliament to issue a statement claiming that “all figures are far below the Commission's original proposal for the 2021-2027 budget. Since when does the Commission call decreases increases?” and further called for doubling the budget, supported by numerous stakeholders<sup>146</sup>.

With the pandemic and the unprecedented effort made on the EU total budget, “Creative Europe represent(ed) only 0,08% of the whole package”<sup>147</sup>.

Thanks to strong advocacy and with the support of the EP<sup>148</sup>, Creative Europe 2021-2027 was finally voted with a 2,4 bn€ budget and reached thus an unprecedented level numerically, even though on a 1.800 bn€ total budget<sup>149</sup>, it represents a 0,12% share.

This battle around the budget points the finger at the Council, which worked against a revalorisation of the Creative Europe Program - although CAE mentions that “some national Culture Ministers, namely Germany, Italy and France”<sup>150</sup> supported the calls for a raise - but it might also question: what happened in the Commission? In a period, which was undoubtedly complicated to handle and where the objective was to find agreements quickly, culture slipped from the position of an easy-sacrifice to a forefront runner, which needed an extra-support.

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<sup>145</sup> Cineuropa. (2019) Culture Action Europe warns new EU budget proposes drastic funding cuts for Creative Europe

<sup>146</sup> European Parliament. (2020). Press release : Rethink "deeply disappointing" budget proposals, says Culture and Education Committee

<sup>147</sup> CAE. (2020). Petition: Uphold culture in the EU budget

<sup>148</sup> And probably the Covid Crisis as well, as we will see in 8.

<sup>149</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/the-eu-budget/long-term-eu-budget-2021-2027/>

<sup>150</sup> CAE. (2020). Sounds like a deal!

### 4.3. Covid crisis and the “economic” argument

The impact of the pandemic on the creative and cultural sector was disastrous. It lost 31% of its turnover and was even more affected than the tourism sector<sup>151</sup>. On the other hand, there was an outstanding visibility for the sector, pushing it from the background where it is normally hidden, in the spotlight.

That can explain how the Council went from a proposal to decrease Creative Europe’s budget end of 2019 to Ministers welcoming “the fact that the budget of the Creative Europe programme will be substantially increased for the period 2021-2027”<sup>152</sup>.

Surely, culture was of great value during the lockdown and that could have helped creating more openness amongst the most reluctant policy makers, but what definitely tipped the scales was that all of a sudden, the economic value of the cultural and creative sector was made visible<sup>153</sup>.

Facts and figures help to trigger a larger interest for the cultural and creative sector, and the Commission has recently launched a call under the Horizon Program, to reinforce research, in order to find “evidence” of the “innovation potential” and of the “direct and indirect effects on the EU economy” by the cultural and creative sector<sup>154</sup>.

For MEP Salima Yenbou, it was important to rely on the economic argument in order to achieve a large awareness and get a quick reaction, but it is also important now to tone it down, in order not to fall in a merely economic use of culture<sup>155</sup>.

This episode proves nonetheless that obstacles can be bypassed and that a common agreement between the institutions can be found in favour of culture.

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<sup>151</sup> EY. (2021). Rebuilding Europe - The cultural and creative economy before and after the COVID-19 crisis

<sup>152</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/eycs/2020/12/01/culture/>

<sup>153</sup> This has been confirmed by many interviewees.

<sup>154</sup> European Commission. (2021). Horizon Europe Work Programme 2021-2022

<sup>155</sup> Cf. Interview with Salima Yenbou.

#### **4.4. #CulturalDealEU: a Cultural Deal for Europe**

Beginning of November 2020, Culture Action Europe (CAE), the European Cultural Foundation (ECF) and Europa Nostra, launched the online debate “A Cultural Deal for Europe”, taking place on November 18<sup>th</sup> and putting around the table amongst many stakeholders, the Commission (Mariya Gabriel, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth), the Parliament (Sabine Verheyen, Chair of the European Parliament’s Committee on Culture and Education (CULT), a representative of the upcoming French Presidency of the Council (Clément Beaunes, French Secretary of State for European Affairs) and the European Committee of the Regions (Apostolos Tzitzikostas, President of the European Committee of the Regions).

“This overarching strategy” aimed at “placing culture at the centre of the European project and mainstreaming it across all policy fields: from the green transition to Europe’s geopolitical ambition and from the digital shift to a value-driven Union”<sup>156</sup>.

They listed nine points, amongst which some had very concrete applications: the EU member states should devote at least 2% of the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility for culture, the EU should include culture in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the European Green Deal and further make sure that funding for culture is mainstreamed into other relevant EU programmes and actions, and the EU should enable a legal and fiscal framework for European philanthropy to unfold<sup>157</sup>.

The obstacles they had to face (and still have to face) in this campaign are very different, since it is far-reaching and touches upon different levels of policy making and different fields.

Regarding the demand for the 2% of the recovery fund, the advocacy at EU level could only be of symbolic nature, since the EU couldn’t impose this upon its member states. And in Brussels, the idea was relayed by several parties in the Parliament, from left to right, like EPP which stated in a press release in February 2021: “against the backdrop of this colossal loss for this industry we call on EU governments to

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<sup>156</sup> <https://cultureactioneurope.org/projects/culturaldealeu-campaign/>

<sup>157</sup> CAE. ECF. Europa Nostra. (2020). A Cultural Deal for Europe - a central place for culture in the EU’s post-pandemic future

devote 2% of the EU and national Recovery Plans to the creative and cultural industry”<sup>158</sup>.

So most of the advocacy on this point had to be done at member state level by the cultural and creative sector and notably by members of the advocacy networks. As a result, some member states did, some didn't. But amongst those who didn't, it was not necessarily the expression of a disinterest in the cultural sector. In Germany for instance, they had already granted a massive support to the sector, with a 2,5 bn€ *Sonderfonds*, but on other budgets than the recovery fund<sup>159</sup>.

Regarding the endeavour of getting culture “mainstreamed” into different EU programmes and actions, it makes sense to focus on Brussels and the Institutions. It is interesting to see that in the context of external relations, there has been an increasing political awareness<sup>160</sup> and that there is a “real strategy”<sup>161</sup> of the EU for culture applied in this field.

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<sup>158</sup> EPP. (2021). EPP Group calls for a lease of life for the culture and creative industries.

<sup>159</sup> Bundesministerium der Finanzen. (2021). Bund unterstützt Kulturveranstaltungen mit Sonderfonds—Bundesfinanzministerium—Presse. Bundesministerium der Finanzen

<sup>160</sup> Or decreasing reserves on the open use of cultural diplomacy?

<sup>161</sup> Cf. Interview with Isabelle Schwarz from the European Cultural Foundation.



## 5. OBSTACLES IN THE EU INSTITUTIONS

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### 5.1. Obstacles in the Council & the Member States

When I started this research and talked to people working in the Institutions, they all pointed to the Council (and the member states) as the main obstacle when it comes to reinforcing culture at EU level or even considering an European cultural policy. Building up on the previous parts of this research, we can understand how this unfolds and we can distinguish different natures of obstacles.

Not a single member state today would accept that culture becomes a shared competence of the EU, according to all my interviewees. Culture is the elephant in the room. It is kindergarten material compared to the “real” issues of the EU, trade, external relations, etc. but as soon as something or someone threatens the order of things, all member states are up in arms. *“The more emphasis was placed on the share of structural funds devoted to culture, the more this share decreased”*<sup>162</sup> said an expert questioned in an information report of the French Senate.

*“Member states are extremely sensitive to anything that might open the door to influences on cultural policies, which they consider to be at the heart of national identities”*<sup>163</sup>, this seems to be a continuum since the creation of the European Union. There is a mistrust against a uniform and homogeneous European culture<sup>164</sup>, based on the fact that EU’s main action has always been a “systematic standardisation”<sup>165</sup>.

And more than any other policy field, culture poses “the symbolic question of supranationality”<sup>166</sup>.

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<sup>162</sup> *“Plus on mettait en avant la part des fonds structurels consacrés à la culture, plus cette part diminuait”* [DeepL translation]. Blin, M. (2001). L’Europe et la culture. (s. d.) Rapport d’information fait au nom de la délégation du Sénat pour l’Union européenne.

<sup>163</sup> *“Les Etats-nations sont extrêmement sensibles à tout ce qui pourrait ouvrir la voie à des influences sur des politiques culturelles, qu’ils considèrent comme étant au coeur des identités nationales”* [DeepL translation]. Chenal, O. (2005). L’Europe et la culture: combien de politiques?. La pensée de midi, (3), 65-71.

<sup>164</sup> Relais Culture Europe, France. Ministère de la culture, & de la communication. Département des affaires internationales. (2001). *Les financements culturels européens*. La documentation française.

<sup>165</sup> Pire, J. M. (2000). *Pour une politique culturelle européenne*. Fondation Robert Schuman.

<sup>166</sup> Pire, J. M. (2000). *Pour une politique culturelle européenne*. Fondation Robert Schuman.

This is a double hurdle. How could member states on one side refuse to give the EU greater power on cultural matters and on the other side, ask the EU to do more on culture?

The upcoming French Presidency of the Council will be very interesting to follow on that point, since a cultural committee will be set up, based around Culture Minister Roselyne Bachelot and Secretary of State for European Affairs Clément Beaune<sup>167</sup>.

Let's imagine that one day, it would be possible that member states note that "their" culture would be more threatened by not giving the EU the means to conduct a strong cultural policy, rather than if they did. This day, another huge obstacle would stand in the way of a common agreement: how to achieve this?

The heterogeneity of national policies, be it organisation-wise or ideological-wise, seem to be unreconcilable. Even without the United-Kingdom, there are a lot of member states where cultural action is left to independent organisations (Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland and Denmark for instance)<sup>168</sup> and which do not like the sound of "cultural policy". As seen with the example of Hungary, culture can indeed be a problematic tool and thus, it can also be a "problematic tool for building identity and belonging to Europe"<sup>169</sup>.

For all these reasons, the Council is indeed the EU Institution which crystallizes the most issues with culture and the idea of a European cultural policy. And it seems to be closely linked to the conception of what the European Union should be and should not be, as if the rejection of a cultural competence for the EU was a rejection of the idea of European federalism itself, or of a closer Union at least.

Is culture stuck in an immutable position in the Council? Does the nature of the European Union need to change to remove the obstacles?

Are they the only serious obstacles?

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<sup>167</sup> Council of Ministers' meeting – French presidency of the Council of the European Union – Statement - Paris, 4 November 2020

<sup>168</sup> Blin, M. (2001). *L' Europe et la culture*. (s. d.) Rapport d'information fait au nom de la délégation du Sénat pour l'Union européenne.

<sup>169</sup> Lähdesmäki, T., Mäkinen, K., Čeginskis, V. L. A., & Kaasik-Krogerus, S. (2021). "Chapter 3 EU Cultural Policy". In *Europe from Below*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill.

## 5.2. Obstacles in the Parliament

One idea I could confirm over this research as well, is that the Parliament is the EU Institution which is the loudest defender of culture and regularly pushes for increasing the budget and reinforcing the action. There are MEPs genuinely and actively involved in advocating for it.

But it hides another reality: a vast majority of MEPs are not interested in culture and simply do not care. Culture, except when there is a pandemic, is not a priority and ranks far behind other topics. This unwritten hierarchy can be confirmed by anyone who ever set a foot in the EP.

The broad understanding of the notion of culture has also led MEPs to be very cautious. Geneviève Fraisse, MEP during the 5th parliamentary term, mentioned: *“Culture does not have a stable and universal definition that is agreed upon by the actors. So the first thing I learned in the European Parliament's Committee on Culture was what words can be used there and what words cannot, such as cultural policy. These words are subject to dispute. There is no censorship, but there are headwinds. This is also the case with European identity and history. These words, which I would have used a priori, I now avoid”*<sup>170</sup>.

The understanding itself of what culture is, is often blurry to the point where it becomes problematic. Invited to talk at the #CulturalDealEu organised by CAE, David Sassoli, president of the Parliament, declines culture as “cultural heritage, figurative art, music, cinema and the performing arts” and switches from culture to art, as if it was one and the same thing<sup>171</sup>.

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<sup>170</sup> *“La culture ne jouit pas d'une définition stable et universelle faisant consensus chez les acteurs. Ainsi, la première chose que j'ai apprise à la Commission culture du Parlement européen était les mots qu'il est possible d'y prononcer et les autres, comme celui de politique culturelle. Ces mots sont sujets à disputes. Il n'y a pas de censure mais cela suscite des vents contraires. C'est aussi le cas d'identité européenne et d'histoire. Ces mots que j'aurais employés a priori, je les évite désormais.”* Alcaud, D. & Pire, J. (2006). Sociologie de la politique culturelle européenne: Stratégies et représentations des acteurs dans un processus d'institutionnalisation contrarié. Sociologie de l'Art, PS8, 131-161.

européenne et d'histoire. Ces mots que j'aurais employés a priori, je les évite désormais.

<sup>171</sup> *“The cultural dimension is not a secondary aspect of our societies; on the contrary, it is decisive for our quality of life. This is why the European Parliament has been committed from the outset to supporting what is a crucial area for building a new world. Cultural heritage, figurative art, music, cinema and the performing arts are not secondary aspects but are elements that contribute to enriching our citizenship, our European citizenship, to giving us personality. At a time when the night seemed to have taken over our private lives, cultural venues, concerts, cinemas, theatres, Europeans took their instruments and even sang on their balconies. Art has a cathartic power that can accompany post-pandemic society on the road to resilience. Art is not an accessory; it is a viaticum. Art is not «*

Misconception of stakes related to culture have led to sensitive episodes in the past. For example, when Julia Reda, only MEP of the Pirates, the only party openly against copyright, was appointed rapporteur on the author's right issue<sup>172</sup>, an issue putting at risk the very basis of large segments of the cultural and creative sector in the EU. This was not the Parliament throwing cultural creation down the sink. It was the Parliament not having seen that it would be the direct consequence.

Another obstacle which was drawn in different interviews, was the functioning of the Parliament itself. In order to be able to move forward, a lot of compromises must be done, and these depend on strategies and alliances. Culture being at the same time very complex and very far in the priorities, it rarely wins this game.

The probability of failure is another obstacle, since it brings with it a form of self-censorship. Knowing that some resolutions won't go through a vote or will at best be blocked by the Council, discourages most to even put them on the table.

Luckily, more than half of MEPs are renewed with each election<sup>173</sup>, bringing new energy and motivation in the assembly.

Since MEPs are linked to member states and can have interests in keeping a good relationship with their home government, the Parliament is exposed in a similar way to the position of member states as the Council, but with more room for manoeuvre.

### 5.3. Obstacles in the Commission

The biggest issue at Commission level, is the lack of perspective, the lack of vision. If it was for the President VDL, there wouldn't even be a proper Directorate General for culture<sup>174</sup>.

This could be compensated by an active and efficient Commissioner at DG EAC, which Mariya Gabriel seem to be, but it isn't, because of her limited responsibilities and the *“unequal distribution of powers within the European Commission, where the*

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*political* », it is « poetic », a creative force that animates us and allows us to live together, to survive, individually and collectively”. Sassoli D. (2020).- My message for @europanostra's #CulturalDealEU debate – 18/11/2020

<sup>172</sup> Tronc, J-N. (2019). Et si on recommençait par la culture ?. Editions du Seuil.

<sup>173</sup> There were 61% new MEPs in the 2019 elections.

<sup>174</sup> Cf. 4.4. #CultureDealEU

*Directorate-General for Culture carries little weight in relation to the other Directorates-General, in particular the Directorate for Competition*<sup>175</sup>.

On the 2,4bn € budget of Creative Europe, 58% are allocated to the MEDIA sub-program<sup>176</sup>, which is under the authority of DG CONNECT for its policy aspects and EACEA for its administrative aspects. This means that the DG in charge of culture is responsible for less than 50% of the budget directly dedicated to culture.

Initially, when the audiovisual sector had been placed under the authority of DG INFSO (the predecessor of DG Connect), it was also to increase the power of action on this sector: in the competition between DGs, INFSO was more influential than EAC<sup>177</sup>. The Commission manoeuvred around its own obstacles.

The prism under which the Commission considers culture and the cultural and creative sector in the last twenty years constitute a problem and could be considered as a real obstacle. Anyone who ever filled in an application for the Creative Europe Programme feels the disconnection with the sector. It got even worse with the 2021-2027 Programme, which applies methods of project management to the audiovisual sector for example, with workplans and risk management analysis which feel like asking an elephant how he intends to climb up a tree.

This disconnection is also to be found in the paradigm shift we have discussed earlier, about inscribing culture in the overall objective of growth and competitiveness<sup>178</sup>.

How strong can the cultural and creative sector advocate for the reinforcement of cultural priorities at the Commission, when the outcome on their side is so disconnected from their reality? How pushing someone to look further when he is not looking in the right direction?

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<sup>175</sup> *“Cette absence de logique est aggravée par l’inégale répartition des pouvoirs au sein de la Commission européenne, où la direction Générale chargée de la culture est d’un faible poids vis-à-vis des autres directions générales, en particulier de la direction en charge de la concurrence.”* [DeepL translation]. Blin, M. (2001). L’Europe et la culture. (s. d.) Rapport d’information fait au nom de la délégation du Sénat pour l’Union européenne.

<sup>176</sup> European Commission. (2021). Europe créative 2021-2027

<sup>177</sup> Cf. interview.

<sup>178</sup> Cf. 3.4.1. Culture 2000

## **5.4. Supporting competence: an obstacle?**

The question whether the fact that culture is only a supporting competence of the EU constitutes an obstacle or not, is very difficult to answer. I started this research convinced that it was and after tons of pages read and many hours of discussions, I have lost the answer and came up with more questions.

Does the fact that culture is only a supporting competence of the EU translate more a discomfort or a disinterest and which of both should advocacy address primarily?

Would it be easier to elaborate a strong European cultural policy if culture was a shared competence? Probably.

Is it impossible to elaborate a strong European cultural policy with a supporting competence? Probably not.

Would it be possible to legislate on crucial aspects for the cultural and creative sector, such as the status of artists, on an EU level? Since it touches upon social policy, which is a shared competence, it theoretically could.

Could that legislation go in a right direction without a global vision for a European cultural policy and seeing the disconnection already happening at Commission level? That would be another debate.

## **5.5. Intangible obstacles**

The intangible obstacles are those whose contours we could see all over this research, but which can't be drawn in a Cartesian way. It is linked to the absence of a common definition of what "culture" means and encompasses, and a very tight definition of what "European culture" is, linked to a fear it could swallow the diversity and threaten the "purity" of national cultures. On the other side, lie the spectres of propaganda and identity, going all the way down to separatism.

There is something about culture, which goes very deep in every individual, right next to his values. Most of the ideas there are intuitions, feelings, beliefs. You can't move them easily and certainly not with loud arguments. It takes time to evolve, which can be complicated in relation to a limited political timeframe.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 6.1. Proven methods

In terms of cultural advocacy, some methods have shown their efficiency. Taking into consideration the results of this research, a first recommendation would be to work with proven methods.

#### **Working with the Parliament**

Historically, the Parliament is the Institution which defends the strongest the interests of the creative and cultural sector, and culture in general. And it still is, as we could see during the covid crisis and the negotiations on the budget for Creative Europe. Obstacles are present there as well, but they can be overcome more easily than in the Commission and the Council, where they are rooted deeper.

Countries and parties of MEPs can be first indicators whether to count them as allies or possible opponents, but they can't be really trusted. A MEP with a strong cultural background (profession, origins, hobbies, etc.) will probably be more helpful for a cultural advocacy campaign, even if his party or the member state he was voted in, would not give it away at first sight.

Discouragement and defeatism are not to be underestimated in the ranks of MEPs. A campaign should be able to raise hope about the possible positive outcome and the importance to fight for it.

#### **Working on local level in the member states**

Most organisations advocating for cultural related goals at EU level are networks of cultural actors at member state level<sup>179</sup>. This is particularly helpful to push causes through the Council.

As with every other advocacy campaign, a thoughtful selection is key. Seeing how complex and sensitive issues related to culture can be, the wrong strong defender could also be the gravedigger<sup>180</sup>.

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<sup>179</sup> It is the case for CAE, IETM, Encatc, FERA, etc.

### **Being in a discussion rather than fighting frontally**

Everything related to culture in a political context is sensitive, even when referring to identified segments like “the cultural and creative sector” or even “highbrow culture”. Fighting frontally with the hope that a policy maker would end up being convinced by the compelling arguments is a lost cause. Discussions and involvement, like the #CulturalDealEU debate, have proven more useful.

### **Having very precise demands**

Remember David Sassoli’s confusion about culture and arts<sup>181</sup>, and don’t create more confusion: be very specific about the request. In the Cultural Deal for Europe, the 2% request was very precise, very promotable. “Upholding democracy and rights for a values-based Europe”, which is also another point of this strategy, is more unlikely to find a concrete outcome<sup>182</sup>.

### **Building on reports**

Facts and figures are particularly helpful to advocate for culture and the cultural and creative sector, as we have seen in the past and in the present. Jean-Noël Tronc describes, how the EY report helped to win the cause about authors rights in 2015: “*He (Andrus Ansip, Vice-President of the Commission) holds in his hands the EY report on the economic weight of culture and explains to me that the publication of these figures has changed the state of mind within the Commission, which the French Commissioner Pierre Moscovici will confirm*”<sup>183</sup>.

Such reports are very costly, but there can be other ways. The EP has a European Parliamentary Research Service<sup>184</sup>, which MEPs can solicit for research and analyses for example.

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<sup>180</sup> Cf. anecdote on Dutch foreign Minister Joseph Luns: “Cultural cooperation seems innocent enough but not when proposed by the French” (Luns quoted in Vanke 2001: 99).

<sup>181</sup> Cf. 5.2.

<sup>182</sup> A precise workplan on this and other points of the Cultural Deal is in the making, so this is only an example.

<sup>183</sup> « *Il tient entre les mains le rapport EY sur le poids économique de la culture et m'explique que la publication de ces chiffres a changé l'état d'esprit au sein de la Commission, ce que me confirmera le commissaire français Pierre Moscovici* ». [DeepL translation]. Tronc, J-N. (2019). Et si on recommençait par la culture ?. Editions du Seuil.

<sup>184</sup> <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/en/stay-informed/research-and-analysis>



## Using side doors

To overcome the hurdle of the weak position of DG EAC in the Commission, bypass the supporting competence, find more budgets, and eventually be presented in a more consensual way to the Council, it can be more effective sometimes to proceed discretely and go through side doors. That is already what is happening with the structural funds for example. But is circumventing obstacles, keeping them solidly in place where they are, helpful on the long run?

## **6.2. Working on the narrative**

As long as “European culture” is understood as the common heritage between member states, the obstacles in the minds of policy makers and in all Institutions, will be high and difficult to surpass.

Is French culture only the common denominator between local cultures in the regions forming France? Would anyone deny that Lederhosen are representative of Austrian-German culture, just because they are linked to a particular geographical area? Aren't the Gilles de Binches also part of Belgian culture even if Belgium itself is a very recent construct?

So why would it be so hard to accept that European culture is the sum of cultures<sup>185</sup> at national level in the member states?

The Germany and Belgium examples give a part of the answer: in Germany, Länders are responsible for cultural policy and in Belgium, the communities. Even at national level, the idea would be rejected.

So rather than going on the fields of member states, would the allies be in the Regions?

According to Vincent Citot, seeing “*Europe as nothing more than an association of regional cultures*” would be another pitfall and would miss the universalist European spirit<sup>186</sup>. He suggests the idea of a “*Europe of culture*”<sup>187</sup> instead, while

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<sup>185</sup> MEP Salima Yenbou (Greens) made an important remark on this hypothesis : « a sum yes, but not a mathematical one ». Overlaying different cultures does not simply give the addition of this cultures, it creates something more.

<sup>186</sup> Citot, V. (2006). L'idée d'une Europe de la Culture (L'Europe des cultures, la culture européenne et l'Europe de la Culture) [1]. Le Philosophoire, 27, 215-225.

<sup>187</sup> « Une Europe de la culture ».

acknowledging other related issues, such as the fact that it would be less consensual.

Working on a definition with experts in one room would probably be close to mission impossible, but it starts there: finding together an acceptable definition which make European culture (or a Europe of culture) embrace the diversity of cultures, rather than pointing to a very tight place which member states have in common, and which could indeed be perceived as an antechamber of normalisation. And bring this definition through policy makers minds, EU texts and legislation.

This approach would be more in line with what the cultural and creative sector experiences anyway, closer to the citizens, and stronger to unfold all the values culture could bring for the European project.

### **6.3. Reducing the risk of political instrumentalization**

The best arguments to reinforce the cultural and creative sector are very sensitive, can lose balance and even become counter-productive.

On one side, since it is so difficult to determine “European culture”, a shortcut can be to determine it by what it is not, the “other”, and emphasize the threat of cultural influence from the outside. American culture for instance. *“Yet this relationship has almost always been defined in a mode of mistrust, in reaction, in opposition. (...) Hence the importance of rethinking the relationship with the Other as a gaze that turns towards him”*<sup>188</sup>.

On the other side, there is the economic weight of culture and its contribution to employment and youth employment. These arguments work, they are more audible than intangible arguments about the intrinsic value of culture. But delivered on a platter to an EU which has already taken a paradigmatic shift which inscribed culture in the overall objective of growth and competitiveness<sup>189</sup>, this can backfire very quickly for the sector.

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<sup>188</sup> « Or cette relation s'est presque toujours définie sur un mode de défiance, en réaction, en opposition. (...) D'où l'importance de repenser la relation à l'Autre comme un regard qui se tourne vers lui ». [DeepL translation]. Rochat, D. (2001). L'identité européenne: du déterminisme historique à une objectivité culturelle. *Études internationales*, 32(3), 455–473.

<sup>189</sup> Calligaro, O., & Vlassis, A. (2017). La politique européenne de la culture. *Politique européenne*

It is important thus to reduce the risks of political instrumentalization of the elements put forward in an advocacy campaign, by being perfectly aware of them, using them with parsimony and in relation to the importance of the campaign. During the covid crisis for instance, taking out the big artillery was a necessity. And still, we can see from the phrasing in the joint motion for a resolution from the Parliament, that this caution has been applied: “whereas culture is a strategic sector for the European Union, not only constituting an important part of our economy, but also contributing to democratic, sustainable, free and inclusive societies, and reflecting our European diversity, values, history, freedoms and way of life”<sup>190</sup>.

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<sup>190</sup> European Parliament. (2020). Joint motion for a resolution on the cultural recovery for Europe.

## 7. CONCLUSION

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This research started with a simple question regarding the weak position of culture in the EU: “what is blocking?”. Going through the definition of culture, how this policy field was deployed in the European Union and how it stands today, we could identify some of the obstacles in the main Institutions, and confirm and complete them thanks to the expertise of interviews conducted over the last three months.

This has plunged us in the very heart of the problematic and made us see the issue through the eyes of the Institutions and the people behind them.

Just like in our everyday life, culture confronts our deepest beliefs, shakes up our convictions, raises many questions and doesn't give any definitive answer. It makes us who we are and takes us somewhere else in the exact same moment. It exceeds our capacity of conceptualisation and slips through our reason as soon as we are trying to contain it in a definition. But at the same time, the European Union desperately needs a soul and has already lost one of its members because of its failure to do so. And there is a very concrete reality of a cultural and creative sector which struggles to maintain himself. There is an urgency in putting down the main obstacles in the EU to reinforce the cultural budget and draw the contours of a “cultural strategy”, if “cultural policy” is a banned word.

Having been through this research, one can wonder: is this even possible? Guido Fanti, former Italian MEP, gives us an important key: *“raising the issue of a cultural policy within the European framework means, in reality, shaking up the conservatism of current Community policies, of the politicians who are responsible for them and who carry them out, it means truly carrying out an operation of profound and global renewal”*<sup>191</sup>.

It took more than thirty years to equip the EU with a competence on culture and that was thirty years ago. Maybe the Conference on the Future of Europe will be the next milestone?

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<sup>191</sup> “Soulever le problème d'une politique de la culture dans le cadre européen veut dire en réalité secouer le conservatisme des politiques communautaires actuelles, des sujets politiques qui en sont responsables et qui les réalisent, cela veut dire accomplir vraiment une opération de renouvellement profonde et globale”. [DeepL translation]. Fanti, G. (1987), « L'espace culturel européen : structure et coordination des politiques culturelles nationales et communautaires », in Delcourt, Jacques et Papini, Roberto (ed), Pour une politique européenne de la culture, Paris, Economica, p. 61-7

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## **INTERVIEWS**

- Mr. Paul Culley – EU Policy advisor. *Several discussions over the last three months.*
- Mr. Bernard Philippe – former senior European civil servant. *Several discussions over the last three months.*
- Mr. Jean-Eric de Cockborne - former advisor at DG CONNECT and former Head of Unit Audiovisual and Media Policies. *Three hours discussion face to face.*
- Ms. Stella Tutunzi – Assistant to MEP Romeo Franz (Greens/EFA). *One and a half hour discussion face to face.*
- Ms. Juliette Prissard – DG of Eurocinema. *One hour discussion face to face, informally.*
- Mr. Eric van den Abeele – Counsellor at PERM REP Belgium to EU. *One hour discussion face to face.*
- Ms. Salima Yenbou – MEP (Greens/EFA). *One hour per Zoom.*
- Ms. Isabelle Schwarz - Head of Public Policy at European Cultural Foundation. *One hour per Zoom.*
- Ms. Sabine Verheyen – MEP (EPP) and chair of the CULT-committee. *Scheduled on 14/10/2021*