

## Joint Statement between EUNIC and the European External Action Service

We, the President of EUNIC – EU National Institutes for Culture – and the Secretary General of the European External Action Service, having convened in Toledo on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2021 on the occasion of EUNIC’s General Assembly;

Recognising that EUNIC is the network of Member States national organisations that engage in cultural or related activities beyond their national borders, bringing to work together inside and outside the EU independent agencies, cultural institutes, as well as Ministries of Culture and Ministries of Foreign Affairs with their respective cultural networks with decade-long experiences in all corners of the world;

Considering the core purposes of EUNIC, namely creating effective partnerships and networks, aiming to strengthen international dialogue and cultural cooperation, advocating of the value of cultural relations in promoting a joint approach in third countries based on a common strategic vision developed at local level and arguing for a strong and independent voice for the cultural sector, a core condition for free societies to prosper;

Acknowledging the serious impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on healthcare, economic and social systems as well as on cultural life, underlining the importance of strengthening relations between EU Member States, European institutions and third countries, in order to address global challenges through common values;

Reaffirming the role of culture in the recovery of the crisis and in the protection of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality and human rights, to achieve more cohesive societies capable of finding common solutions;

Considering **cultural diversity as one of the emblems of the EU and its Member States**, and as a tool to strengthen cultural relations beyond our borders, to connect people worldwide, and to share values to improve international relations and learn from each other’s practice;

Recognising the need to demonstrate the power of effective cooperation in meeting the global challenges of our time, through **better coordination of all EU activities in cultural relations, the investment in a joint EU foreign policy that includes an appropriate role for cultural relations, the support of multilateral initiatives under the EU strategic approach for international cultural relations, and the investment in culture within development cooperation programmes**;

Acknowledging the importance of continuing working together by strengthening the international component of **Creative Europe**, and continuing existing initiatives such as “**European Spaces of Culture**” that can contribute to the overcoming of the crisis;

Reaffirming our commitment to supporting local cultural scenes worldwide and engaging in digital and hybrid ways to work in cultural relations

Bearing in mind the **Joint Communication called “Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations”** that was presented in June 2016 and subsequently endorsed by the European Parliament and the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council in May 2017, marking an important shift in foreign policy, as it for the first time recognised culture as a priority in how Europe interacts with the world, calling for an approach of dialogue, mutual listening and learning, and global solidarity;



Considering that, in April 2019, another set of **Council Conclusions on an “EU strategic approach to international cultural relations”** was approved by the Foreign Affairs Council, including a shared Framework for Action for EU Member States, the European Commission, and the External Action Service, calling all these actors to implement common projects and joint actions in third countries “based on a common strategic vision developed at local level by the Member States, their diplomatic and consular representations, their cultural institutes, EUNIC, EU delegations and local stakeholders”;

Highlighting that, in the Joint Communication, an “enhanced cooperation” between the EEAS, the EC, and EUNIC is being called for and therefore a so-called “**Administrative Arrangement**” was signed in May 2017 between the EEAS, the European Commission Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, and EUNIC, to outline the strategic partnership of EUNIC, the EC and the EEAS;

Reaffirming that in 2019, EUNIC and the EU published **Joint Guidelines** on the partnership between the European Commission, the EEAS, and EUNIC, aiming to provide a practical framework to strengthen the partnership between the EU and EUNIC, thus advising colleagues working in EU Delegations, EUNIC clusters worldwide, EU institutions and EUNIC members’ headquarters on how to design effective working relationships in order to further enhance their cooperation and ensure synergies and complementarity in the delivery of cultural relations strategies and projects.

Fully acknowledging this recent policy framework, acting on behalf of our respective organisations undertake to step up efforts to implement the strategic framework by endorsing the following specific actions:

- Continue to implement the EU Strategy on International Cultural Relations and the Council Conclusions, as well as the Administrative Arrangement and the Joint Guidelines.
- Advocate the cultural relations approach and strengthen European collaboration in culture throughout our global networks.
- Implement common cultural relations projects and joint actions in third countries based on a common strategic vision developed at local level between EU Delegations and EUNIC clusters and together with local stakeholders.
- Effectively continue the joint implementation of European Spaces of Culture.
- Continue joint capacity building between staff of EU institutions and EUNIC through sharing of experiences, awareness raising and explaining of the cultural relations approach and by designing a joint job shadowing scheme and developing a joint training programme.
- Ensure that European cooperation in culture becomes a structural, integrated part of EUNIC’s and the EEAS’ operations.
- Present a **progress report in two years** from now.

Toledo, 11<sup>th</sup> June 2021

