

MAKE CULTURE COUNT: A JOINED-UP STRATEGIC APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL RELATIONS

EUNIC is the network of national organisations based in all EU Member States that engage in cultural or related activities beyond their national borders. As a European network with global reach we unite agencies, cultural institutes as well as ministries of Culture and of Foreign Affairs, from all Member States of the EU, contributing to the exchange between the different bodies engaged with cultural relations and enhancing their collaboration. Our 120 EUNIC clusters – formalised collaborations with at least three members present – in more than 90 countries by default represent all of the members and hence all the EU Member States.

EUNIC's response to the Council Conclusions on an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations of 8 April 2019

The [Joint Communication "Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations"](#) of June 2016 and the [Council Conclusions](#) are milestones of European engagement in international cultural relations and mark an important step to steering international cultural relations to the forefront of EU foreign policy.

We particularly welcome:

- The fact that they call for a more aligned and joint approach between all actors in the field
- The focus on the principles of cultural relations, such as mutual learning, co-creation, trust and understanding, full inclusion of local stakeholders at all levels and a decentralised approach
- The utmost importance attributed to core values of the cultural sector, such as cultural diversity, artistic freedom and independence

Exactly these are the principles and values that are the basis of not only our work, but also expected by our partners on the ground.

[With this paper, we would like to highlight our role as implementing partner of European external cultural relations. We encourage all actors in the field to work together more closely in a coordinated fashion, to continue to attribute great importance to a joint, European approach while ensuring adequate financial backing for increased activity in cultural relations.](#)

EUNIC is mentioned in the Council Conclusions as a strategic implementing partner and [we are playing our part in bringing Member States and their cultural institutes together to create strategies and implement joint projects worldwide](#), in a number of cases in close partnership with local EU Delegations. Our members look back on [decades of continuous international relations work](#), which resulted in longstanding, trust-based relationships with local communities and cultural actors – ultimately firmly

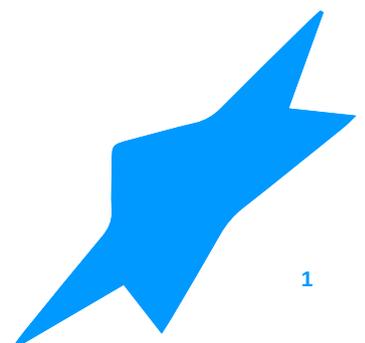
embedding our network in local cultural contexts throughout the world. EUNIC implements the [Preparatory Action European 'Houses' of Culture](#), delivered with EU Delegations and local stakeholders. The project [identifies innovative cultural collaboration projects between European actors and local stakeholders in non-EU countries](#).

[We believe the pooling of resources between EUNIC, EU Member States and the EU's services together with local partners creates a stronger impact](#) and We are keen to increase our joint efforts with the EU institutions.

There is also an evident and urgent [need for additional financial and administrative mechanisms](#), specifically to support small and medium-sized projects on the ground. EUNIC clusters, EU Delegations and their partners have been piloting a number of such projects on an ad hoc basis, but there is a need to standardise processes and [develop dedicated financing tools](#).

Continuous efforts are needed to make cultural relations count in EU foreign policy. [We call on all EU Member States to continuously and increasingly show support to make the strategic approach a prominent factor in EU external relations](#), also by improving coordination between relevant ministries.

The Conclusions underline once again the broad support for the importance of cultural relations for foreign policy and its principles, on both EU and Member State level. [We are committed to playing our part in this endeavour and are looking forward to engaging in continuous and regular conversation with the Council about the developments of this strategic approach.](#)



This annex highlights a number of acknowledgements and recommendations from the Conclusions and sets out how EUNIC contributes to the approach to international cultural relations as partner of choice of the EU institutions.

The Council Conclusions recognise the need for:

- a cross-cutting approach to culture that includes cultural and creative industries, arts, science, education, tourism and cultural heritage, etc.;
- inclusiveness: involvement of all Member States in third countries should be encouraged and facilitated, including where they have no diplomatic and consular representations;
- a new spirit of dialogue, mutual understanding and learning, cooperation with local stakeholders and civil society at all levels and on an equal footing, aiming at the principles described above;
- a decentralised approach, requiring policies and projects adapted to local context, needs and aspirations;
- explaining and awareness raising of the respective roles and mutual expectations of EU institutions and Member States and their representations, cultural institutes and networks, as well as other stakeholders;
- flexibility when designing financing and administrative tools, in order to support also small and medium-sized projects and match local capacities.

EUNIC fully supports the principles of cultural relations as well as the broader, cross-cutting definition of culture as set out in the Conclusions. Both lie at the base of our work and form the core of the selection criteria for both our internal financing mechanisms, the EUNIC Cluster Fund, and the European 'Houses' of Culture project. Many EUNIC members have been following such an approach to culture for a long time.

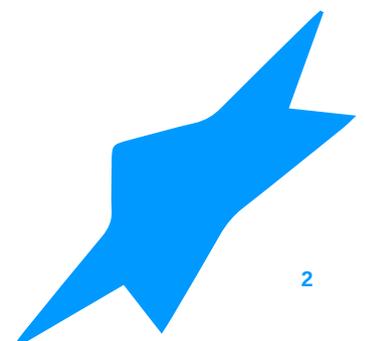
EUNIC clusters by default represent all our members, even if not all physically present in given countries, and hence all EU Member States. As of December 2019, EUNIC counts 120 EUNIC clusters in more than 90 countries implementing our strategy on the ground, putting into practice an inclusive approach to cultural relations. With European 'Houses' of Culture, EUNIC is inviting members to also work in countries with a limited presence of Member States, and our members are actively exploring remotely implementing activities in fragile contexts.

EUNIC clusters develop three-year strategies, based on local needs and contexts allowing for a decentralised approach. They are developed and implemented in concertation with local cultural stakeholders – civil society actors as well as public bodies – and with the EU Delegations through a relationship on equal

footing and mutual listening and learning. EUNIC will in the course of 2020 revise its current strategic framework to further reflect these principles and its efforts to implement the EU strategic approach on a global scale.

EUNIC explains the EU approach to cultural relations and raises awareness of the roles of all actors, by presenting at ambassadors' conferences, public panel discussions, internal workshops (online and offline) throughout the EU and at numerous other occasions.

EUNIC members have a wide-ranging delivery capacity and can manage both large-sized multiannual projects such as in Ukraine and Tunisia (EUR 4-17 M) and medium-scale activities as in Egypt and Bolivia (EUR 100-400,000) as well as small-scale activities such as Cluster Fund projects (approximately EUR 5-40,000). Small and mid-sized projects seem more inclusive and are accessible to the whole cultural sector.



The Council Conclusions invite Member States to:

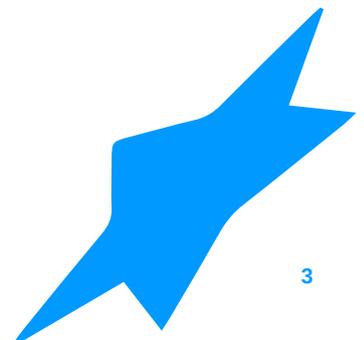
- *enhance collaboration between the relevant ministries of culture and foreign affairs;*
- *develop further existing networks for knowledge and competence development and encourage exchange between academia and practitioners;*
- *strengthen their participation in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of common local cultural strategies and projects in third countries.*

EUNIC is the network of national organisations based in all EU Member States that engage in cultural or related activities beyond their national borders, uniting agencies, cultural institutes as well as ministries, contributing to the exchange between the different bodies engaged with cultural relations and enhancing their collaboration. EUNIC has recently started to exchange regularly with the Cultural Affairs Committee about its activities, especially on the progress of European 'Houses' of Culture.

Knowledge sharing workshops are organised on a regular basis for the members of the network. In 2019, workshops were organised on monitoring and evaluation, digital cultural relations and cultural relations in fragile contexts. EUNIC works together with various academic institutions to ensure dialogue between academics, policy makers and practitioners. In cooperation with the University of Siena, EUNIC co-organises the biennial Siena Cultural Relations Forum, establishing a regular forum for the advancement of cultural relations. The Forum unites stakeholders in academia in the framework of the Cultural Relations at Work project and of other EU-funded projects, such as Ilucidare under Horizon 2020. EUNIC members ifa and British Council have recently established an international research alliance on cultural relations.

EUNIC's activities take place on a worldwide scale. With the Cluster Fund, the network's most important internal financial instrument, it supports such activities inside and outside the EU with currently EUR 200,000 annually. In total, 131 Cluster Fund projects (about 15 on average per year) have been financed with a total budget of EUR 1,1 M, covering topics such as cultural heritage, creative industries,

intercultural dialogue, women empowerment, youth and sustainability. The aforementioned cluster strategy is required to apply to the Cluster Fund, ensuring that projects contribute strategically to the implementation of cultural relations while staying true to the local context.



The Council Conclusions call all actors to:

- *strengthen coordination, synergies and strategic guidance on the best way to promote international cultural relations;*
- *promote cooperation along the objectives of this strategic approach with third countries and relevant international organisations, in particular UNESCO and the Council of Europe;*
- *facilitate, through the appropriate institutional and legal frameworks and support measures, the mobility of artists and cultural professionals between the EU and third countries;*
- *put effort into the implementation of common projects based on a joint strategic vision developed at local level; adequate frameworks and instruments should be developed for that purpose.*

To institutionalize enhanced cooperation between all actors of cultural relations, EUNIC elaborated an agreement with the EEAS and the European Commission. In May 2017 an [Administrative Arrangement](#) was signed between the three parties under which [joint pilot activities were foreseen in order to pilot and strengthen cooperation between EU Delegations and EUNIC.](#)

The first joint pilot activity was [a report on the current state of the partnership](#) between EUNIC clusters and EU Delegations in 14 countries, published in July 2018. Subsequently, EUNIC, the EEAS and the European Commission drafted [Joint Guidelines on the partnership](#) in 2019, explaining how a partnership on the ground can be achieved and including recommendations to develop a shared vision and strategy as the basis of collaboration. [Joint workshops on collaboration in international cultural relations](#) between the EU and EUNIC are organised at numerous occasions for staff from all over the world and in different roles.

EUNIC members are engaging in several joint activities with EU Delegations worldwide, namely in the following eight countries: Bolivia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Jordan, Senegal, Sudan, Tunisia, and Ukraine. [These projects focus on strengthening and professionalising local cultural sectors, improving the status of human rights through culture, and contributing to mobility and people-to-people contacts.](#) The parties are aiming to initiate more such joint projects in the future.

EUNIC has also [collaborated with international organisations such as UNESCO and Anna Lindh Foundation](#) on numerous occasions, such as at the Siena Cultural Relations Forum, and in workshops on cultural heritage and cultural relations for socio-economic development and intercultural dialogue.

In order to [facilitate the mobility of cultural professionals](#), in 2019 EUNIC launched a short-term mobility scheme for colleagues working in the network, the [Job Shadowing Initiative](#). More than 60 professionals will participate in learning exchanges throughout the network over the course of one year. Future editions will be enlarged and extended to EU Delegation staff. EUNIC also implements artist residencies in Iran and India, the curators' exchange programme between Russia and the EU, and other mobility activities. Furthermore, EUNIC is an associated partner of i-Portunus, the Goethe-Institut led EU pilot project testing different approaches to supporting short-term mobility of artists and professionals.

In 2018 EUNIC was granted the [Preparatory Action European 'Houses' of Culture](#), initiated by the European Parliament and implemented through EUNIC's network, EU Delegations and local stakeholders. The project has a scope of EUR 2.5 million and is identifying innovative cultural relations projects between European actors and local stakeholders from the cultural and creative sectors in non-EU countries. The activities adhere to the [bottom-up approach to cultural relations](#),

[thereby implementing common projects based on a joint vision.](#) In December 2020, the project will [deliver policy recommendations at a conference in Brussels](#), indicating how the action could be continued beyond the preparatory phase.

EUNIC currently follows two models of implementing activities between its members and the EU: European 'Houses' of Culture and joint activities between EUNIC clusters and EU Delegations, thereby testing different financing options and contractual models. None offer a path that fully allows for the principles of cultural relations as outlined in the Council Conclusions to be implemented, which is why there is an [urgent need for structural financial mechanisms with the flexibility needed to reflect local parameters and to support such projects, especially small and medium-sized ones.](#)

Brussels,
January 2020

