

The Hague Recommendations

As formulated at the conference 'Diversity Makes the Difference – European Foreign Policy and Culture', Peace Palace, The Hague, 9 March 2007

Introduction

Two weeks from now, we will celebrate the EU's 50th birthday! And celebrate with reason.

Half a century since the Treaty of Rome was signed, the EU is a highly attractive model throughout the world. Europe is influential. Despite the 'EU fatigue' of many of its citizens, the European Union is a powerful economic and social area, strong on human rights, the rule of law, and respect for cultural diversity. It is built on a unique political culture of sharing powers – among its own Member States, and in partnership with others worldwide. And it uses its 'soft power' to help bring about a peaceful, safe, sustainable, prosperous and fair world.

The future role of Europe in the world will be shaped by the common EU foreign and security policy being developed by the Member States and the European institutions. But the strength of the EU model is that it is a *cultural* as well as a political one. Foreign policy inevitably has a cultural dimension.

There is good reason, therefore, to promote an enhanced and structured cultural component to EU foreign and security policy. This would help the EU to engage sensitively in conflict prevention, invest significantly in post-conflict reconciliation, and strengthen and develop cultural and educational capacities as well as sustainable local structures. Such a policy should obviously respect the *acquis communautaire* and the principle of subsidiarity.

Recommendations

1. A facilitating framework for a structured cultural component to the EU's external policy (complementing the policies of Member States) needs to be developed in the interplay between the Council, the European Parliament, and the Commission in their respective roles. More specifically, we recommend to the relevant Commissioners that, on this subject, they install one dialogue partner within the EU for regular meetings and information exchange with representatives of EUNIC (the recently founded network of national institutes and agencies) and with the so-called third sector (foundations and cultural networks). This regular interaction should start in 2008. Such a move would greatly enhance transparency, public debate, emerging commitment and the monitoring of progress – especially where progress is most needed: in building dedicated processes and networks.
2. The EU needs to be more consistent in its definition of and approach to culture throughout its policies and programmes. And for fruitful action between all European

players involved in cooperative cultural actions with and within third countries, the notion of ‘added European value’ should be defined more clearly. This can be done by collecting, publishing and actively stimulating ‘good practice’ projects. Recent research has revealed that all EU Member States are not in principle against a more structured cultural component to EU external relations. There is also a strong desire to define more explicitly the main competences of Member States in this issue. We therefore recommend to the relevant Commissioners, the third sector and national governments that they support follow-up research in selected EU Member States to clarify this issue.

3. We recommend that EUNIC, in cooperation with the European Commission and the third sector, organises a conference involving young up-and-coming cultural managers, including some from non-European countries. We propose that the conference should take place, possibly in Slovenia, during the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008), and that it should discuss possible lines of European-value-adding cooperative action in and with third countries (including the improvement of cultural mobility), and exchange information on funding possibilities and resources.

4. We also recommend that, in 2009, EUNIC organises an extensive workshop for young decision-makers, devoted to comparing administrative regulations relevant to managing joint cultural projects in third countries. Guidelines on handling such joint projects, suitable for inclusion in a project handbook, should emerge from the workshop.

5. We recommend establishing, in 2008, a flexible fund for pilot projects in order to explore new means of equitable cooperation between the EU and third countries.

6. We urge the cultural sector to encourage the European institutions to integrate culture into EU foreign policy, particularly in the lead-up to the revision of the EU budget in 2008 and of its instruments for culture in 2010.

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We welcome the progress achieved by the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) and the role played by the EU Member States and the EU Commission in achieving this landmark document, which has inspired further efforts towards securing a cohesive cultural component to the EU’s external relations. We also pay tribute to the work of the Council of Europe in this field. We look forward to the contribution of the European Commission’s Communication on the role of culture in Europe, which addresses both the internal and external aspects of this role: a position that implies support for the ‘mainstreaming’ of culture in European foreign policy.