



## Ready to support action for a strategic approach to international cultural relations: Culture cannot be imposed 'top-down'

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Luca Jahier, EESC President

Statement by

Culture is a powerful tool to build bridges between people and reinforce mutual understanding.

Artistic freedom, enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU as well as the Treaty of the EU, is essential for development of our open democracies and our European values and identity.

I, therefore, welcome the [Council conclusions on an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations and a framework for action](#) of 8 April.

The clear commitment to the 'cooperation with local stakeholders and civil society at all levels and on equal footing, aiming at bottom-up and people-to-people approach, local empowerment, participation and co-creation' are crucial if we want to succeed.

EU ministers' conclusions correctly reflect the role of civil society in international cultural relations, as the EESC underlined in its 2016 Opinion on the Joint Communication ['Towards an EU Strategy for international cultural relations'](#), for which I was the rapporteur.

Culture cannot be imposed 'top-down' - and its strength results from its nature as part of the fabric of communities and their citizens.

I also welcome the explicit mention of culture as a 'horizontal enabler for sustainable development', a link which, due to its pertinence (and also reflected in the EESC Opinion), had promoted my decision to select "Culture", "Sustainable development" and "Peace" as key priorities of my Presidency.

The EESC, as well as I, personally, are ready to support the implementation of these proposals.

Beyond the capacity to drive trust, mutual understanding, democracy, peacebuilding and reconciliation as well as sustainable development, culture is a powerful engine for economic and social development in and outside the EU.