

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The political stakes of an EU strategy on culture in external relations encompass the whole range of priorities of EU external action. While intercultural dialogue is a prerequisite to mutual understanding and trust building, culture is also closely linked with values and lifestyle, political systems and social structures, economic and trade activities. As an important "soft power" asset for the EU and its Member States, culture contributes to a more effective environment for diplomacy and foreign relations. Calls for a more strategic approach to culture in the EU relations with third countries and regions have multiplied in recent years, emanating from different stakeholders (European Parliament, Member States, cultural institutes, civil society). Against this growing momentum, a strategy-setting process in this field was launched in March 2012, bringing together representatives of Ministries of Culture and Ministries of Foreign Affairs. At a first stage, the focus was placed on China, with the intention of proposing a strategic vision for the future of EU-China cultural relations¹ in the context of an evolving EU-China strategic partnership, which was recently enhanced by the establishment of the High-Level People-to-People Dialogue.

China is a strategic partner and a geographic priority for the EU and its Member States. In a changing world, the EU and China share broad common interests and are increasingly interdependent. Europe and China have a lot to offer in the cultural field: they both have a long, rich and diverse cultural, linguistic and historical legacy. At the same time, historical and ideological differences in the EU and China remain, which have an impact on respective policies and practices related to cultural activities.

The Chinese cultural sector has been developing considerably over the past decade as a result of important reforms, investment and opening up by the Chinese government. This evolution coupled with the gradual opening of the Chinese market translates into a variety of opportunities for European cultural operators and for enhanced EU-China cultural cooperation with benefits for both sides. The EU Member States already have a rich tradition of bilateral cooperation with China in the field of culture, which spans a variety of sectors and involves support for cultural cooperation, cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy and outreach. However, cultural cooperation with China also raises a number of common challenges for EU Member States, which mainly derive from different cultural, procedural and administrative traditions between the EU and China.

A shared strategic vision among the EU and its Member States and an effective comprehensive framework for engagement in China, including the means to deliver and work together, could significantly contribute to overcoming common challenges, enhancing the EU image and deepening EU-China cultural relations in the coming years.

The **general objective** of such a strategic vision shall be to develop the capacities of the EU and support its Member States to make full use of the potential of culture as a generator of dialogue and mutual understanding, a vehicle for sharing values and promoting interests, and a prime source for developing trust and encouraging cross-fertilization between European and Chinese societies. More precisely, this translates into pursuing the following **specific objectives**: to project a distinctive, attractive and more coherent image of the EU and the diversity of its cultures in China, with a special attention on young cultural professionals and audiences; to enhance the presence, visibility and competitiveness, of the EU cultural and

¹ In line with the Council Work Plan for Culture 2011-2014, the European Commission set up an expert group on culture and external relations, which it co-chaired with the European External Action Service. While the group focused its work on China as a test case, it also contributed more broadly to the general reflections on the role of culture in the EU external relations.

creative 'capital' in China; to contribute to the creation of a conducive and more equitable environment for cultural cooperation/exchanges between European and Chinese cultural operators.

While bilateral activities between Member States and China are and will remain fundamental, seeking greater coherence of actions and synergies and pooling individual initiatives within a broader EU perspective can have a stronger impact by achieving a greater scale and critical mass of activities, which is important when reaching out in a country with the size of China. Economies of scale will also allow doing more within the current financial constraints.

Projecting a more coherent image of the EU in China can improve the way the EU cultural potential and the richness of its diversity is perceived by the Chinese public, thereby strengthening the EU image and the values it embodies.

Concerted EU action can strengthen the EU leverage vis-à-vis Chinese authorities on issues of common interest for EU Member States. Strengthening information sharing and networking among Member States can help better identify common interests and obstacles, as well as mobilise appropriate expertise more effectively. This can further help develop a more conducive environment for EU cultural exchanges with China and better support the European cultural and creative sectors to cooperate with their Chinese counterparts.

The implementation of a strategic approach to EU-China cultural relations shall be based on a flexible and open approach. While mutual interests and opportunities can potentially arise in all cultural and creative sectors, emerging areas of mutual interest at a first stage include: EU-China film co-production; production and commercialisation of TV formats; games (in particular online games and smartphone applications, which are less sensitive to piracy); music (especially live music performances); animation; themed entertainment; architecture; design; cultural merchandising; heritage (in particular linked to urban sustainable development); museums (in particular as regards cultural content development and management); contemporary arts events and festivals. In all these areas, there is a need on both the European and Chinese side to support the development of professional skills and build capacity through training, peer-learning, the exchange of best practices and networking.

Delivering added value through increased cooperation at EU level is a **shared responsibility** of all actors concerned: EU institutions, Member States, civil society. Acting together can bring added value in a number of areas including: better defining and projecting the EU image in China, for instance by displaying European diversity through joint thematic approaches or a better exploitation of virtual tools; addressing common policy and regulatory challenges for the EU Member States in China; facilitating networking and cooperation among cultural operators and supporting their professional development. Concerted efforts are necessary to ensure that the appropriate structures and resources are in place for delivering results on a better informed and effective basis. In the short-term, it is important to identify and better exploit the existing resources, structures and tools, including the currently available EU instruments for China, as well as to enhance the European dimension of existing bilateral initiatives. Special attention shall also be devoted to exploiting the potential of virtual tools, given the enormous potential of the internet in China, in particular to reach out to the young generations. In the medium to long-term, diversified solutions will have to be identified including by exploring the opportunities that may arise in the context of relevant future EU instruments, devising new approaches leading to increased cooperation and pooling of resources among Member States, attracting private funding, developing partnerships with the Chinese side.

Based on the above analysis, the expert group agreed on a set of **recommendations** encompassing general recommendations and principles for a strategic approach to culture in

EU-China relations as well as specific recommendations focusing on the implementation of this approach. The recommendations cover the period until 2020 and are addressed to EU Institutions and Services, Member States, cultural institutes, as well as cultural organisations.

I. General recommendations for a strategic approach to culture in EU-China relations

In order to develop a strategic approach to culture in EU-China relations, the expert group recommends:

1) To consider the following guiding principles:

- a. To anchor cultural cooperation on the principles of the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.
- b. To adopt a broad, articulated vision of culture in the context of EU external action considered in all its facets as a social, economic and political asset for the EU and its Member States.
- c. To share universal values to which the EU attaches utmost importance, such as freedom of expression, free and equal access to information, which are essential for creativity to flourish, through concrete action and cooperation.
- d. To respect the autonomy of the cultural sector and prioritize bottom-up processes.
- e. To make full use of the potential of culture as a generator of dialogue and mutual understanding, a vehicle for sharing values and promoting interests, and a prime source for developing trust and encouraging cross-fertilization between societies.
- f. To engage in long-term, two-way processes aimed at building trust over time and seeking mutual understanding and benefits with China.
- g. To adopt a multi-level approach considering the broader regional context in Asia and addressing different levels of governance within China (local, regional, non-governmental actors).
- h. To develop inclusive processes building on existing expertise and structures both within the EU and Member States and in China and using them more strategically.
- i. To pay special attention to the young generation as a key target group and identify the most effective means of communication and outreach, including the internet and social media.

2) To integrate culture as part of EU policy towards China more systematically and strategically.

To reach this goal, the EU and Member States should:

- a. Develop closer cooperation and more integrated working modalities between relevant Ministries and departments in charge of culture and foreign policies.
- b. Integrate culture as a 'soft power asset' in the context of public diplomacy and outreach strategies more effectively.
- c. Ensure the articulation of cultural diplomacy and cooperation on the one hand and other relevant policies and priorities of external relations on the other (such as sustainable development, urbanisation, human rights, trade and IPR issues, rule of law, security).

- d. Include more systematically cultural and societal aspects into their country analysis.

3) To support bottom-up approaches as well as direct and sustainable cooperation among cultural professionals and organisations from the EU and China through training, mobility, networking and concrete support to project development.

4) To build the capacity and improve the competitiveness of European cultural and creative sectors.

5) To explore adequate and diversified resources both at the EU and Member States' level as well as seek effective partnerships in China.

More specifically:

- a. To ensure support for actions aimed at a strategic approach to culture in EU external relations in the future EU instruments in the fields of culture and external relations;
- b. To design innovative approaches for Member States to share tasks and pool resources to achieve greater economies of scale and to leverage their efforts at EU level;
- c. To attract private funding and involve private cultural stakeholders, such as businesses and foundations.

The expert group recommends that these general recommendations and guiding principles shall be considered when developing a strategic approach to culture in the EU's relations with other third countries/regions.

II. Specific recommendations for the implementation of a strategic approach to culture in EU-China relations

Based on the general recommendations and guiding principles, in order to implement a strategic approach to culture in EU-China relations, the expert group recommends:

1) To project a more coherent image of the EU in China through a better integration of culture in public diplomacy strategies and a more strategic use of the potential of virtual tools to facilitate not only showcasing and branding but also concrete forms of cultural cooperation.

2) To undertake a more systematic and structured collection of information on a sector-specific basis about the opportunities and challenges of engaging in EU-China cultural cooperation.

3) To strengthen interactions among the EU cultural stakeholders present in China through an expanded network bringing together Member States' representatives competent for culture, cultural institutes, including the EUNIC China Cluster, as well as major cultural organisations, foundations and private networks as appropriate.

4) To task a dedicated cultural focal point in the EU Delegation in Beijing with working closely with Member States in order to facilitate stakeholders' cooperation, gathering and sharing of information as well as joint approaches vis-à-vis the Chinese authorities on issues of common interest for Member States.

III. The way forward: towards a concrete step change in EU-China cultural relations

In order to move towards a concrete step change in EU-China cultural relations, the expert group recommends:

- 1) To promptly launch a pilot phase in 2013** in order to:
 - a. Task a dedicated cultural focal point in the EU Delegation in Beijing with working closely with Member States;**
 - b. Establish an expanded network of relevant EU cultural stakeholders in Europe and in China and facilitate interactions and information sharing;**
 - c. Launch a series of sector-specific mapping and research, with a view to:**
 - i. gathering information on the state of play in selected sectors of cooperation between the EU and China,
 - ii. making proposals on how to best derive EU added value in the selected sectors,
 - iii. analysing the feasibility of proposed actions.
 - d. Priorities for the pilot phase shall take into account the areas of mutual interest analysed in section 3 of the report "Areas of mutual interest for the EU and China".**
- 2) To identify concrete priorities, actions and resources for the medium to long-term, based on the results of the pilot phase.**
- 3) To assess the results of implemented actions on a regular basis with a possible mid-term evaluation of the proposed strategy (by 2017).**