

António Costa, President of the European Council
Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission
Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament
Henna Virkkunen, Executive Vice-President for Tech Sovereignty, Security and Democracy
Piotr Serafin, Commissioner for Budget, Anti-Fraud and Public Administration
Glenn Micallef, Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport
Members of the General Affairs Council
Permanent Representatives of the Member States to the European Union (COREPER II)
Emma Rafowicz, AgoraEU co-rapporteur, Committee on Culture and Education (CULT), European Parliament
Alice Bah Kuhnke, AgoraEU co-rapporteur, Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE), European Parliament

Brussels, 7 July 2026

Dear Presidents, Executive Vice-President, Commissioners, Ministers and Members of the European Parliament,

Nine cents. That is culture's share of every hundred euros the Commission proposes to spend in the next budget cycle. For seven years, for a Union of 450 million people, the Culture strand of the AgoraEU programme is set at €1.8 billion, about €260 million a year. That is roughly the [annual budget](#) of a single national library, the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

The Cyprus Presidency's negotiating box is even more modest. It sets AgoraEU at €8.2 billion, and if the Commission's strand share were maintained, culture would be left with €1.7 billion.

Meanwhile, the conditions for cultural work are becoming more precarious.

UNESCO [warns](#) that generative AI could cut creators' revenues by 24% in music and 21% in audiovisual by 2028. The works that train these models were taken without consent or payment. Creators supply the fuel, but keep none of the value.

Almost half of artists and cultural professionals [report](#) poor working conditions, and more than two thirds lack sufficient social protection.

Artistic freedom is deteriorating too. The Council of Europe [points](#) to legal restrictions, political pressure, online threats and growing self-censorship.

The prominent role of culture is recognised in the Joint Declaration ‘Culture for Europe – Europe for Culture’, signed by the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the EU. The Declaration affirms that Europe’s cultural diversity and vibrancy are fundamental to EU values and identity, and that culture and cultural heritage create spaces where desirable futures can be imagined. We share this understanding: culture is a public sphere in which our democratic future can be imagined freely, critically and in our full diversity. **This foundation must be funded accordingly.**

We therefore invite the EU institutions to act on their commitments set out in the Joint Declaration by ensuring adequate funding for their implementation: the protection of artistic freedom, cultural and linguistic diversity, access to culture and cultural participation, cultural rights, support for young and emerging artists, and the promotion of Europe’s cultural and natural heritage.

AgoraEU is the central EU programme capable of turning these commitments into concrete action. It builds on the legacy of Creative Europe, whose Culture strand has, since 2014, supported almost 6500 projects and more than 13000 organisations, and created a unique framework for cross-border cooperation with clear European added value.

However, year after year, Creative Europe turns away high-quality applications because its budget is too small. The most recent Culture cooperation call could fund only 5-6% of more than 1600 applications.

As representatives of Europe's cultural sector, we call for a more ambitious budget for culture. More than [2000 cultural and creative professionals](#) have already put their names to the demand for a well-resourced programme for culture in the next EU budget, urging the EU policymakers to Ask, Pay and Trust the Artists.

Ahead of the negotiations on the next EU budget between the European Commission, European Parliament and the Council of the EU, we, the undersigned cultural organisations, networks, institutions, practitioners, are calling for:

1. An increased AgoraEU budget, with at least 25% secured for its culture component. The Parliament’s €10.72 billion proposal for AgoraEU must be the baseline, not the ceiling. In addition, the culture budget of AgoraEU should be supplemented with [digital fines](#) collected under the Digital Markets Act, Digital Services Act and AI Act. AgoraEU needs to engage more private funding from foundations and other third parties, as envisaged by Article 13 of the proposal.

2. The strand supporting culture in AgoraEU should be autonomous and visible. This means a budget that cannot be redirected to other strands, with a separate budget line, separate work programmes, dedicated governance and a distinct visual identity. It must serve the full diversity of Europe's cultural ecosystem and ensure a balanced approach across sectors, disciplines, organisation sizes, and territories.

3. Artists and all staff involved in AgoraEU projects must be paid fairly and covered by social security. Social conditionality should be included in the programme and linked to the upcoming EU Artists' Charter, applied proportionately and with resources so it does not add to the burden on the smallest organisations. Artistic freedom and experimentation must be respected and safeguarded. EU cultural funding must set the standard it wants the sector to meet: fair remuneration for artists and cultural workers as a condition of public funding.

4. Funding for culture should be more accessible, including for smaller organisations, socially engaged arts, grassroots initiatives and cultural actors working outside institutional frameworks. This means operating grants designed to strengthen organisations' long-term capacity without restricting access to other EU funding lines or the possibility to claim indirect costs under separate projects; two-stage applications, so applicants develop a full proposal only after their concept note is accepted; more cascading grants redistributed among smaller organisations; and the possibility of a 100% co-financing rate, so that EU funds cover the full cost of a project. Currently, cultural organisations need to provide part of the costs themselves, which often excludes smaller ones.

5. AgoraEU must enable people-centred international cultural cooperation and apply an inclusive approach to territoriality. Participation as artists, cultural professionals, experts, speakers, residents, mentors or other end beneficiaries in projects should not be restricted to people residing in programme-participating countries. Project holders should be trusted to involve individuals from third countries when their contribution is essential to the project.

AgoraEU must be funded as the programme for Europe's future. It must be bold enough to protect artistic freedom and experimentation, broad enough to reach people across territories and generations, and strong enough to develop the cultural sector that makes European democracy visible, liveable and resilient.

Culture Action Europe

A25 Cultural Foundation

AEDCORO - Spanish Choral Conductors' Association

AERCO - Associazione Emiliano-Romagnola Cori

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Amateo
Angharad Cooper Consultancy and Coaching Ltd
Asociación Cultural Reyes Bartlet
Association des Centres culturels de rencontre
Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et
Musikhochschulen
Austrian Museums Association
Austrian Music Council
Be.Time SCA
Bulgarian music association
Center for Music Ecosystems
Circostrada network
Cluj Cultural Centre
Culture Management Centre "Lauska"
Culture Next ECoC Cities Network
Curso de Música Silva Monteiro
EJN Europe Jazz Network
ELIA
Estonian Choral Association
Euradia Italia
European Association for Music in Schools (EAS) / University of Bristol UK
European Choral Association
European Concert Halls Organisation
European Dance Development Network
European Festivals Association
European Folk Network
European Music Council
European Music School Union
European Theatre Convention
EUROZINE
EUSEC (IGBK)
FARO Flemish Institution for Cultural Heritage
Federació Catalana d'Entitats Corals (FCEC)
Finnish Music Council
German Music Council
Goethe-Institut Brussels
Hungarian Music Council
ICOM FRANCE
IETM
IFCM

IGET

Interessengemeinschaft Freie Theaterarbeit

International Association of Music Libraries, Archives and Documentation Centres

Jeunesses Musicales International

Kuner

Kunsten '92

Live Music Now Scotland

Mammoth House

Mapamundi Música

Materiaviva APS

Moviment Coral Català

Museums Association UK

NEMO – The Network of European Museum Organisation

Nicolas Bertrand

Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture

On the Move

Opera Europa

Pearle*-Live Performance Europe

REMA - European Early Music Network

Reset! network

Royal Dutch Museum Association

Scottish Music Centre

sineglossa

Slovenian Museum Association

Trac Cymru

Trans Europe Halles

Ukrainian Museum Association

Unison - Croatian Music Alliance

We Move Music Croatia

Zone Franche, le Réseau des Musiques du Monde