

# THE EUROPEAN UNION AND CULTURE

The EU discusses culture in two ways...

Quotes

## Unity in Diversity

European union documents and leaders sometimes discuss culture in a theoretical sense. They describe it as a binding force between all Europeans and use it to justify and promote the unification of the different states. Culture in this way, however, is described in a unique way. The argument is not that there is one common culture in Europe but rather that there is a common way of thinking about culture. That this common disposition towards culture is what unites Europe. By way of this argument, the individual uniqueness and importance of each culture is celebrated making way for the frequently used phrase “unity in diversity”.

2007

## The Cultural Sector

European union documents and leaders often discuss culture as an economic sector. By the cultural sector they refer to the dispersion of the Audiovisual sector, which includes film, television and radio, the dispersion of literature and of studio arts. This promotion of the cultural sector is the practical implementation of EU cultural policy. Programs such as Creative Europe and the 2007 document outlining the European Union’s cultural policy justify the support of this sector by affirming its potential to stimulate economic growth and create jobs. This shows that European Union discussion of culture is at least in part motivated by economic interests.

2007

## BOTH? CULTURAL HERITAGE

The distinction between these two themes is not black and white. Many documents and leaders pull from both sides and often EU programs are justified with both in mind. Cultural heritage is a good example of this. To some degree, sites identified as important to cultural heritage, such as old churches, are preserved in the name of promoting “unity in diversity”. The argument is that these sites are critical to history and must therefore be preserved. However, at the same time, making the public statement that they are of importance creates an incentive for people to come see the sites. This can create large amounts of tourism and thus shows that there are economic motivations to the business of cultural heritage.

1958

“It is customary – it has already become a formula – that Europe presents an example of **unity in diversity**, and when we apply this formula to European culture we are generally of the opinion that this unity is more evident there than in the political sphere.”

- Address by Professor Dr. Walter Hallstein President of the Commission of the European Economic Community to the Second Congress of the European Foundation for Cultural Purposes on 13 December 1958 in Milan

“The originality and success of the European Union is in its **ability to respect Member States’ varied and intertwined history, languages and cultures, while forging common understanding and rules which have guaranteed peace, stability, prosperity and solidarity** - and with them, a huge richness of cultural heritage and creativity to which successive enlargements have added more and more.”

- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a European agenda for culture in a globalizing world (2007)

2016

“Culture can therefore help **promote job creation and competitiveness** both inside the EU and beyond its borders.”

- Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations (2016)

“The role of culture in supporting and fostering creativity and innovation must be explored and promoted. Creativity is the basis for social and technological innovation, and therefore **an important driver of growth, competitiveness and jobs** in the EU.”

- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a European agenda for culture in a globalizing world (2007)

Undergraduate Researcher:  
Julia Fest  
Mentor: Dr. Randall Halle  
Dietrich School of Arts and  
Sciences  
First Experience in Research

