



Brussels, 11 December 2007

**The European Forum for the Arts and Heritage warmly welcomes the adoption by the EU Culture Council of Ministers of a ‘European agenda for culture’<sup>1</sup> and looks forward to the development of a genuine structured dialogue with civil society at EU level.**

*The European Forum for the Arts and Heritage (EFAH) exists to strengthen the role of arts and culture in the sustainable development of Europe. Currently EFAH has more than 90 member organisations which in turn represent over 5,000 organisations across 25 EU Member States and beyond, active in all cultural domains, ranging from orchestras to writers’ associations, academic institutions to national theatres and international cultural networks, conservatoires to choirs and festivals to foundations.*

The European Forum for the Arts and Heritage (EFAH) and its members followed with great attention the European Commission’s initiative<sup>2</sup>, which led to the recent adoption of a **‘European agenda for culture’** by the EU Culture Council of Ministers.

EFAH and its members contributed to the online consultation launched by the European Commission in September 2006 and played a key role in the first Cultural Forum organised by the Portuguese Presidency last September.

**EFAH believes that the role of arts and culture is key to the sustainable development of Europe** and, as a major voice of the European cultural civil society, it advocates strongly for the full implementation of the EU competence in the cultural field. Common goals outlined in the ‘European Agenda for Culture’ now need to be fully developed and supported by all actors on the European cultural scene (the European institutions themselves, the EU Member States and civil society organisations).

To define and implement a common ‘European agenda on Culture’, EU Member States and the European institutions must recognise the importance of a constant dialogue with civil society and **acknowledge the role of a number of representative networks and platforms at European level**, such as EFAH, and of their capacity to bridge to the wider sector by ways of information and mobilisation.

**To include civil society actors in the design and organisation of the structured dialogue will allow for a broader representation and for more qualitative civil society inputs.**

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution adopted during the Education, Youth and Culture Council, Brussels, 15-16<sup>th</sup> November 2007. To read the press release, go to [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/educ/97160.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/educ/97160.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Communication on a European agenda for culture in a globalizing world, European Commission, 10 May 2007

In order to involve the artistic and cultural civil society actors properly in the development and implementation of a 'European agenda for culture', the European Forum for the Arts and Heritage advocates:

- An **innovative and inclusive structured dialogue** with civil society actors, to make sure that the all voices are heard and that EU policies and actions are designed in a transparent and participatory manner;
- A **regular and qualitative consultation process** which would not limit itself to a biennial Cultural Forum, but would build on this initiative by developing a variety of dialogue and consultation tools;
- A **flexible, adaptable and transparent Open Method of Coordination (OMC)**, which will involve all actors at local, regional, national and European levels. The OMC should guarantee transparency, ongoing learning and a significant presence of civil society by insuring the free access to working documents and reports to all stakeholders.

The European Forum for the Arts and Heritage (EFAH) supports the three objectives<sup>3</sup> put forward by the European Commission and endorsed by the Culture Council of Ministers. It also noticed with great interest the five priority actions agreed on by the Council for the period 2008-2010<sup>4</sup>.

EFAH and its members are now looking forward to learning more about the **concrete steps** that will lead to the use of the Open Method of Coordination in those priority areas and about the **instruments and spaces of consultation** that are envisaged so as to involve civil society actors in the process.

EFAH is ready to contribute to the design and execution of an open, diverse and qualitative structured dialogue with the arts and culture sector at European level. Indeed, it occupies a unique position of strength from which to achieve this.

EFAH will also continue to inform, mobilise and represent in order to make sure that its members, and the artistic and cultural sector in general, are prepared to make their voices heard.

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<sup>3</sup> Promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue; promotion of culture as a catalyst for creativity in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy for growth, employment, innovation and competitiveness; and promotion of culture as a vital element in the Union's international relations.

<sup>4</sup> Improving the conditions for the mobility of artists and other professionals in the cultural field; promoting access to culture, in particular through the promotion of cultural heritage, multilingualism, digitization, cultural tourism, synergies with education, especially art education, and greater mobility of collections; developing data, statistics and methodologies in the cultural sector and improve their comparability; maximizing the potential of cultural and creative industries, in particular that of SMEs; promoting and implementing the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.