

EU–UN culture and civilisation

Strength in diversity

The European Union is a community of cultures largely comprising what is historically known as the ‘European civilisation’, a source of major contributions to the arts and sciences, philosophy and literature and other fields of human endeavour.

The Treaty on European Union devotes a chapter to culture, one of Europe’s richest and most varied assets. It calls on the EU to ‘contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore’.

EU countries stand united in their view that each culture of the Union is a unique expression of the people who live in it and, as such, they all deserve support and protection. The ‘European Year of Languages 2001’ was a very positive illustration of this.

Furthermore, the Union’s enlargement enriches both the diversity and the common heritage of the cultures in the European Union, thus widening the scope of its cultural policies.

The EU Treaty also mandates that the Community and Member States foster cooperation with third countries and ‘the competent international organisations’ in the sphere of culture. Along these lines, at this difficult time in international relations, the EU considers that UNESCO has a fundamental role to play in the UN system, based on its unique competence in the areas of its responsibilities, such as education and the protec-

tion of cultural heritage (particularly through the World Heritage Programme).

The EU welcomes UNESCO’s participation in the reconstruction of Afghanistan, especially in the fields of education, heritage and communication, and it actively supports UNESCO in efforts to protect (and recover) the cultural heritage of Iraq.

At the UN, the EU is actively concerned with cultural issues (via UNESCO and UNICEF in particular) promoting international cooperation and concerted action. Working in these forums, the EU has contributed to the discussion and resolution of issues pertaining to language, international communication, freedom of expression, free-flow of information, the arts and other culture-related social issues. And it also does so by example: the EU recognises the importance of multilingualism within its own borders, evidenced by its 11 official languages at present (and soon-to-be 20). Three European languages are also official languages of the United Nations (English, French and Spanish).

Protecting the world’s heritage

Established in 1972 as part of the Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage, UNESCO’s World Heritage Mission and Programme aim to define and conserve the world’s heritage by drawing up a list of sites whose outstanding values — historical, aesthetic, archaeological, scientific, ethnological or anthropological — should be preserved for all humanity, and to ensure their protection through closer cooperation among nations.

As signatories to the convention, the EU Member States have pledged to conserve such sites situated on their territories, many of which having been recognised as World Heritage-worthy by the World Heritage Committee. In fact, 269 of the 730 World Heritage sites across the globe are located in the 25 current and acceding EU countries.



The Parthenon on the hill of the Acropolis in Athens, official symbol of UNESCO.

Photo: Greek National Tourist Organisation.



↑ UNESCO has designated many World Heritage sites in Europe, including the Upper Rhine Valley in Germany. For two millennia, it has served as one of the most important transport routes in Europe, facilitating contact between the Mediterranean region and the north.
Photo: UNESCO.

**UNESCO World Heritage sites
within the enlarged European Union**

Source: UNESCO

For a list of European and other World Heritage sites, please visit
<http://whc.unesco.org/nwhc/pages/doc/mainf3.htm>.

Supporting UNESCO

In November 2000, UNESCO's Executive Council fixed its main priorities in the following fields: education, water resources and normative actions related to ethics in science and technology and cultural diversity. With respect to these areas, the EU:

- supports UNESCO's leading role in the 'Education for All' (EFA) programme. It takes note of the excellent EFA monitoring report, which provides clear priorities in intensifying cooperation with other part-

ners, fully exploiting its expertise (at headquarters, but also in UNESCO's institutes) and making good use of the UN literacy decade to strengthen work towards adult literacy and access to education for the disadvantaged;

- attaches the highest importance to concerted action on water resources in the UN system — both in the framework of the International Year of Fresh Water and of the EU water initiative launched at the WSSD in Johannesburg — to preserve and highlight the fresh water resources of our planet, and to help manage them better for the benefit of all. The EU is pleased at the impact made by the world water development report, presented at Kyoto in March 2003, and welcomes UNESCO's contribution;
- favours the drafting of a declaration on genetic data which, like the declaration on the human genome, ought to bring about greater awareness of what is at stake in the sphere of bioethics. The EU would also like to see UNESCO encourage a universal normative framework on anti-doping in sport;
- welcomes the fact that UNESCO considers protection of the tangible and natural cultural heritage as a priority for cultural diversity.

UNESCO Member States are also working on a draft convention on the intangible cultural heritage. The EU hopes that this work will be successful in providing a clear and acceptable conceptual framework, which should encourage cooperation at all levels. The same applies to the project for a convention on cultural diversity, based on the principles of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, which the general conference adopted unanimously in November 2001. A convention on this subject, as foreseen by the declaration, would be an extension of the work in hand, and would signal the willingness to move ahead and realise its commitments.

Given that the digital heritage forms part of the intangible heritage of humanity and a vehicle for the promotion of cultural diversity, the EU welcomes the work taking place on a proposed draft charter for the conservation of this heritage.

Still, normative action in UNESCO should not be limited to drafting conventions and must include the follow up to all these instruments, above all where the human rights aspects of these conventions are concerned.

Finally, the EU applauds the progress achieved in the reform process of UNESCO, particularly towards results-based budgeting and more rigorous management and budgetary control. Progress has been realised on new management procedures, a new human resources policy and decentralisation, even if much remains to be done.

Furthermore, the EU acknowledges the importance and impact the United States' return to UNESCO will have on all aspects of activity within the organisation.

Freedom of the press

Freedom of the press and the free and unhindered flow of information and opinion are fundamental prerequisites for the full development of the individual as well as for democracy. The EU has always vigorously promoted the principle of freedom of the press and the free flow of information and opinion.

Dialogue among civilisations

The EU represents a mosaic of cultures and continues to benefit from a multiplicity of cultural inputs from other continents. The EU supports actions that could contribute to greater understanding and dialogue among and within civilisations.

UNESCO has several levers at its disposal to achieve peace and genuine dialogue between cultures and civilisations. It contributes to the overall actions of the UN system towards the achievement of the millennium development goals. And UNESCO should continue to strengthen its cooperation with other international organisations.

Towards the information society

The EU vision and approach to the information society is based on a comprehensive set of policies developed over the last decade. Accordingly, the EU provided a major contribution to the preparation of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) that was held in December 2003 in Geneva, and will do the same for WSIS in November 2005 in Tunisia.

The WSIS' aim is 'to develop a common vision and understanding of the information society and to draw up a strategic plan of action for concerted development towards realising this vision', as called for by the UN General Assembly in January 2002.

The EU took an active part in three of the four regional conferences organised to prepare the world summit: the African conference in Bamako in June 2002, the pan-European conference in Bucharest in October 2002, and the conference of the Latin American countries in Punta Caña in January 2003. The EU also plays an active role in the preparatory committees of the summit, contributing substantively to the draft political declaration and action plan.



Aiming to increase understanding of its activities at the United Nations, the European Union launched the EU@UN website on 23 January 2002. Managed jointly by the EU presidency, the European Commission and the Council Secretariat in New York, it gives the latest news about EU-UN relations to the public, the media and the UN community.

Among its features, the website contains a multilingual (English, French) and multifaceted search engine (by key words, date, subject, UN body, EU institution, world region, etc.).

EU statements at the UN, press releases and policy documents are now available in a database format that makes it easy to locate current and past documents. It also sports an e-mail alert service for those who want to be informed about the latest news appearing on the website.

In recognition of the importance of multilingualism, the website is available in the official languages of the 15 EU Member States ⁽¹⁾. Many documents are loaded onto the search engine in English and French. EU priorities at the United Nations (e.g. UNGA 58) are posted in all 11 EU languages.

For any inquiries about the website and further information about EU-UN relations, we can be contacted at: delegation-new-york-euinfo@cec.eu.int.

⁽¹⁾ Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.



EU and related acronyms

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific countries; parties to Cotonou Agreement
CFSP	Common foreign and security policy
EC	European Community
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Office
EIDHR	European initiative for democracy and human rights
EMCDDA	European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction
EP	European Parliament
ESDP	European security and defence policy
EU	European Union
EU-25	Current 15 EU Member States plus the 10 acceding countries
EUPM	European Union Police Mission (in Bosnia and Herzegovina)
Europol	European Police Office
FfD	Financing for Development (Monterrey)
HICP	Heavily indebted poorest countries
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
LDCs	Least-developed countries
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
ODA	Official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
SAA	Stabilisation and association agreements
SPD	Strategic programming dialogue
Tacis	Technical assistance programme to 13 east European and central Asian countries
TRIP	Trade-related intellectual property
WTO	World Trade Organisation
WSIS	World Summit on the Information Society
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg)

The UN system — Main bodies and acronyms

Principal organs and main subsidiary bodies

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and main committees

United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Trusteeship Council

International Court of Justice (ICJ)

United Nations Secretariat

Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

Economic Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

United Nations programmes and offices

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

United Nations Development Fund for Women (Unifem)

United Nations Volunteers (UNV)

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)

United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (Instraw)

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

World Food Programme (WFP)

United Nations Population Front (UNFPA)

United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP)

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR)

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA)

United Nations University (UNU)

United Nations Institute for Training and Research (Unitar)

United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (Unrisd)

United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (Unicri)

United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (Unidir)

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (Unaids)

United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)

United Nations specialised agencies

International Labour Organisation (ILO)

Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)

World Health Organisation (WHO)

World Bank

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO)

Universal Postal Union (UPU)

International Telecommunications Union (ITU)

World Meteorological Organisation (WMO)

International Maritime Organisation (IMO)

World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO)

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO)

Related organisations

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

World Tourism Organisation (WTO)

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO)

Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)

Principal departments and offices of the Secretariat

Office of the Secretary General (OSG)

Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS)

Office of Legal Affairs (OLA)

Department of Political Affairs (DPA)

Department for Disarmament Affairs (DDA)

Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO)

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)

Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services (DGAACS)

Department of Public Information (DPI)

Department of Management (DM)

Office of the Iraq Programme (OIP)

Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator (UnseCOORD)

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

UN Office at Geneva (UNOG)

UN Office at Vienna (UNOV)

UN Office at Nairobi (UNON)