

Brussels, 11 February 2022

Robert Schuman: “The European collaboration and integration shall not and cannot become an economic and technical enterprise: it needs a soul, the knowledge of its historical roots and of its responsibilities, in the past and in the future, and a political willingness that serves that same ideal.”

January, 1968

Jacques Delors: “If in the next ten years we haven’t managed to give a soul to Europe, to give it spirituality and meaning, the game will be up”.

February, 1992

Dear Commissioner Gabriel,

Our founding fathers already foretold with precision some of the ailments that have put the European Union to test in recent times. Too often, the Union has been described as soulless, perceived as a distant bureaucratic architecture, and detached from the citizens of Europe.

In the last years, European institutions and political groups have finally recognised the need for greater citizens’ involvement, launching meaningful participatory exercises like the Conference on the Future of Europe. However, questions remain regarding the modes of permanent participation after the conference, and more importantly, will formal participation mechanisms, often limited to a segment of engaged citizens, endow Europe with a soul?

Over the years, this Parliament has heard multiple speeches by political leaders rightly identifying European culture as being at the core of Europe’s soul. This includes President Von der Leyen’s State of the Union on September 2021, when she stated that the *“great European values” “come from the cultural, religious and humanist heritage of Europe. They are part of our soul, part of what defines us today.”*

A belief shared by President Macron, who stated in his speech to the European Parliament on 19 January 2022 *“what does it mean to be European? It means feeling great emotion before our treasures, the fruit of our heritage and our history, the hills of Lapland, and the golden roofs of Krakow, this means being moved in the same way by the romantic spirit, by the works of Chopin and the texts of Pessoa. This also means together sharing a civility, a way of living in the world, from our cafés to our museums, which is incomparable.”*

Our late President Sassoli, in his last address to the European Council of 16 December 2021, affirmed: *“what Europe also needs, and needs most of all, is a new project of hope – a project to unite us all, a project that embodies our Union, our values and our civilisation”.* *“I hope that Europe Day on 9 May next year will see a common, powerful and united demonstration of our commitment to the European project and to the values and civilisation it imparts.”* Thus, leaders from the past and the present, across the political spectrum, and across all European



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institutions, converge in the need to support the flourishing of Europe based on European culture, its richness and diversity.

Unfortunately, these speeches are rarely translated into action, perhaps due the unfortunate limitations that our Treaties endow to the Union in the field of culture. However, and as stated by our leaders, more needs to be done. This is why we propose the organisation of **pan-European Festival of Cultures and Ideas to be organised on**, and around, **the 9th of May**, across the cities and villages of our Union.

This Festival aims to allow citizen's participation and celebration of the European idea from a festive and popular perspective, experiencing Europe from up-close beyond institutional settings. Culture allows for differences and common links to be expressed in a peaceful, fraternal manner. Moreover, firmly rooting the festival at a local level, it can contribute to the enjoyment of our shared cultural heritage, in line with the longer-term objectives in the follow-up of the European Year of Cultural Heritage. The festival will enable the organisation of a wide range of cultural events, theatre, music, literature, dance, etc..., preferably in public spaces, alongside open citizen's debates about European issues. When possible, debates could focus on topics of particular relevance at EU level in a given period.

The Union could support the European Festival of Culture and Ideas through three different funding lines. Firstly, by endowing local municipalities with co-financing grants for the organisation of the Festival.

Secondly, by funding artists, creators and cultural organisation with micro-grants (up to 5.000 euros) to support the creation of work, the organisation of cultural events or promote cultural exchange through European mobility for artists within the context of the festival. In times where the Covid-19 pandemic has devastated the cultural sector and the European recovery fund is largely devoted to large-scale projects, cultural infrastructure or tourism activities, this funding line would be a crucial contribution to support artists that are at the base of the cultural ecosystem, in line with their long-standing demands.

Thirdly, by providing financial support to mature festivals to carry out joint programming on the 9th of May, connecting audiences digitally around Europe, both through cultural events and live debates, in a joint pan-European experience.

We believe such a European Festival of Cultures and Ideas is grounded on, and gives response to, the long-term needs of the European project, the cultural sector, and most of all, the need for more citizens' participation and thus, could become a staple of European funding in the next Creative Europe programming cycle through a dedicated strand, with the corresponding fresh financial allocations.

Nevertheless, the European Year of Youth is the right moment to explore and kick-start preparations of this initiative, with a view to launch the Festival in 2023, firmly anchoring it as part of the legacy of the European Year of Youth, in line with the proposals presented by the organised European youth and under the scope of its legal basis, stating the European Year should build on and seek synergies with European events and initiatives and Europe Day, among others. In that regard, the Festival should not have a detrimental effect on the funding of ongoing or planned core activities of the Erasmus+ programme.



The Covid-19 pandemic has weakened social bonds, with dire consequences for our youth's wellbeing and social cohesion. Europeans crave to reconnect with each other. After the pandemic, we believe this Festival can foster a much-needed feeling of togetherness.

With kindest regards,

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2. Salvatore DeMeo, EPP,
3. Guy Verhofstadt, Renew
4. Niklas Nienass, The Greens
5. Dimitrios Papadimoulis, The Left
6. Fabio Massimo Castaldo, Non-attached
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8. Petra Kammerevert, S&D
9. Michaela Sojdrova, EPP
10. Tomasz Frankowski, EPP
11. Laurence Farreng, Renew
12. Salima Yenbou, The Greens
13. Alexis Georgulis, The Left
14. Dace Melbārde, ECR
15. Fred Matic, S&D
16. Pernille Weiss, EPP
17. Sandro Gozi, Renew
18. Terry Reintke, The Greens
19. Stelios Kouloglou, The Left
20. Victor Negrescu, S&D
21. Peter Pollák, EPP
22. Jan-Christoph Oetjen, Renew
23. Katrin Langensiepen, The Greens
24. Eugenia Rodríguez-Palop, The Left
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26. Ivan Štefanec, EPP
27. Olivier Chastel, Renew
28. Diana Riba i Giner, The Greens
29. Konstantinos Arvanitis, The Left
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31. Esteban Gonzalez Pons, EPP
32. Alin Mituta, Renew
33. Manuela Ripa, The Greens
34. Brando Benifei, S&D
35. Franc Bogovič, EPP
36. Iliana Cicurel, Renew
37. François Alfonsi, The Greens
38. Dietmar Köster, S&D
39. Andrey Kovatchev, EPP
40. Hilde Vautmans, Renew
41. Benoit Biteau, The Greens



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42. Juan Fernando López Aguilar, S&D
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44. Michal Simecka, Renew
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47. Asim Ademov, EPP
48. Svenja Hahn, Renew
49. David Cormand, The Greens
50. Ibán García del Blanco, S&D
51. Milan Zver, EPP
52. Lucia Ďuriš, Renew
53. Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield, The Greens
54. Cesar Luena, S&D
55. Antonius Manders, EPP
56. Martina Dlabajová, Renew
57. Karima Delli, The Greens
58. Klára Dobrev, S&D
59. Lukas Mandl, EPP
60. Ulrike Müller, Renew
61. Claude Gruffat, The Greens
62. Isabel Carvalhais, S&D
63. Irena Joveva, Renew
64. Yannick Jadot, The Greens
65. Inmaculada Rodríguez-Piñero, S&D
66. Michèle Rivasi, The Greens
67. Giuliano Pisapia, S&D
68. Mounir Satouri, The Greens
69. Estrella Dura Ferrandis, S&D
70. Caroline Roose, The Greens
71. Sándor Rónai, S&D
72. Marie Toussaint, The Greens
73. Thijs Reuten, S&D
74. Malte Gallée, The Greens
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