



AFRICA-EUROPE
WEEK
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Event report #4



AU-EU cultural relations partnership

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The first-ever Africa-Europe Week¹ and 6th Europe Africa Business Forum (EABF)² were held between 14 to 17 February 2022 and led by the European Commission, European cultural organisations, and cultural and civil society actors from the European Union (EU) and African Union (AU).

culture Solutions' Training and know-how sharing team was invited to contribute to the assessment of the 26 different culture-related events in the Week and EABF agenda, including lectures, showcases as well as presentations of artistic projects. In doing so, we contributed on the main takeaways to strengthen future Africa-Europe dialogue events and programming related to culture and its possibilities.

This report shares culture Solutions' reflections on the events and what they tell us about the aspects of the Africa-EU partnership that matter most in the post-COVID context.

1. European Commission DG INTPA, Africa-Europe Week: Strengthening cross-continent, people-to-people and business relations between both continents, https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/news-and-events/news/africa-europe-week-strengthening-cross-continent-people-people-and-business-relations-between-both-2022-02-17_en

2. European Commission DG INTPA, EU-Africa Business Forum, https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/eu-africa-business-forum_en

Three take-aways for the AU-EU cultural relations partnership

Acknowledge the calls for a reset of the Africa-Europe partnership

The events of the Africa-Europe Week and EABF must be seen in a context where African-European relations have been strained by responses and actions during the Covid-19 pandemic and a strengthening in demands to transparently address colonial baggage through decolonising old and ongoing practices. In that sense, the agenda of the Week and the EABF 2022 has had a particular significance.

The most important political message was the call for a reset of the AU-EU partnership on more equitable terms and on shared values.



We are looking for equitable partnerships where goals address each other's weaknesses.



Ahmed Mansur, Pan African Manufacturers Association

In any partnership (re-)negotiation, however, cultural actors must have a voice and cultural considerations – such as cultural diversity and the role of culture in sustainable development – must be part of the discussion.

Clarify ownership and define responsibilities

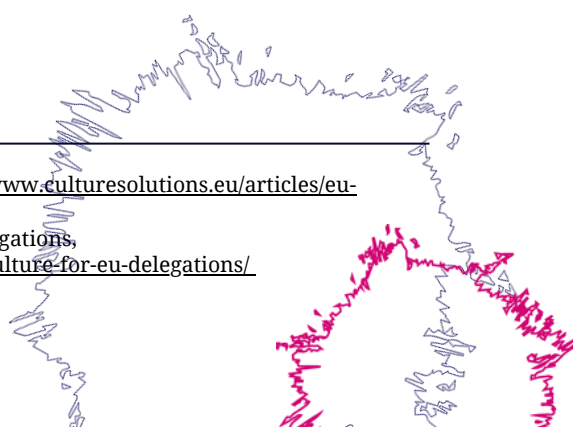
Asymmetries in institutional development and diversity of theoretical frameworks require further efforts to create sustainable and scalable cooperation between the EU and its partners in Africa. On the EU side, the involvement of actors beyond EU institutions is a fact, yet the role of Member States remains undefined. How European cultural and socio-entrepreneurial sectors professionals are or could be more directly involved in cooperation with Africa outside EU-funded initiatives is still unclear.

Europe's diversity in terms of the cultural activities of its member states is still not represented on EU-AU cooperation platforms. Whether or not this is due to the legacy of the colonial past, increasing the diversity of European institutions working with and learning from their African peers can only be a good thing. Furthermore, a coordinated #TeamEurope culture approach⁴ – bringing together and showcasing the good practice of EUNIC clusters, EU Delegations and the EU institutions – needs to be strengthened in the presentation of the EU's cultural relations with Africa.

The Week saw calls for the EU to take ownership and move forward with discussions on the restitution of Africa's cultural heritage from Europe. Among various factors, it is clear that Member States and potentially other intermediary organisations need to address this pending in more consequential and transparent ways.

3. culture Solutions, EU External Cultural Action: decolonising the praxis?, <https://www.culturesolutions.eu/articles/eu-external-cultural-action-decolonising-the-praxis/>

4. culture Solutions, #TeamEurope: A community of practice on culture for EU Delegations, <https://www.culturesolutions.eu/events/teameurope-a-community-of-practice-on-culture-for-eu-delegations/>





We will strive to facilitate cultural exchanges and the movement of artists and artworks between our two continents, and encourage mutual undertaking for the restitution of cultural assets and promote access to and protection of cultural heritage.



6th European Union – African Union Summit: A Joint Vision for 2030, p.2

Mainstream culture in broader social and political discourse

There are opportunities to reinforce the importance of mainstreaming culture (in both its artistic and anthropological senses) in the broader political and social themes being discussed in future events about Africa-Europe international relations. For example, discussions around climate change and sustainability should embrace topics including, but also wider than, sustainable fashion. This would help move beyond ideas of culture as an ‘add-on’ in sustainable development. Integrating a new cross-sectoral and holistic view of the creative economy in spaces of dialogue and cooperation between African and European actors can favour the construction of common objectives.

Culture is far from being mainstreamed in the Europe-Africa partnership and there is a lot of work to do. Practical cultural programming activities supported by the partnership are key. In the next sections we will focus on the most pressing topics in Africa-EU cultural relations programming, good practice on creating space for inclusive online dialogue and the headway made by Africa-EU partnership since the ACP-EU Seminar in June 2021.

5 priorities for international and regional Africa-Europe cultural relations programming

Strengthen skills and professionalism in the cultural and Creative Industries value chains



We are in a crucial transition phase. We are moving from a phase in which Africa has been provided with inputs from the West to an African industry.



Kunle Afolayan, Kap Hub, Nigeria

Africa’s brand is cultural. Its CCIs are full of potential. However, much employment, particularly for young people and women, rests in the informal economy. We recommend that European and African actors:

- Support the professionalisation of the African CCIs through the strengthening of informal and formal education and reducing skills gaps, such as on intellectual property and digitisation;
- Embed cultural perspectives and actors into the development of innovation hubs like, for example, the digital or textile innovation hubs proposed by the Europe-Africa Business Forum working groups;
- Further support international cooperation on artistic education and training, valuing its potential for long-term impact on the development of CCIs.

Mainstream cultural diversity considerations and reconsider the importance of heritage in Africa-Europe collaboration

Europe's colonial legacy must be addressed to ensure equal partnership working. This is particularly important in light of the different conceptualisations of culture (e.g. as a way of life vs a formal art form). Collaboration between Africa and Europe is fraught with the risk of identity loss and the risk of what it means to adapt to European paradigms of what culture and quality is. Focusing on the richness and cultural diversity in Africa would help us see the African CCIs for their potential for human and sustainable development, rather than through a deficit lens based on the European gaze. For example, we should pay more attention to the possibilities of heritage and traditional knowledge as tools to tackle climate change.

We recommend that cultural programming should:

- Support horizontal, more diverse and inclusive cultural relations between Africa and Europe, including working with digital content platforms to promote and protect the diversity of cultural expressions;
- Capitalise on heritage as part of holistic local and national economic, sustainable development and tourism plans;
- Work to stop the loss of native languages. It could also help the EU progress its position on linguistic diversity.

Support the enabling environment through access to finance, improved data collection and impactful research

We lack data in most cases to understand the extent and real potential of the African CCIs, in particular in the informal economy. We don't know much about the gender breakdown in the African CCIs or

how culture is contributing to decent employment goals (Sustainable Development Goal 8). More broadly, we struggle to embed culture in sustainable development because we lack the data and the evidence of the impact it can have.

In addition to investing in creative infrastructures (e.g. to support specific CCI sub-sectors like gaming), legislative reform is ongoing on copyright and related intellectual property themes, such as image rights.

We recommend that cultural programming should:

- Support access to market-orientated investment opportunities – accessible to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and in particular young people and women – provided by development banks and guaranteed by public-funding;
- Explore the possibility of an EEAS-INTPA-led pilot programme of unrestricted funding to cultural projects that are process-based and focussed on impact rather than outputs;
- Invest and prioritise longer-term sectoral investment;
- Provide more intersectoral governance models to protect freedom of cultural expression in a digital age.

Create value for all by seeing the opportunities in mobility and migration



Seeing Africa through its youth is to see a continent full of potential and opportunities.



Jutta Urpilainen, Commissioner on International Partnerships

Within the called-for Africa-Europe partnership reset we described in our first blog, there is a further call for a new mobility framework that would incorporate African priorities on free movement and benefit enhanced EU-AU cultural relations. Both regular and irregular migration is likely to continue (especially due to climate change). Mobility is needed for creative professionalisation and professionalisation is anticipated to reduce (creative) migration.

We recommend that cultural programming, therefore, must:

- Take a 'rights-based, long-term approach to migration, focusing on harnessing its positive aspects' (drawing from the civil society track outcomes document);⁵
- Support a community of practice for networking that goes beyond art forms and age, part of which would be a sustainable platform of good practices and spaces;⁶
- Strengthen the EAC's I-portunus pilot action and open it up to third countries to invest more in mobility opportunities.

Embrace culture in sustainable development

Whereas culture is missing from the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, the African Cultural Renaissance is a clear goal of the Africa 2063 agenda.⁷ Both, however, do not clearly set out a vision of an integrated place for culture in sustainable development priorities.



It's unequivocal; everyone agrees that culture matters for sustainable development, but to what extent? [MONDIACULT can help the culture-environment nexus] by raising awareness; looking for the best practices in the African intangible heritage that can be used to tackle climate change.



Youma Fall, Co-founder and Executive Director at PayDunya

We recommend, finally, that cultural programming in the Africa and EU partnership needs to:

- Think beyond fashion (which is leading in sustainable and circular economy innovation) towards how other cultural expressions can help in the climate action;
- Bring anthropological perspectives of culture into architecture and urban planning;
- Embrace preparations for MONDIACULT to reconsider the post-colonial and climate action frameworks of the AU-EU cultural partnership.

The above five priorities in Africa-Europe cultural relations programming are relevant to all European actors collaborating with African partners at any level. For sustainability and relationship building, we recommend the strengthening

5. European Commission DG INTPA, Africa-Europe Week CSO Forum outcome document to All Heads of State and Government and Dignitaries attending the 6th EU-AU Summit, https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-02/aew-2022-cso-forum-outcomes-document_en.pdf

6. culture Solutions, #TeamEurope impact: Effective Digital Communities of Practice, <https://www.culturesolutions.eu/events/teameurope-digital-community-of-practice/>

7. African Union, Linking Agenda 2063 and the SDGs, <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/sdgs>

of existing cooperation projects and partnerships and the inclusion of previously excluded or new voices, in particular, the sector itself, as well as women and young people.

Building inclusive spaces for Africa-Europe cultural relations dialogue

Spearheaded by the EU and the African Union, the 2022 Africa-Europe Week and EABF sought to reinforce culture and other transversal themes (like youth participation) in future Africa-Europe dialogue. However, the rise of new voices and calls for a reset of the Africa-Europe political agenda means that new spaces for inclusive cultural relations dialogue could and should emerge.

Reset the narratives through participatory policy-making

The events of the Africa-Europe Week and EABF unveiled the need to reform the EU-AU political agenda and the power relations and tools that have perpetuated a trust deficit. Bolstering an inclusive AU-EU dialogue invites us to reconsider the connections between culture, cultural participation and the underlying political and social challenges of both continents.

Decolonising the practices and narratives is fundamental to bolster AU-EU cultural relations dialogue and should be made tangible by the co-design and even stronger consultative practices in policy making. Including the voices of European cultural sector professionals involved in relations with Africa outside EU-funded initiatives (and African peers not involved in EU-funded activity) can showcase new narratives and support this shift in mind-sets.

Refresh the partnership with visible leadership and clear responsibilities

Advancing towards inclusive spaces for Africa-Europe dialogue interrogates the terms of the EU-AU partnership. Questions have been raised on representation and leadership in cultural issues on both sides, including, for example, responsibility for the restitution of African states' heritage in European museums.

Firstly, partnership events must have visible and dense representation from member state diplomats, representatives and public officials. Secondly, beyond the political level, the responsibility of civil society organisations relating to culture must also be clearly set out. Finally, there is a need to foster constructive dialogue beyond the displaying of good practices; for instance, by bringing alternative voices as journalists, academics and researchers into the conversation.

Recompose the practices with practical support and mobility

Establishing new spaces for dialogue and trust building should translate into clear actions and toolkits to support cultural actors' initiatives. Building on existing success stories, the co-creation of new meeting places and cultural spaces for cultural actors to create partnerships and initiate dialogue could be foreseen through a #TeamEurope approach. Such efforts should include networking, peer learning and knowledge sharing opportunities to equip cultural practices.

The Europe-Africa agenda should improve access to mobility opportunities: in particular, there is a need for a positive rights-based mobility framework that would facilitate easier travel between Africa and Europe.



Final thoughts on fairness

Ensuring fair access to funding, fair representation and fair access to mobility opportunities invites all those involved in Europe-Africa relations to consider:

- The empowerment of existing EU-led structures such as EUNIC Clusters, national institutes and EU Delegations – and their transformation into even stronger spaces for dialogue
- Looking at digital content platforms which are not yet subject to rules that protect the diversity of cultural expressions, and the implications this may have as digital consumption rises;
- The capacity-building and leadership development of cultural actors, including through mentorship;
- Renewed and widened financial support to foster fair access to mobility for creators;
- The creation of an inclusive and sector-led working group to create criteria for good practice in international collaboration and in sustainable ICR;
- The creation and support of opportunities for South-South cultural cooperation; and
- An additional scheme for mobility to engage the trainers.

From ACP-EU Culture Webinar to Africa-Europe Week 2022: five pathways to follow

In our analysis of the 2021 EU-ACP culture webinar⁸, we highlighted the main takeaways of EU-ACP relations and the five opportunities that could help to build a stronger, more sustainable partnership. Now we ask ourselves, what key topics persist? How have these advanced in the last months? This section discusses the

main trends in EU-AU cultural relations by positioning them along what we have observed to date with EU and Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) relations.

Mainstreaming a wider and more inclusive concept of culture

A more inclusive, all encompassing concept of culture is advancing in cultural discussions. The EU-ACP 2021 webinar considered that culture, as a common and public good, must be taken into account in all aspects of human activity, including its connection to the environment, health and education, and not reduced to the needs of growth and employability. This was also a key takeaway of the Africa-Europe Week 2022. Panellists underlined the need to take an anthropological view that focuses on the richness and cultural diversity in Africa and its potential for human and sustainable development, rather than a deficit/economic lens.

Suggestions to mainstream this approach into international collaboration and economic growth emerged in parallel with concrete proposals, such as bringing an anthropological perspective of culture into architecture and urban planning.

Young people take the lead

Both events consolidated youth inclusion as a priority for Africa and for Europe. An initial pathway was set during the EU-ACP event of including young people in any culture-based strategy, along with infrastructure, training and tailored data-gathering and research. The Africa-Europe Week took a step further, from inclusion to calls for direct participation in decision-making. A thematic Youth Track was developed prior to the event, dedicated to youth perspectives and priorities, such as the decentralisation and decolonisation of

8. culture Solutions, Event report #3: EU action for culture in Africa, Caribbean and Pacific, <https://www.culturesolutions.eu/publications/event-report-3-eu-action-for-culture-in-africa-caribbean-and-pacific/>

education, inclusion in consultation processes, access to formal education, more spaces for young people to meet, match-making and networking, capacity-building and leadership development, more funding opportunities that support political participation, and mentorship.

Cultural and Creative Industries: decent jobs and digital acceleration

Strengthening the cultural ecosystem is always high in the agenda, especially in a region where over 90% of cultural workers are part of the informal sector. The EU-ACP webinar underlined the need to build cultural and creative industries (CCIs) that help talents to thrive in their own country, through the network of small-medium enterprises that act locally and internationally. Together with professionalisation of the CCIs, it is important not to overshadow the informal sector, which is a source of creativity and wealth.

The Africa-Europe Week moved the debate forward in calling for a shift towards the formal sector that ensures decent working conditions for artists. Professionalisation of the CCIs helps to reduce migration, strengthen cultural ecosystems and contribute to sustainable development. Investing in formal and non-formal education which is inclusive with people in situations of vulnerability, was considered as a key first step in the long-term professionalisation of the CCIs.

Diversifying funding and enabling market-oriented opportunities

Diversifying public-private financing and repositioning international collaboration as a business ally that does not substitute local investments was outlined by

panellists during the EU-ACP culture webinar.

The Africa-Europe Week deepened this vision, considering that market-oriented investment opportunities provided by development banks and public-funding should also be available for artists and cultural actors. Unrestricted funding, as opposed to funding for concrete projects, was suggested as a solution to boost artistic creation and support longer-term projects. Nevertheless, the lack of data, infrastructures, an adequate legal framework and excessively complex procedures are also seen to jeopardise an enabling environment for stronger CCIs.

The digital dimension

The digital acceleration, especially regarding the developments during the COVID-19 pandemic, was one of the key topics outlined during EU-ACP discussions. It was considered a radical change to the entire value chain of cultural practitioners that has led to significant imbalances in global trade that could lead to exclusion. Therefore, any cultural project should include a capacity-building dimension for staff dealing with digital technologies that considers diversity of socio-economic situation.

The EU-AU Week touched upon the still mostly unfair reward for creatives who provide content to digital platforms, or the increasing skills gap triggered by the digitalisation of CCIs and education and lack of digital infrastructure that especially affect women, making it more difficult to access finance. Digital platforms were considered as important elements for protecting and promoting the diversity of cultural expressions. Nonetheless, the digital debate had not progressed to such a significant degree and was missing from some discussions where we might have expected it.

9. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Contribution to the 2015 United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), <https://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/integration/2015/pdf/eca.pdf>



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