



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
Ministry of Culture and Sports



*Council of Ministers of Culture
of South East Europe*



With the support of
**Regional Bureau
for Science and Culture
in Europe**

Seventh Ministerial Conference of the Council of Ministers of Culture of South East Europe -

Enhancing Culture for Sustainable Development (CoMoCoSEE)

Athens, Hellenic Republic 25 May 2021

Declaration

We, the Ministers and the Heads of Delegations participating in the seventh meeting of the Council of Ministers of Culture of South East Europe - Enhancing Culture for Sustainable Development (CoMoCoSEE),

Gathered today, on 25th May 2021 in Athens, Greece, within the framework of the Presidency of the Hellenic Republic of the CoMoCoSEE;

Reaffirming respectively the contents, objectives, activities and principles included and determined in the Charter of the Council of Ministers of Culture of South-East Europe signed on 31 March 2005 in Copenhagen, the Appendix and Second Appendix to the Charter approved on 15 April 2011 in Bucharest and on 28 June 2014 in Ohrid respectively;

Confirming our commitment to the implementation of the Joint Declarations approved in Mostar (2004), Venice (2005), Ohrid (2006), Varna (2006), Tirana (2006), Sofia (2007), Zadar (2007), Bucharest (2008), Zagreb (2008), Athens (2009), Cetinje (2010), Bucharest (2011), Belgrade (2012), Brdo pri Kranju (2013), Istanbul (2016), Tirana (2017), Sarajevo (2018), Sofia (2019), Rijeka (2020) and of the Regional Strategy for Cultural Cooperation in South-East Europe approved in Ohrid (2014);



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
Ministry of Culture and Sports



Council of Ministers of Culture
of South East Europe



With the support of
Regional Bureau
for Science and Culture
in Europe

Accentuating the very important role that the established mechanism of cooperation within the Council of Ministers of Culture of South-East Europe plays, especially the contribution that further intensifies cooperation and cohesion, in a spirit of mutual respect, peace and stability;

Recognizing the exceptionally important role of culture in sustainable social and economic development in line with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the New European Agenda for Culture and the EU Work Plan for Culture 2019 – 2022;

Reaffirming our commitment to the cultural conventions, conclusions and recommendations adopted within the framework of UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the European Union;

Welcoming the results achieved in cooperation in the field of culture between the member countries of the Council of Ministers of Culture of South-East Europe, at bilateral and multilateral levels, and the commitment and support of all participating countries in further developing, enhancing and promoting mutual cooperation in this field;

Thanking UNESCO, the Council of Europe, and the European Union for their support in advancing cooperation through regional projects and activities in the field of culture in South-East Europe;

Considering that cultural diversity in our region is a key value that promotes understanding and respect towards other cultures and enriches our societies;

Acknowledging the importance of cultural cooperation and intercultural exchanges to the prosperity and social cohesion of South-East Europe;

We, the Ministers of Culture and the Heads of Delegations, agree to:

1. Continue to strengthen the cooperation of CoMoCoSEE member countries with the aim of sharing knowledge and best practices in the cultural sector, as well as linking



culture to other sectors and sectoral policies, in line with the goals of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2. Acknowledge the severe impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on all aspects of economic and cultural activity in our region and the fact that this affected our common ambition for cultural cooperation and exchange.
3. Acknowledge that these conditions have gravely affected the artists and cultural professionals, as well as the sustainability of cultural organizations, enterprises, festivals and institutions.
4. Recognize that the development of cultural and creative industries has become an important economic strategy that promotes local and regional economic development, as well as raises the quality of cultural life that promotes people's well-being. We therefore stress the need for the continued support to the cultural and creative sector by means of appropriate institutional, legislative and financial measures. These measures should aim at supporting the cultural and creative sector as a sustainable and integrated ecology of mutually supporting individuals, organizations and institutions.
5. Recognize the significant role of culture in promoting democracy and social cohesion within societies. In the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development we underline a unique contribution of cultural and creative industries to foreign relations, with particular focus on ensuring peace and stability.
6. Foster the digitalization of cultural content in order to make it more accessible to everyone, as it has been demonstrated during the pandemic.
7. Recognize the importance of a holistic approach towards the cultural and creative sector, which brings forth the interdependence of the economic, the social and the cultural value of cultural activities, stakeholders and products. We also emphasize the important role of culture in enhancing social cohesion. Particularly in times of social distancing, anxiety and



uncertainty, culture helps people connect while providing hope, comfort, and the feeling of inclusion.

8. Consider that the approach to cultural policies should incorporate useful ecological concepts, such as co-operation and collaboration held in balance, self-regulating systems, mutual dependence, dynamism, fragility and robustness, global environmental capacity, interactions, linkages, patterns in the field of culture.
9. Acknowledge the importance of embracing policies that enhance the resilience of the cultural field under the current conditions. An ecological approach brings forth the need for such a resilience in the cultural ecosystems in South-East Europe, and for that purpose, we encourage possible targeted financial measures as these may be deemed necessary in extreme conditions, affecting the production, the dissemination and access to culture.
10. Encourage measures to promote and improve the access of cultural organizations to financial resources to mitigate unemployment risks due to the current coronavirus pandemic, citizens' access to culture, as well as strengthening intellectual property legislation to stimulate the spread and access to culture through the digital means – all while emphasizing the importance of the freedom of cultural and artistic expression for creation and participation in the digital era.
11. Recognize the exceptional role that digital technology can play in the field of contemporary culture as the enabler and facilitator for disseminating cultural meanings by providing alternative means for the cultural circuit to function. Previous attempts should be continued in order to increase the content available online and develop the necessary networks for its dissemination so as to grow digital audiences.



12. Stress the importance of digitalization, inventorying and management in protecting, preserving and promoting cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, and the application of new technologies in accordance with relevant international standards and regulations.
13. Start from the fact that the protection and promotion of cultural and natural diversity are key issues, and that museums and collections constitute important means by which tangible and intangible testimonies of nature and human cultures are preserved, we strongly support projects that strengthen the cooperation of museums in raising public awareness on the value of cultural and natural heritage.
14. Continue our cooperation on multilateral, bilateral and regional level in the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural goods by exchanging information and expertise, and strengthening existing capacities.
15. Welcome collaboration and mutual work on the organization of capacity building programs, seminars, and expert meetings with emphasis on sharing knowledge and good practices in order to promote cultural diversity and diversity of cultural expression.
16. Encourage the establishment of new thematic routes and participation in existing ones within South-East Europe and their inclusion in the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, as well as a stronger connection with the tourism sector.
17. Support development of projects and initiatives to foster cross-border networking on cultural and creative industries in order to jointly develop cultural products and services in our countries.



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
Ministry of Culture and Sports



Council of Ministers of Culture
of South East Europe



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

With the support of
Regional Bureau
for Science and Culture
in Europe

18. Reaffirming our commitment expressed in the Declarations adopted in Sofia, on 17 May 2019 and Rijeka, on 1 February 2020, to the creation of the Cultural Cooperation Fund (CCF) in cooperation with UNESCO, we thank the Republic of Bulgaria for its efforts in elaborating the draft CCF governance and management frameworks, as well as its operational rules. We invite the Republic of Bulgaria and Montenegro, as the next chair of the CoMoCoSEE, to continue the necessary deliberations in collaboration with UNESCO and the rest of the country-members of CoMoCoSEE, in order to finalize the establishment and operationalization of the CCF, for it to be possibly inaugurated by the next ministerial meeting in 2022.

19. We thank the Hellenic Republic for its excellent presidency of the CoMoCoSEE and we welcome the takeover of the presidency of the CoMoCoSEE by Montenegro.

In Athens, 25 May 2021