



PRESS RELEASE

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More Europe initiative is launched in Brussels

Opinion leaders appeal to policy makers to use culture more strategically to create a stronger voice for Europe in the world

Brussels, 8 December – A one year-long civic initiative More Europe – External Cultural Relations will be launched today at a special event at the Centre for Fine Arts (Bozar) in Brussels, bringing together an alliance of cultural leaders, politicians, diplomats and influential civil society networks around the world.

The event will start 12 months of intensive debates, fresh research and practical workshops to develop concrete recommendations and best practices in the area of cultural relations. This new form of a culture tour around European capitals has the ambitious goal of convincing key decision makers to use cultural and educational initiatives to build stronger relationships and trust between Europe and the rest of the world.

The need to act is urgent. Europe’s influence in the world has been weakening together with its economy as Asia and developing countries grow and develop their own cultural relations strategies. China, for example, is matching its economic power by launching an extraordinary cultural diplomacy campaign with Confucius as the brand.

Europe must not miss out. A vibrant cultural diversity and extensive experience in external cultural relations at member state level is one of the strongest and attractive tools that Europe has. However, these strengths have not yet been reflected in the EU’s official external strategies and require a multilateral approach. The More Europe project is aiming to change this in order to reinforce the role of culture in the external relations of the EU and to build greater mutual understanding between Europe and external partners.

“In the times of real dangers of fragmentation of the European Union, it is time to say: We need more Europe. More mutually responsible commitment by sharing our strengths.” said Gottfried Wagner, the project adviser and added: “Cultural relations are crucial for the economy and play an important role in building and strengthening civil societies structures and supporting democratic processes, conflict prevention and reconciliation. In short, culture makes Europe an inspiring source of creative solutions and a stronger partner.”

“This exciting campaign has arisen in response to a decade of conflict, democratic struggles, economic and financial crisis. All these have contributed to fear and mistrust dominating external relations. That needs to be changed by turning to an area that builds bridges, enhance

people to people contacts, foster cooperation and partnership among equals.” explains Project Manager, Sana Ouchtati.

The initiative will be launched in the context of a policy dialogue co-organized with the European Policy Centre (EPC). The EUNIC Yearbook 2011 «Europe’s foreign cultural relations» will also be presented and distributed to the audience.

Among the speakers at Bozar will be:

- Pierre Vimont**, Executive Secretary-General of the European External Action Service.
- Wolfgang Petritsch**, Chairman of the Board, European Cultural Foundation.
- Leila Chahid**, General Delegate of Palestine to the EU, Belgium and Luxembourg.
- **Frédéric Martel**, journalist, writer and author of 'Mainstream, Enquête sur la guerre globale de la culture et des medias'.
- Yudhishthir Raj Isar**, Professor of Cultural Policy Studies at The American University of Paris.
- Gottfried Wagner**, Special envoy for the Austrian ministry of culture and More Europe project adviser.

More Europe is a civil initiative of leading European culture foundations like the European Cultural Foundation (ECF), the Fritt Ord Foundation and the Goethe Institute, the British Council, the Institut français, the Danish Cultural Institute, the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations (IFA), and -as key liaison partner- the European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC).

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Notes for the editor:

Goethe Institute www.goethe.de is acting as a coordination point on behalf of the core partners: European Cultural Foundation, Fritt Ord Foundation, British Council, Institut français, Danish Cultural Institute, Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen/IFA.

The first confirmed patron is former European Commissioner Franz Fischler.

