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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject:	Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the 'AgoraEU' programme for the period 2028-2034, and repealing Regulations (EU) 2021/692 and (EU) 2021/818 - *Progress report*

I. INTRODUCTION

On 16 July 2025, the European Commission submitted to the European Parliament and to the Council a proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the 'AgoraEU' programme for the period 2028-2034 and repealing Regulations (EU) 2021/692 and (EU) 2021/818[1].

[1] ST 11771/25 + ADD 1 REV 1 + ADD 2 + ADD 3

The Commission presented its proposal and the related impact assessment report to the Cultural Affairs Committee (CAC) on 3 September 2025. Members of the Audiovisual and Media Working Party and the Working Party on Fundamental Rights, Citizens' Rights and Free Movement of Persons[2] were invited to take part in this and other discussions related to 'AgoraEU'. Examination of the impact assessment report continued and was finalised at the CAC meeting on 26 September 2025. A summary of the discussion can be found in the Annex I to this document.

Since the proposed Regulation is part of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2028 to 2034, all provisions identified to be subject to horizontal negotiations have been set aside and will be addressed later during the negotiations on the MFF. These provisions, which appear in square brackets in the text, concern recital 4 (financial envelope), recital 30 (implementation in accordance with the European Competitiveness Fund InvestEU Instrument), recital 31 (budgetary guarantee or financial instrument), recital 35 (accordance with the Performance Regulation), recital 40 (duration), Article 1 (duration), Article 11 (budget) and Article 15 (budgetary guarantee or financial instrument).

The Cultural Affairs Committee, in close cooperation with members of the Audiovisual and Media Working Party and of the Working Party on Fundamental Rights, Citizens' Rights and Free Movement of Persons, has examined the proposal in six meetings since September. The Commission has provided further explanations on various issues (horizontal issues – including financial issues – and considerations, synergies with other EU programmes and policies) and has taken note of delegations' wish to provide more details in the programme proposal.

Despite the limited time available for discussions on the proposal, it has been possible to identify some matters which most delegations would like to add or clarify in the text (e.g. committee procedure, definitions and programme desks). This report seeks to summarise the main reactions of delegations (in section II below).

It should be noted that some Member States still have scrutiny reservations on the proposed programme.

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[2] The Working Party on Social Questions (Gender Equality and Antidiscrimination) is linked to the file as an associated community.

In the European Parliament, the proposal is examined jointly by the CULT (Culture and Education) and LIBE (Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs) Committees. The appointment of the rapporteur on the proposal is pending.

The consultation of the European Economic and Social Committee and that of the Committee of the Regions is mandatory. The opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee is expected to be adopted on 18-19 February 2026. That of the Committee of the Regions is expected to be adopted on 4-5 March 2026.

II. STATE OF PLAY

Most delegations have welcomed the Commission's proposal integrating the current Creative Europe and Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values – CERV programmes. They acknowledged the Commission's aim to increase synergies and coherence and to enable the future programme to respond to the serious challenges facing European Union values, cultural diversity and the creative and media sectors, including threats in the form of disinformation.

The proposed three distinct strands (Creative Europe – Culture, MEDIA+ and CERV+) were all equally welcomed. However, some delegations suggested that the strands be distributed differently (merging the Creative Europe – Culture strand and the Audiovisual objective into a CREATIVE EUROPE strand, and having a separate NEWS strand). Other delegations suggested adding a separate CROSS-SECTORAL strand.

Despite their generally positive reaction on the architecture of the proposal, many delegations have expressed concerns that the integration of programmes, in combination with a lack of detail in the proposal and the proposal's new name of 'AgoraEU', would risk diluting its distinct parts and strands, making it more difficult to build on the established brand and successes of the current programmes. In fact, some delegations have expressed a desire to change or add to the proposed name of the programme and/or the names of the strands.

Delegations have generally agreed with the call for flexibility and future-proofing in the proposed programme. At the same time, delegations have indicated that the need for future adaptability should not come at the expense of transparency and predictability.

Delegations have also welcomed the proposed simplification of the funding application process, and many stressed the need to avoid excessive administrative burden for beneficiaries.

In this context, delegations repeatedly emphasised the importance of clarifying how Member States will be involved in the programme's implementation once it has been adopted. Nearly all delegations that provided comments expressed a preference for the establishment of a programme committee.

1. Definitions (Article 2)

Several delegations have requested clearer definitions, including a definition of the cultural and creative sectors, and emphasised the need for greater clarification on target groups across all strands of the proposal.

2. Programme objectives (Article 3)

While there is general support for the programme objectives among delegations, some of them suggested additions to the text. For example, some have proposed including references to the special circumstances of smaller countries, minority languages, and countries with lower capacity. In the field of media, it was suggested that 'media pluralism' be added as a programme objective. Furthermore, some delegations argued for the inclusion of 'mobility' and 'innovation' in the general objectives of the 'Creative Europe – Culture strand'. Others suggested that 'gender equality' be included in the general objectives of the CERV+ strand.

3. Creative Europe – Culture strand (Article 4)

The delegations' comments included the suggestion that more details be provided regarding concrete projects and activities, including an explicit mention of the European Capital of Culture and the European Heritage Label actions (Article 4(g)) in the main body of the text (rather than merely in the footnote). Some delegations also focused on the need to continue initiatives targeting specific sectors such as music and publishing.

4. MEDIA+ strand (Articles 5-6)

In general, delegations welcomed the proposed 'News' objective under the Media+ strand. They also emphasised the importance of continuing to build on the successes of the current Creative Europe Media programme strand under the proposed 'Audiovisual' objective. As a consequence, many delegations requested that the two objectives under this strand be kept separate. Many delegations wished to stress that independent producers should be mentioned as eligible for support under the 'Audiovisual' objective. While many delegations recognised the pertinence of the proposed areas of support, protection and promotion under the 'News' objective, some expressed a wish to strengthen the focus on certain domains, such as media literacy. Others have raised questions regarding concepts such as 'Union affairs'. Many delegations also welcomed, highlighted, and in some cases asked for, further emphasis on the need for special support for local and regional news.

5. CERV+ Strand (Article 7-9)

Delegations welcomed the specific objectives under the CERV+ strand ('Rights, Equality, Citizens and Civil Society', 'Daphne' and 'Democratic participation and Rule of Law'*)*, which remain crucial across the Union. Some delegations expressed the desire to mention concrete activities and organisations in the text, such as the 'Town Twinning' activities, the 'Network of Towns' and the 'Civil Dialogue Group'. Many delegations also called for more references to 'gender' (including gender mainstreaming, gender equality, and gender identity etc.*)* in the text*,* while a few others preferred a narrower focus on 'gender', in line with their national legislation. Moreover, several delegations believe that more references to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union should be included, while some called for more references to remembrance actions. The two-year work programmes in the current CERV programme were highlighted by some delegations as being valuable for implementation, and they expressed a desire for pluriannual programmes to continue under 'AgoraEU'.

6. Cross-cutting and horizontal priorities and activities (Article 10)

Overall, delegations found the cross-cutting and horizontal perspective in Article 10 to be important, but they raised many questions regarding the implementation of the Article. For example, several delegations stated that there is no concrete explanation of how horizontal activities and projects will be selected or carried out, and they suggested inserting selection criteria to ensure transparency and predictability. Moreover, many delegations were concerned that support for horizontal projects will come at the expense of the three strands of the proposed programme. Delegations also raised concerns that the horizontal projects could create more burdens for applicants. Some delegations asked for more clarity on what is meant by concepts such as 'public discourse' or 'societal resilience' (Article 10(a)), and some had questions about the meaning of the last sentence of the Article (concerning financing) and recommended a clearer wording. All of the delegations commenting on the Article emphasised the vital role of programme desks/contact points. According to most delegations, the desks/contact points should continue their current activities and set-up in the future. Some delegations suggested a separate article devoted to desks/contact points. Delegations took note of the Commission's reassurance that the desks would also play an important role in the future 'AgoraEU' programme, but some called for this to be explicitly mentioned in the text. They also noted that the Commission had no intention of applying a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to future desks/contact points.

7. Additional resources and alternative, combined and cumulative funding (Article 12-13)

Some delegations raised questions regarding the implications of Articles 12 and 13 which are of a horizontal nature and not exclusively targeted at 'AgoraEU'. Delegations welcomed the possibility of synergies and cooperation being included in the articles and took note of the Commission's explanation that the proposed articles do not impose any obligations.

8. Third countries associated to the Programme (Article 14)

Delegations raised questions regarding the meaning of the proposed text. For instance, questions were asked on the intention behind the residual category in Article 14.1(d) on 'other third countries'. At the same time, delegations took note of the fact that Article 14 was a horizontal text and should be treated as such, with the exception of Article 14.3 requiring that granting participation in the specific Audiovisual objective under Article 3 take into account the audiovisual market in the countries concerned, including the proximity of their legal framework with the Union's acquis on audiovisual media.

9. Eligibility (Article 16)

Some delegations asked for clarification on the proposed provision that is a horizontal text – except for Article 16.6 which allows for an operating grant (without a call for proposal) to the European Network of National Equality Bodies (Equinet). In particular, some delegations expressed the wish to facilitate the eligibility of smaller organisations for support, as well as seeking geographically balanced access to funding.

10. Work programme (Article 17)

Nearly all delegations that provided comments expressed a preference for the establishment of a programme committee in the proposal. This would clarify and ensure Member States' involvement in the future 'AgoraEU' programme. Some delegations highlighted the positive experience of two-year work programmes (applied in connection with the CERV programme). Other delegations wished to have annual work programmes (as used in connection with the Creative Europe programme).

11. Final provisions (Articles 18-20)

Delegations took note of the final provisions (on repeal, transitional provisions and entry into force and application).

12. Recitals

The examination of recitals in the Cultural Affairs Committee has started with recitals 1 to 19. Many of the comments that were made in relation to the operative part of the text were reiterated for the discussed recitals. It is foreseen that the remainder of the recitals will be examined at the Cultural Affairs Committee meeting on 9 December.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the examination of the proposal in the Cultural Affairs Committee[3], the Presidency identified three elements that most delegations considered were missing from the operative part of the proposal, for which the Presidency presented drafting proposals inspired by the current programmes. These are:

1. **committee procedure**; i.e. a provision to be added to the text which provides that work programmes are to be adopted by means of implementing acts and which (re-)introduces a programme committee ensuring a role for Member States in the implementation of the programme;
2. **definition of the cultural and creative sectors**; by taking the first part of the definition of CCS in the current Creative Europe programme, but leaving out the non-exhaustive list of examples of CCS so as to make the definition more future-proof;
3. **programme desks/contact points**; i.e. a (re-)introduction of Programme desks (Creative Europe) into the operative part of the text and contact points (CERV) which would reach and advise potential applicants and promote the programme.

[3] With the participation of the members of the Council's Audiovisual and Media Working Party, the members of the Working Party on Fundamental Rights, Citizens' Rights and Free Movement of Persons – FREMP and the members of the Working Party on Social Questions (Gender Equality and Antidiscrimination) as an associated community.

The drafting suggestions of the three elements can be found in the Annex II to this note. They were presented at the CAC meeting on 14 November and most delegations highly appreciated the Presidency's analysis of the most pertinent issues identified during the examination of the proposal.

The Presidency's proposal to insert a definition of the CCS in the draft programme is without prejudice to the addition of other possible definitions relating to all or some of the proposed strands and specific objectives across the proposed programme. The Presidency therefore proposes discussing in depth the interplay of different definitions across strands.

ANNEX I

Discussion in the Cultural Affairs Committee on the European Commission's impact assessment report

At the meeting of the Cultural Affairs Committee on 3 September 2025, the Commission presented its impact assessment report on the proposal[4]. Members of the Audiovisual and Media Working Party and of the Working Party on Fundamental Rights, Citizens' Rights and Free Movement of Persons were invited to join the meeting. Ahead of the meeting, the members of the three working parties had received information on impact assessment reports together with an indicative checklist to help prepare the discussions.

The Commission's presentation[5] was followed by two discussions (on 3 September and 26 September 2025) during which delegations expressed an overall positive opinion on the merging of the previous Creative Europe and Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programmes into a single one, given the potential for greater synergy and coherence between the objectives of the two programmes. At the same time, delegations made several requests for clarification due to the lack of details in the proposal. For example, it was mentioned that it was important to ensure a balanced allocation of funds between the different proposed strands in the new programme architecture, but there was no indicative allocation in the proposal. Furthermore, it was pointed out that in order to meet its objectives, 'AgoraEU' would have to continue the contact points/programme desks of the current programmes. The same applied to the question of governance, where it was pointed out that the information on how the programme would be implemented was limited. In addition, one delegation questioned the legal basis with regard to news media, given the strong Member State competence in the field.

Further to the Presidency's request regarding the sharing of information or data from national sources on the possible impacts of the proposal on 'AgoraEU', one delegation shared information from national sources relevant to the 'Creative Europe - Culture' strand of the programme[6].

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4 ST 11771/25 ADD 1 REV I
5 WK 10908/2025
6 WK 14470/2025

ANNEX II

Three drafting proposals for the proposed 'AgoraEU' programme[7]

1. Drafting suggestions regarding committee procedure

Article 17 and new Article 18A

Article 17

Work programme

1. The Programme shall be implemented by work programmes referred to in Article 110 Regulation (EU, Euroatom) 2024/2509. The work programmes shall set out, where applicable, the activities and related amounts of Union support to be implemented through the ECF InvestEU instrument.

2. The Commission shall adopt work programmes by means of implementing acts. Those implementing acts shall be adopted in accordance with the examination procedure referred to in Article 18A.

Article 18A

Committee procedure

1. The Commission shall be assisted by a committee (the 'AgoraEU Committee'). That committee shall be a committee within the meaning of Regulation (EU) No 182/2011.

[7] Additions compared to the text of the proposal (doc. 11771/25) are highlighted in **bold underline**.

2. The committee may meet in specific configurations to deal with concrete issues relating to the individual strands of the Programme.

3. Where reference is made to this paragraph, Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 182/2011 shall apply.

Justification:

Delegations have expressed their wish to be involved in the implementation of the programme once adopted. The Presidency considers the most appropriate and structured way to achieve this to be through (re-)introducing a committee which applies the examination procedure set out in Regulation (EU) No 182/2011 in connection with the adoption of work programmes.

The proposed additions are based on Articles 15 and 24 of the Creative Europe Programme and Articles 15 and 22 of the CERV Programme.

2. Drafting suggestions regarding definitions

Article 2

Article 2

Definitions

For the purposes of this Regulation, the following definitions apply:

1. 'award procedure' means an award procedure, as defined in Article 2, point (3), of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509, as well as procedures for entrusting the implementation and provision of support through financial instruments, for granting a budgetary guarantee, or for providing support under the budgetary guarantee.

2. **‘cultural and creative sectors’ means all sectors:**

(a) whose activities, many of which have the potential to generate innovation and jobs in particular from intellectual property:

(i) are based on cultural values and artistic and other individual or collective creative expressions; and

(ii) include the development, the creation, the production, the dissemination and the preservation of goods and services which embody cultural, artistic or other creative expressions, as well as related functions such as education and management;

(b) irrespective of:

(i) whether the activities of those sectors are market-oriented or non-market oriented;

(ii) the type of structure that carries out those activities; and

(iii) how that structure is financed

Justification:

Delegations have called for a definition of the cultural and creative sectors (CCS). The Presidency suggests (re)introducing the definition of the CCS from the current Creative Europe Programme Regulation, thereby providing more clarity of target groups. At the same time, the Presidency concurs with the Commission’s argument that the ‘AgoraEU’ programme needs to be flexible and future-proof. The Presidency therefore suggests not including a non-exhaustive list of various CCS, as is the case in the current Creative Europe Programme.

It should be noted that the Presidency’s suggestion is without prejudice to the addition of other possible definitions relating to all or some of the proposed strands or specific objectives across the proposed programme.

The proposed addition is based on Article 2 in the current Creative Europe Programme.

3. Drafting suggestions regarding programme desks/contact points

Article 10

Chapter V

Cross-cutting and horizontal priorities and activities

Article 10

Within the general objectives set out in Article 3, the Programme shall support the following cross-cutting and horizontal priorities and activities:

(a) cross-sectoral cooperation and innovation across the cultural and media and civic fields, and protection of the integrity of the public discourse, thereby bolstering democratic resilience, societal preparedness and cultural and civic engagement;

(b) a responsible use of innovative tools and content technologies, notably Artificial Intelligence, as well as skills development and capacity building through cross-sectoral approaches;

(c) actions for the development, implementation, and monitoring of relevant Union legislation and policy in the culture, media and civic fields, including, where applicable, through cooperation among national authorities and stakeholders.

(da) **the establishment and activities of Programme Desks in participating countries to stimulate cross-border cooperation and the exchange of best practices within the sectors covered by the Programme. In addition, the Programme Desks may also have the responsibility for providing impartial guidance, practical information and assistance to applicants, stakeholders and beneficiaries of the Programme with all the aspects thereof, including in relation to the application procedure, dissemination of user-friendly information and Programme results, inquiries for partners, training and formalities.**

(d) in line with the provisions of the Regulation (EU) [XXX]* of the European Parliament and of the Council [Performance], the promotion of the Programme, and its funding opportunities, including through Programme Desks, thereby enhancing outreach, visibility and the dissemination of the Programme results;

The financing of cross-cutting and horizontal priorities and activities shall be determined by their nature and scope.

Justification

A general request from delegations is to continue the programme desks/contact points of the Creative Europe and CERV programmes. The Presidency has suggested 'Programme Desks', which is the term proposed by the Commission in Article 10(d). The Presidency has kept the verb 'may' in connection with the CERV+ strand, as the establishment of contact points under the current CERV programme are not obligatory. The Presidency is of the view that – as it is the case today – programme desks can be organised in many ways, and that it is therefore not necessary to specify the configurations of the desks in the text.

The proposed addition is based on Article 7(d) of the Creative Europe Programme and Article 21 of the CERV programme.