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*Contribution of COMECE and CEC
to the French EU Presidency Programme*

“Recovery, Strength and a sense of Belonging”

Introduction

COMECE (*Commission of the Episcopates of the European Union*) and CEC (*Conference of European Churches*) welcome the ambitious and forward-looking Programme of the French EU Presidency of the Council of the EU.

Under the motto *Recovery, Strength a Sense of Belonging*, the French EU Presidency highlights the need for a European response, based on solidarity and common values in facing the public health crisis, the climate crisis, the digital revolution, migration and geopolitical challenges. COMECE and CEC support the three key ambitions of the French EU Presidency: a sovereign Europe, a new European model for growth and a humane Europe, stressing the need for promoting our common European values and the common good within all policy areas. We also think that strengthening a sense of belonging could best be done by enhancing the unique character of the EU as a community of values and fundamental rights.

Representing together the membership of around 380 million citizens in all EU

Member States, COMECE and CEC are strongly committed to develop the European project on the basis of the Christian ideals of justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

Together COMECE and CEC have a longstanding tradition of engaging in dialogue with EU Presidencies, as one significant part of the open, transparent, and regular dialogue between the EU and Churches enshrined in Article 17 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). We are committed to this dialogue with the EU Institutions and to work towards a more peaceful, socially just, sustainable, and inclusive Union, in which the respect for human rights and human dignity, solidarity freedom, equality, democracy and the rule of law are at the forefront of EU actions and policies both within the EU and on the global stage. In light of this, we as **COMECE and CEC would like to share our joint reflections and concrete Policy Recommendations addressing the priorities of the French EU Presidency Programme**. We look forward to a constructive dialogue and interaction throughout the tenure and wish the French Presidency success, courage, wisdom and God's blessing for this important task

Presidency Priority I: "A more sovereign Europe"

1.1. Migration & asylum

In taking further the development of a common asylum and migration policy, most notably the proposed EU Pact, **the French Presidency should be guided by its overarching rule of law priority – including the full application of the existing EU legislation and particularly at**

its borders. The necessary initiatives for protection in the countries of origin and transit must go hand in hand with the much needed protection in the EU. Conditions in other regions of the globe are increasingly dire – e.g., in around Afghanistan or in many refugee hosting

countries in Africa. We call the EU to **provide humanitarian support** for the people in need in these regions. COMECE and CEC also appeal to the EU and its Member States to strengthen its indispensable **role in international protection**, by granting quick access to a full and fair asylum procedure to those arriving at EU borders and territory. We also call on the EU to **provide more space for safe passages** into protection into Europe – through resettlement, humanitarian visa, generous family reunification or visa exception, which should, in view of mixed migration, be complemented by meaningful routes into regular labour migration. We ask the EU to

intensify the fight against human trafficking and to set up a permanent mechanism of cooperation with third countries to prevent and combat it.

We consider unacceptable that people are dying at sea when they try to cross unsafely to EU territory looking for international protection, and therefore, **we call on Member States to run State sponsored Search and Rescue (SAR) activities** or, in their absence, to support and not criminalise humanitarian SAR activities by civil society actors, including Churches. We welcome plans to revitalise, broaden and upgrade the so-called “Valetta agreement”.

Policy Recommendations:

- **To make real and effective the right to asylum** in the EU as expressed in the existing asylum acquis, including an effective access to EU territory using detention during the asylum process as last resort, and respecting the fundamental rights of applicants at all stages of the process, including return.
- **To provide a range of mechanisms for safe passages**, i.e., safe and legal pathways both into protection in the EU as well as patterns for regular labour migration.
- **To provide financial support and reinforcing capabilities of third countries that are receiving asylum seekers**, and access to secure status and local integration. In addition, to offer safe passages/complementary pathways into the EU for those for whom protection outside the EU is not an option.
- **Involving Churches, religious communities, and associations as well as FBOs as reliable partners** to support migrants and refugees, including victims of human trafficking, those rescued at sea in countries of transit and destination, in particular asylum seekers seeking refuge in countries.
- **To set up a predictable and binding mechanism for SAR operations** in the maritime waters at the EU's external borders including arrangements for swift and safe disembarkation.
- **To make the primary right to remain in one's own country a reality** by addressing the root causes of forced migration.

1.2. External affairs and Security

Foreign and Security Policy

The European Union continues to be surrounded by an arch of instability in its neighbourhood, and also at the global stage, it is confronted with an eroding trust in multilateral cooperation frameworks and a renewed logic of a great power competition, manifesting itself through various means. Churches welcome the ambition of the French EU Presidency to further strengthen the global role of the EU as a leading actor for development and peace. However, as the COVID-19 pandemic and its wide-ranging consequences have highlighted, major threats to the life and security of people are in most cases not posed by military means. **A logic of rearmament and fear can only create a false sense of security and lead to further destabilisation.** It is moreover factors such as rising socio-economic

inequalities, food insecurity, human rights abuses and progressing environmental degradation, that make the achievement of lasting peace impossible. We therefore call on the French EU Presidency to work towards **developing a European strategic culture of peace, with human security at its heart.** The EU should focus the efforts in its neighbourhood and at the global scene on **cooperation rather than confrontation**, by intensifying bi- and multilateral partnerships in favour of human development, integral ecology and peace. In particular, we encourage the French EU Presidency to **promote efforts towards a trustful and close partnership with the United Kingdom**, while taking into account the post-Brexit implications on the peace process on the island of Ireland.

Policy recommendations:

- In the context of the upcoming European Summit on Defence and the publication of the EU 'Strategic Compass', we ask the French EU Presidency to **promote the elaboration of an "EU Human Security Index"**, setting clear **people-centred benchmarks** and encouraging EU's holistic efforts to foster human security as an enabler for sustainable and inclusive development worldwide.
- As stipulated in the [EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy](#), we encourage the French EU Presidency to **explore ways of intensified cooperation with religious and faith-based actors** *"in the protection and promotion of human rights, in delivering the sustainable development goals, and in peace-making, conflict prevention, reconciliation and mediation"*, when drafting pertinent Council conclusions or designing relevant initiatives.

EU-Africa Partnership

COMECE and CEC strongly support the aspirations to renew the partnership between the EU and Africa. The upcoming

EU-AU Summit, scheduled for 17-18 February 2022, is of great importance in view of reshaping the intercontinental

political and economic relations towards an equitable and responsible partnership that puts the people at its centre.

The future EU-Africa partnership should be based on the values of human dignity, solidarity and equality, focusing especially on promoting peace, security and stability as well as economically and environmentally sustainable development. An important question in the current

context is **equitable access to Covid-19 Vaccines.**

COMECE and CEC would in this respect like to stress the **constructive role churches and religious communities can play** in promoting peace and reconciliation as well as social cohesion, the provision of basic social services, healthcare, education and youth empowerment.

Policy recommendations:

- Ensuring equitable access to and distribution of **Covid-19 Vaccines.**
- Prioritising **human development** and supporting **climate change adaptation,** including through people-centred and sustainable trade and investment initiatives.
- **Promoting effective participation of civil society as well as of churches and religious communities** in the future EU-Africa Partnership and in pertinent policy processes.

1.3. Religious freedom outside the EU

Policy recommendations:

- In its External Action, the EU should actively promote internationally recognizing human rights, including the **right to freedom of religion or belief, as well as a common and equal citizenship of members of religious minorities** in third countries.
- Supporting the creation of **independent international Commissions of Inquiry** to investigate alleged atrocities and human rights violations committed by Fulani militants in the Middle Belt of Nigeria, and by jihadists in Cabo Delgado (Mozambique), and to provide evidence for the International Criminal Court to prosecute their crimes.

1.4. Digital Transition and Cybersecurity

Spreading digitalisation and increasingly interconnected cyberspace may not only bring opportunities, but also open up new vulnerabilities for the security of critical infrastructures, enterprises and citizens.

While effectively responding to these concerns, **cybersecurity measures need to follow a human-centric approach** and be intrinsically bound with respect for the rule of law and citizens' fundamental rights.

Policy recommendation:

- Building upon the recent [EU Cybersecurity Strategy](#), Churches encourage the French EU Presidency to promote initiatives aiming at **enhancing the resilience** against possible cyberattacks through better information-sharing, capacity-building, coordination as well as multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral cooperation in Europe and globally.

1.5. Global challenges

Digital transition & AI

The new proposed rules by the European Commission in April 2021 aim to turn Europe into the global hub for trustworthy Artificial Intelligence (AI).

The combination of the first-ever legal framework on AI and a new Coordinated Plan with Member States should guarantee the safety and fundamental rights of people and businesses, while strengthening AI

innovation across the EU. It will be necessary to continue the **intense negotiations of the presidency of the EU Council on the EU's AI Act**.

We welcome the **raised concerns** regarding the regulation of the list of high-risk systems, social scoring, and biometric recognition.

Policy recommendations:

- It will be necessary to **extend the ban on social scoring** from public authorities to private entities.
- The possibility of using **biometric identification systems** in real-time must be extended to actors that are not law enforcement authorities but are collaborating with them.
- The **distribution of responsibilities** will need to be re-evaluated to better reflect the reality of AI value chains and to avoid conflicting legislation in terms of sectorial legislation like privacy and law enforcement.

Ecological transition

The European Green Deal (EGD) will change profoundly the landscape of EU policies. New accents underlining the need of combating climate change in the European as well as in the global context proved to have a stimulating effect on the change of mindset. **CEC and COMECE welcome the EGD and the growing EU efforts aiming to achieve a sustainable future**. Aims and objective of the EGD are largely in consonance with the efforts of churches for a transition towards an integral ecology. In particular we want to raise the following concerns:

One keyword of the EU-policies envisaged by the EGD is «not to leave anyone behind». A goal-oriented ecological transition can only be achieved with the support of

European citizens and with the help of civil society. The churches will also have a role to play in this. However, the support of the citizens can only be won if a number of serious challenges of the transition are addressed. This applies to the threat of energy poverty as well as the loss of traditional jobs and the need to rethink and transform different sectors of the economy, such as agriculture and industry. **The success of the EGD's ecological transition will ultimately depend on whether it succeeds in making it beneficial for all.**

The Covid pandemic has once again highlighted the extent to which human activity and overuse of resources have disturbed the balance in nature. A return to 'business as usual' as before the pandemic

is therefore not an option. It must be the goal of all measures of post-pandemic economic reorganisation to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to minimise resource consumption. A crucial task in this regard is the **redefinition of the concept of 'growth' that defines today's economy.**

Climate change and its global impacts, especially in the poorer and more vulnerable countries of the global South, force the EU to take responsibility for its large contribution to climate change. Providing technical and financial assistance in the transition and in combating the consequences of climate change is not only indispensable, but also

in the interest of the EU's own integrity and security, it's a recognition of its undeniable responsibility. The COP-27, which this time will take place in an African country, in Egypt, provide an opportunity for joint action between the EU and the countries of Africa. However, **this will require changing the self-centred European perspective, and taking the needs and demands of African countries** in tackling the consequences of climate change seriously, making them an essential part of a common negotiating position. **Preparing such a joint position leading to joint programs could be one of the key elements of the upcoming EU-AU summit.**

Policy recommendations:

- To increase the opportunities for the citizens of the European Union to participate in the EGD agenda, with the intention of **leaving no one behind** in the end.
- Honestly and publicly name the challenges and difficulties of transition initiated by the EGD, **develop concrete programs** to tackle them.
- **Redefine the concept of "growth"**.
- Use the upcoming EU-AU Summit to better coordinate and **advocate a common approach** to tackling climate change and its consequences.

Presidency Priority II: "A new European model for growth"

2.1. Economic and Financial Affairs

Recovery and growth

EU Member States have shown solidarity during the COVID-19 crisis by borrowing jointly on the capital market. But so far, **only 22 of the 26 national recovery plans submitted have been approved** by the European Commission. Churches welcome that the French Presidency will make it a

priority to **fully implement the Recovery Plan** in the Member States.

At the same time, the recovery plans must deliver on their promises to respond to the dual health and ecological emergency, as well as to the challenges of the digital

transition, while respecting workers' rights and integral human development in order to leave no one behind. "A technological and economic development which does not leave in its wake a better world and an integrally higher

quality of life cannot be considered progress" (*Laudato Si'*, #194). This is why Churches affirm that **effective and transparent monitoring** is essential for the success of the national plans.

Policy recommendation:

- Churches call on the French Presidency to **develop a clear and transparent measuring, reporting and evaluating of the social and environmental impacts of recovery policies over time**, not only regarding its main instrument the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF). In addition, the Presidency should make sure that spending in the digital transition does not weaken parallel efforts to meet the ecological transition.

Building a Responsible, Sustainable Market economy

Since borrowing Member States will have to repay their loans, it is essential to lighten their financial burden to contribute to the EU budget. In this context, **Churches welcome the efforts of the French Presidency to bring forward the proposal for a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)**, with the aim of reducing on the one hand the relocation of pollution to other parts of the world, but also to reduce the pressure on EU Member States to repay the borrowing.

Churches welcome the willingness of the French Presidency to **transpose to the**

European level the international agreement on Pillar II reached within the OECD on 8 October 2021, towards its effective implementation as of 1st January 2023. Long awaited, this Pillar will enable a fairer taxation through the introduction of a **worldwide minimum corporate tax rate of 15%**, which will be applicable for companies of at least 750 million euros in turnover.

In addition, Churches welcome the focus of the French Presidency on developing green finance, while enhancing EU anti-money laundering legislation.

Policy recommendations:

- Churches call for '*an ethics of international relations*¹' so that the EU recovery plans benefit the preservation of our Common home globally. **New own EU resources such as the CBAM** could be used not only to finance the recovery, but also to help least developed countries to engage in sustainable technologies.
- Make full use of the **EU taxonomy**, to align both public and private investments to meet the climate objectives. Towards a **new growth model**, Churches stress the importance of serving the common good and encouraging enterprises to expand while respecting ESG requirements².

¹ "One year after: What place for justice in the EU recovery package?" COMECE Social Affairs Commission, March 2021

² "A Financial System Serving the Common Good in Times of Systemic Change" COMECE Secretariat, November 2021.

- Pursue the Presidency's work towards a fairer taxation, aligned with the **2021 OECD-agreement**, so that large companies contribute in a fair way to the recovery.
- Effective provisions should be included in **EU anti-money laundering legislation** to soundly combine **transparency** and **protection personal data**, in particular with regard to sensitive data (e.g. data revealing religious beliefs). Provisions should be calibrated so as to prevent **unwanted negative impact on not-for-profit organisations and Churches** (e.g. discouragement of donations and contributions). **Public access to UBO Registers** should be **limited** in line with recommendations of EU advisory bodies.

Internal market & Cooperation on digital challenges

- Concerning the **Digital Services Act**, we would recommend **further strengthening provision on children**, with the inclusion in articles of the Regulation of specific clauses to ensure their protection. Any negative impact of the DSA on the fundamental rights to **freedom of expression and information**, and to **freedom of thought, conscience and religion** (which entails the right "...to manifest religion... in worship, teaching, practice and observance") should be prevented.

2.2. Employment, Social Affairs and Health

Employment and Social Affairs

The French Presidency should not aim merely at reaching growth, but at promoting integral human development. A flexible labour market should not mean **precarious working conditions**. Today, too many women, young people and vulnerable workers with non-standard forms of employment, including **platform workers**, face low wages with a low (or no) social security coverage, although most of their jobs have been recognized as "essential" during the pandemic. Moreover, **decent wage should come together with a full inclusion in society**.

Churches have long recognised the equal dignity of men and women and criticized **unjust discrimination against women**, including on **pay discrimination, violence against women and domestic violence**, as a violation of their most fundamental teaching. Yet, the pandemic increased domestic violence. Churches are very

active to provide safe spaces and services for women victims of violence.

Moreover, the **gender-pay gap** is still high. Women deserve equal chance to build their career than their peers. We welcome the French Presidency support to **deepen pay transparency mechanisms** and implement the Directive on binding pay transparency.

Churches welcome the political will and support of the French Presidency to reach at least 78% of the population aged 20-64 in employment by 2030, as presented in the European Pillar of Social Rights's [Action Plan](#). For Churches, **work contributes to the common good of society. Work should enable all people to pursue a life in dignity, have access to decent wages, to preserve a good work-life balance to**

enable time for faith, family, voluntary and social activities³.

The pandemic also accelerated the [blurring of work-life balance](#), with an ‘always-on

culture’. A **synchronized free day** would enable workers to spend time with their families, but also to engage in civic work, social, sports and spiritual activities.

Policy recommendations:

- Churches urge the French Presidency to pursue negotiations on the **minimum wage Directive** to reach an agreement by spring 2022, while respecting the subsidiarity principle and taking into account the diversity of European social models, to **enable all workers to pursue a dignified life**.
- Churches call on the French Presidency to move the negotiations forward towards effective pay transparency in the EU to **close the gender-pay gap**. At the same time, work should be supported by **strong family-oriented policies**.
- Churches call on the French Presidency to take measures towards the **(re-)introduction of a common day of rest in the EU**, which according to tradition or custom should in principle be the Sunday, as enshrined in Art. 2(5) of the European Social Charter (ESC).

Health

Referring to the fact that it is most important to strengthen the cooperation between EU Member States and the EU institutions to ensure affordability, sustainability and security of medical and pharmaceutical supply, it is a matter of great urgency to **build a strategic resilience for a Europe of health** as an answer to the historic situation of the COVID- 19 pandemic and its global challenges.

Essential pillars of a European response to the existing health crisis must be an **ethically responsible vaccination strategy**,

a more socially **just global distribution of vaccines** and a meaningful **establishment of a European health agency (HERA)**.

Churches are essential actors for this urgent matter of action. They underline the strong engagement in health care and support this by a **threefold approach**: to raise the awareness for the necessity to get vaccinated, to include all available health care facilities into the global distribution procedure of vaccines and other necessary medical supplies, and the necessary call for the implementation of the promised vaccine donations to the COVAX facility.

Policy recommendations:

- **Promote widescale vaccination** not only for Europe’s own safety and protection, but also for global public health as a public good, benefiting people living in poorer nations as much as they benefit people living in countries with the resources to create and produce the vaccines.
- **Improve the implementation of the global COVAX facility** by a strong European commitment (promised are pledges of 500 million doses of vaccines by Team Europe

³ “*Shaping the Future of Work*”, COMECE Social Affairs Commission, October 2018

(EU, EU Member States and EU financial institutions), parallel to the existing booster vaccination campaign in Europe).

- **The establishing of a European Health Agency (HERA)** must be more transparent, prioritize the public interest, and must involve all necessary EU actors in the decision-making process.

Presidency Priority III: “A humane Europe”

1.1. Conference on the Future of Europe

COMECE and CEC agree in their positive assessment of the Conference on the future of Europe. The Conference is a sign of hope for Europe. And it is unique. No other international political body in the world has ever reached such a level of direct and qualitative citizen involvement. It is something that Europeans can and should be proud of. **The four European citizen panels have proven to be an exciting new form of participatory democracy** at the European level. They have allowed enlarge citizen’s dialogue across geographical and linguistical borders and they are a useful instrument to reconnect European citizens with the European institutions.

Like other “Article 17 partners” COMECE and CEC regrets that they have not been involved in the Conference plenary. This remains a sensitive shortcoming of the organisers. However, COMECE and CEC are now looking forward to the intermediate report of the Plenary. Notwithstanding the recommendations included in the report and with regard to the political climate in Europe, **COMECE and CEC do not believe in the opportunity for the European Union to try to amend the Treaties and to convene a new Convention and intergovernmental conference.** Instead of strengthening our Union such a project might reinforce existing divisions.

Policy recommendation:

- CEC and COMECE suggest to **perpetuate the European citizen panels** and to reconvene them at the beginning and mid-term of the five-year term of the European Parliament.
- CEC and COMECE support the proposal for a **conference on the Western Balkans** as a concrete follow-up to the conference on the Future of Europe.

3.2. Antisemitism, EU fundamental rights

Antisemitism

COMECE and CEC strongly welcome to take a decisive stand against all forms of **antisemitism**, in line with the EU-strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering

Jewish life adopted by the Commission in October 2021.

A structured dialogue at European level, establishing strategies and structures to

combat and record antisemitic incidents, including education, is an important step to oppose antisemitism with all our strength. **We encourage the Presidency to respond to the current discussions on racism by recognizing and addressing racism as a problem of societies and institutions in**

the EU. Given the setup of competences in the EU, we would in particular support the Presidency in taking forward the full implementation and further development of the EU's anti-discrimination legal framework in the area of racism.

EU fundamental rights

Guided by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, CEC and COMECE support a strong and multi-dimensional approach to fundamental rights. This should fully take into account the role of religion in different EU policies and ensure decisive action to tackle current challenges

such as **antisemitism, hate crimes and hate speech**, respect for **freedom of religion or belief** on our continent, including **protection of places of worship**. Protection of children should be a high priority in the fundamental rights domain and be pursued through sound legal provisions.

Policy recommendations:

- Any initiative on **hate crimes/hate speech** should ensure a sound **protection of fundamental rights** (e.g. freedom of expression, freedom of religion or belief, freedom of science, freedom of education and of teaching) **from any chilling effect**. No protected characteristic should be prioritised over others and religion should be included among them.
- In any EU policy where religion comes into play (e.g. **non-discrimination**, data protection, Covid-19 response, animal welfare) the **fundamental right to freedom of religion or belief and its specificity** should be respected, taking into account differences among religions and **avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach**. Freedom of religion and **protection against discrimination** should **not** be seen as a matter mainly/exclusively concerning minorities.
- Churches express their concern about the **negative impact of EU and national initiatives on rituals and practices that sit at the core of religious communities** (e.g. ritual slaughter, circumcision). **Dialogue and exchange of practices** with the affected communities should be fostered. Initiatives to counter religious illiteracy are important and the human person must remain at the center of human rights policies.
- **Protection of places of worship** within the EU should continue to be **integrated in public spaces and security policies, recognising their specificity** and vulnerability. This goal should be **linked with the fundamental right to freedom of religion**, rather than merely with the symbolic character of such places.
- Churches support **effective legal provisions to detect, report, and remove child pornography**. Particular attention should be devoted to **online grooming, self-generated sexual content** and child sexual abuse via live streaming. Protection of

children is a public health issue, requiring a **multi-agency approach** (including faith-based actors). EU legislation should foster a **victim-centric perspective**, while **privacy provisions should not create undue obstacles** to prosecuting offenders.

3.3. Education & Culture

Education

Both areas of Education and Culture should be high on the agenda of the French Presidency. The rapid changes brought by the Covid-19 pandemic and the exacerbation of inequalities among learners at time of distance learning require major interventions to **ensure that Education systems are sufficiently inclusive** and financially ready to support most vulnerable and disadvantaged students. The use of **digital technologies** in education during the pandemic lockdowns revealed a major need to strengthen digital literacy and the availability of digital tools for the sake of more innovative, inclusive

and resilient formal, non-formal and vocational training and education. To these aims, **Member States will need to improve their education systems**, with coordination and support from the EU, especially by devoting substantial funds in their NRRPs to Education and training, implementing the objectives set in the European Education Area. In the area of higher Education, **universities should become centres of excellence and innovation, with transnational and interdisciplinary approaches** devoted to all disciplines, for finding common shared research-based solutions for contemporary challenges.

Policy recommendations:

- **Strengthen EU cooperation on common issues in Education and Training**, prioritizing support for inclusive and resilient education systems in each Member State in the context of the European Education Area objectives.
- **In the context of the European Education Area, prioritise higher education**, particularly by addressing its importance for the recovery of the EU and the innovation potential of transnational alliances, expanding the accessibility of the European Universities alliances and implementing an inclusive European strategy for universities
- By respecting the subsidiarity of EU Member States in Education, **ensure that Education and Training systems contribute to the integral development of learners** through quality assurance, focusing both on basic skills and interpersonal, social and intercultural competences.

Culture

Hardly hit by the Covid-19 pandemic, the cultural sector needs more support from the EU and the Member States, with actions that can **ensure its resilience and sustainability** in view of future crisis. Transnational cooperation between artists and cultural stakeholders must be reinforced, aiming to **locally support national and regional initiatives** and

create the necessary links for sharing best practices and innovation. **Work conditions for artists** should also be addressed by the EU Council Presidency, as well as the **resilience of cultural tourism and the preservation and promotion of religious and cultural heritage in the EU and beyond.**

Policy recommendations:

- Within the remit of the EU, **provide support for the cultural sector in EU Member States**, especially by issuing coordination policies for better cooperation and improved resilience of cultural enterprises and operators in the cultural sector.
- Considering the importance of intercultural dialogue, **foster among the EU Member States good practices of collaboration in culture and creativity**, building bridges between European societies, cultures and religions, and fostering encounter, especially among youth.