# Shaping a Common Approach to the Development of Long-Term Cooperation between Russia and the EU in the Field of Culture

## Michael Webb

### Deputy Head of the European Union Delegation to Russia

### Briefing Points

Culture plays a central role not only in the process of European integration but also for the EU’s external relations. The European Agenda for Culture was adopted as a Commission Communication in May 2007 and endorsed by the Ministers of Culture in November 2007 and by European Council in December 2007.

Being part of the Common Spaces agreed between EU and Russia, culture has become increasingly important in the relations between the two sides in recent years.

The official cultural cooperation between Russia and the EU was initiated by the approval of the documents on the 4th Common Space Road Maps in the field of science and education including cultural aspects.

On 25 October 2007, the first Permanent Partnership Council (PPC) adopted a joint statement between the EU and Russia, which calls for “the organisation of a high level conference to promote contacts between EU and the Russian Federation cultural operators”.

This initiative has been confirmed by the 3rd Meeting of the EU–Russia Joint Working Group at its meeting in Moscow on 10 June 2008. The EC and Russia agreed to jointly organise in autumn 2009 a high level conference involving cultural agencies and cultural operators from the EU and Russia. So now we are happy that these plans come are realized.

This event is focused on generation of free discussions aimed at elaboration of a common EU – Russia approach for the development of cultural cooperation.

In the long run, the outcome of the conference could give substance to practical cultural cooperation between the EU and Russia in the context of the possible future Action Plan. The Conference will produce a final declaration with results and recommendations for fostering cooperation between the EU and Russia.

Let me recall the progress made since the adoption of the Culture Road Map in May 2005 which provide a framework for long term EU- Russia cultural cooperation.

At the St. Petersburg Summit of May 2003, the EU and Russia agreed to reinforce their co–operation by creating in the long term four ‘common spaces’ in the framework of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). It was decided to create a common economic space; a common space of freedom, security and justice; a space of co–operation in the field of external security; and a space of research and education, including cultural aspects.

The Moscow Summit of May 2005 adopted a single package of [Road Maps](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/russia/summit_05_05/finalroadmaps.pdf#ces) for the creation of the four Common Spaces. These set out specific objectives and determine the actions necessary to make the common spaces a reality. They thereby determine the agenda for co–operation between the EU and Russia over the medium–term.

The London Summit of October 2005 focused on the practical implementation of the Road Maps for the four Common Spaces. Cultural co–operation is part of the 4th Common Space. Its objectives are:

* To promote a structured approach to cultural cooperation between the enlarged EU and Russia, to foster the creativity and mobility of artists, public access to culture, the dissemination of art and culture, inter–cultural dialogue and knowledge of the history and cultural heritage of the peoples of Europe.
* To strengthen and enhance the European identity on the basis of common values, including freedom of expression, democratic functioning of the media, respect of human rights including the rights of persons belonging to minorities and promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity as a basis of vitality of civil society in Europe without dividing lines.
* To develop cooperation between the cultural industries of the EU and Russia in order to increase both their cultural and economic impact.

### The Kajaani Process

Cultural cooperation has been fostered more specifically under the “Kajaani Process”. The Finnish Presidency organised the Kaajani Conference on 18–19 September 2006. The objective was to pave the way for the implementation of the existing cultural Road–Map via a Common Action Plan (CAP). The operational conclusions of the Kajaani conference called for setting up an EU–Russia Joint Working Group on cultural cooperation to carry forward the elaboration of the Common Action Plan.

### Joint Working Group on Culture

Mrs. Saarela, then Finnish Minister for Culture, Mrs. Ferrero–Waldner, Ms. Reding and Mr. Figel’ set up the Joint Working Group (JWG) to elaborate the Common Action Plan which, when ready, would be presented to a Permanent Partnership Council on Culture (PPC) to be held under the Portuguese Presidency in conjunction with the EU–Russia Summit in late October 2007. This item was then included in the Portuguese priorities for the Presidency.

There have been four meetings of the JWG:

* On 12 December 2006 a first informal meeting of the JWG took place in Brussels: and concentrated on two factors: the definition of the Terms of reference (ToR) for the JWG and the degree of involvement of the future EU Presidencies, in particular in the light of the distancing of the German Presidency from this process.
* An informal meeting on the 16th of February 2007 in Moscow was devoted to the organisation of the Joint working group and its Modus Operandi.

The 17th September Brussels meeting was very constructive. It agreed to proceed with the preparation of two important documents intended for the PPC:

* a general joint declaration on cultural relations between the EU and Russia;
* a specific EU–Russia culture action plan (to be annexed to the declaration).

Both documents were meant to be presented for adoption to Commissioner Figel’ and Ministers Sokolov and Pires de Lima at the meeting of the PPC.

The 8th of June 2008 Moscow meeting achieved a set of operational conclusions pertaining to the inclusion of policy and regulatory aspects in the Culture Action Plan, the organisation of the forum of Cultural operators from the EU and RF (in line with the Joint Statement of the Culture PPC of October 2007) and to the financial cooperation including the Media and the Culture Programmes.

### The Permanent Partnership Council on Culture PPC

The PPC is a new cooperation format with the RF that has been agreed at the St Petersburg Summit to strengthen the EU/Russia Co–operation Council. The PPC bring together Ministers/Commissioners responsible for respective policy areas.

The first PPC on Culture meeting was held in Lisbon on 25 October 2007. At the meeting, the Russian Federation was represented by the Minister of Culture Alexander Sokolov. The European Union lined up Portugal’s Minister of Culture Isabel Pires de Lima, Commissioner Ján Figel’ and Vasko Simoniti, Minister of Culture of the next Slovenian Presidency.

In spite of efforts made to endorse the two papers mentioned above, only the Joint Statement was adopted. This was due to Russia’s opposition to a number of issues that were crucial for the EU: policy dialogue, Unesco Convention on cultural diversity, pre–conditions for participation in Community Programmes, and consultations on trade–related matters in the audiovisual sector. The French presidency convened the second meeting but later dropped the idea as a reaction to these results.

### Culture Action Plan

On this basis of the Kajaani process and the JWG, the EU and Russia stressed their commitment to intensify cultural cooperation through a Culture Action Plan and attain practical goals on a wide range of issues. The parties agreed that the Culture Action Plan should flexible and dynamic, regularly monitored and adapted by the JWG. It should reflect a consensus on the principles of cultural cooperation between the Parties and, in particular, their joint intention to preserve and promote the diversity of cultural expressions. **The EU concept for the Common Action Plan is as follows:**

* Principles and objectives of EU–Russia Cultural Cooperation: promotion of a structured approach to cultural cooperation between Russia and the EU, fostering of the creativity and mobility of artists, ensuring of public access to culture, dissemination of art and culture, etc.
* Actions of Cultural Cooperation: the examination of measures facilitating the emergence of artistic and cultural cooperation projects, the examination of the possibility of future closer cooperation between cultural institutions from the EU and Russia, the provision of information to cultural operators from both EU and Russia on possibilities of cooperation and funding opportunities in the field of culture, etc.
* Structured Policy Dialogue on Culture: the commitment of the EU and Russia for cultural diversity, as well as their joint endeavor to foster cooperation in the context of ratification and implementation of the 2005 UNESCO Convention , – the convergence towards European broadcasting standards in the field of audiovisual and media policy, in particular in the framework of the Council of Europe Convention on Transfrontier Television of 5 May 1989, etc.

### New EU-Russia Agreement (PCA)

The Commission has just concluded the sixth round of negotiations on the New EU–Russia Agreement, and will have another full round before the end of this year.

In negotiating this New Agreement, the Commission and the Russian side have together set our ambitions high: in Khanty–Mansyisk they agreed to work towards a comprehensive framework for EU–Russia relations, an Agreement which contains substantive, legally–binding commitments in all areas of the partnership, including political dialogue, JLS issues, trade and investment, energy, economic cooperation, and research, education and culture. This is and remains the EU’s objective.

### Northern Dimension and Northern Dimension partnership on culture

The Northern Dimension (ND) policy was elaborated in 1999 with the participation of Norway, Iceland EU Member States and the Russian Federation. Geographically the ND focuses increasingly on northwest Russia, Kaliningrad, the Baltic and the Barents Seas, the Arctic and Sub–Arctic areas.

In their joint statement at the Northern Dimension Ministerial meeting in Saint–Petersburg on October 28th, 2008, the Ministers emphasized the considerable potential for cultural cooperation in the area of the Northern Dimension. They instructed the ND Steering Group to set up an ad–hoc expert group (ad–hoc Working Group) to examine the issue and to assess the feasibility of such a partnership.

An ad–hoc expert group was set up by the ND Steering Group at a meeting in Oslo on 5 March 2009.

On the last meeting in Copenhagen on 31 st August, the WG reached an ad verbatim compromise on the text examining the desirability of a Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture.

The report of the ad–hoc expert group make reference to the EU–Russia Culture Action Plan stating its different areas of focus and mentioning the cooperation in international fora such us UNESCO. It considers that the NDPC is highly desirable and that it could provide important further impetus to the development of cultural cooperation in the region and beyond. The Expert Group recommends that a decision to establish the Partnership be taken by the ND Senior Officials at their meeting in Stockholm on 12 November 2009.

The decision of establishing a new Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture (NDPC) has been adopted in the Chairman’s Conclusions of the Northern Dimension Senior Officials meeting in Stockholm on 12November 2009.

The main objectives of the Partnership are:

* providing a platform for exchange of best practices, dialogue and meetings with stakeholders representing government (national, regional and local) and the private sector as well as different sectors of cultural life (state and non–state);
* facilitating a dialogue between cultural actors and the business community in order to seek areas of mutually beneficial cooperation and the development of the creative economy;
* promoting coordination and cooperation between the four Regional Councils in the North with a view to avoiding overlap;
* to facilitate assessment of the financial viability of projects and access to multiple sources of financing and also to mobilise public–private funding for collaborating projects.

The ad–hoc Expert Group proposes the following two–level institutional structure for the Partnership, composed of the relevant cultural policy and decision makers:

* High Level Meetings to take strategic decisions;
* A Steering Group to monitor the implementation of the projects and measures.

The Chairmanship will rotate between the Northern Dimension Partners and a two–level institutional structure: a high level meetings and a steering group are proposed.

The development of an ND partnership on culture should complement our involvement in the discussions on the adoption and the implementation of the Cultural Action Plan.