

**Speech Delivered at the Fourth Ministerial Forum on Cultural
Cooperation between PR China and Central and Eastern European
Countries**

Hellenic Republic

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Intervention

Your excellences,

On behalf of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, it's a great pleasure to participate to the 4th Ministerial Forum on Cultural Cooperation between the People's Republic of China and the Central and Eastern European Countries, organized in the framework of the "17 + 1 Initiative". We firmly believe that the Forum presents a wide range of opportunities for the promotion of cultural exchange and cooperation among the participating countries in various fields of the cultural and creative sectors.

Nowadays, the content and the role of Culture in a globalized, digital environment is constantly changing, enriching and expanding, with the use of new technologies and new business models in the area of production and dissemination of cultural products. Beyond their intrinsic spiritual value, the cultural and creative industries, as well as the tangible and intangible cultural heritage, have been characterized as the 'heart' of the creative economy, fostering economic growth, employment and subsequently the upgrading of quality of life. Figures provide solid evidence for these statements, since cultural and creative industries are estimated to contribute 4.2 % to EU GDP and the cultural employment

increased steadily between 2011 and 2016, when it reached 8.4 million. For younger Europeans in certain countries, cultural employment is an important entry point to the labour market.

Beyond the economic benefits to the local, regional and national level the cultural and creative industries, as well as cultural heritage, are linked with the principles of social inclusion and integration, strengthening social cohesion and overall sustainable development. After all, Culture, as a sector of activity, can be considered as a self-sustaining pillar in sustainable development, contributing significantly to the achievement of the UN SDG's, such as combatting poverty, promoting well-being for all at all ages, ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education, achieving gender equality as well as making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe and resilient.

For this reason, it is important to encourage the exchange of know-how and best practices applied in the sector of cultural and creative Industries, as well as in tangible and intangible heritage, and explore all possible opportunities for partnerships, synergies and artists' residencies, as a way to advance cultural and creative professionals. Our cooperation in exchanging expertise with the aim of acquiring skills and new knowledge is crucial for the further flourishing of our cultural and creative sectors.

The networking among the countries of the "17 + 1 Initiative" in the field of the cultural and creative industries, including cultural tourism, as well as in the area of tangible and intangible cultural heritage can lead to effective synergies and joint actions.

It is also important to focus on the promotion of cultural entrepreneurship, especially among the young, through exchanges and peer-to-peer learning, thus fostering creativity, innovation and talent nurturing. Capacity building of the cultural and creative professionals is vital, since the operational environment in the sector is undergoing rapid and strong structural change. In this framework, we consider that the web platform for the “17+1 Initiative” will become a very useful tool to cultural institutions and organizations for networking and communication, as it can function as a facilitator of the internationalization process, creating a number of new opportunities for smaller cultural actors. In this way, it will be possible for players active in the creative and audiovisual industries to engage in new forms of cooperation and alliances, so as to address the competitive challenges that the cultural and creative sectors are facing.

In conclusion, we firmly believe that the “17+1 Initiative” can significantly contribute to a fruitful cultural cooperation and lead to effective synergies in favor of the cultural and creative sectors, including tangible and intangible cultural heritage.