Dear Minister Peter Burke, dear Chair of the Culture Council, dear colleague,

We, the undersigned EU ministers responsible for Culture, are writing to express our profound concern and opposition to the proposed reduction of over €2.5 billion, representing approximately 30% of the originally proposed budget, for the future AgoraEU programme, as reflected in the latest version of the Negotiating Box presented by the Irish Presidency in the context of the negotiations on the European Union's Multiannual Financial Framework for 2028-2034.

We fully recognise the complexity of these negotiations and the need to reconcile diverse priorities in a particularly challenging budgetary environment. However, we firmly believe that the proposed reduction would be disproportionate and difficult to reconcile with the strategic priorities and political commitments endorsed by the European Union.

In recent years, the European Council has increasingly recognised culture as a strategic asset for Europe. This commitment was reaffirmed at the highest level on 18 June 2026 with the signing of the historic Joint Declaration, "Europe for Culture, Culture for Europe".

Culture —including cultural heritage and the cultural, creative and audiovisual sectors— plays a fundamental role in strengthening our democracies. It provides spaces for freedom of expression, critical thinking and civic participation; reinforces social cohesion and a shared sense of belonging; and contributes to the resilience of our societies at a time when democratic values, media freedom and civic space face growing challenges.

Culture is equally vital to Europe's competitiveness and prosperity. Our cultural and creative sectors generate economic growth, employment and innovation, while strengthening Europe's ability to create, produce and circulate its own cultural content and preserve its cultural diversity.

In addition, culture is also fundamental to Europe's international standing. Our cultural and linguistic diversity, our heritage, our creativity and our commitment to artistic freedom are among the defining features of our shared European identity. They strengthen Europe's capacity to engage in dialogue, cooperate and exert influence internationally.

More recently, the Council Conclusions on inclusive democratic participation, and societal and community resilience, approved in October 2026, recalled the strategic role of culture, cultural heritage and audiovisual works in upholding European values and democratic resilience, and welcomed the Commission's European Democracy Shield.

AgoraEU was conceived precisely to put these priorities into practice. Through its three strands—Creative Europe: Culture, MEDIA+ and CERV+—the programme is intended to support cross-border cultural cooperation and creation; the competitiveness and diversity of Europe's audiovisual and creative sectors; independent journalism and media pluralism; and the promotion of fundamental rights, democratic participation and the rule of law.

A reduction of the magnitude currently envisaged would significantly constrain the capacity to deliver on these objectives. It could also undermine the effective implementation of key European policy commitments, including the EU Strategy on

Combating Antisemitism 2021–2030, the Anti-Racism Strategy 2026–2030 and the Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030.

Against this background, we respectfully but firmly call for the proposed reduction to be reconsidered and for AgoraEU to be provided with resources commensurate with the responsibilities entrusted to it.

The budgetary savings resulting from the proposed reduction would be limited in the context of the overall MFF, while their consequences for Europe's cultural and creative sectors, and its ability to protect democratic resilience and media pluralism could be far-reaching.

Please accept, Mr. Burke, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Mr. Ernest Urtasun Domènech

Minister of culture of Spain

Ms. Marta Cienkowska

Minister of Culture and National Heritage of Poland

Mr. Evtim Miloshev

Minister of Culture of the Republic of Bulgaria

Ms. Martina Šimkovičová

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Culture of the Slovak Republic

Ms. Ioana CIOCAN

Minister of Culture of Romania