



Edited by Luigi Ulgiati, UGL Deputy Secretary, member of the EESC

N. 175 26th of May 2026

THE EESC AND THE CULTURAL COMPASS FOR EUROPE

The Cultural Compass is a strategic document, published by the European Commission, which sets out the European Union's new cultural policy plan for the period 2028–2034. It is a forward-looking legislative framework designed to shape the EU's cultural policy and ensure that culture plays a central role in promoting European identity, celebrating diversity and supporting excellence. In times of uncertainty and change, culture strengthens our democracy, social cohesion, competitiveness and resilience. The Compass therefore aims to harness the benefits of culture, in particular by promoting European cultural heritage and addressing the main challenges facing the cultural and creative industries, such as restrictions on artistic expression, the precarious livelihoods of artists, inequalities in opportunities for cultural participation, and the profound impact of artificial

intelligence (AI) on cultural sectors. In this context, EU policies will focus on four main areas: safeguarding European cultural values and rights, supporting artists and cultural professionals, strengthening the sector's competitiveness and resilience, and promoting international cultural relations. During its April Plenary Session, the EESC (European Economic and Social Committee) adopted the Opinion entitled "A Cultural Compass for Europe" (SOC/853), with the aim of ensuring that culture is no longer a marginal issue, but rather a starting point for future generations. The Committee highlighted that culture is not merely knowledge, but also fertile ground for democratic participation, through the role played today by libraries and existing cultural infrastructure; furthermore, the compass must not remain an isolated tool, but must work in synergy with existing ones, such as the European Shield for

Democracy. Councillor Ulgiati also stressed the importance of drawing up a Charter for EU Artists, in order to ensure fair working conditions in the cultural and creative industries sector of the European Union. «Member States - said Ulgiati - should take appropriate measures to ensure that all workers have access to social protection, given the prevalence of atypical and self-employed workers in the cultural sector, the need for international mobility, and the fact that the majority of SMEs are micro-enterprises, cooperatives or social economy enterprises».



EU: FREE TRADE AGREEMENT SIGNED WITH MEXICO

The European Union continues to forge partnerships and agreements as part of its strategy to diversify trade, secure supplies of raw materials and build defensive alliances. Following the Free Trade Agreement with Australia some two months ago, the European Union recently (on the 22nd of May) officially signed two Agreements with Mexico aimed at profoundly renewing the partnership – not only economic but also political – between the two sides of the Atlantic: the Modernised Global Agreement (MGA) and the Interim Trade Agreement (ITA). The two Treaties revive a historic collaboration, established in 2000, but one that was

slowly losing its value in a global world that had changed profoundly and very suddenly. The 2000 Agreement, in fact, whilst extraordinarily effective in quadrupling trade, was beginning to falter under the weight of everything it failed to cover, stuck as it was in an era when the digitalisation of society and the economy was still an unexplored concept: critical raw materials, e-commerce, public procurement, but also the supply chain for the green transition. The Agreement between the parties has therefore responded to a 26-year wait, laden with expectations. As regards customs tariffs, the Agreement will enable Mexico to eliminate



almost all duties on European agri-food products – with pasta, cheese, eggs, pork and poultry previously subject to rates of up to 100% – and to open up a market of 132 million consumers. In conclusion, the EU-Mexico Agreement takes on, in addition to its commercial aspect, a strong geopolitical dimension, in the midst of a very pronounced protectionist era, spearheaded by Donald Trump.