2015 is the European Year for Development, which aims to "inform the European citizens about the development cooperation of the EU, by highlighting what the European Union can already do as the world's largest donor and how it could do even more by combining the forces of its Member States and institutions."

While we are now entering the final negotiation phase of the United Nations post-2015 sustainable development agenda, 2015 is also marking the 70th anniversary of UNESCO and the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. The Convention, ratified today by 139 Parties including the European Union (2006), is considered as one of the reference tools to develop efficient cultural policies for sustainable development.

Finally, 2015 is the end of the first phase of the UNESCO/EU Project entitled “Expert Facility to strengthen the system of governance of culture in developing countries”. Implemented since 2010, this innovative project enabled the developing countries that requested it, to benefit from high-level expertise and long-term technical assistance in the field of the governance of culture and of cultural policies, hence helping them to strengthen human and institutional capacities for the implementation of the Convention.

For all these reasons, 2015 is a crucial year for the debate on the relationship between culture and sustainable development, guided/enriched by the recent recommendations on the integration of culture in sustainable development policies. They are at the heart of the United Nations Creative Economy Report 2013 and the Florence Declaration adopted in Italy in October 2014 during the third UNESCO World Forum on Culture and the Cultural Industries. The debate has also been powered by the work of the European Union, including the European Consensus (2006), the European Agenda for Culture (2007), the European Commission's communication “Increasing the impact of EU Development Policy: an Agenda for Change" (2011) and the conclusions of the Council and representatives of the Member States’

Throughout the various missions carried out, the UNESCO/EU Expert Facility Project demonstrated the decisive potential of the cultural and creative industries for employment, social cohesion and poverty reduction, through an improved coordination of policies and culture professionals. In so doing, it met the objectives of Article 13 of the Convention (*Integration of culture into sustainable development*), which calls on Parties to “integrate culture in their development policies at all levels for the creation of conditions conducive to sustainable development and, within this framework, foster aspects relating to the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions”. In that regard, the project can now offer its contribution to the current discussions on culture as a factor and driver of sustainability.

A high-level panel will allow the Director-General of UNESCO to present UNESCO Member States’ appeal for the integration of culture in the United Nations post-2015 sustainable development agenda and to display the Commission’s and EU’s activities in this field. Prior to this panel, a seminar gathering some key actors of the UNESCO/EU Project - beneficiaries of technical assistance missions and international experts - will open the debates on its impacts on the implementation of the Convention.

This event will mark a new step for a better recognition of the importance of integrating culture in national development planning, as well as at the international level by strengthening human and institutional capacities to develop policies and entrepreneurship, through trainings, networking and information sharing, key objectives of the Convention.

In particular, the seminar will:

- reinforce the advocacy for a better integration of culture in the Post-2015 Agenda;
- highlight the contribution of culture, and especially of the cultural and creative industries, to sustainable development, job creation and social cohesion;
- identify the programmes and priorities of UNESCO and the EU to place culture and the creative economy at the heart of development and cooperation strategies.

It will also allow to:

- draw the lessons learnt from the technical assistance missions carried out in 2012 in 13 developing countries Parties of the Convention and from the follow-up carried out in 2013 and 2014;
- illustrate the contribution of the project to the integration of culture in sustainable development policies and programmes;
- share information and good practices;
- promote a targeted international cooperation, in coordination with national officials and stakeholders on the ground.

For more information:
http://en.unesco.org/creativity/capacity-building/technical-assistance