

# Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the States in the Federal Republic of Germany

Greeting from the President of the Standing Conference  
of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs 2006  
Minister Ute Erdsiek-Rave

*EU Expanding Use Cultural Exchange Project*

8 March 2006

The European Union has become a community of 25 countries with almost 450 million citizens. Although the historic dimension and economic importance of this union is incontestable, there is a certain degree of skepticism, lack of interest, sometimes even distrust toward Europe. Many fear losing a specific way of life, national cultural traditions and last but not least social and economic standard of living. Others learn about European roots only rudimentarily. Convincing people about Europe remains a great challenge, especially considering that European identity – together with, not competing against, national or regional identity – will not be established just by pressing a button or adding a signature.

European identity is much more a project of the future, it is being created based on experience and life in Europe; it can be bolstered by rapprochement, intensive exchange and creative coping with everything strange and personal, including one's own lack of interest. Projects such as the series of exhibitions *EU Expanding Use* support understanding across borders, cultural dialogue and intercultural rapprochement. Through specific forms of cognition and possibilities of expression, art opens up perspectives beyond the boundaries of one's own horizon. It is the uniqueness of art and culture and the intensive connection between tradition and innovation that may become a symbol of European consciousness, European identity. I wish the series of exhibitions a great success and a wonderful reception by the citizens of Europe.

Ute Erdsiek-Rave  
President of the Permanent Conference of the  
Ministers of Culture of the German Landers