

# *Transcultural: integrating Cuba, the Caribbean and the European Union through culture and creativity*

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Havana, March 8 (RHC)-- Having completed its inception phase in October 2020, the Transcultural Programme: Integrating Cuba, the Caribbean and the European Union through Culture and Creativity set its ingenious machinery in motion to promote opportunities and strengthen capacities among Caribbean youths.

Cuba will play a key role in this process since the heart of the Regional Cultural Training Hub will be located in the capital, Havana, a space that brings together the University of the Arts (ISA), the International Film and Television School (EICTV) of San Antonio de los Baños, the Higher Institute of Design (ISDi), the Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos Workshop School, the San Gerónimo College and the Santa Clara College, along with other institutions of the Caribbean region.

The Program seeks to deepen integration between Cuba, the Caribbean and the European Union. It aims to harness diversity and build bridges between people and cultures from different linguistic areas.

Thanks to this Programme, implemented by the UNESCO Regional Office for Culture in Latin America and the Caribbean and funded by the European Union, young people from the Caribbean will be able to obtain, through access and mobility scholarships, quality training at the institutions comprising the Hub.

Juan Garay, Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to Cuba, hopes that collective ingenuity will help expand the boundaries of creation.

About the program, he said: 'We want the project to have a capacity-building approach that does not entail –let us say– adapting to the orthodoxy of techniques and methods. Methods and techniques are important for all disciplines of art expression, but I consider that it's just as important to have a space for creativity, innovation, laboratories where even that orthodoxy can be challenged, and new artistic expressions can be found.'

Anett Rodríguez Mendoza, cooperation specialist at the Cuban Ministry of Culture, asserts that 'the Programme constitutes an opportunity to strengthen the cultural relations that exist today with the Caribbean, which are not negligible, but which we must develop and reinforce with new bridges. May all disciplines of art and culture be unified through Transcultural!'

For entities such as the University of the Arts and EICTV, with an important international projection, Transcultural will expand their perception of the Caribbean, a region whose creative potential remains insufficiently exploited.

Transcultural will also support Cuban institutions with teaching materials and equipment to help improve conditions in educational centers.

The expectations of these institutions are not limited to welcoming Caribbean students to their classrooms. "My first dream is that the Film School experience may be extended throughout the Caribbean and beyond. At the same time, I dream that the Caribbean will have a greater presence at the International Film and Television School of San Antonio de los Baños," declared Susana Molina, Director of this emblematic image

and sound laboratory.

Transcultura will also have a significant impact on the Historic Centre of Old Havana. With the support of the Programme, the current Santa Clara Convent will become the Santa Clara College. The San Gerónimo College and the Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos Workshop School will also put their faculty's expertise at the service of the Programme's goals.

Dr. Felix Julio Alfonso, academic coordinator of the San Gerónimo College, shares his views on the future training options that will be promoted in the Transcultura framework.

"While the San Gerónimo College focuses mainly on heritage administration and management, the Santa Clara College is centered on restoration arts, the handmade crafts. As a result, there will be a very rich symbiosis between theory and practice. They will be like the two great pillars of heritage work, one in a more theoretical, more strategic dimension, and the other in a more practical dimension, more directly linked to the restoration processes taking place in the Historic Centre."

The restoration of the Santa Clara Convent will give the community of San Isidro, where it is located, a new lease on life in education and entrepreneurship, a wish to which Eusebio Leal Spengler, the person who first came up with the idea of the Programme, dedicated his vital energies.

In order to strengthen alliances and adjust the Programme to the challenges COVID-19 imposes on face-to-face education, representatives of Cuban institutions agreed, together with the Transcultura team, on a common roadmap for the year 2021 and examined alternatives to readjust the Programme's offer to the new times.

Tatiana Villegas-Zamora, Culture Specialist at the UNESCO Regional Office for Culture in Latin America and the Caribbean and Programme Coordinator, stated that capacity building is one of UNESCO's flagship tasks. Promoting bold initiatives to ensure that education may continue has been crucial to the Organization in times of pandemic.

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