

Culture, one of the key priorities for Europe's future

The *we are more* campaign welcomes the European Commission's EU 2014-2020 budget proposal but calls for a balanced support to all cultural actors

The *we are more* campaign:

- **welcomes** the EC's 2014-2020 budget proposal and calls on Member States and the European Parliament to support it in terms of overall envelope and new sources of own income;
- **calls** on the European Commission, the European Parliament, and national and regional authorities to ensure that the contribution of culture to the achievement of the EU2020 objectives is fully recognised and translated into policy and budget priorities in the next steps of the negotiation process;
- **calls** on the European Commission, when preparing the legal base of the 'Creative Europe' Programme, to carefully assess the needs and operational environments of all actors within the cultural and creative sectors in order to enhance the sector's potential rather than to limit it to its economic dimension only;
- **calls** on the European Commission, Member States, and regional authorities to earmark culture in the future European, national, and operational guidelines of the future Structural Funds, with a specific action line under the European Social Fund;
- **calls** on Member States and regional authorities for a sustained and reinforced commitment to culture in their own national, regional and local policies and actions.

Civil society counts on Member States and on the European Parliament to back the EC's ambitious vision of EU's future budget, and to preserve within it a strong support to culture as one of the key priorities for Europe's sustainable and inclusive development.

It is indeed time for the EU and its Member States to make strategic investments for the future, and culture should be one of them, alongside education, research and innovation, territorial and social cohesion. Cultural diversity, access to culture, creativity and the development of individual and collective cultural skills enrich our societies. They are even more needed in times of crisis, when new and shared visions of sustainable and fair growth have to be imagined.

Culture increases added-value

In line with its demands, the *we are more* campaign - which has already gathered more than 18 000 signatures - welcomes the recognition of the added-value of EU action in the field of culture, as well as of the importance to maintain EU's commitment to cohesion policy and its Structural Funds. This recognition of and support to culture should however not limit culture's potential to an economic dimension only but rather open the possibilities for culture to participate in a diversity of goals that make up the EU2020 framework.

The added-value of EU programmes in the audiovisual and cultural fields has been widely acknowledged: enhancing cultural diversity, also through the circulation of artists and works of arts within and beyond Europe; broadening cross-border audiences; fostering new artistic

creations and longstanding collaborations; building capacities and supporting networking in the cultural sectors; enhancing arts and culture's contribution to innovation, learning, skills development, economic growth and social cohesion.

EU programmes for culture are also unique instruments that allow the leverage of additional funding for pan-European cultural actions, without which national, regional and local co-financing would most certainly be seriously questioned or disappear altogether at times of drastic cuts across Europe and beyond.

In supporting culture through a dedicated programme, in mainstreaming culture in all relevant policies, and in implementing the European Agenda for Culture in partnership with key stakeholders, including Member States, the European Union fulfils its role of complementing national cultural policies, and of initiating new synergies in the cultural policy and cooperation fields.

Balancing the economic and cultural dimensions

In this light, *we are more* warmly welcomes the EC's proposal to reinforce its direct support to culture in the next EU budget. The bringing together of the Media and Culture Programmes under the same umbrella, the new 'Creative Europe' framework programme, has indeed the potential to maximise EU action in the field, but only if the objectives of the programme are adapted to address the diversity of objectives pursued by cultural actors across Europe, and the diversity of their operational realities.

In developing its proposal for the legal base of the 'Creative Europe' Programme, the European Commission will have to broaden its focus, and ensure that the economic contribution of culture is not the only objective driving its action. Cultural and creative industries contribute greatly to European economic growth, and should be supported adequately to enhance their potential. Not all cultural activities should however be supported in this light. Cultural activities and cultural actors also have a great role to play in preserving and promoting cultural heritage, in enriching personal and collective development through artistic creation and practice, in creating new spaces of dialogue, in strengthening social cohesion, and in experimenting with new models of social and economic innovation. Artists and professionals build capacities through genuine artistic and cultural co-operations that also enrich European diversity and our collective creative potential.

An open and accessible programme

The distinction between the two pillars of the Programme, and its financial instrument, will also be key in allowing the most diverse groups of beneficiaries to participate. 'Support to industry' does not allow the inclusion of all those arts and culture actors that do not operate in purely commercial environments. All transversal action lines will have, for their part, to be thought of as support mechanisms for all actors composing the cultural ecology: from individual artists, to not-for-profit associations, from public institutions to cultural and creative SME's.

Culture as an integral part of Cohesion policy

In what concerns the future generation of EU Structural Funds, culture has been recognised as the fourth pillar of sustainable development and has proved to contribute fully to the achievement of many of the newly identified objectives of the future cohesion policy framework (such as innovation, education, skills development, social inclusion, or SME development). In the upcoming steps of the negotiation process, culture will have to be clearly earmarked in the Common Strategic Framework to be proposed by the Commission, as well as in the Partnership contracts and operational programmes to be negotiated with individual Member States and regional authorities. The European Social Fund in particular, with its broader scope covering employment policies as well as social inclusion and the fight against poverty, should cater for specific and earmarked support to culture.



The political platform
for Arts and Culture

