

Culture Action Europe reacts to Mr Juncker's proposal for the new European Commission

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On September 10th, Jean-Claude Juncker, President-elect of the European Commission, announced the composition of the new College of Commissioners. The President-elect proposed new working methods to respond to the portfolios' break-up, which has been generated by the obligation to compose a College including a representative from each Member State.

Culture Action Europe acknowledges the attempt made to mitigate the impact of such fragmentation on the European Commission's work through the set up of the positions of Vice-Presidents and to foster policy co-ordination through the introduction of the project-teams. However, Europe deserves and needs a truly Europe- driven governance.

Nomination to the Commission should be determined by competence and meritocracy as regards the European project rather than by which government, at a given moment, has more weight to position its representative on an 'important' portfolio. The European Commission cannot simply be the result of individual Member States' governmental appointments. Indeed in this sense, several of the current nominations profoundly question the full legitimacy of the Commission: Lord Hill, Commissioner-designate for Financial Stability, and Mr. Arias Cañete, for Climate Action and Energy, are among these. Within these appointments there should be no potential conflict of interest, as there seems to be in these cases. The European Parliament should consider rejecting any appointment where a conflict of interest arises.

On October 1st the European Parliament will hear Mr. Tibor Navracsics, Commissioner-designate for Culture, Education, Youth and Citizenship and former minister of the Hungarian government. Notwithstanding the personal profile of the candidate, it is to be recalled that Mr. Victor Orbán's government has taken and is taking unprecedented and unacceptable measures that infringe human rights, including the right to freedom of expression. It has also implemented policy measures that have clearly undermined the cultural sector's development as a whole. This has been widely and loudly contested by civil society in Hungary and cannot be passed in silence.

Therefore, we call on the European Parliament to rigorously scrutinize the candidate's views and independence from the current Hungarian government as well as his full allegiance to the European fundamental values. Should this scrutiny provide sufficient guarantees, Mr. Tibor Navracsics appointment could also represent a possible means to enhance the limited impact that European views and regulation on rights, culture and education has had until now on the Hungarian government and society. Conversely, should the hearing fail to provide the necessary guarantees, we call for a rotation of portfolios between Member States.

The proposed re-organisation of the Commission includes changes in several portfolios and directorates. Some of these changes reflect a political vision where society's progress is still seen as an automatic derivative of economic growth despite the fact that multiple evidences prove the contrary¹.

With reference to Culture Action Europe's field of activity and concerns, the transfer of the MEDIA sub-programme of the Creative Europe programme to DG Connect contradicts the necessity to increase synergy between the media and culture sectors on which the very basis the Creative Europe programme was conceived and approved by the European Parliament and the Council. Such separation narrows down media

¹ E.g. In the last three decades the GDP and inequality increased in parallel in the most advanced economies.

policy to its digital market dimension and keeps on missing the opportunity to explore the potential of an integrated policy on the technological, industrial and creative processes². As a result culture, education, youth and citizenship are again placed far from the core of the new European Commission agenda.

Europe needs a political vision where economy is at the service of people and not the reverse: citizens, their needs and hopes, cannot be at service of the accumulation of material wealth of a few. Rights, culture and education are at the core of such a vision and fundamental to Europe for overcoming the cultural and economic crisis, which is undermining its very basis. Culture and heritage must be recognized as strategic resources for a sustainable Europe, for the generation of social capital and shared wellbeing, for the fulfilment of human rights for current and future generations. This should be duly reflected in the relevance given to culture on the Commission's agenda.

Culture Action Europe stands for this vision and will do so in the coming years. We will closely follow the hearing of the Commissioner-designate for Education, Culture, Youth and Citizenship, to report to our constituency and to the public, and react on the basis of its outcome. Following this we will comment on the results of the first round of calls under the Creative Europe's Culture sub-programme and formulate our recommendations for its future implementation.

Culture Action Europe (CAE) is the political umbrella of the European cultural sector. Through our 110 European and national network members we reach out to over 80.000 cultural organizations across Europe, active in all domains of creation and heritage.
For more information +32 2 5344002, advocate@cultureactioneurope.org

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² Taking this in account, Culture Action Europe calls for re-integrating of the MEDIA sub-programme of the Creative Europe programme to the DG EAC. Moreover we demand: a strong operational link between the MEDIA and CULTURE sub-programmes of the Creative Europe programme and a single policy unit for both MEDIA and CULTURE sub-programmes of the Creative Europe programme within DG EAC.