

Culture Action Europe values the position adopted by the EU Council of Culture Ministers on the *Creative Europe* programme

The EU Council of Culture Ministers met under the Danish Presidency on the 10th and 11th of May, in Brussels, and adopted a position on the legal basis proposal for a *Creative Europe* Programme. Through this “partial general approach” the Council of Culture Ministers not only expresses strong support for the proposal; it also clearly acknowledges the contribution that culture can play in helping Europe to recover from its crisis. The document results from both internal discussions within the European Council and with the European Commission which have led to several clarifications of the legal basis and which take into account many of the demands that, in the past months, Culture Action Europe (CAE) has given voice to.

The **improvements** adopted by the EU Council of Culture Ministers encompass a better balance between the recognition of the economic dimension and the intrinsic and social value of arts and culture (art. 5.a); the adoption of the access to culture and creative works as an objective for the whole Programme with a particular focus on children, young people and underrepresented groups (art. 5.b); the explicit inclusion of museums and literature as components of the cultural and creative sector (art. 2.1); the recognition of the specific role of European networks (art 10.1b); the replacement of the initial audience building notion with the one of audience development; the explicit inclusion of micro enterprises in the definition of SMEs (art. 2.4) and a balanced focus on non-for-profit projects for the cultural strand (art. 10.2).

Although conditioned to the approval of the EU multi-annual financial framework for the period 2014-2020, a clear budget share has been also proposed. This foresees the allocation of 30% of the total sum to the cultural strand (art. 19.1a) thus proposing a substantial increase of the European budget for culture compared to the one allocated for the previous 2007-2013 period. Last but not least, some valuable changes leading to the introduction of additional qualitative indicators to measure the impact of the Programme, such as those included in articles 14.1 and 14.1a, have been adopted clearly echoing proposals put forward by CAE as well.

However, some **debatable changes have also been introduced** by the EU Council of Culture Ministers with regard to the implementation procedures that might impact negatively on the objective of procedural simplification strongly supported by beneficiaries and civil society organizations at large. The changes introduced to articles 17.2 and 17.3, geared to increase the Member States’ jurisdiction regarding the Programme, imply complicated procedures for the adoption of implementing acts such as the “Annual Work Plan” and, more warningly, the “General guidelines for the implementation”.

Therefore, CAE will now strengthen its activity targeted at the European Parliament in order to consolidate the achievements made in this “Partial general approach”, promote additional changes to meet the remaining demands for adjustments and, where necessary, to put the controversial elements under analysis.

With reference to the demands yet to be met CAE action will, in particular, aim at ensuring the eligibility of projects including risk-taking and experimentation components, a more explicit recognition of the value of equal opportunity to access, produce and participate in cultural life also as a component of the broader human right to culture and a wider scope for a closer dialogue between the European Commission and civil society stakeholders in the process leading to the implementation of the Programme.

CAE will also **urge** all major institutional actors to engage for a quick approval of **the innovative Financial Facility**, duly clarified.

The early and overall **positive outcome of this initial phase of the legislative process is an important step** in which civil society is called to build on more action and engagement at grass roots-level as well.

The approval of the final proposal by the European Parliament and Council, resulting from a fast paced and constructive dialogue between the different actors involved, will be an asset when the discussions will later revolve around the budget.

Indeed, the European Commission's budget proposal for the Creative Europe Programme will be threatened from many directions but **the step forward taken in daring to increase the EU cultural budget at this time of crisis must be acknowledged and cannot be undone**: it is a sum too small to be an important part of any negotiated budget cuts and it is an idea too great to be dealt away with just a sigh.

Therefore, while reiterating its full commitment to this endeavour, **Culture Action Europe calls** on all those who care about culture and its contribution to fostering new and sustainable developmental models for our societies **to engage and mobilize also by joining the 'we are more – act for culture in Europe' campaign** (www.wearemore.eu).