

To the attention of

- Ms Themis Christophidou, Director-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture of the European Commission
- Ms Viviane Hoffmann, Deputy Director-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
- Mr Georg Häusler, Director for Culture, Creativity and Sport (EAC.D) at DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
- Ms Judith Videcoq, Acting Head of Unit, Creative Europe (EAC.D.2) at DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
- Mr Walter Zampieri, Head of Unit Culture, Executive Agency (EAC.D.EACEA.B.1) at DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture

28 June 2023

Creative Europe - Concern regarding the future application process for large-scale cooperation projects (Coop3)

Dear Ms Christophidou, Ms Hoffmann, Mr Häusler, Ms Videcoq, and Mr Zampieri,

It has come to our attention that the European Commission's **DG EAC is considering to launch calls for applications for Creative Europe large-scale cooperation projects (Coop3) only every other year**, as of 2023.

We the undersigned, representing Europe's major cultural networks, platforms, as well as organisations running (or planning to run) such large-scale cooperation projects, would like to express our concern **against this proposed measure**, which we strongly believe will negatively affect the impact of Creative Europe on the cultural and creative sectors (CCSs). Pausing the large-scale cooperation projects calls in a few months, without having first informed/consulted cultural stakeholders in due time, **hinders the long-term efforts to ensure the sustainability of the sectors**.

We advise against this proposed measure for the following reasons:

- Applying for a large-scale cooperation project with 10 pan-European partners or more requires an extensive long-term planning process. Preparing an application starts long before the call for proposal is published, which includes securing the 40% co-funding.
- Large-scale projects provide an international recognition and brand for project partners and European funding institutions. They provide an agile framework for many organisations of different sizes to work together sustainably and innovatively, much beyond what would be possible for them to do at national level. Large-scale cooperation projects often focus on specific subjects following the EU's key political priorities, often making the sectors more resilient in face of global, complex challenges.
- The CCSs need long-term commitment from the EU, especially post-COVID. The European Commission must provide the necessary leverage for the sectors to continue thriving at all levels, avoiding potentially harmful decisions like pausing large-scale cooperation calls this year to then launch calls every second year. We need more ambitious financial support, also in view of the mid-term revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).

A much-needed scheme

Compared to the last financial framework period (2014-2020), the CULTURE Strand of the Creative Europe programme 2021-2027 has opened the door to significant changes with regards to the cooperation projects funding line. Responses to the calls have been growing, showing there is a clear demand for cooperation projects, as shown by the 45% increase in the number of applications received in 2022 compared with the 2021 call.

While it appears that the small and medium stages of funding are most popular, large-scale projects fill a need that is not covered by other European actions such as networks or platforms, or by national funding schemes existing in participating countries. Indeed, European networks focus on the capacity building of the sectors, and European platforms promote the cross-border circulation of new European talent beyond borders through

third parties. In comparison, **large-scale projects provide a crucial framework for many organisations of different sizes to work together sustainably, much beyond what would be possible for them to do at national level.**

Large-scale cooperation projects are often focused on a particular topic that follows the EU's key political priorities. This agile, thematic process allows for a smart way to support the needs of the sectors in real time, additionally to the 'structuration effort' that European networks and platforms are carrying out. Thanks to this flexible approach and budget, **large-scale cooperation projects can make the sectors more resilient in the face of global, complex challenges.** In addition, with the requirement to work with a minimum of 10 partners in 10 countries, large-scale cooperation projects offer a greater pan-European reach than small- and medium-scale ones.

Often, large-scale projects stem from small- and medium-scale cooperation, combined with connections that project partners have in the networks or platforms they are part of. Large-scale cooperation projects allow for partners to grow together and build sustained relationships of trust and fair practices across borders which are hard to achieve and can easily be questioned if they are not continued in time. Additionally, these projects provide an international recognition and brand for project partners, especially when they are the continuation of smaller actions.

The need for continued support

The CCSs need long-term commitment, especially post-COVID and the European Commission must provide the necessary leverage to continue thriving at all levels. We understand that the overall budget of the Creative Europe programme has been frontloaded, with a third of the financial envelope committed in the first two years of the multiannual cycle, in order to address the difficult situation of sectors that have been hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis. Such frontloading has produced, however, negative externalities: having constantly decreasing annual budgets for the second half of the programme is already putting new strains on the cultural and creative sectors at large, especially in light of high inflation and the spike in energy costs in the last few months.

The Creative Europe funding should be allocated in a continuous and progressive way. **Putting large-scale cooperation projects in place takes time** and the sectors need to have the ability not only to test actions, but also to upscale them at EU level by having more resources available to develop individual pan-European projects. Applying for a large-scale cooperation project with 10 partners or more requires an extensive long-term planning process, with the preparation of applications starting long before the call for proposal is published. Such preparatory activities include securing the 40% co-funding.

In addition, it must be acknowledged that large-scale cooperation partners have a larger share of co-financing to bring to the project, thus contributing to a larger part to financially leverage the Creative Europe Programme as a whole. The continuity of such projects, where the EU investment acts as a guarantee, is crucial to the relationship building with other funders and sponsors, which are at the core of the financial leverage of the programme.

Pausing the large-scale cooperation projects calls in 2023 to then launch them every second year can hinder the long-term efforts to ensure the sustainability of the sectors, especially since stakeholders have not been informed or consulted in due time. We need more ambitious financial support, also in light of the mid-term revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), to make Europe's cultural and creative sectors thrive.

Yours sincerely,

List of signatories:

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