Ten-Point Reflection on the European Commission's proposal for a Regulation establishing the Creative Europe programme (2021-2027)

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International network for contemporary performing arts

Endorsed by

IETM, International network for contemporary performing arts, is one of the oldest and largest cultural networks, which represents the voice of over 500 performing arts organisations and institutions, including theatres and arts centres, festivals, performing companies, curators and programmers, producers, art councils and associations from about 50 countries. IETM advocates for the value of the arts and culture in a changing world and empowers performing arts professionals through access to international connections, knowledge and a dynamic forum for exchange.
www.ietm.org

For more than 15 years, **Circostrada** has been working to develop and empower the fields of circus and street arts in Europe and beyond. It supports professionals and cultural stakeholders at large by boosting professional exchanges, collecting data, fostering training, knowledge sharing and promoting innovation in both sectors. With more than 100 members from over 35 countries, Circostrada acts as a bridge between all field players and EU policy makers, relaying their needs and advocating for greater means and more structured cultural policies. Circostrada is coordinated by ARTCENA – French National Centre for Circus Arts, Street Arts and Theatre, and is co-funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union and the French Ministry of Culture.
www.circostrada.org

IN SITU is the European platform for artistic creation in public space. Since 2003, it has supported more than 200 artists working outside conventional venues and contributing to the transformation of our territories. IN SITU is an ecosystem connecting a new generation of artists with audiences, programmers, and key-players involved in the economic, political and social realities around Europe. IN SITU develops an ecology of creation based on transnational artistic workshops and laboratories, European and international residencies and collective mentoring for pilot artistic projects. IN SITU also designs tailored consulting and expertise for European cities, online training modules (MOOC) and a Think Tank dedicated to artistic creation in public space.
IN SITU ACT 2016 - 2020 is co-funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union.
www.in-situ.info

The **European Theatre Convention (ETC)** is an artistic platform for creation, innovation and collaboration.
As the largest network of public theatres in Europe, the ETC has more than forty European Theatre Members from over twenty countries, reflecting the diversity of Europe's vibrant cultural sector. Founded in 1988, the ETC promotes European theatre as a vital social platform for dialogue, democracy and interaction that responds to, reflects and engages with today's diverse audiences and changing societies. ETC fosters a socially-engaged, inclusive notion of theatre that brings Europe's social, linguistic and cultural heritage to audiences and communities everywhere. Powerful and professional ETC governance ensures that the network will strive and grow taking into consideration latest trends and developments.
www.etc-cte.org

EDN, European Dancehouse Network, formed in 2004, is an association of more than 36 dance houses connecting across Europe and beyond, with a shared ambition: strengthening professional practice, developing audiences and enhancing public engagement and progressing the network. In pursuit of this mission EDN's purpose is to champion, strengthen and communicate the dance house model as providing the optimum conditions and most effective means necessary for the structural development of dance as contemporary art form, at all levels of engagement. EDN is the dance house network of Europe, where each member subscribes to cooperating, sharing resources, capacity building and intelligence gathering. Confronted with the challenges of the world today we stay for connectedness, identity and empathy building, resilience and the vital impact of the performing arts in society.
www.ednetwork.eu

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The points are presented on behalf of the performing arts sector

"The successor programme may play a valuable role in responding to populism by reinforcing cultural diversity and increasing tolerance and mutual understanding. Therefore the programme will intensify the citizens' dimension of its activities."[1]

Creative Europe, the current EU programme for cultural and creative sectors, has proven its potential to build interpersonal bonds and emotional engagement beyond national frontiers. These are the strongest glue of the European project and the undeniable foundation for a shared European future. Artistic mobility and cooperation across borders are vital when it comes to nourishing mutual understanding, solidarity, and thinking beyond national paradigms. The need for international exchange is insufficiently addressed at Member State level, and some of the current political developments, both within the EU and beyond its borders, even hinder mobility and cross-border partnerships. Therefore, a European programme for culture is essential to continue to promote international cooperation and mobility of cultural operators and artworks.

Furthermore, Creative Europe has played a crucial role in supporting the sector's development by creating a pan-European forum for accumulating and exchanging knowledge on – inter alia – sustainable management models, seizing opportunities brought by digital technologies and engaging with audiences.

On May 30, the European Commission released its proposal for a Regulation establishing the Creative Europe programme for 2021-2027. We welcome the newly designed stand-alone programme for cultural and creative sectors (CCS), meant to be reinforced with an increased budget of € 1,85 billion. We endorse the Commission's recognition of culture's role in strengthening inclusive and cohesive communities, and the programme's intention to support the initiatives that contribute to a socially more inclusive European society.

The recent Commission's report on the mid-term evaluation of the current programme stated that "Creative Europe will address in a balanced manner the two general objectives of the programme i.e. cultural diversity and competitiveness, taking account of the multifaceted dimension of the programme as well as its cultural, social and economic objectives." The new proposal also claims to take into account the "dual nature of cultural and creative sectors"; their artistic merits as well as their economic utility.

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[1] REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL Mid-term evaluation of the Creative Europe programme (2014-2020)

Yet the document's spirit is by far more business and growth driven. It is more specific and lengthy when it comes to the sectors which are more likely to contribute to the economic growth and employment. At the same time, the programme's societal and citizen-oriented priorities fade into the background.

This is at odds with the current state of the EU, which is challenged by eurosceptic tendencies and social disintegration, creating the need for some intangible fuel to design inclusive and cross-border spaces for an equal dialogue among its citizens and multiple communities. Moreover, the proposal's industry-driven focus does not match the discourse of the recently released ambitious New Agenda for Culture which puts forward the long-awaited recognition of the value of arts and culture for social cohesion, building a true community among Europeans based on shared values, feeling of togetherness, and active citizenship.

Considering this imbalance, as well as reacting to the specific sectoral initiatives, **we call for equal support to all cultural and artistic sectors**, including those which need public support the most, due to the time- and human-intensive nature of their work, as we believe that **this is the only fair and effective way of enhancing the diversity of cultural expressions in Europe**.

Furthermore, we draw the European institutions' and Member States' attention to the following points to be taken into account when designing a programme truly suited for the European cultural and creative sectors:

1. The true value of the arts

The paper asserts that cultural and creative sectors "promote European excellence on the world stage, reinforcing the Union's global positioning." If the programme is to be comprehensive and embrace the arts, it must take into account that the biggest value of the arts is their potential to facilitate an equal dialogue and create human-based bridges among different realities, mentalities and identities, rather than promoting political concepts.

2. Sufficient resources

The programme's budget is denoted as "reinforced", which logically stems from the proposed increase from € 1,6 billion to € 1,85 billion. However, given the intention to accommodate various new priorities and actions within the programme (such as sector-specific initiatives, a mobility fund, and new areas of interest of the cross-sectorial strand), and taking into account the multiple challenges the CCS's are encountering, the programme must be strengthened with a much more significant amount. Moreover, the increase should primarily be used to top up the budgets of strands dealing with extreme low success rates.

3. Cultural diversity in a broader sense

The programme's focus on cultural diversity mostly pertains to the cross-border circulation of, notably, audio-visual works. We regret that it insufficiently endorses such vital elements of cultural diversity, as transnational interpersonal bonds, resulting in the circulation of live art works and professionals, an

equal dialogue among diverse social, cultural and ethnic groups inhabiting European cities and settlements, as well as a "safe" space which can accommodate this diversity, immune to fear and intolerance. The arts and culture are powerful anchors for establishing and nourishing such a dialogue and such a space.

4. Mobility of art works

The first priority of the Culture strand is "to strengthen the cross-border dimension and circulation of European cultural and creative operators and works." The "cross-border circulation of works" is also mentioned as one of the expected generated Union added values. However, Annex I, which details the priorities further, only mentions "mobility of artists and cultural and creative operators" for the Culture strand. We strongly advocate complementing cross-border mobility of art professionals with special touring grants for mobility of art works within Europe and beyond, which would enable showing the results of cooperation projects in as many European countries as possible, as well as outside the EU. Circulation of art works contributes greatly to the sustainability and extension of art projects' life-spans, and enhances the promotion of the European arts' richness to the diverse and large audiences across the continent and beyond.

5. Challenges faced by artists

The list of challenges faced by the CCSs identified by the Commission's proposal does not sufficiently embody the precarious social and economic situation faced by artists all over Europe. One of the challenges faced by the arts which should be addressed is the market-based model of functioning, at the cost of time spent on research and audience engagement, and artists remuneration.

6. Freedom of artistic expression

Free media environment is mentioned as one of the areas of the future programme's support. No matter how pertinent it is for the current situation of journalism and media in Europe and beyond, it is striking that the programme destined to support cultural and creative sectors does not clearly focus on the freedom of artistic expression, which is being increasingly and considerably undermined in some parts of Europe. The programme fairly associates critical thinking with media literacy and high quality journalism; however, it is also essential to address the undeniable power of the arts to open minds and encourage critical reflection.

7. Diversity, inclusion, access and equality

We welcome the programme's ambition to promote gender equality, which is still a hill to climb in most of the EU Member States. Nevertheless, as our societies are going through rapid transformations, caused inter alia by migration, ageing of the population, and societal consequences of the financial crisis, the Europe of today and tomorrow needs to invest in building inclusive and diverse communities and fight all types of discrimination based on gender, ethnic and geographic origin, social background, physical ability, sexual orientation, etc. Therefore, the programme should embrace diversity, inclusion, access and equality as its guiding values and requirements for applying.

8. Synergies with other policies

The programme states there are "strong links - notably in the fields of media pluralism, European identity, values and cultural heritage - between the Creative Europe programme and the Rights and Values programme." It cannot be stressed enough that the arts have a great power to raise awareness of and to promote the rights and values the EU cherishes as its anchors. All the more so, the Commission's mid-term evaluation report confirms that "recent developments show the importance of creativity and culture in sustaining healthy democracies, diversity and a shared sense of European identity." As for the possible synergies between Creative Europe regional and rural policies, a great value is attributed to cultural heritage, tourism and creative industries. It is crucial to feature in the new programme that the arts play a tremendous role in revitalising rural areas and nurturing their self-identification. Besides, participative art practices equip underprivileged citizens and communities with innovative tools to address their challenges, reflect on their values and bring their aspirations to life.

9. Small organisations' access

The document acknowledges that the limited access of small organisations to Creative Europe 2014-2020 has been one of the pitfalls of the current programme's design. Nevertheless, it is not entirely clear what the effective measures are, besides the cascading grants, to be applied to ensure a fairer scheme in which small organisations do not have to go through insurmountable competition with bigger players. Small-scale projects and small organisations are very often the ones most involved with the most urgent social issues; they are also particularly flexible, agile and inclined to international mobility. Thus, they must be fairly included in the future scheme. A special strand based on lighter application conditions for small organisations and small-scale initiatives should be a solution.

10. Flexibility and expansion of the programme

We appreciate the proposal to endow the future programme with "greater flexibility", in order to adapt to "unforeseen circumstances or new technological and societal developments". However, we stress that the programme's priorities must be developed based on a strategic and long-term vision, which aims to ensure the sustainability of the projects supported. We agree that the appearance of a new topic in the programme may happen ad hoc in order to respond to the urgent phenomena in society. In this case, an expansion of the programme requires a more substantial budget, in order to avoid endangering the consistency of some initiatives developed in the framework of the pre-existing priorities and the continuity of a budget for such a long-term goal as, for instance, social integration.

The EU funding programme for culture remains a vital added value supporting the sector's development and sustainable cooperation, as a counterforce to a disintegrating Europe. Therefore, **we call on the European Parliament and the Member States to endorse the Commission's proposal for the stand-alone Creative Europe programme and to modify the proposal taking into account the points outlined above.**