Position paper on the mid-term evaluation of Creative Europe and recommendations regarding its post-2020 successor

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Endorsed by

EDN European Dancehouse Network

IETM, International network for contemporary performing arts, is one of the oldest and largest cultural networks, which represents the voice of over **550 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.
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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.
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Europe today and tomorrow

The context, in which European societies live today, has become ever more complex, challenging and insecure, whilst inequalities have widened. The societal disruptions have led to the rise of populism. Today's migration requires a bolder approach to the social cohesion. The increasing uncertainty and turbulence, along with the rising awareness of highly digitalised citizens, require a stronger ability to navigate this complex reality through a constructive and critical reflection. The old ways of addressing burning issues (such as climate change) have proved insufficient to instigate a deep behavioural change; therefore, new strategies to convey urgent messages are increasingly on demand. The unity within the EU has been undermined by internal contradictions and growing eurosceptic sentiments; thus, a greater effort to nourish a feeling of common culture and values is sorely needed.

The power of the performing arts

Performing arts is a live art form which invites citizens in a social gathering to reflect on a presentation which evolves in front of them – be it a narrative, a purely visual experience, or a performance which manages to touch all senses. The art form embraces some special qualities that tend to get lost in our daily existence: it confronts people with the unexpected messages, non-mediated and unframed, with the physical proximity not only with the fellow spectators, but also with those people on stage (or whatever place they chose to perform in). Performing arts trigger a very special human trait: the ability to identify with the "other", to empathise with the character or the body on stage. It is thanks to this ability that children dress up, that youngsters in favela's choose to dance as an alternative to a career as drugs dealer, and that communities in crisis find consolation in watching their problems, prides or values put on stage.

The performing arts can stimulate the civic debate, foster social innovation and cohesion, educate, open minds, show alternative perspectives, and inspire free thinking, which is so vital in the view of the increasing aggressive intolerance for "difference". They are engaged with the issues which have been shaking our societies in the recent years: economic crisis, gender inequality, human displacement, globalisation, environmental concerns, among others[1]. They have the potential to reveal the imperfections of current approaches to sustainability, help envisaging a better future, accept and adopt new perceptions, values and behavioural patterns, which are so badly needed if the EU is serious about achieving its ambitious Agenda for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Performing arts can influence people. When authoritarian leaders want their message to be heard, they try to bribe the performing artist. The flipside of the coin: over the globe performing artists are the natural enemy and victims (together with journalists and other critical artists) of authoritarian regimes.

In short: contemporary performing arts have a great power to promote humanitarian values. They enable citizens to break out of the increasingly predominant simplistic us-against-them discourse and develop free room of accepting and understanding different points of view which are essential for a healthy democracy[2].

Contemporary performing arts create the space and provide the tools for various communities to engage in a dialogue, and bring their concerns and feelings upfront, which are otherwise excluded from the social discourse and let alone the political debate[3]. This fosters civic engagement and facilitates social cohesion – essential conditions to enable the EU to not only prosper, but to exist.

The condition of the sector

The economic downturn and digitisation has impacted the performing arts sector and will continue to do so. The performing arts sector continues to be composed of a large majority of small and mid-size companies, and the number of freelance professionals also increases. The sector will continue to grow, but without any direct impact on the quantity or quality of jobs. Every year thousands of talented, well-skilled, high-educated people enter the

performing arts sector. While the paid-job opportunities become even more scarce, the competition within the sector remains very high with job demand exceeding supply[4]. As a result, thousands of performing artists across Europe continue living in a very precarious social and economic situation, being increasingly pushed towards the market-based model of functioning: reducing extra costs and the time spent for research, increasing audience enlargement activities, convening short term or zero hours contracts.

Some national policies (varying greatly from country to country though) increasingly marginalise such priorities as diversity, cross-border collaboration and pluralism within their funding programmes. Whilst certain political developments, both within the EU and beyond its borders, hinder mobility and cross-border partnerships, performing artists are still amongst the most mobile artists, developing trans-border collaborations.

Given the above trends, in light of the multiple budget cuts for culture across European countries, the EU funding programme for culture remains a vital added value supporting the sector's development and sustainable international cooperation, as a counterforce to a disintegrating Europe. Therefore, post 2020, it must not only continue but needs to be strengthened with a substantial increase to its budget.

Recommendations

IETM and EDN recognise the essential value of the Creative Europe programme for the sustainability, innovation and internationalisation of cultural and creative industries across Europe. Nevertheless, the programme is insufficient to empower the performing arts. It fails to produce high-quality work and doesn't embrace and incite innovation, neither using its full potential for driving social change nor contributing to the progress of European societies. To achieve this, **the post-2020 EU programme for culture must be better attuned to the vital needs and concerns of the artistic and cultural sectors.**

IETM supports the conclusions and recommendations made by Culture Action Europe[5]. Furthermore, we call on the European Institutions and Members States to:

⇒ Continue **the support for the cultural and creative sectors** in Europe, and given the very poor application success rates (15,83 % for Culture[6]), strengthen the future programme with an **increased budget allocation;**

⇒ Design a programme, which stems from the **equal recognition of economic, social, humanistic and artistic dimensions of arts and culture**, including social cohesion, intercultural dialogues, critical thinking, promotion of cultural diversity, pluralism and democracy;

⇒ Ensure that the future programme for culture aims at supporting **international cooperation** in the field of **conception**, **artistic creation, production and exchange, valuing research, experimentation, innovation and risk-taking** in the cultural sector;

⇒ Guarantee that enlarging the scope of the programme and adding new priorities is accompanied by an **increased budget and a possibility to focus on one or few priorities** relevant to each project`s mission while not being obliged to focus on all of them;

⇒ Continue to promote **the transversal approach to culture and the arts within other policy areas** in an appropriate way, giving them the strength to support other policy objectives;

⇒ Enable cultural and creative sectors to participate in other EU programmes, by advocating for a **proper integration of cultural actors in as many programmes as possible** and creating a **better awareness and easily accessible guidance regarding all existing EU funding opportunities** available to culture and the arts;

⇒ Ensure that the **conflation of Culture and MEDIA strands is carefully monitored** and backed by an inclusive and a differentiated approach where both economic and intrinsic values of each of the sectors are in focus;

⇒ Facilitate the access to the grants and the application procedure by establishing **a two-stage application process** and introducing **a special strand for smaller organisations**;

⇒ Introduce a **European Touring Grant**, a quick and flexible instrument for supporting mobility of artistic productions within Europe;

⇒ **Adjust the Guarantee Facility Instrument evenly to the Culture and MEDIA** practitioners taking into consideration the differences between their financing logic, creation and production process;

⇒ Allow networks a **percentage of the budget for an undefined activity** which can respond to the emerging trends during the grant period and the consultation requests from the European Institutions;

⇒ Within the cooperation projects strand, consider **the specificity of artistic project management**, which is predominantly inspired by an artistic value and impact on citizens and not by the drive for efficiency;

⇒ Ensure **more quality and transparency in the evaluation process**, by assigning only highly qualified evaluators, by setting up clearer selection criteria, by providing more explanation about the reasons of rejecting an application, and by giving more detail about selected projects and the way of awarding the points;

⇒ **Embrace diversity, inclusion, access and equality** as guiding values of the EU cultural programme support and horizontal requirements for applying.

⇒ Analyse the allocation of cooperation grants of last programme period and make sure that the **project funds are distributed evenly**, in order to prevent the recurring support for same big and well-established organisations in the same countries.

Guiding values

As is the case for all EU policies and programmes, Creative Europe aligns with the priorities of Europe 2020: creating conditions for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Due to the prevailing economic approach of Europe 2020, the Creative Europe programme focuses on business models and expanding audiences.

Whilst culture is expected to enhance economic growth and innovate social models, an economic spirit is also meant to innovate the cultural sector itself. Culture is seen as a catalyst of creativity which can potentially produce a "spill-over effect" in any field of public life, whilst the economy and job creation is brought to the fore. This attitude to culture is not absolutely inadequate, as the cultural and creative industries contribute significantly to the economy and employment (responsible for around 3.5% of all EU products and services annually, and employ 6.7 million people, or 3% of the European workforce[7]).

However, whilst the EU, (as a party to the UNESCO Convention 2005), is committed to promoting the diversity of cultural expressions, it must not be seen as **solely having economic value,** nor as a mere "market" in which building a strong business model would be a guarantee of success. Instead, the future programme must focus on the activities which attempt to:

⇒ Foster and promote cultural diversity and inclusiveness across European societies;
⇒ Inspire and nourish the reflection of the society on the most vital issues and challenges faced by Europe today: migration, environmental crisis, decline of democracy, widening inequalities, social disintegration, among others;
⇒ Enhance the sense of shared identities and shared values among European citizens, creating a space for building a dialogue and collective critical thinking, democracy and pluralism.

We cannot stress enough how bringing these values in sharp focus is urgently needed in the Europe of today and tomorrow.

Support to **mobility and international touring** must be one of the forefront priorities of the future programme, and should be offered in the context of multilateral partnerships and transnational collaborations. The support to mobility within the EU programme is vitally important for the lifetime of shows, conditions of artists and technicians' employment, and the circulation of art works between different parts of Europe.

Stimulation of international collaboration should not lead to unsustainable partnerships, conceived only with the view of fitting the application criteria. Instead, it must give applicants the possibility to cope with the economic discrepancies among the countries eligible to apply.

Transversal approach to culture within other policy areas

The current priorities of the Creative Europe programme, such as business models, digitisation and expanding audiences, are still relevant for the arts sector today. However, instead of being addressed within the EU funding programme for culture, some of them need to be properly embedded in the framework of other DG's and funding opportunities. These are directly aimed at enhancing competitiveness, professional capacities, entrepreneurial skills, innovative business models, digitalisation, and other economically driven priorities: Horizon 2020, European Social Fund, COSME, Interreg, European Regional Development Fund, among others.

As stated above, culture and the arts can and do play a significant role in other policy objectives, such as sustainable development, economic growth, global positioning of the EU, integration of migrants, European citizenry, etc. Thus, DG Education and Culture should prompt the mainstreaming of culture in the appropriate DGs, such as DG Migration and Home Affairs, DG Environment, DG Development and Cooperation, etc. Whilst **the aim of the EU budget and programme for culture must support international conception, creation, and collaboration, valuing such aspects as experimentation, innovation and risk-taking are also crucial within the cultural sector**.

Many EU policy programmes are open to cultural and creative practitioners, but their participation has not yet reached its full potential, mainly due to the lack of awareness amongst the cultural professionals about the existence of such instruments. DG EAC could create a "one stop shop" to highlight different funding opportunities for the cultural and creative sectors[8]. It could be an easy to navigate website or a regularly updated guidebook (like the one published by IETM in 2014: Fund-finder - Guide to funding opportunities for arts and culture in Europe, beyond Creative Europe[9]).

Specificity of art projects

Arts and culture often outpace many other sectors in taking risks and experimentation, which are the essential drivers for inventing new socio-economic models and are badly needed in Europe today. Unique qualities of the arts have a great potential to instigate a real change; however, the drive to be creative may be hindered drastically by the increasing pressure to be efficient.

If the EU programme for culture is meant to enable the art sector to embrace innovation and "spill it over" to other fields of public life, it **should not limit art project management with too restrictive guidelines**. Art practices aim at artistic achievements and values, which usually in turn are more important than any predictable outcome, and can stretch over a long period or become irretraceable. Thus, the programme must **take into account such specific features of artistic undertakings as risk-taking, experimentation and freedom**. It should consider the processual character of art projects instead of pursuing the *just-in-time* perspective and respect the intrinsic nature of art practices[10]. The guidelines and evaluation criteria need to be more flexible and less narrow, which will provide a certain space for experimentation and spontaneity, which are crucial for the arts.

Compatibility of priorities and expansion of the programme

The topic of integrating refugees and migrants became a new priority within the Creative Europe programme in 2016 with a call for projects aimed at supporting refugees' and migrants' integration. However, it does not seem to be clear how it may be possible to reconcile the ambition of promoting cultural diversity and social cohesion with the goal of raising competitiveness and the market-orientation in the cultural sector.

Instead, **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**. At the same time, it is clear 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 social integration.**

Operation funding vs project grants

The shift from operational to project financing within the strand for cultural networks has meant a loss of flexibility and capacity to react to unexpected developments. Besides, the new scheme doesn't appear to allow allocating a budget for specific network tasks such as sector representation and advocacy.

Whilst, networks work in continuity, a few months in between the end of a subsidy scheme for networks and the start of the next one can result in bankruptcy. This is a serious issue which needs to be addressed, and it is yet unclear if the new Guarantee Fund will successfully promote banks to bridge these gaps, while the application is still pending. We cannot underestimate the seriousness of this dilemma for many European networks relying on the Creative Europe support.

It is vital that networks have the opportunity to work in a greater continuity, which enable them to undertake their core tasks whilst also having enough flexibility to engage in new activities. Subsequently, **networks should be allowed a percentage of the budget for an undefined activity in order to be adaptive to topical events/projects during the period of the grant.** Moreover, **there should be a combination of project grants and operation funding**, so that networks have enough capacity to continue playing the role of the intermediary between the EU institutions and the art field – through dissemination of information, updating the European Commission on the trends and developments in the sector, and advocating for the arts and culture within other DGs and policies.

Culture vs MEDIA

In the Creative Europe programme MEDIA and Culture are merged under the same general objectives. The priorities include competitiveness, employment and the strategic development of audiences which stem from and better suit the MEDIA scheme rather than the Culture scheme: while MEDIA actors are obviously more profit-oriented, Culture applicants are rather focused on the intangible dimension of their practices.

Reflecting the wide concept of culture and creative sectors, Creative Europe tend to categorise creative industries, culture and art in the same box. Whilst this might make sense if we look only at the creativity side, the impact on urban development and jobs is enormous. But in their objectives, methodologies and production processes many art forms have less in common with digital start-ups, design, architecture and advertisement industry than with – to name a few such as the world of science or the social industries.

How are applicants for support of art forms and cultural practices supposed to tick the same boxes as the demand driven/profit making creative industries? They have to force themselves to fit criteria which is not their driving factor and consequently, many of their most prominent values thus stay under the radar. Art without doubt contributes to the economy (city branding, gentrification, tourism and jobs, etc.), but art is also made to stimulate critical view on the established narratives, educate, open minds and drive social innovation and cohesion.

Given the on-going integration of new technologies including visual and live art forms, the distinction between media and culture is blurring. Recent selection results seem to prioritise more and more (semi) media projects within the Culture sub-programme, which has to deal with a considerable lower budget than the MEDIA sub-programme: these hybrid projects and programmes also ask for hybrid funding.

We acknowledge the overlaps between the cultural and creative industries and similar challenges both sectors are facing. However, **the cross over may become damaging, if it's not carefully monitored and backed by an inclusive and differentiated approach, where both economic and intrinsic values are in focus and budgets for culture are invested in MEDIA productions or potentially profit-making activities.**

Facilitated access for small organisations

Small-scale local projects and small organisations are very often the ones most involved in the work with the most urgent issues such as human displacement, social conflicts, discrimination, environmental crisis and more. Micro-organisations answer most efficiently to the many different needs of our fragmented societies. Being particularly flexible, agile and prone for international mobility, they are at the forefront of conceiving and fostering cross-border bonds and collaborations, which are essential for nourishing a feeling of common European culture and values.

At the same time, small organisations are obviously unable to allocate enough time, and human resources to handle the complex application process. As a result, those small-scale actors, which are often highly innovative and research-oriented, are losing on a European level. This goes against the EU's commitment to diversity and aspiration for innovation. Moreover, it deepens the divide between emerging organisations and well-established bigger actors, having enough capacity to compete for an EU grant. Therefore, a more varied approach is needed, and EU funding should be more flexible and accessible for small organisations and small-scale initiatives.

A **special strand for smaller organisations** (up to 10 employees) is needed: tailored requirements and a lighter application procedure will release them from the unsurmountable competition with bigger and better equipped organisations who often have a tick box formulae. Action grants offered in the framework of the Europe for Citizens Programme may serve as an example of such a strand.

A **two-staged application process** would also facilitate the access of smaller organisations to the programme and improve considerably the success rate and diminish the frustration as many companies spend a huge amount of time and energy on submitting a Creative Europe application whereas a two-stage process would make the process less frustrating for many.

Also, a longer period between the call out and the application deadline in needed; moreover, better and furthermore, earlier communication of the actual call and its deadlines would help facilitate the application process.

European Touring Grant

IETM supports the proposal by European Dancehouse Network to introduce a special European Touring Grant, easily accessible with application and reporting procedures that are reduced to the minimum needed in order to create a quick and flexible process for supporting mobility of artistic productions within Europe. Such a grant should support presenters when they invite artistic productions with reasonable fees which will, in turn, subsidise better payment for artists and enable the growth of the social status of artists across Europe.

Transparency and quality of evaluation

The EACEA needs to provide sufficient information about the grantees, so that one is able to get a clear and full insight into what type of projects benefit from the programme, based on which criteria they have been selected and how the points have been awarded. Some of the projects, in the making, do not have a website yet and subsequently have less presence on line, thus a short description of each project derived from the application files could be made public.

A more complete, competent and consistent feedback must be provided to rejected applicants. Many organisations point out that after having taken into account all the evaluators' remarks while applying for the second time, they receive even lower scores and the new comments contradict to the previous feedback. Moreover, many applicants repeatedly notice that the evaluators' feedback is often provided in an unclear and poor English language, which obviously does not contribute to the programme's positive image.

Guarantee Facility Instrument

We have concerns regarding the new instrument due to the lack of operational and financial details. Given the small number of participating banks at date, only operating nationally, a well-functioning instrument in the future doesn't seem to be guaranteed. It is not clear what consequences the new instrument will have for the allocation of the EU budget and whether it will imply a shift from a subsidy strategy to investment.

Moreover, since the banks are free to choose the sectors they want to support, there is an assumption that the banks will use the new instrument only for enterprises that are able to convince them of their ability to return the loan, while the cultural organisations, less trained in composing sound business plans, risk to be marginalised. This may **enhance asymmetric competition between profit and non-profit sectors within the programme.**

It must be carefully verified whether the Guarantee Fund is fully effective within the programme for culture or whether it should be addressed within COSME (Europe's programme for small and medium-sized enterprises).

Diversity, inclusion and equality

Inequalities affecting European societies are reflected in the cultural sector as well. Women, ethnic minorities, low-income classes, persons with disabilities, LGBTI+ people face economic barriers and social pressure to access professional artistic education, and struggle more at the early stages of their careers when it is more common to accept unpaid internships or lower incomes. As professionals, minority artists are often excluded from the mainstream venues and programmes and work often as freelancers, in more precarious conditions.

If the sector is not diverse, the people and stories on stage do not represent equally all groups in society; consequently, when art is produced under these conditions it is not meaningful for a part of society that doesn't see itself represented on stage. Therefore, **the EU programme for culture needs to support and stimulate art and culture organisations to integrate diversity, inclusion and equality in their strategies and projects.**

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