

Comments about the proposed *Creative Europe* programme

These comments were made as one input to a workshop discussion on the topic, involving people who are familiar with the background. This is why the presentation of the draft *Creative Europe* programme and the introduction of the relevant documents (listed at bottom) are missing.

Furthermore, the proposals, or rather suggestions in the text are meant to animate the discussion (also among readers) rather than being recommendations with the realistic chance to be adopted and implemented.

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1. The fundamental dilemma of culture in the European Union

The fundamental dilemma of culture in the European Union is the large and insoluble **conflict between the expectations** of the cultural (and artistic) community **and the mandates** of the Union, especially of the European Commission, as stipulated in the basic treaties. In Article 6 of the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union* culture is one of the seven areas where the Union has no competence to act on its own or even in conjunction with Member States. Its competence is limited to supporting, coordinating or supplementing the actions of the Member States. In other words, it can have no culture policy of its own (other than the policy of handling this limited remit). Article 167, which specifies this restricted competence, ends with the forthright warning that eventual “incentive measures” are not supposed to aim at “any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the Member States”. Never in the past few years has a serious initiative been taken to alter this situation. The tiny fraction of the budget of the Union spent on cultural actions reflects this state of affairs. The *Communication on Creative Europe* is right to point out that the limited resources of the culture strand correspond to the budgets of many opera houses in Europe.

Nonetheless, in the eyes of the general (including the general professional) public the cultural framework programmes of the Commission (under various names from *Kaleidoscope* to *Creative Europe*) in fact represent an **additional financial source** that complements other funding, above all the national cultural budgets. Thousands of “cultural operators” flock to the info days to learn about future funding for their activities. Some of them hope for some extra

to their basic provisions, for others the EU offers a second chance, maybe the last hope for realising a project – this in spite of the indeed very small share in relation to the available funds for culture elsewhere in Europe.

We shall see that the official rationale of these programmes does not support the concept of being an alternative, not even a complementary source of funding. Nevertheless the communication of the Commission may be interpreted as confirmation of such conceptions by emphasising the achievements of these programmes in “strengthening the sector”, and when one of the first things to promise about the future programme is that 300 000 artists and cultural professionals would receive funds...

This fundamental contradiction will stay with us. Expectations would be more realistic, and proposals more to the point if it was specified more bluntly at the outset that *Creative Europe* is not a European Arts Council or Culture Fund.

2. The peculiar position of audiovisual culture

In case of the film industry, on the other hand, EU programmes are clearly meant to support the sector. The special position of the audiovisual culture does not derive directly from the fundamental treaties. As part of culture, the European Union can just “contribute to the flowering” of audiovisual cultures in the Member States, and as industry it is likewise national competence... However, the concerns about this area are very simple to determine: the European share among viewers of films in cinemas in Europe and in the box office revenue. Which clearly define the aims of the *MEDIA* programme. These indicators and their derivatives mark out tasks that cover the entire range of filmmaking and distribution. Differently from the rest of culture, Member States have not resisted to close coordination and joint policies in the audiovisual area. The common goal: the **competitiveness of European films** (against, mainly, Hollywood) overrides particular concerns.

The fact that two and a half times more comments were made to the consultation, done in spring 2011, on the future of *MEDIA* than on *Culture* was another signal of the appreciation of the programme among stakeholders.

3. The way that the cultural dilemma was handled earlier

If cultural policies, and consequently, if financing of culture is national or lower level competence, what is there to do for the Commission in terms of „contributing to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States“? Article 167 offers the clue, since Paragraph 2 establishes that „action by the Union shall be aimed at encouraging co-operation“. With some simplification, the Union has no role in what is going on *inside* the countries, its support is expected to focus on what happens *between* them, i.e. **transnational cultural co-operation** and exchanges. Indeed, cultural co-operation strands constitute the backbone of the Culture Programme.

The same Paragraph 2 allows for a small leeway, stating that „if necessary“ the Union can support artistic and literary creation in supplementing Member States’ actions. A phrase that warms most artists’ hearts in Europe. Since, however, such necessity is seldom defined or

announced, the Commission indeed very rarely directly stimulates artistic creation. (And sometimes it should not when it does, e.g. it should not manage “European” orchestras.) It rewards outstanding creation though, which is the function of the various awards.

Focusing on transnational cultural co-operation is more than a smart excuse to using EU funds to run cultural projects, and thus demonstrate the Union’s concern for a cause that is primarily national competence; this activity is more than an opportunity to harvest the symbolic profit from associating with cultural events and achievements – a classical bonus for politicians and administrators. Enhancing cultural co-operation, improving the all-round mutual familiarity with one another’s culture, and the cautious construction of a joint **European identity** are important legitimate objectives, and the *Impact Assessment* has every reason to take pride of the achievements of the *Culture Programme* in this respect (just like of the predecessor programmes).

Already in the middle of the past decade efforts were made to prove that culture contributes to the economic competitiveness of Europe, to the realisation of the goals of the *Lisbon Strategy*. A key concept in the *European Agenda for Culture* was culture as a **catalyst for creativity**, and cultural industries received an increasing place in EU communication (although this did not lead to major changes in the functioning of the *Culture Programme*). The *European Year of Creativity and Innovation* centred around culture. These efforts, however, had limited impact on mainstream economic policies of the Union. *Europe 2020*, the EU’s growth strategy does not contain the word culture, and the first drafts on the objectives of the Structural Funds in the future, disclosed last October, do not contain the word creativity.

4. The way the cultural dilemma has been handled lately

The next generation of efforts to mainstream culture fully adopted the strategy devised in Britain^[1]. New dependencies have been identified as parts of an expanded notion of the culture sector, re-baptised as **cultural and creative** industries or sectors. Areas outside of the traditional remit and jurisdiction of cultural policies have been incorporated. These new acquisitions were the growth champions of the years before the global credit crunch, and the amalgamated statistics of this broader sector are indeed impressive. We need not go far for them, these data shine on the first page of the *Communication on Creative Europe*. Boasting them, however, is a bit like the bragging of the athletic champion’s brother or the beauty queen’s sister about “their” success.

Precise **differentiation rarely happens**, if ever: detailed identification, articulate definition of what is still “culture” – belonging to the accountability of cultural policies and administrations –, and what are the creative industries outside that domain. And then: what exactly is the responsibility and the scope of manoeuvre of cultural policies and administrations with respect to those extra branches? What is the distribution of labour (or deal) with the primary administrators of the creative industries? And who are they: in the *European Commission* certainly the *DG Enterprise and Industry*, and probably their equivalents at national and lower levels. Knowing the exact nature of that collaboration could we infer about how policies vis-à-vis culture proper have been (will be) affected by this expansion of scope.

5. The basic message of *Creative Europe*

The *Creative Europe* programme wholeheartedly reflects the expanded concept of cultural and creative sectors. In the texts the general objective begins with the safeguarding and promotion of European cultural and linguistic diversity, but the language of the documents and their spirit leaves no doubt that the main emphasis is on **optimising the sector's potential for economic growth**, job creation and social inclusion, i.e. to bring it in line with *Europe 2020*. A marked shift from ideology towards pragmatism.

This may cause unease for many, but others – including the author of this paper – hold that this is the adequate development in the service of both culture and the Union.

Coming back on the expanded remit of *Creative Europe*, no serious discussion about the proposed programme is possible without exact specification of its clientele in general, and with regard to the three main strands in particular. What approximate percentage of the financial resources of the *MEDIA* strand will serve those operators, mainly small and medium enterprises (SMEs), that were not eligible before? The same about the new strand, the cross-sectoral *Facility*. It would be essential to see a number of typical examples of operations from non-cultural, non-media creative sector that qualify to aid from this *Facility*. Also samples from conventional culture that can draw from this strand.

How does the shift of emphasis affect the culture strand? Is there going to be an increased attention to the “cultural industries”? Or the opposite: will those be ushered towards the *Facility* strand, leaving more room for “non-commercial”, “intrinsic” culture?

A remark is due with regard to the cultural industry concept. I fully disagree with the division of culture into sectors producing products as cultural industries versus non-industrial culture. The real criterion should be the propensity to generate income (and thus contribute to economic growth). This is not an either-or criterion and does not necessarily mechanically discriminate by genre. Some museums have little to do with the economy, others are important players on the global tourism market. The same is true for theatres, orchestras or festivals. The closer to the “business end” of the scale a cultural operation is, the more appropriate it is to label it as cultural industry.

Combining culture and the audio-visuals promises **synergic gains**. Capacity-building, a strong feature in *MEDIA* has already made its way into the functions of the future culture strand. This, as well as knowledge transfer and cross-fertilisation between sectors needs to be kept on the agenda. There is much to learn from the successes and skills of *MEDIA*.

6. The bases of the programme

The two main starting points towards devising the new programme are the mandates contained in EU legal documents, and the analysis of future challenges towards culture. The part of the *Impact Assessment* that discusses culture refers to both.

The chapter *Justification for EU intervention* (in the *Assessment*) is little convincing about the **legal foundations** of the shift towards a more instrumental stance of culture. Three references to the respect of cultural diversity are cited (which was the central aim before and is now

overshadowed by the contribution to growth), and Paragraph 2 of Article 167 is mentioned. Namely that the Union can support and supplement Member State action – except that none of the four areas where this support is allowed relates to culture’s contribution to economic goals. It is very unlikely though, that the new course taken by *Creative Europe* will be attacked on this legal basis.

The other starting point is the analysis of the **state and performance of the cultural and creative sector** with regard to the aims of *Europe 2020*. Although the *Impact Assessment* focuses on the appraisal of the financial interventions of the Union in the past, one may accept this as a judgment about the most important issues in the future in the field of cultural and creative sectors. The *Assessment* takes over the four relevant main issues as identified by the Commission, defined as **four major problems**.

Problem one is the highly fragmented market. This is mainly discussed from the point of view of political fairness: limitations both for consumers and creators, with special regard to linguistic diversity. Less is said about the critical mass required for global competitiveness of European works of culture.

Problem two refers to the impact of globalisation and the digital shift. The title of this section speaks about “the cultural sector”, though the text mainly affects creative enterprises, as does also the section on *Problem four*: difficulties in accessing finance. In these two contexts is it vitally important to clearly identify the composition of the targeted clientele. A mixed list of cultural and non-cultural branches creates more confusion than clarity.

Problem three is lack of data: indeed (is our comment), especially with regard to the new acquisitions to the enlarged sector...

A most welcome feature is the frequent reference to **audience building** as an important target. Even if it sometimes occurs somewhat out of context (such as in the first priority of the culture strand: “encouraging the adaptation to digital technologies, including testing new approaches to audience building and business models”).

7. The brave, outspoken variant

It would be a positive development if – besides the separation of cultural and creative components of the combined sector, as specified above – the two basic aims of the programme could also be identified and differentiated more clearly. The actually somewhat blurred aim of contributing to the aims of *Europe 2020* should take the lead. Bravely and honestly should the programme associate itself with the objectives contained in Paragraph 3 of Article 3 in the *Treaty on European Union*: “The Union shall establish an internal market. It shall work for the sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth ..., a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress...” The main aim of *Creative Europe* should admittedly be to identify and unleash the potentials in the cultural sector to this avail. The main obstacle indeed is the fragmented European cultural market, and the advantages of the single market need to be exploited more also in the creative sphere, reaching the critical mass for **global competitiveness**.

It should be plainly stated that within the confines of the programme, and in alliance with other actors, DG EAC extends its operation and resources to related creative industry domains, which otherwise lie outside its traditional jurisdiction. Without such a statement cultural administrators even on the highest level will remain well-intentioned trespassers. And with such a statement the aims of the programme could be further specified at greater precision and clarity.

The dark prospects of European economy, and thus of European civilisation and culture justify such a choice, and such outspoken language.

8. The case for culture as such

Moving into such a direction would make it clear what is there to worry about in terms of culture in the narrow conventional sense. This requires unambiguous definition of the place to preserve in the new programme to the goals that nominally still appear at the first place as the aim of *Creative Europe*: “to foster the safeguarding and promotion of European cultural and linguistic diversity” (which is how the above mentioned Paragraph 3 of Article 3 ends).

Braveness is in place in this respect, too. Besides reiterating diversity^[2], and maybe even at its expense, from Article 167 the “**flowering of culture**” should be better emphasised. Making culture an even more integral specific of **quality of life in the European sense**, to be extended to ever more citizens of the Union, constitutes valid European added value. Surely, caring about the flowering of cultures remains the primary competence of Member States, and it remains a delicate task to find out how the Union can best contribute to it. **Audience building** and **capacity building** should be important dimensions in the culture grants (regardless of global competitiveness), within the frames of transnational cultural co-operation.

Making a clearer differentiation between grants (and other financial devices) in favour of competitiveness on the one hand, and culture for European quality of life on the other should not lead to strict division, certainly not between the culture strand and the cross-sectoral *Facility* strand. Overlaps and cross effects should prevail. The programme should insist on quality behind economic success, as well as attention to down-to-earth management skills (the entrepreneurial dimension) in non-commercial projects.

9. The case for literary translations

Literary translation grants have been an odd item out from the beginning. This is the only part of the framework programme that is not co-operation. There is a single beneficiary (without co-organisers), and constitutes direct support to cultural creation. The great importance attached to **linguistic diversity** justifies this particular position.

On the other hand, it is far from being flawless. The piecemeal picking a few dozens from the tens of thousands of titles that are translated annually in Europe, implies a higher risk of mistaken decisions than anywhere else in the programme. The recent shift towards placing stronger accent on the source language, as well as the idea of targeting programmes

(publishers) rather than books point in the right direction, yet a more general, structural approach would be needed.

The issue of smaller spread linguistic cultural environments should be in the focus. Instead of their supply with mainstream products (like translating Proust into Macedonian), the main objective should be bringing their features and achievements to the common European pool. Instead of the very narrow tag of literary translation the broader concept of **promoting cultural achievements from smaller spread linguistic environments** would match the daring shift from “cultural” to “creative”. Thinking along these lines would go beyond one-by-one translation grants, without of course leaving this crucial cultural activity without backing. By the way, what happened to the important initiative of a European Translation Award?

Péter Inkei, December 2011

Relevant documents

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Establishing the Creative Europe Programme

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Creative Europe - A new framework programme for the cultural and creative sectors (2014-2020)

Commission Staff Working Paper. Impact Assessment. Accompanying the document Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council Establishing a Creative Europe Framework Programme

The Entrepreneurial Dimension of the Cultural and Creative Industries

[1] Some claim that the concept originates from Australia. This, however, has significance of academic pedantry only.

[2] Overemphasising diversity may support nation-state conceptions of a mosaic of divergent cultures.

See also on www.budobs.org: [What have cultural ministers to do with creative industries?](#) Also: [EU creative library](#), the most relevant documents of EU organisations, as well as [Comments to the Green Paper](#).