European agenda for culture in a globalising world

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PRUPOSE: to set a European agenda for culture that takes account of globalisation.

CONTENT: the purpose of this Communication is to explore Europe's cultural position in a global economy as well as to propose a revitalised EU cultural agenda. In so doing the Commission is seeking to establish a new partnership with the Member States, the European Parliament and civil society.

The EU's contribution to culture

The Commission paper recognises that "culture" is a challenging concept to define and accepts that this policy field is, and will continue to be, the responsibility of the Member States. Nevertheless, the EU does play a role in promoting culture. For example, it already contributes to the promotion of cultural activities in European through:

- The Community's culture programmes. Currently the Culture Programme 2007-2013Programme.
- Other related cultural programmes that, for example, promote foreign languages learning and culture and "European for citizens" programme.
- The MEDIA Programme 2007-2013.
- Cohesion Fund support for cultural activities.

On a regulatory level, EU legislation impacts upon cultural activities in a number of ways. For example :

- A strong link exists between the promotion of cultural creativity and EU copyright legislation. This legislation protects the rights of authors, producers and artists and promotes citizens' access to Europe's rich and diverse cultural heritage.
- The Television without Frontiers Directive, which was adopted in 1989, sets transmission conditions across borders of TV broadcasts and has allowed for the free circulation of European audiovisual content within the EU.
- On the state aid front the Commission has often adopted decisions that benefit museums, national heritage, theatre and music-productions etc.
- 2008 has been designated the "European Year of Intercultural Dialogue". Particular attention has been given to multilingualism.
- The European Commission is seeking approval to make 2009 a European Year of Creativity and Innovation with an emphasis on education and culture.

In addition to the above the EU promotes European culture with third countries.

European Agenda for Culture

In 2006 the Commission held an extensive consultation process in order to identify a consensus for an EU Cultural Agenda. Based on this consultation process three core objectives have been identified, namely :

- Promoting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue.
- Promoting culture as a catalyst for creativity within the Lisbon Agenda for growth and jobs.
- Promoting EU culture internationally.

Based on these three core objectives the Member States and their regions would be expected to streamline their cultural policies in line with the EU Cultural Agenda; those involved in cultural organisations would be asked to support the development of new EU policies and actions ; whilst for its part the Commission would be expected to mobilise its internal and external policies and funding programmes in order to promote best practices.

New Partnerships and working methods

In order to deliver the cultural agenda, the EU must rely on a solid partnership between all actors. This partnership is to be based on four essential dimensions :

1) **Dialogue with the cultural sector** : the Commission will continue its structured dialogue with the cultural sectors by : identifying the key actors ; setting up a cultural forum where ideas can be exchanged ; encouraging artists to express their views at a European level (cultural ambassadors) ; encouraging a social dialogue with the cultural sector ; and bringing a cultural dimension to European public debate.

2) **Setting up an open method of co-ordination** : the Commission plans to renew the joint work plan that was agreed by the Council for 2005-2007. The Commission believes that the time is ripe for the Member States to take their co-operation one step further, by using the open method of coordination (OMC). The OMC offers an appropriate framework for Member State co-operation in the field of culture. It is a non-binding, intergovernmental framework for policy exchange and concerted action. The European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions should be involved in the process.

3) **Supporting evidence based policy making** : within the context of the OMC and the Lisbon Agenda, the Commission will launch a series of studies and inter-service cooperation the purpose of which will be to support the proposed objectives. Stakeholders, who play a role in cultural impact assessments will be invited to join the dialogue.

4) **Mainstreaming culture in all relevant policies :** in order to realise the Treaty objectives of taking cultural activities into account and to respect and promote Europe’s diverse cultures, the Commission will strengthen its internal inter-service co-ordination as well as deepening its analysis of cultural diversity. It will seek to strike the right balance between different legitimate public policy objectives – including promoting cultural diversity when making decisions or proposals of regulatory and or financial nature. To that end the Commission has created a new inter-service cultural group.

Conclusions

The Commission is of the view that the time is ripe for a new European agenda for culture that takes account of globalisation. This Communication puts forward a number of concrete proposals that focus on shared objectives and new methods for stepping up cultural cooperation across the EU. The European Parliament, the Council, the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee are all invited to respond to the suggestions put forward in this paper. The Council is invited to decide on a set of shared objectives and the proposed open method of coordination.