

Alun Ffred Jones AC/AM
Y Gweinidog dros Dreftadaeth
Minister for Heritage



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref SF/AJ/0147/10

Androulla Vassiliou
Commissioner for education,
culture, multilingualism & youth
European Commission
200 rue de la Loi
(BERL 10/110)
B-1049 BRUSSELS
Belgium

14 December 2010

Dear Androulla Vassiliou,

I have noted with interest the European Commission's consultation on a future Culture Programme. I am pleased to submit this response to you, on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government.

The Welsh Assembly Government is pleased to signal its interest in the principle of a future Culture programme. As well as being a source of funding for culture projects, we agree the potential value of such a Programme in influencing the way culture might be addressed within future mainstream structural funds projects. The Programme – and culture activity more broadly – can be seen as linked with the “Europe 2020” agenda, “more jobs, better lives”, where in our view cultural activity has an important contribution to make.

We would like to suggest to the Commission that a portion of the Culture funds should be made available for smaller-scale projects which, while transitional/international in focus, might involve less money, fewer partners and, consequently, should be dealt with by the Commission in a proportionately less bureaucratic way.

In your consultation document, you raise specific questions. I would like to offer the following views on one or two of these:

Should the Culture programme pursue the protection and promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity?

In our view, this would be a key rationale for a Culture programme, given the strong links between cultural and linguistic identity, particularly in those parts of the EU, such as Wales, which are lucky to have widely-used regional languages. Objectives of any supported actions through the Culture Programme should clearly align with those being supported

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Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)

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through the Lifelong Learning Programme, and support the EU Flagship Initiative 'Youth on the Move'. Promotion of linguistic diversity can also promote learner mobility, and enhance employability across EU states. Duplication of activity funded between education and culture programmes should be avoided, with clear signposting for interested organisations. The Commission should also make explicit that the programme may be used to support projects involving regional or minority languages given the contribution this can make to linguistic diversity in a European context.

Would you like to comment on the objectives for a new Culture programme?

In the current economic climate, and being mindful of the agreed European approach to knowledge based growth for the next 10 years set out in Europe 2020, there needs to be clear and demonstrable benefit from the Culture Programme to progressing EU objectives. A Culture programme should offer opportunities which are not provided within, for example, the mainstream structural funds programmes. Cultural activity both within and out with the EU can have an important role in underpinning economic and educational benefits for European citizens. A closer understanding of the diverse cultural and linguistic mix within the UK aids intra-European trade – and also encourages learner mobility. The promotion of elements to EU cultural activity on a more global stage can also help promote the EU as a place to study, do business and visit. Thus, we would be supportive of a programme that contributes to the promotion of the EU in these areas; and which contributes to learner mobility.

To what extent should a new programme support the development of innovative digital cultural content, digitisation and new digital and exhibition platforms?

The Welsh government believes that digital technologies will play an increasingly important role over the next decade. European programmes could play a valuable role in promoting innovation, supporting joint working across borders and expanding the opportunities available for cultural organisations to develop their understanding of what can be achieved via new platforms. A digitally focused programme could also make a contribution to maintaining the commercial competitiveness of European creative industries. It is notable in this regard that recent reports have shown a decline in the EU's position in the major global electronic games industry. It is not clear whether the actions referenced here would support such direct commercialisation of artistic skills – but we would welcome the establishment of such linkages between culture and economic development.

To what extent should a new programme support cultural activities promoting understanding of common European heritage?

Whilst cultural programmes provide an opportunity to promote a greater understanding of Europe's common cultural heritage we do not believe that should be the main objective of any new programme. This is an area where we believe the EU can offer added value and where, we would suggest, actions might be focused on supporting broader educational delivery and European citizenship.

To what extent should a new programme support translation of fiction into different languages?

We believe that this activity should be supported. There would be particular benefits associated with ensuring that the programme includes fiction published in a regional or minority language.

To what extent should a new programme support festivals with a strong European dimension?

The Welsh Government believes that festivals can play a strong cultural and economic role. We would encourage the Commission to explore the potential for this activity to be supported.

I look forward to seeing the proposals that emerge from this consultation in due course.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alun Ffred Jones', written in a cursive style.

Alun Ffred Jones AC/AM

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