



Assembly of European Regions  
6, rue Oberlin  
67000 Strasbourg  
FRANCE  
Identification Number: 87082911676-22

## **Public Consultation on the future Culture programme**

### **Contribution by the Assembly of European Regions (AER)**

\* \* \*

The Assembly of European Regions (established in 1985) is the largest independent network of regions in the wider Europe. Bringing together over **270 regions** from 33 countries and **16 interregional organisations**, AER's mission is to: promote the principle of **subsidiarity** and regional democracy; increase the regions' political influence within the European institutions; support the regions in the process of European enlargement and globalisation; facilitate interregional cooperation across wider Europe and beyond. AER's President is **Michèle SABBAN**, Vice-President of Ile-de-France (F).

\* \* \*

The Assembly of European Regions (AER) welcomes the European Commission's initiative to review the Culture Programme (2007-2013) and to provide stakeholders and civil society with an opportunity for feedback.

AER acknowledges the progress that have been made in recent years in the various fields covered by the programme and welcomes the fact that, with the establishment of the European Agenda for Culture as well as the introduction of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) and the structured dialogue, an effort has been made to reach out to Member States, Regional and local authorities, civil society and all stakeholders.

#### **The open method of coordination**

AER would first and foremost like to underline its belief in the principle of subsidiarity and the need for it to be strengthened where it exists and introduced where it is non-existent. Decentralisation in the field of culture should be promoted to allow Regional and local authorities to lead their own cultural policies given their local expertise. Although we welcome the use of the OMC for suggesting EU wide guidelines and indicators in the field of culture, we would strongly oppose any attempt by the European Commission to use the OMC as a way of getting wider competences in the field of culture. Cultural is too dependent of its national, regional and local context to be dealt with centrally by the European Commission.

With regard to culture, the role of the European Union should rather concentrate on

accompanying actions by Members States, Regional and local authorities, facilitating exchanges of good practices and highlighting potential synergies with other EU priorities.

### **Challenges ahead**

Against the backdrop of the current economic crisis, the review of the Culture programme will need to address the various challenges facing the cultural sector and show its commitment to helping cultural actors play their role in the promotion of innovation and economic growth. Budget cuts in the field of culture would undermine the crucial role played by culture in social cohesion and economic development.

### **Cultural education**

The future Culture programme should ensure that education to culture is promoted from an early age. This will help young people not only to widen their cultural horizons but will also plant the seeds of creativity which leads to innovation. Social cohesion and economic growth will stem from such an early age education.

The education sector should involve the cultural and creative stakeholders in the design of their educational programmes and activities.

AER is concerned by the tendency it has witnessed to abandon artistic and cultural education at school for the benefit of hard sciences often seen as being more in adequacy to the job market needs. A lack of artistic and cultural education often leads to less interest and tolerance towards other cultures, less creativity and less consumption of cultural goods. The implications for the development of the cultural production and the related economic sectors are obvious. A white paper to which AER has participated and that will be launched in January 2010 (a copy of which will be sent to the European Commission) shows clearly the link between the presence of museums on a given territory and the regional/local economic development it brings. Culture and cultural equipments are still too often considered as a luxury that cannot be afforded in times of economic crisis. On the contrary cultural equipments play a role in economic development and education to culture more generally enables young people to develop their imagination and creative skills that will prove useful for any career path they choose.

### **Inclusiveness**

Europe claims to be a community of values sharing a common historical and cultural heritage. In order for European citizens to keep that sense of belonging and develop their attachment not only to their immediate surroundings (their village, city region or country) but to the geographical and political Europe they live and evolve in, European values must be promoted. Education to culture and promotion of cultural activities are one way of reaching that goal.

Studies show that citizens most involved in consuming cultural goods are the ones with the highest level of political participation. If we want the various peoples of Europe to engage more into EU political life starting by giving them the tools to open their minds to their own and other countries culture is crucial.

### **Orientations and economic/budget implications**



Undisputedly, the current economic crisis puts public finances under strain. The EU, its Member States and Local and Regional authorities should nevertheless fight the temptation to cut back on expenditure in the field of culture. On top of all the reasons mentioned above, these cuts would have negative effects on the cultural and creative sector as such and lead to its downturn. This would completely contradict the aims of the recent consultation on the potential of cultural and creative industries which had acknowledged the importance of these sectors. (see some points developed in the AER consultation's response below).

In order to take account of the reality of cultural production and of cultural and creative industries, the future Culture programme should provide them with more opportunities to apply for funding while keeping application procedures simple and bureaucracy to a minimum.

Information and dissemination should reflect this and should be improved, also with the aim to diversify and reach out to those groups that do not belong to the traditional target groups. A special effort should be made towards SMEs working in the cultural and creative sectors.

On the contrary, well established institutions, festivals etc. that have proven their attraction potential and, above all, their market value should only receive funding if they can show the innovative and risk taking dimensions of the new activities they are developing.

The mobility of artists and works at transnational and international levels should continue to be funded as well as translation of literature, the subtitling of films and the promotion of cultural heritage.

With regard to other EU policies, such as education, cohesion, enterprise etc., coordination should not only be sought in terms of contents and integrative policy approaches but also in terms of finances, for example for cultural education and the fostering of the creative industries.

As a conclusion, AER would like to invite the European Commission to initiate a reflection on a coherent strategy in view of forging a truly European spirit that provides a basis for a long-lasting and sustainable development of the cultural and creative sector.

**AER**  
**15 December 2010**

