

— : The EC Green Paper on Cultural — : and Creative Industries – A contribution

The much awaited Green Paper has been made public by the European Commission.

The document is the first ever EC paper on culture and creative industries. It officially acknowledges the economic and social importance of the sector. Undoubtedly this will serve in convincing other services in the European Commission that culture and creative sector is worth more policy attention in the context of the Agenda 2020. The main political objective seems to make structural funds, aimed at supporting local development, more open to cultural investment. This is to be welcomed as a great step forward in mainstreaming culture in one of the main EU policy domains. It rightly highlights the importance of culture as a tool for local and regional development.

The document is short on concrete ideas to unlock the potential of the creative sector and is timid on steps that the EC could already set in motion to support it. The document calls essentially on exchange of good practices and further mapping exercises in skills, mobility or networking opportunities (clustering) including the promotion of dialogue with third countries.

For instance the document could have:

- referred to existing EC programmes on culture, audiovisual (Media programme) and education to examine their relevance in supporting creative industries. After all the European Union will spend € 6 billion on culture (2007-2013). Such programmes require examination in light of the Green Paper objectives.
- Considered ways to encourage multidisciplinary across creative disciplines, art, science and technology and explored ways of supporting transversal implementation of creative objectives across a wider range of EU policy domains (innovation, research, social policy, education and culture).
- Highlighted the importance of multilingualism in stimulating creativity and singularity in Europe.
- Considered the use of technical assistance programmes with third countries to foster exchanges between CCIs.
- Addressed the issue of EC treaty implementation in relation to competition and internal market objectives when confronted with creativity and diversity requirements.

- Looked into the potential of other EU programmes on research and competitiveness (essentially focused on ICT) to stimulate creative industries.
- Called on the Member States or national cultural institutions to collaborate in promoting and branding Europe internationally as the place to create.

The Green Paper is too often turning to measures or policies for which the EC has little power or means (education and social policies or the EIB/EIF lending capacity) whilst the powerful trade, competition and internal market competences are not considered as tools to promote creativity. There is little on intellectual property rights, the main asset of CCIs, for instance.

Finally cultural and creative industries do not exist without creativity and talents; the Green Paper says little on measures to stimulate creativity, imagination and lateral thinking in Europe. It appears fundamental to consider creative individuals and companies from the cultural and creative sectors as partners in the quest for innovation in Europe. EU policies on innovation need to recognise the cross-sectoral and multi-disciplinary aspect of "creativity" which mixes elements of "artistic creativity", "economic" as well as "technological innovation". To "break the policy silos" and change mindsets to drive innovation, EU institutions should also ensure that the different EU policies aimed at stimulating innovation in the framework of the Agenda 2020 can be effectively used to stimulate culture-based creativity and engage the creative and cultural sectors.

This could be done in the context of existing EU programmes which should aim at developing the next generation of creative polymaths¹ – imaginative and entrepreneurial talents that straddle both technology as well as the creative professions. It is time to take the creative risk of valuing imagination, the poetic, the symbolic, and the aesthetic as factors of innovation.

Considering the amount of policy initiatives on cultural and creative industries throughout European regions and states over the last 10 years a little more action is due.

1. A polymath is a person with varied and deep knowledge in particular in art and sciences (Copernic, Averroès, Da Vinci, Descartes).