



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**  
Education and Culture  
Culture, Multilingualism and Communication

## **Call for expressions of interest – Culture sector Platforms**

**This call is published in order to give organisations from the culture civil society the opportunity to express their interest in participating in the structured dialogue with the European Commission.**

### **CONTEXT**

Last November, the Culture Ministers of the EU Member States endorsed<sup>1</sup> the European Agenda for Culture on the basis of the Communication<sup>2</sup> presented by the Commission in May 2007.

This first-ever Agenda for Culture in Europe provides for the Member States, European Institutions and cultural stakeholders to work together in order to respond to some of the major challenges faced by the cultural sector.

Three major objectives have been identified for a common work:

1. promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue;
2. promotion of culture as a catalyst for creativity in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy; and
3. promotion of culture as a vital element in EU external relations.

### **The Open Method of Coordination with Member States**

In order to deliver on these objectives, this new policy strategy introduces a more structured system of cooperation among the Member States: the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), which has already been successfully used in the areas of education & training, youth, employment and social protection. In this frame, the Member States committed – on a voluntary basis – to exchanging good practices and learning from the experience of their peers in other Member States on issues directly linked to the European Agenda for Culture.

---

<sup>1</sup> Resolution of the Council of 16 November 2007 on a European Agenda for Culture, 2007/C 287/01.

<sup>2</sup> Communication of the Commission of 10 May 2007 on a European Agenda for Culture, COM (2007) 242 final.

### **Dialogue with the cultural sector**

The success of the Agenda also depends on the active involvement of the cultural sector. In its Communication, the Commission announced that it was "committed to pursuing a structured dialogue with the sector, which would provide a framework for the regular exchange of views and best practices, input into the policy-making process, follow-up and evaluation". It also called for the cultural sector to "continue organising itself as far as possible in order to permit the identification of representative interlocutors".

Following the First Cultural Forum for Europe successfully organised by the Portuguese Presidency in Lisbon on 27-28 September 2007, that gathered many cultural NGOs from all over Europe and gave its support to the Agenda, it is now the intention of the Commission to put in place an on-going process aiming to give a voice to the cultural sector at European level.

This structured dialogue should:

- Complement existing consultation processes (such as online consultations, public hearings etc.) or specific sectoral dialogues carried out on specific EC policy or regulatory initiatives;
- Encourage the various components of the cultural sector to work in a more trans-sectoral way and to better structure and organise itself at EU level;
- Help the cultural sector to formulate recommendations with a view to contributing to the development of a political Agenda for Culture in Europe;
- Provide opportunities for these recommendations to be regularly presented to the European Commission and the Members States in the frame of the Cultural Forum.

## THE CULTURAL PLATFORMS

In this context, the Commission proposes that civil society should concentrate its work on three topics of the European Agenda for culture: **intercultural dialogue**, **access to culture** and **cultural and creative industries**.

On the question of **intercultural dialogue**, there is already a well-functioning civil society platform. This platform, set up jointly by the European Forum for the Arts and Heritage and the European Cultural Foundation, meets regularly and produces concrete, policy oriented results, such as the Rainbow Paper process. As the aim is not to duplicate existing fora, but to encourage the convergence of all efforts in the same direction, it is suggested that this platform keeps on working as part of the structured dialogue. More information on this platform and the modalities of participation in its work can be found at <http://www.efah.org/index.php?id=153&pagelang=en&pagemode=site> and <http://www.eurocult.org/we-advocate/advocacy-actions/>

The Commission proposes therefore that civil society sets up two new complementary platforms on the other two topics:

- **Access to culture**<sup>3</sup>

Many ways can be explored to foster a wider access to and participation in cultural activities: promotion of cultural heritage with a view to improving public access to different forms of cultural and linguistic expressions, increased synergies between culture and education (in particular art education), wider digitization of cultural content and the use of Internet, reinforcement of cultural tourism, promotion of the access of youngsters or the search for new audiences, implementation of various projects aiming to boost the demand such as free access, vouchers, etc. These are just examples; the list is by no way exhaustive.

---

<sup>3</sup> Favouring a wider access to and participation in cultural activities for all groups of the population independently of the geographical, physical, social, educational or economic obstacles they may encounter is a key objective of policies at national level. At Community level, it also means giving all citizens access to the cultures of other countries as part as an endeavour to promote cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue.

- **Potential of cultural and creative industries<sup>4</sup>:**

It is essential to better understand how culture and creativity can lead to the development of creative solutions in existing structures and environments such as schools/the workplace, or to the emergence of new services and products, in particular for SMEs, as well as better understand the type of environment which is conducive to the development of creative and cultural industries. In this regard, the European Year of Innovation and Creativity Year in 2009 will provide, inter alia, an opportunity to explore how to reinforce the cultural and creative industries in Europe, in particular SMEs, as a force for both economic growth and cultural diversity. Moreover, it is worth noting that the European Commission will present a Green Paper on cultural and creative industries in 2009.

### **Who can participate in the platforms?**

Platforms should be open to cultural organisations (e.g. networks, foundations, professional organisations, etc.) with a trans-national or European-wide dimension and willing to commit themselves to trans-sectoral exchanges of views. In order to avoid duplication and to have workable platforms of highly committed organisations, whenever an organisation is part of a bigger structure representing its interests at the European level, it is suggested that in principle the European structures alone should take part, channelling contributions up and down the line.

The platforms are intended for organisations of civil society only. Public authorities, whether national, regional or local, are not invited to participate. They will be offered other channels for contributing to the European Agenda.

### **Who will decide on the work programme of the platforms?**

Each platform will be responsible for defining its work programme during a constitutive meeting, planned to take place in Brussels in early June. The Commission will act as a facilitator and inform the

---

<sup>4</sup> In its conclusions of March and December 2007, the European Council recognised that creative entrepreneurs and a vibrant cultural industry are a unique source of innovation for the future of our continent. Indeed, the contribution of culture to the Lisbon Strategy is gaining recognition: the study on the economy of culture published by the European Commission in 2006 underlined the links between culture, creativity and innovation as well as the contribution of the cultural and creative sectors to growth and jobs.

In a nutshell, it is estimated that almost 6 million people worked in 2004 for the cultural sector (including cultural tourism), equivalent to 3.1% of total employed population in the European Union. The cultural sector contributed around 2.6 % to the EU GDP in 2003, with growth significantly higher than that of the economy in general between 1999 and 2003.

On top of that, against a backdrop of increased competition in a globalising world, the stimulation and optimal use of “creativity” appears to be more than ever before the way to foster innovation and, consequently, to boost the competitiveness, growth and income of the EU countries and regions.

platforms on the ongoing work carried out at Community and Member States' levels as part of the European Agenda for Culture.

The two themes suggested above for the work of the new civil society platforms are precisely intended to carry through the objectives of the European Agenda for Culture, including topics on which Member States will work in the frame of the Open Method of Coordination.

The suggested themes would all take on our common endeavour for cultural diversity, enshrined in the UNESCO Convention, through various angles: the availability of a diverse and rich cultural offer; the openness to and interest in the culture of the other; and how to have easy access to culture. Finally, they will also integrate the external dimension in their mandate.

### **Governance of the platforms**

A first "constitutive" meeting of the newly set up platforms will take place in early June in Brussels. This meeting will be the opportunity for the member organisations to decide on the modus operandi (frequency of the meetings, organisation of the work between the meetings) and on the governance (designation of a Chair and of a Secretariat).

### **Logistical support given by the Commission to the platforms**

The Commission will offer a logistical support for one meeting per year: a meeting room within its own premises, interpretation facilities from and to several languages and a technical support for a collaborative work between the meetings through CIRCA<sup>5</sup>.

### **Durability of the platforms**

In the medium term, and providing that they fulfil the eligibility criteria<sup>6</sup> of the Culture Programme (2007-2013)<sup>7</sup>, these platforms could ask for funding under this programme.

### **Timetable**

**15 April 2008:** Deadline for expression of interest for organisations wishing to participate in the first constitutive meeting

---

<sup>5</sup> CIRCA is the extranet tool developed by the European Institutions to facilitate the collaboration between public administrations or other stakeholders working with European Institutions. It will enable the platforms to have a private space at their disposal on the Internet where they can share information, documents and participate in discussion fora.

<sup>6</sup> Under the present call for proposals, the eligibility conditions are as follows: being in existence for at least two years, being a non-profit-making body, having a legal status, having a registered legal seat in one of the countries taking part in the Culture Programme, having the necessary financial and operational capacity, having associates from at least 15 participating countries etc.

<sup>7</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/culture2007/cult\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/culture2007/cult_en.html).

**June 2008:** First constitutive meeting of the platforms in Brussels

**1<sup>st</sup> semester 2009:** Second plenary meeting in Brussels in order to take stock of the progress.

**End of September / early October 2009:** Organisation of a mid-term Forum in Brussels. This Forum will give the platforms the opportunity to present their achievements and recommendations to other cultural operators of civil society, who will then have the possibility to enrich and endorse them. It will also be the opportunity for the culture civil society to present its recommendations to the Member States and the European Commission and to learn from them about their work in the implementation of the Agenda.

**End 2010:** A new Cultural Forum for Europe will take place in order to take stock of the results achieved by Member States, the European Commission and the cultural civil society and contribute to shaping new policy orientations.

## **CONTACT**

Aline Denis, [aline.denis@ec.europa.eu](mailto:aline.denis@ec.europa.eu)

Sylvain Pasqua, [sylvain.pasqua@ec.europa.eu](mailto:sylvain.pasqua@ec.europa.eu)