

To: José Manuel Barroso,
President of the European Commission

Europe, 8th of April 2013

Dear President Barroso,

At a time of intense financial austerity, the European Commission took, under your direction, a small but significant step by proposing an increase to the cultural budget through the Creative Europe programme. The increase proposed was very small in financial terms but had a high value in signaling a strengthened role for arts and culture in the building of Europe's future.

Indeed, investing in culture, education and research not only generates prosperity; it is essential to foster both freedom of expression and creative thinking which, in turn, lead to sustainable prosperity. Moreover, cultural exchange brings hope and fosters civic engagement thus contributing to repair torn social fabric. Ultimately, culture means practicing democracy and giving content to citizenship.

Therefore, the step taken by the European Commission in proposing an increased EU budget for culture cannot be totally undone. It is a sum too limited to be an important part of any negotiated budget cuts. And it is an idea too great to be dealt away with too swiftly.

We know that democracy is a slow and delicate process. We know that economic and political compromise is required. We know that there are growing pressures to cut funds for culture but we believe they must be rejected.

We believe that the moment for clear positions has come: we urge you to stand strong with the Creative Europe proposal and safeguard the proposed budget allocation despite any short-sighted criticism. It is a necessary sign of commitment to the future of European citizens as well as a necessary condition to continue building bridges and trust between the cultural sector and the European institutions.

Furthermore, culture designs new narratives for Europe, narratives that you have personally supported and nurtured. Unjustified cuts to the Creative Europe programme will not only undermine this endeavor but will also be incomprehensible to the cultural sector.

We supported the Commission's proposal for increased funding for culture and education and we publicly acknowledged its significance. We will definitely further support decisions ensuring that European culture, and the narrative for Europe that it underpins, continues to thrive and we ask that no choice be made that might undermine this.

Signed

Mercedes Giovinazzo, Director of Interarts and Chair of CAE's Executive Committee
Luca Bergamo, Secretary General, Culture Action Europe
Emina Visnic, Director, POGON
Chris Torch, Founder and Senior Associate, Intercult
Simone Dudt, Secretary General, European Music Council
Henrik Zipsane, Director, Jamtli
Alex Meszmer, member of the National Committee of Visarte
Katherine Heid, Network Manager, Opera Europa
Isabelle Battioni, General Delegate, ACCR – Réseau européen des centres culturels de rencontres
Ferdinand Richard, President, Roberto Cimetta Fund
Paul Collard, Chief Executive, Creativity, Culture and Education
Philippe Fanjas, Director, French Orchestras Association

Surname, Name, role and organisation

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