



EBLIDA comments on *Creative Europe*

EU support programme to Culture 2014-2020

EBLIDA, the European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations, welcomes the opportunity to comment on the EU Commission's early proposal of an EU support programme "Creative Europe" for 2014 to 2020, which is intended to replace the current cultural support programme Culture 2007 (2007 to 2013). EBLIDA hopes that the discussion stimulated by its publication will generate further ideas and evidence that will help improve the proposal. Our main concern is that the proposal is too narrowly focused on culture and its contribution to economic growth, ignoring broader social, political and educational aspects and culture as a public good in its own right. The proposal also lacks essential detail in many areas making informed comment difficult.

In our submission EBLIDA recommends that an amended proposal should:

- Consider the positive effect of Culture on the development of individuals;
- Focus foremost on developing and promoting a European cultural area that addresses all future needs in Europe and is not confined to economic ones;
- Promote European identity and support intercultural dialogue by celebrating diversity within the European community and strengthening the bonds of European citizenship;
- Support a European library policy, to be included as an integral element within an independent European cultural policy;
- Support the continuing development of the existing pan-European network of libraries which help build European identity, enable intercultural dialogue and underpin democratic engagement;
- Support the digitisation of Europe's cultural heritage held within libraries and other repositories and promote Europeana and other collaborative projects;
- Enable the public to access Europe's cultural heritage through the work of libraries and other cultural institutions, providing them with the opportunity of new cultural experiences;
- Acknowledge libraries in their role as network hubs for cultural and creative production, providing essential support and a source of inspiration for artists and support this contribution through a simple and adequate funding system for creative professionals.

We give a short explanation on these points below and are willing to elucidate further.

Culture as the focus of economic growth

In proposing “Creative Europe“, the EU Commission is in fact recommending the creation of an additional economic programme rather than developing and promoting the idea of a European cultural area, which has been the aim of the current EU programme, Culture 2007.

Culture cannot just be defined by its contribution to economic growth and job creation. EBLIDA believes that this programme proposal, which focuses almost exclusively on the cultural and creative industries, is inadequate as it fails to embrace culture in its broader dimensions and address how cultural services and activity can meet the future needs of the citizens of Europe. The concept of a creativity-driven Europe only partially addresses the objectives of the EU strategy set out in ‘Europe 2020’.

Culture promoting strong European citizenship

The core objective of a cultural programme should be to promote a European identity and support intercultural dialogue – these also feature strongly amongst the priorities and responsibilities of libraries. Their role in cultural education, helping to foster identity and providing a robust socio-cultural underpinning for communities of all types are not addressed at all in the proposal. Yet such programmes are vital especially for those aspiring EU citizens of extra-European origin who are bound to become more numerous within the Union, and who will deserve special provision that is both sensitive to their own backgrounds and culture but also welcoming and informative about European citizenship.

The current political and economic difficulties within the European Union demonstrate both the need to strengthen the bonds of European citizenship and to increase respect and understanding for the great diversity of communities and peoples embraced within the Union. A variety of cultural and educational agencies (including libraries), working within their local communities, assume responsibility for this. An extensive network of citizen-centred libraries, often serving economically and socially deprived communities, sit alongside special, university and major libraries providing universal access – together they are the engine rooms of creativity and promoters of democracy.

The funding of temporary projects will stimulate innovation and enable new service development. However organisational and community resilience grows from a basis of continuing development and the support facilitated by existing networks such as libraries. The new programme should also support the infrastructure that enables the new, the innovative and the creative.

Cultural property – Cultural heritage

Items of cultural heritage are characterized by a dual nature. On the one hand they are commodities but on the other they have an intrinsic value setting them apart from mere commodities.

This dual nature needs to be acknowledged appropriately when presenting and preserving items such as handwritten documents, manuscripts, and book and media collections - a fair intellectual property framework is required to enable their effective use and marketing. One of the tasks of a creative Europe must be to promote the digitisation of cultural heritage items at the institutions where they are housed and also to make them easily accessible for everyone within key projects

such as 'Europeana' and other smaller digitisation projects. Libraries play an important role in such digitisation projects and in providing and extending free access to our European heritage so that people from all parts of society are able to enjoy new cultural experiences.

Funding creative professionals

EBLIDA appreciates the desire to provide some form of financial facility to encourage the work of creative professionals. However the proposal lacks sufficient detail on which to base comment and does not specify, for example, whether the funding is based on loans or guarantees or anything similar, and how it will be administered. Libraries support cultural and creative professionals by providing services at low or even no cost. Many cultural and creative professionals use library collections to research ideas, suggestions and examples. Libraries can be seen as crucibles of creativity or network hubs, bringing together ideas and creators, often within an environment that helps stimulate the creative process. Library premises also often provide exhibition spaces or forums for creative exchange, so bringing artists within the working life of the library. Often libraries will focus on the local or young artists, or those from minority cultural groups providing them with a platform for their artistic expression.

Credit and credibility

Libraries are a way for artists to raise their profile and, having established credibility in one, to have the opportunity of engaging and performing across a whole network of libraries. The interrelationships that libraries can facilitate between sources of ideas and creators, performance and exhibition space and creators, library audiences and creators, can be a key development focus for such creators. And it is likely to be a library that will capture and preserve the creative output of an artist for future posterity.

Independent European cultural policy

EBLIDA supports the idea of an independent European cultural policy that complements the cultural policies of member states. This would include a joint European library policy which EBLIDA advocated in its 2009 'Vienna Declaration' <http://www.eblida.org/index.php?page=vienna-declaration-2>. Creativity and the dissemination of information do not and must not stop at national borders but require a coordinated European strategy and support on the basis of a EU framework programme. A European cultural policy, which is not simply the sum of national cultural policies, but is complementary and provides added value, should be set out explicitly in the new programme 'Creative Europe'.

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EBLIDA is the European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations. We are an independent umbrella association of national library, information, documentation and archive associations and institutions in Europe and through our members we represent 90,000 individual libraries in all EU member states and other European countries.