



Dr Danuta Hübner
Commissioner for Regional Policy
European Commission
Rue de la Loi
1049 Brussels

Bruxelles, 28th October 2005

Dear Commissioner Hübner,

The Commission's internet consultation on the ***Community Strategic Guidelines on Cohesion Policy in Support of Growth and Jobs, 2007-2013***, has closed. EFAH (the European Forum for the Arts and Heritage) and several of its members have participated in this consultation and argued for a greater role for culture in the Strategic Guidelines and hence in the Structural Funds.

We would like to reiterate our main points to you personally since the political steer for the Strategic Guidelines is in your hands:

We regret that the contribution culture can make to the economic and social cohesion of Europe is only recognised under one of the three sectoral priorities defined in the guidelines (namely under "Making regions attractive places to live and work"), and that it is only cultural heritage, and not also contemporary culture, which is referred to in this context.

In the context of the proposed integrated approach to territorial cohesion and to international cooperation, the Guidelines mention concrete measures eligible for support, which do recognise the role of culture in achieving the goals of cohesion policy, but too tentatively. (Improving access to cultural heritage is cited as one way of ensuring sustainable economic development. Exploiting 'cultural capital', is recommended as a means to enterprise and thus job creation. Improving city regions' cultural offer appears as a factor in attracting qualified labour; moreover the cultural integration of disadvantaged population groups is mentioned.)

We therefore urge you to integrate a comprehensive notion of 'culture' in the Strategic Guidelines:

Culture, both in the sense of cultural heritage and contemporary culture, is a factor of innovation, economic growth, employment and interregional cooperation: There is ample research which demonstrates that the cultural industries, but also the visual and performing arts as well as the arts and craft sector increasingly contribute to economic development, the diversification of the labour market and new employment opportunities.

The cultural sector also contributes considerably to 'the knowledge society': It is in the forefront of employing new technologies and developing them (e.g. databases or the digitalisation of archives).

It delivers content for new technologies (e.g. computer games). Moreover, the cultural sector is very much a 'network sector' with easy access points for SME, research institutes and universities.

Consequently, **the Strategic Guidelines should recognise that the contemporary arts, infrastructure development for contemporary arts practice and cultural services are of considerable importance to achieving the goals of cohesion policy, in addition to the protection and promotion of cultural heritage. The cultural sector as a whole should therefore be mentioned as a field of action under priority 2 'Promotion of knowledge and innovation for growth' and under priority 2 'More and better jobs'.**

This would send an important signal to the Member States and the regions for the drawing up of National Reference Documents and Operational Programmes: Where the relevant authorities are not yet aware that the potential of the cultural sector is there to be exploited, a change in thinking can be stimulated. And where the cultural sector is ready to make its contribution to economic and social cohesion, doors will be opened.

Finally, **where the proposed integrated strategy for territorial cooperation is concerned, the Guidelines should explicitly recognise the cultural dimension of such cooperation beside its economic and social dimensions.** There is plenty of evidence from the practice under the current Structural Funds programmes that the cultural sector contributes to the integration of regions and to the creation of networks for the exchange of information and experience, which serve policies for economic and social development.

We rely, dear Commissioner, on your action to these ends. The opinions presented here are widely held across the EU, and in particular by our membership organisations (list attached).

Please find 5 factsheets attached which illustrate the interactions between the new structural funds programmes and culture. These have been put together under an Interreg IIIc project entitled *Stratcult* by regional and local governments and development centres in Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Finland. They will provide you with many examples for the arguments above.

We very much look forward to hearing from you.
Yours sincerely,

Ilona Kish
Secretary General