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Creativity, Innovation and the role of the Cultural Sector

**A joint statement
on behalf of the European sectoral social partners 'live performance'
in the framework of the
European Year on Creativity and Innovation 2009**

STATEMENT

**Presented at the flash info session
'Social Dialogue as a tool for sustaining creativity, with a focus on the
performing arts sector'
at the European Culture Forum on 30 September 2009**

Introduction:

In recent years, the European social partners representing the live performance sector have been aware of a shift in cultural policy thinking at all levels, with much greater weight placed on the economic importance of cultural and creative activities. There is a heightened awareness of the contribution made by the cultural sector to growth, employment and GDP, as well as to urban development and social cohesion. Naturally, the recognition of the importance of the cultural sector, also in economic and social terms, is a welcome one and has served, for example, to give cultural aspects and projects a more central place in development policy; nonetheless, it is not totally impartial or unproblematic. This 'cultural and creative industries paradigm', as it is often referred to, considers the cultural sector primarily from the point of view of the industries that make it up and their place in the economy. Arguably, it loses sight somewhat of the primary artistic and communicative function of culture, by placing cultural production within an economic framework, where its chief value is its contribution to national wealth and competitiveness. Equally, the value of culture is not seen in artistic terms, but rather in terms of assets to be exploited in the knowledge economy. Thus, while a stronger recognition of the value of the cultural sector and its economic and social contribution is very welcome, the policy approaches that result from

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it can be very problematic for those actually working in the cultural sector, as well as for society as a whole, which can lose exposure to artistic acts that do not fit the paradigm.

Most proponents of cultural and creative industries thinking base the conceptualization of this approach around the so-called concentric circles model. This has been briefly described by Professor David Throsby as: "the cultural industries as a series of "concentric circles" built around the core components of primary artistic and cultural production. This model asserts that a healthy and flourishing environment for creative artists and arts organisations is necessary to support the more commercial operations of the cultural sector"¹. Social Partners believe that careful consideration of this primary principle is vital, if high-quality, diverse cultural production is to be maintained and a commodification of culture and weakening of national cultural traditions is to be avoided.

Context for the Present Position Paper:

The European social partners have welcomed the development of a strong cultural agenda at European level. In particular, it has welcomed the strengthened involvement of civil society actors developed in the 2007 European Agenda for Culture in a Globalising World and indeed it has taken up the opportunity to be involved in the civil society culture platforms (on the potential of cultural and creative industries and on access to culture) that have emerged through the culture programme in the wake of that communication. The social partners also believe that the Open Method of Coordination on Culture can prove a valuable tool for making real progress on certain outstanding issues affecting those in the cultural field and that European exchange, dialogue with stakeholders and target-setting can offer a real added value. The OMC is certainly one of the avenues through which the EU can realise its commitment to upholding the 2005 UNESCO convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. However, to be effective, the OMC must be based on strong dialogue and consultation at national level and it is clear that the social partners should have a key part in this process and be actively engaged in it.

The European Agenda for culture clearly embraces some aspects of cultural and creative industries thinking, particularly in objective 3.2 on "Culture as a catalyst for creativity in the framework of the Lisbon strategy on growth and jobs". This objective aims to explore how culture can support and foster creativity and innovation, which are drivers of growth and competitiveness. This objective is also clearly taken up in several of the goals of the 2009 European Year on Creativity and Innovation, which seek to address cultural diversity as a source of creativity and innovation; and the cultural and creative industries – where the aesthetic and the economic coincide.

¹ Throsby, David: " Culture in Sustainable Development: Insights for the future Implementation of Article 13", Macquarie University Sydney, 2008

Therefore, in light of the current European Year on Creativity and Innovation, social partners took up the item in their work programme for the year, as we considered that it was an opportune moment to reflect more deeply within our own sector and structures on what we consider to be the value and the pitfalls of the cultural and creative industries policy approach.

Problems raised by Cultural and Creative Industries thinking:

As was mentioned above, the “traditional” arts (such as literature, visual and performing arts) are at the heart of the concentric circles model, with the idea being that the creativity somehow spills out to the more commercial cultural sectors and beyond that to mainstream economic sectors. Equally, the European Agenda on Culture sets itself a primary aim of fostering cultural diversity and the flowering of the cultures of the Member States. However, social partners consider that such thinking places artists and their work at the centre of creativity and wealth creation within a knowledge economy, but takes little account of the particularities of the sector and the way the sector functions.

Thus there is a great contradiction in cultural and creative industries thinking, that places the performing arts at the heart of its model, but shies away from policies to allow them to develop and expand and make them a more attractive sector in which to work.

Faced with the financial crisis that is starting to impact the cultural sector, it is clear that the ambitious European objectives on innovation and creative spillover will require that public subsidies dedicated to culture and education be at least maintained at their current level. It is clear that the aim of having a flourishing cultural sector to drive the creation of content, that is the backbone of the knowledge economy, cannot be reached in a context of budgetary restrictions.

Creative and cultural industries thinking as it is being developed at European level needs to take account of the real needs and problems those working in the cultural sector are confronted with and to make these a central component in its approach. Certainly the EU can have a key impact in areas related to mobility and the coordination of social security systems and taxation systems. The place of cultural goods and services in the internal market and how the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity must impact on their movement is an important question to be addressed at EU level. Equally, the EU must work to improve the involvement of the performing arts sector in the context of the protection of Intellectual Property rights in the online context.

Conclusions:

Although cultural and creative industries can lead to new and interesting policy approaches to the cultural sector, it will inevitably lead to less creativity and less cultural diversity if it eschews the more difficult political investment in the cultural sector that lies at its core. This means:

- assuring the sustainability of the sector and acknowledging that the performing arts are a core sector within the cultural and creative industries;
- addressing the ongoing employment issues and social protection issues in the sector also in the context of mobility, which continue to pose serious problems for cultural workers and organisations;
- addressing the role of IP in creative content policy debates, with due regard for the needs of cultural workers to gain due recognition and remuneration; as well as with close consideration of the challenge posed by illicit recording and posting online of live performance, which is a major and growing problem for live performance organisations;
- understanding that creativity is inherently risky, but that is legitimate to invest in the arts because of the communicative role that the arts play in the 21st century civilisation and therefore give creation, alongside innovation its place in Europe's policy;
- recognising the benefits of investing in the sector, which studies have shown to have a strong multiplier effect in terms of employment and economic activity, as the sector is a labour-intensive one, which generates significant associated economic activity;
- stimulating access to culture, by offering culture to children from a young age in all school levels, by supporting children in their families to enjoy culture and by endorsing the entitlement to culture for all citizens;
- supporting the dissemination of live performance across Europe and in the world
- fostering social dialogue in the sector as a tool for sustaining the sector and to ensure the role of social partners in consulting government on the industry and in undertaking activities which respond to the challenges and issues at stake in the sector;
- guaranteeing public support and include the sector in its economic recovery plans designed to stimulate investment and create jobs in these times of the financial crisis.