

E U R O P E A N E C O N O M I C A R E A
S T A N D I N G C O M M I T T E E O F T H E E F T A S T A T E S

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SUBCOMMITTEE IV ON FLANKING AND HORIZONTAL POLICIES

**EEA EFTA COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSAL FOR
THE CULTURE 2007 PROGRAMME (COM(2004) 469 final)**

I G E N E R A L R E M A R K S

1. The EEA EFTA States welcome the proposal for the Culture 2007 programme and the attempt made to build a more coherent framework for Community activities in the field of culture. As stated in the proposal's preamble, culture plays a pivotal role in promoting active citizenship and European integration, strengthening the fight against exclusion in all its forms. Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein fully subscribe to the general as well as to the more specific objectives of the programme as specified in Article 3 of the proposal.

2. The EEA EFTA States are in agreement with the philosophy that seems to lie behind the proposal, namely that implementing details are kept to a strict minimum in the decision itself, leaving much more room for flexibility and development in the process. This will, however, put an even higher responsibility than before both on the participating countries and on the Commission itself to co-ordinate the further elaboration of the activities that will be supported and implemented in the best way possible. The EEA EFTA States will closely follow and contribute to the debate on the amplification of the actual content of the future programme.

3. In order to emphasise the focus of the programme, it could be helpful to come up with a different name for it that would perhaps be more informative than just "Culture 2007". This could be achieved, for example, through a name contest on the Internet. A more informative name may also provide useful publicity for the new programme.

4. It is the view of the EEA EFTA States that all schemes, including those established by the Community, aiming at supporting the cultural sector should be guided by a set of principles crucial to maintaining and increasing the creativity, diversity and quality of the cultural sector. The principal guidelines can be referred to as

the arm's-length principle, quality first, broad participation, initiative by the cultural sector, accessibility and culture's own intrinsic value.¹

II SPECIFIC ISSUES

5. The EEA EFTA States welcome the attempts for the simplification of the programme's legal basis and of its administration. The concrete proposals made by the Commission in this regard are sound and should be in the interest of all parties concerned. However, in order for this to materialise, it is essential that amendments to the financial regulations of the Commission be made, adapting them to the needs and nature of Community programmes and actions. The principle of 'proportionality' has therefore the full support of the EEA EFTA States.

6. It is a cause for concern that much less support is envisaged for smaller projects within the new programme than was the case within the framework of "Culture 2000". According to the proposal, only 24% of the funding is foreseen for projects of a one year duration compared to about 47% within the present "Culture 2000" programme.

7. As desirable as it may be to launch big and widely visible European cultural projects, experience shows that innovative/experimental projects often come from small cultural organisations. The EEA EFTA States therefore strongly recommend that the role of smaller cultural organisations is strengthened and more than the amount envisaged in the proposal for the "Culture 2007" programme.

8. Furthermore and related to the previous point, the increase of the required number of partners from 3 to 4 in the case of one year projects and from 5 to 6 for the multi-annual projects is questionable, as the administration and co-ordination seems to be already difficult enough as it is with smaller numbers of partners involved.

9. In the view of the EEA EFTA States, literature is one of the most popular and effective cross border cultural mediums. Support to translation projects that fulfil the general aims of the programme should therefore be continued in the new programme. In particular, one should make sure that the works supported are actually widely spread

¹ **The arm's-length principle** means that a sharp distinction should be maintained between the management of support to the cultural sector and the assessment of the quality of individual projects. The latter should be left to experts and researchers with knowledge and competence in arts, literature and cultural heritage. The management of cultural programmes at various levels should concentrate on policy formulations, overall priorities and administrative considerations. **Quality first** suggests that the best and most sustainable way to select among cultural projects is to use quality as the primary criterion. Closely related is the issue of **broad participation** of the various cultural operators in cultural activities, which is a prerequisite to achieve diversity as well as high quality standards. **Initiative by the cultural sector** implies that the act of initiating, creating and developing individual cultural projects remains with the artists and professionals in the cultural sector, thereby securing innovation, creativity and diversity in the sector. As regards the principle of **accessibility**, giving as many persons as possible the opportunity for experiencing culture, regardless of regional or social belonging, should be another main objective of public action in the area of culture. Finally, a main task of cultural policy is to invest in culture because of its **own intrinsic value**, although investments in culture will often have positive impacts on other fields, such as employment, regional development, tourism, etc.

and read. According to the proposal, it seems that translation projects will only be supported if they include a minimum of four publishers in four countries. This is not in line with how the publishing market works and would also exclude many potential important projects.

10. The Commission has proposed that the Co-operation focal point projects - which will form the basis of the first programme strand with more than a third of the total budget - should have a duration of five years. It could be argued that such an extended duration, with few exceptions, is quite unrealistic. A more flexible approach should therefore be favoured, with time limits between 2–5 years, although priority may be given to projects of a longer duration.

11. The EEA EFTA States would like to highlight the importance of actions aimed at the preparation of partnerships for good co-operation in the projects. A very welcomed action in this respect would be a project based partner search forum similar to what is offered within the Socrates and the Leonardo da Vinci programmes. Culture is a very wide area and partner searches have proved to be difficult for many cultural operators, especially for the new Member States as well as for countries in remote areas.

12. The role of the Cultural Contact Points is stated in article 10 of the proposal. This is an improvement from the present programme and an acknowledgement of the importance of these bodies.

13. The EEA EFTA countries do not see a reason for keeping a special strand or action for projects related to the preservation and commemoration of main sites and archives associated with deportations. Projects dealing with this important subject should be able to apply for grants under the Co-operation focal points and Co-operation measures.

14. Concerning the budgetary breakdown, it is most important to safeguard possible flexibility as regards the reallocation of funds between different strands and actions, depending on the actual demand for qualified projects. In line with the general philosophy behind the proposal mentioned above, the programme decision should therefore not fix a minimum percentage that must be allocated to a certain type of activity.

15. To avoid any uncertainties, the preamble to the proposal or a separate article on definitions should explain that the term "Member State" in the decision text refers to all participating countries of the programme.

16. In Article 2 on funding, a reference should be made to the additional funds that may come from the participation of the EEA EFTA States and the countries associated to the programme, particularly as such references are made in the General budget of the European Union for budget titles where programme participation with non EU Member States is foreseen.
