

Consultation on Culture in the EU external relations

Contribution of Pearle* - Live Performance Europe

Ref. SL_2015/P6925

19 November 2015

1. Introduction

The aim of the Commission consultation is to gather stakeholder views on the new EU strategy for Culture in the external relations and help to find clearly defined objectives as well as the right approach in this strategy.

Pearle* - Live Performance Europe represents through its members the interests of about 7,000 organisations in the performing arts and music sector and is recognised by the European Commission as a European sectoral social partner for employers in the live performance.

We welcome this initiative as the strategy touches on an area of prime importance for the performing arts sector which is a highly mobile sector due to international cooperation, touring and the regular exchange of artists.

We are convinced that in the context of new global challenges, a modern and holistic approach to cultural diplomacy is needed; this would contribute to implement the overall goals of the EU external action.

2. General remarks on the Live performance sector in the context of the EU external relations

* **A sector committed to values:** The EU live performance sector defends genuine European values. It represents and refers to 3000 years of shared European heritage while bringing contemporary relevance to people's interaction with the performing arts today. In this sense, theatre plays, operas, concerts, music events and other live shows are reflecting our

“living together” – they root people in their society, transmit knowledge and values, and promote common history.

* **A sector characterised by SMEs:** The EU live performance sector exists of thousands of different types of enterprises, varying from larger entities (public institutions or commercial enterprises) to medium-sized and small theatres, orchestras, venues, festivals, dance or other performing arts companies and very small to micro-sized producing companies or project-led organisations. It concerns a mixture of organisations with different legal status, such as public or semi-public institutions, subsidised, non-profit and profit-making organisations.

* **A sector employing EU and non-EU nationals:** As the focus in the sector is on the artistic output, it is common to work with international teams, where nationality does not prevail. The intercultural exchange taking place in the sector is of high relevance in the context of cultural diplomacy.

* **An innovation sector open for training:** Third-country nationals in the live performance sector often travel to stimulate and develop their professional career. Concretely they may take part in workshops, auditions and master classes, residencies, specific specialised training programmes or others. When returning to their home country, the experience made can have a positive effect on the local professional environment.

* **A sector characterised by mutual exchange and cooperation:** Third-country nationals in the sector live performance travel to the EU for the purpose of prospection (seeking to see new performances and shows) and in order to contract producing companies or artists for tours in their respective country. Vice versa and with the same aim European live performance organisations and artists travel to third countries to set up exchanges and agree on cooperation with local companies, theatre, venues or soloists.

3. A new EU strategy for culture in the Union's external relations

In summer this year, the EEAS strategic planning published the policy paper *The European Union in a changing global environment* which prepares the new EU Global Strategy on foreign and security policy (to be published in 2016). Whilst Pearle* recognises the consistency of this paper to meet challenges and opportunities in a connected, contested and complex world, we advocate to include the cultural dimension in this overall approach.

3.1. The added value of an EU strategy for culture

In general, culture and the arts are the essence of every civilisational development and the basis for the flourishing of societies. In this sense, they are the basis on which further relationships with third countries can be established. They are furthermore an important response to the

social, economic and religious tensions existing inside societies, within the EU and outside European borders.

It is widely recognised that cultural diplomacy strengthens the relation with third countries and builds bridges between societies – as it is a tool to exchange ideas and to foster better mutual understanding. Cultural exchanges also create an open environment within which political and social issues as well as liberal values can more easily be addressed.

3.2. The objectives of an EU strategy for culture

Pearle* agrees with the objectives of a new strategy for culture proposed in the consultation paper of the European Commission. We would like to comment on objective 3 and 4 and furthermore add an objective 6: foster social cohesion through culture in third countries.

Objective 3: deepen mutual understanding and trust

We are strongly in favour of implementing this objective as a specific goal of the strategy.

Mutual comprehension, a better communication and the involvement of civil society are key conditions to strengthen the EU's relationship with third countries. Appropriate tools to foster understanding would be cooperation and education projects, training opportunities and cultural exchanges to build bridges between people and societies.

Objective 4: support partner countries' capacity for sustainable self-development

Pearle would like to stress the importance of social dialogue in this context. A strong representation of sectoral federations, with equally strong participation of employers and trade-union side, is key to creating a future-proofed, sustainable work environment within which creativity can thrive.

Proposal for a new objective 6: foster social cohesion through culture

Cultural activities have a key role to play in promoting social cohesion and helping tackle societal issues such as discrimination. They incentivise individuals and communities to define, develop and reflect upon their own identity and engage in a dialogue with others. They also reach out to wide spread audiences and participation in cultural activities allows isolated or marginalised people to acquire skills, self-confidence and self-esteem.

3.3. The approach that would best suit the objectives of the strategy for culture in the EU external actions

In Pearle's view, a more active and concrete policy on cultural cooperation would be required in order to implement the strategy and suit the objectives.

Existing instruments such as the cultural protocol in annex to trade agreements had very limited concrete outcome. It remained a text signed by the signatory parties without a follow-up on the implementation in daily practice.

European cultural programmes should also not only be facilitated through the Creative Europe programme which is limited in resources and has its specific goals, but through targeted support in the framework of the external action.

In terms of concrete action, training of artists and cultural professionals, capacity building for managers of cultural organisations, exchanges with representatives of ministries of culture and cultural organisations, exchanges with representatives of ministries of culture and cultural institutions, support for study visits or participation in conferences organised by European cultural networks, are instruments to achieve the objectives. We believe that cooperation through targeted projects has an important effect on peers, in particular through dissemination on online platforms and social media.

Finally, when thinking about concrete actions and a practical approach to implement the strategy for culture, it has to be emphasised that the cultural landscape differs from one country to the other. Therefore a differentiated approach in terms of cultural cooperation and exchange is required for each region.

4. Conclusions

Pearle calls on the Commission to include culture in a comprehensive EU global strategy. As outlined above, culture and the arts, including live performances, reflect our "living together" and are one of the substantial responses to current societal, economic and political tensions. They defend the core EU values addressed in the Charter of fundamental rights on a daily basis and help to strengthen civil society. In this sense, they have a positive impact breaking up the arc of instability that surrounds the Union to which the Commission policy paper "The European Union in a changing global environment" refers. Cultural diplomacy is the accurate "soft tool" to address the complexity of today's world and the diversity of local situations.