



Background Note

Towards a creative Europe: what role for creative industries?

The world economy has been changing at a tremendous pace over the past decades; the rapid roll-out of new information and communication technologies (the so-called digital shift) and globalization have meant new opportunities, but also new challenges for our societies.

Under the pressure of these two intertwined and mutually reinforcing phenomena, we are witnessing a "cultural" revolution, a change in paradigm, with the emergence in Europe – but also in other parts of the world – of communities, whose main resource lies in their capacity to imagine, to create and to innovate. We are moving from societies with a strong focus on specific hardware production to societies developing material which can be best described as abstract productions, where human-centred creative production has become more and more important.

In this new world, the wealth of a nation is no longer simply based on the rewards generated by making "things": it is shifting to include the benefits derived from thinking and developing "ideas and experiences", as well as from hands-on creative activities aimed at applying ideas in a productive and cross-sectoral way, such as through design, architecture or entertainment.

Through their specific role at the core of the digital shift and the new trend towards the "experience economy", creative industries - which can be defined as activities having their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and leading to the generation and exploitation of intellectual property - have clearly a key role to play.

It is equally more and more widely recognized in EU Member States that creative industries are hotbeds of innovation for our economies and societies. Indeed, artists and creative workers contribute to establishing a positive environment for innovation in two ways: directly with their creations, and indirectly by inspiring creativity in others. On top of that, they help us to better understand ourselves and the world around us.

From a territorial point of view, we also see that many regions and cities across Europe consider creative industries as essential assets to boost their economic competitiveness and attractiveness.

When it comes to creativity, Europe is second to none. We have a long tradition and vast assets. Europe's creators and artists are world leaders whether it is in architecture, design, fashion, cinema, music, and art. However, do we make the best use of the extraordinary richness? How can we develop this potential so as to create the best possible environment for a creativity-friendly Europe?

Indeed, although at this time of economic crisis, there is growing political recognition of the importance of the creative industries in the new "experience economy", in practice, the potential of this sector as a motor of the economy remains under-

exploited. What can policy makers do to unlock this potential? What can be done to maximise the positive links between creative industries and the rest of the economy? How can these industries be better exploited as a conduit for innovation for society as a whole? What place can they have in any European innovation strategy?

This Brussels Debate will address these questions. It is taking place as part of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009. The European Year has adopted a broad definition of creativity, including education, ICT, innovation in the workplace, innovation in public and private services, and cultural and creative industries. It has promoted positive linkages between culture, creativity and other policies such as education, innovation and local and regional economic development.