Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on 'Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries'  
(2011/C 42/06)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

— welcomes the fact that with the Green Paper 'Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries' the Commission has launched a European debate on the necessary conditions to improve the creative and innovative environment in Europe in order to stimulate the potential of cultural and creative industries, which is a generator of growth and employment;

— welcomes the increasing recognition at European level of the role played by cultural and creative industries in fostering creativity and innovation;

— observes that in most Member States local and regional authorities are responsible for sectors mentioned in the context of cultural and creative industries, especially culture, research, education, tourism and employment;

— stresses that the successful implementation of the flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy – the Digital Agenda and the other initiatives – requires a bold innovative approach, and here the role of the creative industries is, in particular, to generate multidisciplinary and multicultural solutions. For this, Europe needs open-minded, pioneering players at local and regional level to create social innovations and the global business activity they help to engender.
I. INTRODUCTION

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

1. notes that, throughout the European Union, local and regional authorities assume a high level of responsibility for implementing policies in the cultural domain;

2. points out that local and regional authorities play a key role in developing and fostering culture, especially in protecting cultural heritage and promoting artistic innovation (1);

3. emphasises that local and regional authorities, through their proximity to citizens, are strategically better placed to engage with different cultures and cultural activities within the European Union, as well as to effectively call up local and regional communities in support of the promotion of a better intercultural dialogue (2);

4. notes that local and regional authorities are also able to effectively mobilise their citizens to participate in creative activities (3) and innovative practices;

5. points out that the cultural and creative industries strongly contribute to local and regional development by making European regions more attractive, developing sustainable tourism and creating new employment opportunities. They play a key role in fostering a competitive and innovative market economy in Europe (4);

6. takes note that, according to a study on the economy of culture in Europe carried out by KEA European Affairs for the European Commission in 2006, the cultural sector itself is very dynamic in economic activity and job creation within the EU. The number of people working for the cultural sector in 2004 was estimated at 5.8 million, equivalent to 3.1 % of the total employed population in the EU 25. In addition, the cultural sector contributed around 2.6 % to the EU GDP in 2003, with growth significantly higher than that of the economy in general between 1999 and 2003 (5);

7. also takes note that in the Green Paper, the European Commission mentions the digital revolution as an increased growth opportunity for cultural and creative sectors. Cultural and creative industries face a rapidly changing context with (global) digital information and communication technologies (ICT) having a huge impact in all sectors along the whole value chain;

8. points out that, as long as the full potential of ICTs is exploited with due regard to the interests of end users, content providers as well as ICT providers and traditional patterns of production and distribution are reviewed, this offers potentially larger audiences and markets for creators and a more diverse cultural offer for citizens;

9. welcomes the fact that, in that context, the Commission will be working on three major policy frameworks, which will have a significant impact on the framework conditions for CCIs in a digital environment and were based on earlier consultation processes. These are:

— the Digital Agenda for Europe, which is one of the seven flagship initiatives of Europe 2020;

— the ‘Innovation Union’ flagship initiative, under which specific measures will be undertaken to strengthen the role of CCIs as a catalyst for innovation and structural change;

— the Strategy on Intellectual Property, which will clearly focus on the use and management of rights, looking for a balance between the necessary protection and sustainability of creation and the need to foster the development of new services and business models.

II. POLITICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

10. welcomes the fact that with the Green Paper ‘Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries’ the Commission has launched a European debate on the necessary conditions to improve the creative and innovative environment in Europe in order to stimulate the potential of cultural and creative industries, which is a generator of growth and employment;

11. welcomes the fact that throughout the Green Paper culture is recognised as a tool of local and regional development;
12. welcomes the increasing recognition at European level of the role played by cultural and creative industries in fostering creativity and innovation; since they are well placed to capture new talents and to boost the development of cultural and creative industries in Europe;

13. believes that innovation policy - at European, national, regional and local level - can build bridges with the cultural and creative industries; 24. points out that local and regional authorities have successfully integrated cultural and creative industries into their development strategies and that this has contributed to boosting local economies; in particular, it is possible at the level of local and regional authorities to set up networks and databases of young artists, promote the training of young people in artistic and cultural disciplines, help young artists to become professional, stimulate multimedia and multilingual experimentation, make public spaces available for the work of young artists, encourage the artistic and cultural appreciation of the young audience, support young people in forming associations in the artistic and cultural domain, and foster innovation in local traditions and vocations;

14. welcomes the intention of the Commission to take into account the needs of cultural and creative industries in three of its flagship initiatives, thereby giving due regard to Article 167 of the TFEU; 25. therefore recommends ensuring the right conditions for the transfer of best practices, for fostering knowledge, and setting up networks for sharing experience on the opportunities for making use of the potential of these sectors; moreover, in view of their contribution, it also recommends that cultural and creative industries be covered by the general principles of the EU’s economic and social cohesion policy;

15. observes that in most Member States local and regional authorities are responsible for sectors mentioned in the context of cultural and creative industries, especially culture, research, education, tourism and employment; 26. recommends that a constructive way of engaging between local and national levels would be via outcome-type agreements whereby each governance level commits to work towards agreed outcomes to facilitate the development of cultural and creative industries at the local level;

16. stresses that the cultural and creative industries are not only industries that are of major importance for development, employment and competitiveness but can also contribute to promoting the local and regional cultural identity and diversity; 27. notes that creativity is locally rooted and therefore, in order to develop, cultural and creative industries need local networking, clustering, business incubators and partnerships between art and science/industrial institutes and universities and businesses;

17. points out that local authorities have an extensive role relating to infrastructure (rehearsal space, performance space, production space), strategy and planning (cultural strategies, sector development initiatives) and networking. Local authorities also support arts and culture venues and extensive investment in young, creative talent; 28. challenges art and design educational establishments and universities to work in close cooperation with other sectors with a view to creating new alliances and other structural and operational arrangements leading to the creation of entirely new European products and services which pioneer the way to global commercial success. Young people’s lack of preconceived ideas is often a critical success factor;

18. underlines the importance of diversity and multilingualism as specific European assets to stimulate creativity; 29. points out that cultural activities can be used, for example, to foster social cohesion by developing intercultural understanding and building strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds in the workplace and in schools and therefore boost the potential of the cultural and creative sectors;

19. calls for sufficient attention to be paid to disadvantaged groups in the cultural and creative industries; 30. notes that Europe’s cultural diversity represents a major economic and competitive asset. Recommends that investment in culture be used to promote Europe’s cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue in order to facilitate cultural and social integration;

20. believes that the creation of a stimulating framework for the development of creative industries at European level leads to a strong European added value and can initiate the drafting of programmes and initiatives between the Union Member States, regions and cities which encourage the cooperation between the main actors;

21. stresses the importance of the local and regional level for the development of the cultural and creative sector in Europe; therefore recommends that the Commission include local and regional authorities in the follow-up process of the Green Paper in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity;
III. CONCLUSIONS

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

37. points out that creative and cultural industries can play an important role in meeting economic social objectives at local and regional level in Europe;

38. emphasises the key role that cultural and creative industries play as part of the culture agenda by supporting local communities and economies in achieving outcomes across a wide span of different policy areas from economic development, education, lifelong learning, community safety and the criminal justice agendas;

39. considers that the hospitality/tourist industry should be included in descriptions of the cultural and creative industries;

40. emphasises that, in the post-crisis economy, culture can play a role in creatively meeting social policy objectives by fostering innovation as a way to achieve social outcomes. Culture and art can trigger behavioural changes and have the power to create new social relationships to motivate people to use their abilities to be creative;

41. notes that, as a consequence, the contribution of culture, especially the cultural and creative industries, is essential when implementing the Europe 2020 Strategy (7);

42. stresses that the successful implementation of the flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy – the Digital Agenda and the other initiatives – requires a bold innovative approach, and here the role of the creative industries is, in particular, to generate multidisciplinary and multicultural solutions. For this, Europe needs open-minded, pioneering players at local and regional level to create social innovations and the global business activity they help to engender.

Brussels, 1 December 2010.

The President
of the Committee of the Regions
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