Creative Europe programme at the halfway point

Creative Europe is the only European Union programme that directly targets cultural activities. Its mandatory mid-term evaluation by the European Commission is due by the end of 2017. The March I plenary will discuss the European Parliament’s own-initiative report on the programme’s implementation.

Background

The Creative Europe programme 2014-2020 brings together previous programmes which separately supported the cultural and media sectors. Smaller players in both culture and media face common challenges linked to digitisation and globalisation, the need for training in managerial skills, and difficulties in accessing credit, or reaching wider and diverse audiences. The programme consists of three branches: the Culture strand, devoted to non-profit cross-border cultural activities, or cultural and creative organisations, which operate transnationally; the Media strand, supporting EU films and the audiovisual industry, with a focus on distribution and the promotion of non-national productions in the EU and worldwide; and a Cross-sector strand, covering transnational policy cooperation, the sharing of market experience and knowledge, and the Guarantee Facility, which enables banks to grant loans to enterprises in this high-risk industry.

EU support for culture and media

Cultural policy is the remit of Member States, but the EU supports cooperation and cross-border projects, networks or platforms, audience development initiatives, access to markets, the mobility of works, artists and cultural operators in order to strengthen the quality, competitiveness, and European dimension of their activity. The Creative Europe programme’s €1.46 billion budget (0.14 % of the total Multiannual Financial Framework for the period) funds projects and prizes for cultural heritage and other initiatives.

European Parliament position

Studies on the Culture and Media strands, an EPRS European Implementation Assessment, meetings with stakeholders, Creative Europe Desks (CEDs, which help interested parties apply for funding), implementing bodies in the European Commission (Directorates-General for Communication Networks, Content and Technology (CONNECT) and Education and Culture (EAC), together with the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency), all contributed insights to the European Parliament’s Committee on Culture and Education (CULT), which adopted its own-initiative implementation report on 24 January 2017.

The report stresses that the low success rate for applications in the Culture strand (15 % compared to 44 % in Media) results from the programme’s limited budget. It suggests that the strand’s underfunding (31 % of the budget) and requirements for co-financing undermine the popularity of the programme. If calls for ‘Cooperation projects’ were separated by their innovation, mobility and co-production objectives, the success rate could improve. Administrative burdens are still heavy. CEDs’ role in the application procedure indicates that it would be an asset to involve them more closely in the decision-making process. The programme’s intended contribution to the Europe 2020 strategy puts the focus on an economic approach, overshadowing the artistic dimension. The Media strand sufficiently supports cultural diversity and innovation, for example in video games. The focus on film literacy to grow audiences is a welcome change. However, the report states that the automatic point system, which attributes additional points to film producers from low production-capacity countries without considering national support schemes, distorts the intended level playing field. The Cross-sector strand’s flexibility allowed the Commission to earmark €1.6 million for intercultural dialogue projects on refugee integration. The report states that the programme should permanently cover a new social inclusion priority, with a focus on individuals and groups who are vulnerable and at risk of radicalisation.

Own-initiative report: 2015/2328 INI. Committee responsible; CULT. Rapporteur: Silvia Costa, S&D, Italy.