

## Culture Action Europe demands to include Culture in the Jobs, Growth and Investment Package to contrast declining cultural participation in Europe.

On November 1<sup>st</sup> the new European Commission has taken office.

As regards the process leading to the final composition of the European Commission Culture Action Europe (CAE) confirms the criticism it expressed on September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014 and, namely, that the process rewards national interests over each individual Commissioners' suitability to the post. Throughout the process, civil society organizations have publicly voiced their views as regards several nominations and have asked that concerned candidates take a position on specific issues. This has indeed contributed to the EP advancing several changes in the portfolios proposed by Mr. Juncker.

Commissioner Tibor Navracsis's portfolio eventually includes Culture, Education, Youth and Sport whereas Citizenship is included in the Commissioner's for Home Affairs portfolio. On the onset of Mr. Navracsis's mandate CAE recalls the words he used when answering the questions posed by the European Parliament to assess his independency from the Hungarian government and his allegiance to European values. In particular, the Commissioner wrote: "*Media freedom and media pluralism are of key importance for a democratic society. I regret that sometimes in the past, not enough importance has been given to this important aspect by the Hungarian government, to which I no longer belong. Fundamental rights must not only be respected on paper, but must be seen to be strongly reflected in all actions of public authorities.*" In front of the Parliament the Commissioner also said that "*All of us look to education, culture, sport and civic participation as a means to unlock our potential as human beings. We are not economic resources. We are not parts in a machine. As humans, we find meaning in our relationships with others. We only become whole when we contribute to something bigger than ourselves*". He also committed to striving to put culture and education at the core of the Commission's work and stated that their contribution to the European project goes beyond an instrumental role in fostering "growth and jobs".

CAE has said, now and again, that in politics, as in institutions and legislation, words matter and must be coherently embodied in the design of policies and programmes. At the start of the new Commissioner's mandate CAE **commits to advance proposals and positions as well as to monitor the situation to ensure that the engagements taken are not only respected but also coherently reflected** in the political and institutional acts undertaken by the new Commission.

CAE calls on the new Commissioner, as **the immediate priority at the start of his mandate**, to **engage and secure that culture is included as one of the priorities** of the 300billion€ *Jobs, Growth and Investment Package* and this, in particular, to promote cultural participation across Europe where it has substantially declined in the last years as shown by the special Eurobarometer n.399/2013.

CAE also demands to **take stock of some of the shortcomings in the recent results of the Creative Europe programme**, including the uneven balance between large-scale and small-scale cooperation projects and in the funding for networks. CAE indeed considers it necessary that a better balance in the future selection of cooperation projects is sought and that an additional allocation of resources to allow more European cultural networks to access the Creative Europe opportunities is provided. Cultural networks play a critical role in connecting citizens as well as grass-root organizations and EU institutions; their contribution to the *democratic change* evoked by Mr. Juncker's programmatic speech deserves more support from the Creative Europe programme.

*Through our 110 European and national network members we give voice to over 80.000 cultural organizations across Europe, active in all domains of creation and heritage. Culture Action Europe (CAE) is the political umbrella of the European cultural sector.*