

Press release – COVID-19: Save European culture and values, MEPs tell Commission



In their discussion with Commissioners Mariya Gabriel and Thierry Breton, Culture and Education Committee MEPs stressed that the damage to the cultural and creative sector – especially for small businesses and individual actors – meant “more than just jobs being lost”. “Europe must not allow that things that define Europe – namely, the rich, lively and productive cultural and creative scene – disappear”, therefore the EU needs to quickly and directly support those affected, said Culture and Education Committee Chair Sabine Verheyen at the start of the debate.

The two Commissioners shared the view that EU culture and values had to be preserved “at all costs” and told MEPs that an EU support plan for the cultural and creative sector was under way, as part of the wider EU recovery plan. Apart from more flexibility for current programmes and structural funds, Commissioner Breton announced that direct support measures were also being considered, including a “repair plan”, which would provide the most fragile players with liquidity as well an investment plan, which would support the whole sector in the long-term. Commissioner Gabriel added that this sort of solidarity plan should send a message to artists that “we are there for them”.

Direct support for the media sector

MEPs also called on the Commission to come up with specific plans to provide direct support for the media sector. Both small and larger media outlets are losing most of their revenues from advertising, and supporting the sector is crucial for a healthy democracy and for countering disinformation, they underlined.

Specific plans to help tourism needed

With 40% of EU tourism linked to culture and cultural heritage sites, MEPs discussed with the Commissioners specific plans to support this sector, which has been hit very hard by the pandemic. Finally, they also grilled the Commissioners about their plans for recovery and adjustments in education, digital access, the sports industry, the European Capitals of Culture project, support for European cinemas and audiovisual production, as well as cultural initiatives by minority groups.

Verheyen: The EU needs to do much more

Sabine Verheyen (EPP, DE), Chair of Culture and Education committee, said, after the conclusion of the debate:

“There’s no doubt that the Commission is working hard to tackle the existential threat now facing the cultural and creative and the media sectors and that it shares our view that these sectors need to be vibrant, as they are essential pillars of European society and democracy.”

“Nevertheless, they are facing ruin and the European Union still needs to do much more. We need to adapt the current aid package –the often small businesses and individuals making up these sectors take one look at the mass of paperwork involved in the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative through the Structural Funds and run a mile. We need to tailor support to those people and help them access that support.”

“We also need – without delay – to boost and adapt the Cultural and Creative Sectors Guarantee Facility under Creative Europe to help the sector access further financing. And we need dedicated support for the media sector.”

Listen to the full debate [here](#)