



To: President von der Leyen
Cc: Commissioner Breton, Commissioner Gabriel

Brussels, 15 May 2020

Dear President von der Leyen,

I would like to once again express my hope that you and your loved ones are doing well.

The value of our shared heritage and culture to our societies is immeasurable, especially during times of great uncertainty. Many of our fellow citizens have had the privilege of turning to art, film and music to help them through these difficult times, and we rely on the media to keep us informed and hold governments to account. I am writing to you to draw your attention to the risks facing Europe's cultural and creative industries. In addition to its intrinsic value, this sector contributes approximately half a trillion euros to the Union's economy each year, accounting for 7.5% of the total workforce. As COVID-19 has forced the closure of bookshops, museums, cinemas, film sets, concert halls and festivals, this entire sector has been paralysed. Plummeting advertising revenue is threatening media outlets. Without strong EU action, they may never recover.

First of all, the Commission should act to ensure the sector's immediate survival. I join Culture Action Europe in calling for flexibility within the Creative Europe programme, to ensure that businesses and freelancers do not bear the costs of cancelled events. Secondly, the Commission must do its utmost to ensure that workers remain protected even when professional activities are suspended. Freelancers and artists are often ineligible for support schemes, so the Commission should consider reallocating funding to individual creators.

The cultural and creative industries should be at the core of the recovery. They represent a dense, cross-border web of small and medium enterprises that are deeply rooted in local economies and contribute to Europe's global influence. The Party of European Socialists' own proposals contain measures that we believe essential to rebuilding our economies. Member States must have the flexibility to support businesses, especially those active in the cultural and creative industries. I hope that they will not be forgotten in the Commission's Recovery Plan, nor in the next Multiannual Financial Framework.

As long as the Commission's actions for the cultural and creative industries, the media and SMEs live up to the expectations of European citizens and put the protection of workers and their livelihoods front and centre, you may count on the support of our social-democratic family.

I thank you for your attention to this matter of great importance.

Yours sincerely,

Sergei Stanishev
PES President

