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## Calls for minimum budget for each of Creative Europe's strands

23 April, 2012 | By [Martin Blaney](#)

Calls have been growing for the European Commission to be more specific on the level of the budgets allocated to the three strands in its proposed Creative Europe framework programme.

In response to the minor interpellation tabled in March by Germany's opposition parliamentary party SPD on Creative Europe, Bernd Neumann, state minister for culture and media (BKM), echoed the sentiment of many EU Member States by stating that it was "important from the federal government's perspective that the three strands [Culture, MEDIA and MEDIA Mundus] also retain their own profile under the roof of 'Creative Europe'. It therefore advocates that a minimum financial share of the overall budget be set for each of the three programme strands and to sharpen the specific structuring of the programme strands."

MEP Silvia-Adriana Ticau, rapporteur for the Creative Europe framework programme at the European Parliament's (EP) Committee on Industry, Research and Energy in Strasbourg, argued in her Opinion to the EP's Committee on Culture and Education that the European Commission's Regulation for Creative Europe should set out "explicitly" the indicative budgetary allocation for each of the programme's strands. The breakdown should be "15% for the Cross-sectoral Strand, 30% for the Culture Strand and 55% for the MEDIA Strand" so that the culture and creative sector operators would "have the possibility of scheduling their resources with a view to the co-financing of their projects."

At the moment, the Regulation's Article 19 on financial provisions only says that the financial envelope for implementing the programme is fixed at €1.801bn, but without any specific breakdown.

Neumann added that the idea of minimum percentages being defined for the three action lines was something that was supported by "numerous delegations" of the other EU member states.

Turning to the ongoing debate about the Commission's proposal to merge the existing MEDIA Desks and Cultural Contact Points into Creative Europe Desks, Neumann suggested that such a concentration could "definitely make sense if it serves the goal of reducing bureaucracy, user-friendliness and synergies", but stressed that larger countries like Germany should have the option of a flexible solution which "secures the knowhow of the existing information centres and guarantees an efficient consulting procedure".

Meanwhile, the Slovenian National Assembly's EU Affairs Committee supported the EC's plans for Creative Europe "in principle", welcoming "the cohesive, open, flexible structure of the proposal," but adding: "However, it believes that certain parts should be defined in more detail due to clarity."

While the Slovenians were not opposed to the merging of the MEDIA Desks and Cultural Contact Points, they were "more reserved" about supporting the establishment of a common Creative Europe Programme Committee as this "would not bring added value due to the diversity of the contents of the MEDIA and Culture programmes".

At the same time, the Dutch government has shared the UK coalition government's opposition to the EC's proposal for a funding increase of 37% over the current Culture and MEDIA programmes for the future Creative Europe framework programme.

Ed Vaizey, the UK's minister for culture, communications and creative industries, had made this very clear when he appeared before a House of Lords sub-committee on March 15.

However, Lord John Roper, chairman of the House of Lords European Union Committee, subsequently wrote to Vaizey noting that "the Commission's proposed increase constitutes only a fraction (0.002%) of the overall allocation for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the period 2014 to 2020. In the context of domestic funding cuts for this sector and taking account of UK organisations' obvious capacity for attracting EU

funding, and notwithstanding the government's declared negotiating stance of achieving a real-terms freeze across the next MFF, we would urge the government to review its approach to this funding proposal."

Roper also encouraged Vaizey to "keep an open mind" about the potential merits of the proposed financial guarantee facility "especially if the majority of respondents to the DCMS consultation express support for it".

"The leverage potential of such a facility should not be overlooked," he said. "In addition, its use as a bridging mechanism during engagement with investors about the opportunities that this sector can provide should also not be discounted."

When it came to the question of holding an ongoing dialogue with other culture ministers about European cultural policy Vaizey had been vague in front of the sub-committee about when and if he had actually met his opposite numbers from the other EU member states.

"The culture and creative sectors are inherently international and therefore we believe that ministerial engagement at this level would be beneficial in terms of exchanging best practice and conceiving joint collaborative efforts," Roper declared.

In a letter to the sub-committee's chairperson Baroness Young of Hornsey, Vaizey then admitted that he had in fact not attended any of the EU's Education, Youth, Culture and Audiovisual (EYCA) Ministerial Council meetings since being appointed in May 2010. "The next EYCA Council meeting is on May 10-11 [2012] and I am considering whether I will be able to attend," Vaizey wrote.

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