

## Feedback of the European Writers' Council (EWC) on the Report on the Proposal for a Regulation establishing the 'AgoraEU' programme for 2028-2034 (2025/0550(COD))

-additional submission related to the Stakeholder Meeting on Wednesday 4 March 2026 from 14:00 to 17:00-

### To the attention of

- Emma RAFOWICZ and Alice KUHNKE MEPs, Co-Rapporteurs for the Report on the Proposal for a Regulation establishing the 'AgoraEU' programme 2028-2034 (2025/0550(COD));
- Shadow-Rapporteurs: François-Xavier BELLAMY, Zoltán TARR, Krzysztof ŚMISZEK, Catherine GRISET, András LÁSZLÓ, Alessandro CIRIANI, Ivaylo VALCHEV, Veronika CIFROVÁ OSTRIHOŇOVÁ, Brigitte VAN DEN BERG, Diana RIBA I GINER, Pernando BARRENA ARZA, Mario FURORE, Zsuzsanna BORVENDÉG
- CJ65 Joint CULT-LIBE Secretariat

*Brussels, 27<sup>th</sup> February 2026*

### **Dear Co-Rapporteur and Shadow Rapporteurs, Dear Members of the CULT and of the LIBE Committee,**

The European Writers' Council (EWC) expresses its sincere gratitude for the invitation to give both oral and written feedback onto the Report on the Proposal for a Regulation establishing the 'AgoraEU' programme for the period 2028-2034 related to Culture.

As the EWC is the world's largest representative body for writers in the book sector – with 52 writers' organisations from 34 countries of the EU, the EEA and of non-EU areas, representing 250,000 writers and translators – we are taking the opportunity to sketch out the vision of writers in Europe before setting out specific recommendations for action in connection with the MFF, and AgoraEU in particular.

We wish you fruitful and courageous debates, and we place our hope in a significant improvement of the current programmes and MFF proposals through your invaluable efforts.

### **Pre-amble: What is the writer for?**

At the very foundation of human culture and the value chains – both under terms of ethical principles and financial profit – is the writer and their creative works. Never paid for their thousands of labour hours crafting a manuscript over years and upon private financial investment and rigorous self-exploitation, they are paradoxically often economically marginalised. They develop innovations but work under conditions of high economic uncertainty, without benefits of pension or other safeguards casually granted to wage earning citizens of Europe. The writer is first but is remunerated last.

When it comes to the non-financial value of writers – to foster democratic values, to create civic space and act as medium for shared principles, visions and cross-border understanding –, the writer provides the framework of human imagination itself, conceptualises the collective, puts the contemporary into perspective and provides the first step in the materialisation of a shared imaginarium.

The writer glues separated communities into collectives and help put us in each other's shoes; they create, book by book, a Europe, unified in diversity.

If one sees the impact of books and stories under these angles and as a critical infrastructure – for cultural resilience, collaboration, for connection that empowers citizenry, and the shared sense of democracy and respected coexistence of totally different opinions or lifestyles –, the consequence is to centre on fostering the writer itself and their profession as critical infrastructure of European values, fundamental rights, and a stable democracy.

This is not an easy task, but an emergency with long ranging benefits. To strengthen the community of writers as an infrastructure, will be in the long run the needed pillar to keep Europe sovereign in its diversity, in its plurality, in its long-established cultural skills and in its principle to take care for the next generations, living in stable democracies and with all opportunities.

With this in mind, we kindly ask you to consider our following submissions:

### 1. Increase the budget instead of defending the mere status quo

As European Writers' Council, we represent 52 writers' organisations and 250,000 authors of the book sector from 34 countries. Our practice constitutes, along with the millions of creative workers and artists of all cultural sectors, an irreplaceable contribution to the foundation of fundamental values – and of the **third largest economy in Europe**. But although authors and artists are the source of value chains, both in terms of ethical principles and financially, they benefit the least from it.

Unfortunately, this is also pictured in **the dedicated share to Culture within the Multiannual Financial Framework (only 0.43% of the 2028-2034 MFF budget allocated to AgoraEU; within AgoraEU approx. 20% allocated to Creative Europe/Culture). It remains marginal compared to what Europe's vibrant cultural landscape offers** – while challenges are rapidly increasing, like AI unfairly competing with human labour and investment, in crises in education, and democracies under multilayered pressure. Although the EWC acknowledges the European Commission's proposal for an increased budget dedicated to the Culture strand, the current levels of funding are already insufficient to meet the demand for Creative Europe calls for applications.

**Thus, the EWC applauds the proposal within the CULT opinion under Amendment 20a, and the proposed increase from 8.6 billion to 12 billion euros for the AgoraEU programme (Creative Europe – Culture strand from 805 million to 1.6 billion).** However, this calculation in current prices did not take into account the effect of real inflation. The fixed 2 % inflation rate considered in the current MFF leads to a negative impact based on higher effective inflation rate. Nevertheless, the increased proposal brings us closer to factual reality in which the vulnerable creative minds of all sectors serve as the bedrock of European principles and economic benefits.

Also, EWC echoes the call by Culture Action Europe, quote: **“Ensure AgoraEU's budget is topped up with revenues from digital fines.** Reintroduce a programme-specific adjustment mechanism (as used in the 2021-2027 MFF), which allowed a share of antitrust and competition fines imposed by the European Commission to be redirected to seven EU funding programmes, including Creative Europe. Ensure that fines collected under the Digital Markets Act, the Digital Services Act, and the AI Act are used to top up AgoraEU. The 8.6 billion funding envelope proposed by the Commission represents only the bare minimum required to sustain and develop Europe's cultural sector.”

### 2. Establish reliable funding and allocate them towards the sources of the book sector: the writers.

The merging of three existing programmes into AgoraEU, is likely to lose effectiveness. The integration of Creative Europe and Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values – CERV programmes in AgoraEU 2028-2034 risks diluting its distinct parts and strands, making it more difficult to build on the established brand. **If the allocation towards Culture is not ring-fenced within AgoraEU with clear earmark references, it is foreseeable that funding will be redirected to other strands or ad-hoc priorities.** Furthermore, consistent earmarking of the allocated funds to each separate strand leads

to better predictability and stability of funding for final beneficiaries, as Parliament's MFF co-rapporteurs already stated in the draft interim report of 27<sup>th</sup> November 2025.

Therefore, the EWC calls to these general actions:

- ensure a balanced allocation of funds between the different proposed strands in the new programme architecture. The Culture strand must be visibly ring-fenced within AgoraEU and guaranteed in negotiations;
- distinct Creative Europe – Culture Desks should be maintained, separate from CERV national contact points;
- mainstreaming funding to culture and creativity shall be allocated also across other MFF programmes, including the new Horizon Europe and European Competitiveness Fund;
- to maintain under the Culture Strand the support to European networks and organisations representing authors, artist or performers, which play a crucial role for capacity building, cultural exchange, knowledge transfer and monitoring working and living conditions, while providing the infrastructure to be involved in shaping European's policies;
- introducing operating grants and using these grants to support initiatives of non-profit bodies, smaller networks or institutions, and allowing up to 100% EU financing to improve accessibility for smaller organisations; and protecting fixed grants against inflation and currency fluctuations;
- ensuring that EU public funding does not benefit entities that disregard authors' rights or circumvent contractual laws related to appropriate remuneration. A safeguard, for example an EU Charter on Working Conditions in the Cultural Sector or a binding Code of Practice, to oblige grant beneficiaries commit to appropriate and correct working conditions;
- any funding programme for Culture should always be centred on human works and creativity. Sustaining and promoting AI within cultural works throughout EU funding is harming the sector and authors. For example, ARTE is encouraged to developing AI within the EU Commission funding programme, therefore, endangering human works and creativity at its core.
- Reinstate a Creative Europe Committee under Regulation (EU) No 182/2011 to give Member States a formal involvement on Annual Work Programmes.

In relation to the Book sector, the EWC pleads to ensure that proper funding for book professionals and literature promotion is clearly allocated. **The European Commission's proposed increased budget gives hope to expect opportunities to fund more specific programmes for the originator of the entire book sector, the writer – as these writer-specific supports are indeed nearly absent to date.** As writers and their work(s) contribute in essential ways to the competitiveness of Europe – as envisioned to the Culture Compass – the EWC is convinced that strengthen projects with a focus on the writer, will enable citizens to have access to a wide range of books and topics, which fosters in the middle-run knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence for resilient democratic in Europe.

**The increased budget dedicated to the Creative Europe Culture strand offers a well needed chance to build a writer and book-sector-specific approach.** Such approach has been supported e.g. by European Parliament resolution of 14 September 2023 on the future of the European book sector (2023/2053(INI)) (Rapporteur Thomasz Frankowski) stating the essential role of books in our societies as, “...an invaluable source of knowledge, education, culture, information and entertainment and a vital means of preserving and disseminating the EU's values, cultural and linguistic diversity and cultural heritage...”.

Therefore, the EWC calls to these specific actions related to writers in the book sector:

- an explicit reference to the book sector in the legal basis and work programmes of AgoraEU, with dedicated calls and programmes specifically targeting the writers;
- a European Book Observatory to provide policy-enhancing facts and figures on the writers' ecosystem;
- eligibility for public funding shall be linked to binding compliance with the CDSM Directive (EU) 2019/790, particularly the provisions contractual obligations (Articles 18-23), but also in regard to respect authors' wish to say "no" to the use of their works within TDM, GPAL, or generative AI usage in the future.
- regarding programmes to promote any AI use within the book sector shall be rejected or, as a basic safeguard, respect the EWC ART-principle of Authorisation, Remuneration, and Transparency;
- to foster projects with a policy gain, for example that amplify upon the EP recommendations to address structural imbalances in the book ecosystem, e.g. the impact of the high level of Non-European online monopolies with disruptive impact on the remuneration of writers; or, as another example, the dominance by Non-European digital communication oligopolies on the discoverability of European works through unfair competition, and lack of transparency of algorithms and recommendations systems, to the detriment of European diversity;
- and commit to a full sectoral approach with the originators, the authors, writers in the centre. If programmes' budget is increased, retain sector-specific and author-focused actions, to reflect fairly, on which shoulders the cultural sector, and especially the book chain, is thriving.

### 3. Accessibility and tools for improving effectiveness

One of the well-known challenges of Creative Europe programmes is practical inaccessibility. The application process itself favours the biggest players of the field, leaving many ground-breaking and promising ideas, initiatives and concepts with no financial backing, while the operators with capacity for either hiring help or with sufficient organizational muscle will be favoured.

If Europe wants creative innovation and dynamic in the cultural sector, competitiveness and a real balance towards non-European dominance, the need to create programmes with easy, uncomplicated access to financial support is key. We therefore welcome the Commission's intention to simplify forms of funding and procedures, especially for small organisations which is supported by Members of European Parliament. Programmes do not need to be massive, complicated, fancy or high maintenance, to serve this aim for professionalisation, capacity building, networking and knowledge sharing, but needs to be easily accessible programmes, for example funding participation in international activities, residencies, workshops and festivals, invite writers to trade-tours, and fund their associations and federations frequently, to support the politically and democratically important voice of these people, who often, especially in Brussels, find themselves up against highly paid full-time lobbyists representing (non-European) business interests, while writers try to write books and champion their profession at the same time.

The writer is the beacon of the human spirit and thus an ideal ambassador for reading and engaging in literary activities, not only on a national but in particular on a European level. Writers should be invited to participate, for instance, in designing and shaping programmes, actively.

### Final remarks

In a rapidly changing world where European values, as diversity of culture, are under pressure, for example by non-European Big Tech or autocracy-driven book bans, the European Union needs a distinctive, dedicated, and safeguarded funding programme to strengthen European cultural sources, the authors and artists, as the most needed pillars upholding European values and cultural diversity.

As voice for the over 1.2 million European writers, we stay available and are eager to support.

With our kindest regards:

**Nicole Pfister Fetz**  
Secretary General

**Nina George**  
Commissioner for Political Affairs

**Claus Ankersen**  
Board Member, Denmark