Reset! Contribution to European Commission's Call for Evidence

A Culture Compass for Europe

Reset! network

Reset! as the Independent Direction of Europe's Culture Compass

For three years now, the Reset! network, representing European independent cultural and media organisations, has been working to promote this third sector, to defend its interests, to document its challenges, and to empower its members. Local workshops, reports, editorial contributions, trainings; the activities carried out by and for the network's members have been numerous and have paved the way for Reset!'s most recent action: its advocacy. This advocacy endeavour seeks to underscore the urgent need for a social and cultural reset, but also articulates a nuanced and expansive roadmap for a horizon characterised by equity, inclusivity, and sustainability.

Contributing to a Bottom-Up Approach

The Reset! network's vision is a direct response to the pressing landscape of political challenges facing independent cultural and media organisations. From war, to obscurantist, reactionary, and authoritarian forces coming to power in several countries, to private corporations massively buying up entire fringes of the cultural and media space, independent scenes are now more than ever under multiple threats, from disappearance to repression to takeovers, along with the ongoing ownership concentration of their sector. In this situation, Reset! acknowledges the necessity to collaborate with institutions in a collective dynamic of sharing and learning, leading to the capacity for the European Commission to shape EU action for culture in the most informed and grounded way. By contributing to this call for evidence, Reset! aims to include different perspectives and contexts—from the diversity of voices within the network—in this forthcoming European Culture Compass.

A Call to Collective Action

Recognising the power of collective action, the Reset! network encourages its member organisations to join forces together with actors outside the scene, notably public institutions (cities and universities) in the pursuit of a shared vision for strengthening independence and its roots. The latter is more and more threatened by a series of challenges, which reinforce the necessity of constant monitoring with a European Observatory on Threats to Independence.

Embracing the network's vision is not just an acknowledgment of the challenges at hand, but an active commitment by the independent scenes to lay the foundations for a more just, compassionate, and sustainable sector. This commitment takes shape in defending sub-sectors—such as community radios—in their need for better recognition and support, as today's culture puts on a variety of forms.

Shaping this new strategic framework of European culture means questioning pre-established assumptions. Rethinking our digital practices and spaces is one action that our sector cannot avoid. Seizing existing independent and European digital tools is now a necessity, and the European Commission plays a role in urging culture to be an active part in this ethical change. Another assumption to reconsider lies in the UK's role in EU culture. The UK's withdrawal from the EU and from the Creative Europe programme has had significant repercussions on culture on both sides—restricted international collaboration, administrative barriers, and reduced the platforms available for emerging artists.

This contribution therefore invites the European Commission to actively participate in shaping a horizon that prioritises creative freedom, artistic diversity, pluralism of opinion, digital independence, and more generally, the emergence of alternative narratives and voices, both nationally and internationally, within and across borders.

As we navigate this expansive narrative, the aim is not just to address some of today's challenges, but to sow the seeds of positive change led by the diverse voices within the network. Europe's Culture Compass should look into forging a narrative that transcends borders and inspires collective action towards a future of independence, pluralism, and a renewed sense of global interconnectedness.

Under
Reset!
Proposals

01. ___

Strengthening Collaborative Alliances: Cities and Independent Cultural & Media Entities Across Europe

Background

The cultural and media landscape in Europe thrives on diversity, innovation, and independence. Independent cultural and media organisations play a crucial role in shaping the narrative and fostering creativity. However, these entities often face financial challenges and limited resources. Recognising the need for targeted support, we propose a pilot project titled "Strengthening Collaborative Alliances: Cities and Independent Cultural & Media Entities Across Europe." This initiative aims to bridge the gap between local cultural and media organisations and their cities, fostering a stronger, more interconnected European cultural ecosystem.

Proposal

The proposed pilot project entails selecting 10 European cities for a three-year programme. Each city will serve as a hub to connect and support independent cultural and media organisations within its locality. The funding provided through this project will empower these organisations with the resources needed to thrive and innovate, in a cascading grant dynamic. Additionally, a key feature of the initiative is the establishment of a sandglass dynamic, creating a reciprocal relationship between European organisations, cities, and local entities. This innovative approach ensures a continuous flow of support, knowledge, and collaboration at all levels.

- *City Hubs for Local Support*

— Select 10 European cities as hubs for the pilot program.
— Empower these cities to serve as focal points for supporting and nurturing independent cultural and media organisations within their localities.

Direct Funding for Empowerment
Allocate funding to independent cultural and media organisations at the local level.
Enhance the autonomy of these organisations, providing them with the necessary
resources to thrive, innovate, and contribute meaningfully to their communities.
Sandglass Dynamic for Reciprocal and Cross-Cultural Relationships
Establish a sandglass dynamic to create reciprocal relationships between European
organisations, cities, and local organisations.
Foster a continuous and dynamic flow of support, knowledge, and collaboration ensu-
ring a well-rounded and mutually beneficial exchange.

Expected Outcomes

- ***Local Empowerment***

Direct funding to independent cultural and media organisations at the local level will
enhance their autonomy, enabling them to produce impactful content and contribute
to their communities.

- ***Cross-Cultural Collaboration***

The sandglass dynamic will facilitate cross-cultural collaboration, allowing funded
organisations to connect with counterparts in other European cities. This exchange of
ideas, expertise, and creativity will enrich the cultural landscape and foster a sense of
European unity.

- ***Sustainable Impact***

By selecting 10 cities every three years, the project ensures a dynamic and evolving
support system. This approach adapts to changing needs, promotes sustainability,
and encourages long-term growth in the cultural and media sector.

Conclusion

The "Strengthening Collaborative Alliances" pilot project represents a forward-
thinking and inclusive approach to supporting independent cultural and media or-
ganisations across Europe. By establishing strong connections between cities and
local independent organisations, we create a framework for sustainable growth,
cross-cultural fertilisation, and enhanced cultural independence. This initiative aligns
with the European Union's commitment to cultural diversity, innovation, and commu-
nity engagement. We urge EU representatives to endorse and support this pilot pro-
ject, laying the foundation for a more vibrant and interconnected cultural and media
landscape throughout Europe. Together, we can empower local voices, strengthen
collaboration, and celebrate the diversity of European culture.

02.

Observatory on Threats to Independence:
Safeguarding Independence in the
European Cultural and Media Sectors

Background

The cultural sector is a vital component of Europe's identity and diversity. Independent cultural organisations contribute significantly to the richness and variety of cultural expressions. The preservation of independence in the European cultural sector is essential for maintaining the continent's cultural diversity, fostering freedom of expression, driving cultural innovation, contributing to economic growth, and preserving the heritage that defines European identity. Any threats to this independence, particularly from concentration dynamics and monopolistic practices in ownership, jeopardise the very essence of Europe's cultural diversity and must be addressed proactively to ensure a flourishing cultural landscape.

Proposal

We propose the creation, as a pilot project, of an Observatory on Threats to Independence in the Cultural and Media Sector, with a specific mandate to monitor and analyse ownership and antitrust concentration dynamics in the European cultural and media sector. This observatory would serve a dual purpose:

- ***Informing Cultural Players***

— Establish a robust system for collecting and analysing data on ownership structures, market concentration, and antitrust issues in the cultural and media sector.
— Find an ethical and user-friendly online platform to disseminate information, research findings, and resources to cultural actors and the public.
— Organise yearly workshop, seminar, and conference to facilitate knowledge exchange and collaboration.

- ***Impact on Legal Framework***

— Engage in dialogue with policymakers, regulatory bodies, and relevant stakeholders to advocate for necessary changes in antitrust laws and regulations.

Expected Outcomes

- ***Empowerment of the Cultural and Media Sector***

Independent cultural organisations equipped with comprehensive and up-to-date information on ownership structures and antitrust concentration trends would allow them to better grasp the resources, research and analysis, and to empower them in navigating and responding to challenges.

- ***Influential Legal Framework***

The development of a legal framework that safeguards the independence of the cultural sector will participate to solidifying the grounds on which independent cultural players are working on, lifting one tension off of the sector's shoulders.

Conclusion

The establishment of an Observatory on Threats to Independence in the Cultural Sector is crucial for safeguarding the diversity, creativity, and independence of Europe's cultural landscape. We believe that through informed advocacy and a collaborative effort, we can contribute to shaping a legal framework that ensures a fair and competitive cultural environment.

03. ──

Empowering Voices:
A Call for Recognition and Support
for Independent Community Radio

Background

Independent Community Radios (ICR) serve as powerful tools that amplify local voices, foster cultural diversity, and promote education within communities. Indeed, these ICR are generally funded and run by residents and listeners. The latter are usually trained by the residents to use radio equipment and to learn the basics of radio programming and running, training citizens and sometimes future journalists. They also do a significant work around music and art, as well as news curation, actively offering alternative source of information. Despite their significant contributions, community radios often operate in the shadows, lacking proper acknowledgment and support.

Proposal

This advocacy proposal seeks to highlight the importance of community radios in the cultural, media, and educational landscape, advocating for their recognition as a valuable model and collaborative philosophy.

- *Defining Community Radios*

— Clearly define community radios as non-profit, locally operated radio stations that prioritise community engagement, inclusivity, and grassroots content creation–having unique characteristics at the intersection of media, culture, and education sectors.
— Emphasise the distinct role community radios play in representing the diverse voices within a community without external influences.

- *Acknowledgment of Importance*

— Showcase the cultural, social, and educational significance of community radios in preserving and promoting local culture, traditions, and languages.
— Emphasise the role of community radios in fostering a sense of belonging, social cohesion, and civic engagement.
— Advocate for recognition of the independent nature of these radios and their ability to serve as watchdogs, ensuring unbiased representation.
— Advocate for the integration of independent community radios into community development plans, recognising their capacity to operate independently while contributing to positive change.

- *Specific European Grant Scheme*

— Advocate for specific cooperation grants/open calls tailored to ICRs, recognising

their distinctive contribution to the media, artistic, and educational landscape. Advocate for partnerships that respect the autonomy of independent community radios, facilitating knowledge exchange and capacity building without compromising their independence.

Expected Outcomes

- *Recognition and Integration*

Achieving an increased recognition and acknowledgment of the cross-boundary nature of independent community radios, would position them as a distinctive genre. This recognition would pave the way for a more effective identification and support framework. Additionally, advocating for the inclusion of ICRs in media policies is crucial for fostering a diverse and representative media landscape. It would include a strengthened educational impact, with ICRs playing a pivotal role as platforms for self-directed learning and knowledge dissemination.

- *Empowerment*

Establishing dedicated European grant schemes would empower ICRs, providing the means to enhance their activities and foster creativity and innovation within the sector. Moreover, these grants would support the structuring of educational dimensions within ICRs, playing a pivotal role in training future journalists and providing an alternative, diverse source of information. The strategic focus on ICRs could also highlight their ripple impact on other sectors, such as the music industry, fostering collaboration and co-broadcasting opportunities.

Conclusion

This advocacy proposal seeks to redefine the narrative around community radios, positioning them as a genre that bridges old-school and new media, arts, and education. By securing recognition, support, and collaborative opportunities, ICR can thrive as models of grassroots empowerment, preserving and promoting the diverse voices that enrich our communities. It is time to amplify these voices and ensure that ICR receive the acknowledgment and backing they deserve.

04.

Driving Europe's Cultural Future:
A Call for Ethical Digital Transformation
in Creative Europe

Background

In today's digital landscape, the MAGMA structures—Microsoft, Apple, Google, Meta, and Amazon—exert an unparalleled level of domination and control, dictating the course of the virtual realm in manners that raise profound concerns. The unchecked authority of MAGMA structures raises ethical questions regarding their practices, stifled competition, potential censorship, and the exploitation of user data. This ever-evolving digital landscape then presents both opportunities and challenges for the European cultural scene. The prevalence of MAGMA poses a threat to the diversity and independence of cultural expression. Also, most cultural and media organisations–and beyond– are simply unaware of the alternatives that exists, or don't have the necessary support to implement these digital changes. To address this, we propose a strategic realignment of Creative Europe's digital policies to favour organisations committed to ethical digital practices.

Proposal

By aligning Creative Europe's grants and open calls expectations with digital ethics standards (free, fair, secure, respectful, generous, economic and ecological), by relying on initiatives like the ones developed by the NL Net Foundation, a European Commission-funded organisation dedicated to open internet, privacy, and digital rights, we can make substantial strides towards a more responsible and ethical digital landscape.

- *Support for Ethical Digital Alternatives*

— Prioritise organisations committed to using ethical digital alternatives that align with the principles of openness, privacy, and digital rights, by creating specifics grants for cultural and media projects working on this topic.
— Work towards a shift that will contribute to a more inclusive, diverse, and democratic digital cultural landscape.

- *Collaboration with NL Net Foundation*

— Establish collaborations and bridges between Creative Europe and NL Net initiatives to facilitate knowledge exchange, capacity-building, and the development of ethical digital tools. The NL Net foundation, with its dedication to an open and sustainable digital society, is an ideal partner for fostering ethical digital practices in the cultural and media sectors.

- ***Grant Allocation Criteria***

— Integrate criteria in grant allocation to increase culture and media commitment to ethical digital practices and collaboration with initiatives supported by the NL Net foundation.
— Ensure that Creative Europe funds contribute to the advancement of responsible digital culture.

- ***Capacity-Building Initiatives***

— Allocate resources for training and capacity-building programmes that empower cultural and media organisations to adopt ethical digital practices, including the use of decentralised and open-source technologies.

Expected Outcomes

- ***Diverse Digital Ecosystem***

Encouraging the use of ethical digital alternatives will contribute to a diverse and resilient digital ecosystem that values pluralism as well as cultural and artistic freedom.

- ***Empowered Cultural and Media Organisations***

By collaborating with NL Net Foundation initiatives, cultural and media organisations will be empowered to take control of their digital paths, fostering independence and self-determination.

- ***European Leadership in Ethical Digital Practices***

Positioning Creative Europe as a champion for ethical digital practices will enhance Europe's global standing as a leader in cultural innovation and responsible technology use, thus contributing to European sovereignty in the digital sphere.

Conclusion

This proposal aligns with Creative Europe's mission to support and promote European cultural cooperation, and it reflects the organisation's commitment to adapt to the evolving digital landscape responsibly. By endorsing ethical digital alternatives and collaborating with NL Net Foundation initiatives, Creative Europe has the opportunity to lead the way in shaping a more ethical and sustainable future for the European cultural and media sectors.

05. ⎯⎯

Reintegrating the United Kingdom
into the Creative Europe Programme

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Background

The United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union and, consequently, from the Creative Europe programme has had significant repercussions on the cultural and music sectors across Europe. Historically recognised for its dynamic and innovative cultural scene, the UK played a critical role in enriching the European cultural landscape. Post-Brexit, the absence of UK participation has diminished funding opportunities, restricted international collaboration, and reduced the platforms available for emerging artists on both sides. Challenges such as decreased cross-border mobility, administrative barriers, and a narrowing of cultural diversity have affected the sector's dynamism. Evidence from the 2014-2020 Creative Europe cycle shows that UK organisations were active and successful participants, receiving €74 million and contributing to hundreds of projects, highlighting the mutual benefits of UK involvement.

Proposal

Reintegrating the United Kingdom into Creative Europe would restore essential channels for artistic collaboration and reinforce the European cultural ecosystem. Building on existing frameworks such as the 2021 Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA), an evolution of this agreement could offer a legally and institutionally feasible path forward. This approach is consistent with Creative Europe's existing model of including non-EU countries like Norway and Iceland.

To facilitate this reintegration, we propose the establishment of a dedicated EU-UK working group tasked with negotiating the UK's re-entry under the TCA umbrella. This mechanism would ensure a structured, mutually beneficial partnership without the need for a new overarching agreement.

- *Restoring access to Creative Europe funding for UK artists and cultural organisations, facilitating participation in collaborative projects.*
- *Increasing the representation of UK artists in European cultural events.*
- *Enhancing cross-border mobility and reducing administrative barriers for UK and EU artists.*
- *Promoting creative partnerships and joint ventures between UK and EU cultural organisations to foster innovation and exchange.*

Expected Outcomes

- *Mutual Cultural Enrichment*

Reintegration would enhance the diversity and vibrancy of the European cultural scene, restoring opportunities for cross-cultural collaboration.

- ***Economic and Artistic Innovation***

Strengthened ties between UK and EU cultural sectors would stimulate innovation, economic growth, and creative entrepreneurship.

Conclusion

The reintegration of the United Kingdom into Creative Europe represents both a cultural and economic opportunity. By leveraging existing agreements and aligning with established precedents, the EU and UK can restore and strengthen a shared cultural space, fostering resilience, diversity, and innovation across the continent. This proposal seeks to rebuild the bridges that underpin European creativity, ensuring a thriving and interconnected cultural future.

Reset!'s Policy and Position Publications (2023 – 2025)

- **_Reset! Statement_** — on bringing together all those who share the ambition to redefine the core meaning of cultural independence

- **_Live Entertainment, a Cash Machine by Nepthys Zwer_** — on mapping Germany's music industry economic and ownership concentration

- **_Consent and Safer Spaces in Nightlife by Consentis and Aysun Yildirim_** — an awareness-raising podcast on consent in cultural spaces

- **_Atlas of Independent Culture and Media_** — 8 topic-based volumes exploring independence, its realities, voices, and challenges

- **_Atlas of Independent Culture and Media: Policy Proposals_** — 5 policy recommendations to support independent cultural and media players

- **_Unveiling Europe's Live Music Scene:_** Market Dominance and Cultural Diversity by Matéo Vigné — on market dynamics, competitions, and ecosystem diversity in the European live music sector

- **_Cultural Independence: Its Value(s) and Conditions – Report by Anne-Marie Autissier and Yauheni Kryzhanouski_** — on the construction of a category of 'independence' in cultural and media organisations

- **_Reset! Chronicles 2024: Into Europe's Threats to Cultural Independence and Artistic Freedom_** — on 2024's multiple attacks on artistic and informational freedom and cultural independence in Europe

- **_Creative Europe Networks and BIPoC Representation: Bridging Gaps and Breaking Barriers_** — Study & Guide by Miriam Amina Fofana — on developing Creative Europe networks strategies to strengthen BIPoC representation in the European cultural sector

- **_Open Letter: Rethinking Digital Practices and Spaces_** — on addressing the digital ethics dimension of the Creative Europe programme

& more on the Reset! website.

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