

Culture is too often wrongly considered to be a luxury, an expense without economic return. Although the UNESCO *Convention on the Protection and the Promotion of Diversity of Cultural Expressions* rightly underlines that cultural activities, goods and services have both an economic and cultural nature, the former is still easily forgotten.

Cultural and creative industries, such as visual and performing arts, heritage, film and video, television and radio, music, books and press, design, architecture and advertising, do make a very significant contribution to both economic growth and employment, although these merits are traditionally and unfairly underestimated. This is partly due to the fact that culture is too often simply and definitely perceived as a costly waste.

Nevertheless, the cultural and creative industries experienced a remarkable expansion and a rise in employment at a time when the global economic situation was much less favourable. They must therefore be supported by public authorities.

Due to the important role they play in the development of innovation and technology, they are crucial actors for sustainable development (or growth). As dynamic sources of creativity and innovation they are also key partners for many other sectors developing crosscutting issues involving their own field..

Cultural goods and services generally have strong links with a specific cultural and linguistic environment. Therefore they often have a crucial function in local and regional development, both on an economic and on a social level.

In some cases cities and regions, cultural consumption is one of the principal economic boosters. For some cities and regions built on tourism and culture, tourism represents a substantial portion, if not most, of the local GDP, including job creation.

It should also be noted that, probably even more than in other industries, small business is a major driving force in the development of cultural and creative industries.

Cultural policy makers trying to convince their colleagues in other policy areas that culture is not merely an expensive luxury will need objective facts and figures, proving the return generated by investments in the cultural and creative sectors, or the potential for doing so. There is a clear need for more and better quantitative data on revenues and the employment generated in and by these sectors.

Belgium includes this analysis as part of contributions recently produced within both the European Union (see doc. 9021/07 adopted by the European Council on May 24, 2007, and the Study on the Economy of Culture in Europe, KEA for the COM, submitted on November 13, 2006) and the OECD (see also “Culture and Creativity for Jobs and Growth,” February 27, 2007, in Brussels, which highlights the importance of statistics for this area).

---

At the same time policy should also be adapted to the specific scale characteristics (many small businesses) of the sectors. It's important to leave the opportunity to public authorities to develop specific support measures for the sectors. The exchange of best practices between different regions and countries can provide useful ideas to put the above mentioned policy measures into action.

As already mentioned, innovation and creativity play a key role in the success of the cultural and creative sectors. Investments in new technologies and support for specific research and development must ensure that these sectors are dynamic.

Proper education and training are also vital conditions for sustainable growth and development of the sectors. In order to strengthen the link between culture, training and education, cultural studies should incorporate business management aspects, and training on managing even the smallest cultural businesses specifically tailored for professionals in the cultural and creative industries should be provided.

Culture is a crosscutting and encompassing aspect of our society.

Although economic profit, in the strict and commonly understood sense of the word, created by culture remains relatively modest compared with the fundamental wealth it generates for society and the individual, we feel it is useful and necessary to be able to quantify it in the future.