

Brussels, 16 April 2003

The Commission proposes extending the Culture 2000 and MEDIA programmes up to 2006

The European Commission is making a proposal to the Council and the European Parliament to extend the existing Community programmes on culture and the audiovisual industry unchanged until the end of 2006, the aim being to ensure continuity of Community action in these fields until such time as the EU's new financial perspective kicks in in 2007. The MEDIA Plus and MEDIA Training programmes, which provide support for audiovisual creativity and the audiovisual industry in Europe, expire at the end of 2005. The "Culture 2000" programme, which provides support for collaborative projects with a view to highlighting Europe's cultural diversity and helping bring about a shared cultural area in Europe, expires at the end of 2004. By the end of 2003, Viviane Reding will be making proposals to the Commission for the programmes which are due to start at the beginning of 2007.

"The European Union's programmes are recognised by and meet with interest from culture professionals. MEDIA provides support each year for close on 250 works, and for more than 50 European films to be distributed outside their countries of origin. Culture 2000 may have a relatively modest budget, but it has, over the past three years, funded more than 700 projects in the performing arts, the visual arts, literature and heritage conservation. It also funds promotional campaigns and training for professionals. It would be unthinkable not to ensure continuing Community support for these sectors. That is why the Commission is proposing that these programmes be extended unchanged to 2006, so that the new generation of programmes can be prepared in an unhurried atmosphere," said Viviane Reding, the European Commissioner responsible for culture and audiovisual affairs.

In concrete terms, what the Commission is proposing is to defer the end of the Culture 2000 programme by two years (2005 and 2006) and the MEDIA Plus and MEDIA Training programmes by one year (2006). The new budgetary package allocated to Culture 2000 would be boosted from EUR 167 million for the period 2000-2004 to EUR 236.5 million for 2000-2006, while the MEDIA Plus budget would grow from EUR 350 million to EUR 435.6 million (2001-2006), and the MEDIA Training budget from EUR 50 to EUR 57.4 million (2001-2006).

By giving itself more time to prepare the future programmes, taking account of any improvements on the culture front which might emerge from the constitutional treaty, and learning certain lessons from the way the current programmes are being run, the Commission hopes to be in a position by the end of this year to propose even more effective and ambitious programmes for the post-2006 period.

Extending Culture 2000 and MEDIA to the end of 2006 will not prevent the Commission, the European Parliament or the Council from continuing to explore innovative approaches within the present generation of programmes. For instance, in the audiovisual field, cooperation with the European Investment Bank under the joint initiative "i2i Audiovisual" will be strengthened while, in the cultural field, new approaches will be explored for giving support to the cultural industries and strengthening links between culture, education and training.