



All CCS and Cross-sectoral

"EU Elections: Challenges for culture?"

"With voter turnout and policy proposals around the status of artists and cultural funding as key issues, the stakes are high for Europe's cultural landscape in this election. The Society of Audiovisual Authors sums it up in an article"

On 6-9 June, EU citizens will have their say about the composition of the new European Parliament and consequently on the future of the Union. But both the EU and the cultural and creative sectors are facing a few challenges. The EU Parliament's biggest electoral priority: is to increase voter turnout. 71% is the one figure quoted frequently in Brussels now - the likelihood of voting in the 2024 European elections. This unexpectedly high number, set against 2019's turnout at 51% provides us with a glimpse of hope. The communication department of the EU Parliament is going all out in terms of its awareness-raising campaign, as you may have seen from the #UseYourVote initiative or this powerful video, reminding us not to take democracy for granted.

The cultural and creative sectors are also taking action to encourage voters: the EU Parliament's LUX Audience Award is present at the Cannes Film Festival, inviting a conversation about democracy and cinema. In 2019, the festival saw the launch of a manifesto from filmmakers (including several of the SAA Patrons). The SAA, its members (collective management organisations) and Patrons (screenwriters and directors) recently published their call to vote.

But why should you vote?

If you are not already convinced of what the EU Parliament can do for culture, then read the SAA's comprehensive article that sums up the achievements of the Parliament during its 9th legislative term. For instance, on authors' rights and fair remuneration, the previous European Parliament pushed to add a principle of appropriate and proportionate remuneration to the EU Copyright directive. This a principle that Members of the European Parliament, during this term, urged EU countries to properly implement. And let's not forget how in 2020, in times of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU Parliament supported the cultural and creative sectors and brought attention to the economic insecurity and working conditions of authors and artists. More recently, during the negotiations of the EU Artificial Intelligence Act, MEPs raised creators' concerns against big tech companies.

Right. But for whom should you vote for? Well, that I cannot tell you. But what I can say, is that there is one major improvement compared to the 2019 elections: culture is talked about in parties' manifestos, even if it remains insufficient. The role and importance given to culture varies greatly from one political party to another. The majority agrees that culture is a way to promote certain values, although be aware that political parties put different meanings into it...

For the European People's Party, culture is a vector of the "European way of life" that needs to be preserved while for the Greens and the Socialists & Democrats it is essential to preserve democracy and unity. According to the European Conservative Reformists' Charter of Values, culture is a tool to preserve traditional values and guaranteeing national sovereignty.

If culture and art are mentioned in manifestos, it does not necessarily mean it comes with any concrete plans for policy action. However, more than in previous years, some parties are including proposals. The Left considers culture as a "basic need for a decent life" and a tool to fight poverty, they ask to adopt a basic European statute for artists and to allocate 2% of EU GDP to supporting culture. The Greens also call for "a European Artist Status [...] to ensure good working conditions and minimum standards for artists and cultural workers". Last but not least, the Democrats have quite a long section dedicated to cultural diversity, with proposals to multiply the current budget allocated to culture by 10, and to create a harmonised status for artists. Regrettably, and contrary to last elections, ALDE's manifesto completely ignores culture and art.

To note, financing of the cultural and creative sectors and the status of artist are issues that this Parliament worked a lot on, and which the stakeholders, including the SAA, actively supported.

So, you will be voting on 6-9 June. What happens after that?

The first official day for the new MEPs will be on 16 July when the constitutional plenary will take place in Strasbourg. The plenary will elect its President, Bureau members and the composition of the committees. It might also vote on the President-designate of the EU Commission.

The SAA is looking forward to welcoming the new MEPs and is now preparing its advocacy material presenting its priorities for the next legislature. As a public affairs intern in Brussels, I find this shifting time interesting. I get to experience the conclusion of a cycle, reflecting on the SAA's main accomplishments, all while enjoying a busy and animated period, filled with all sorts of events. Also, how exciting to start my career journey with a fresh Parliament!

October and November will be crucial, as this is usually when the cross-party intergroups of the EU Parliament are formed. In the past, many such groups have been proposed by MEPs and supported by interest groups. Not all receive enough support from at least three political groups. This term, MEPs instead formed a Cultural Creators Friendship Group. This time around, the SAA and other European creators' associations hope that an official intergroup dedicated to culture and creators will be formed.

On 9 June I will vote, and I hope that you will too.

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