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Commission proposes 2009 to become European Year of Creativity and Innovation

Europe needs to boost its capacity for creativity and innovation for both social and economic reasons. That is why the Commission has today adopted a proposal to declare 2009 the European Year of Creativity and Innovation. The decision will be taken later this year by the Council and the European Parliament.

The modern world puts emphasis on better use of knowledge and rapid innovation. It therefore requires a broadening of the creative skills base involving the whole population. In particular, there is a need for skills and competences that enable people to embrace change as an opportunity and to be open to new ideas in a culturally diverse, knowledge-based society. Education and training are determining factors in this.

Ján Figel' Commissioner responsible for education, training, culture and youth, believes the Year is "*an effective way of helping to meet challenges by raising public awareness, disseminating information about good practices, stimulating education and research, creativity and innovation, and promoting policy debate and change. By combining action at Community, national, regional and local levels, it can generate synergies and help to focus policy debate on specific issues.*"

The Commission does not propose that a specific budget should be allocated for the Year, arguing that it can be organised by using existing EU programmes and planned administrative expenditure. In order to involve all those who might be interested, the Commission invites member states to appoint national coordinators who can cooperate through a small steering group at EU level.

The activities of the Year should focus on creating an environment favourable to creativity and innovation and become a strong impetus for a long-term policy priority. Emphasis should be put for instance on education across a wide range of subjects including mathematics, science and information and other technologies. Highlighting creativity through such skills should foster problem-solving and the practical application of knowledge and ideas. All forms of innovation including social and entrepreneurial innovation should be taken into account.

Artistic creation and new approaches in culture should also receive due attention, as important means of communication between people in Europe and in the follow-up to the ongoing European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008).

The European Year of Innovation and Creativity is proposed as a cross-cutting initiative covering not only education and culture, but also other policy domains such as enterprise, media, research, social and regional policy and rural development. It should include information and awareness-raising campaigns, promotion of good practices, debates, meetings, conferences and promote a wide variety of projects at regional, national and European level.