



Culture: Not found

Open Letter to President-elect Ursula von der Leyen

European authors, publishers and booksellers are concerned about a Commission without a Commissioner for Culture and Education

Brussels, 18.9.2019

Dear President-elect Ursula von der Leyen,

We congratulate you on finalising the challenging task to form the future European Commission. On 10.9.2019, you, as President-elect, presented your team and the new structure of the next European Commission. **For the first time since 1999, culture and education will not appear in the title of one of the Commissioners.** From reading the mission letters which your colleagues received, these comprehensive areas of responsibility will fall as subordinate sections within the remit of the Commissioners-designate for "Innovation and Youth" (Mariya Gabriel, Bulgaria) and "Protecting the European Way of Life" (Margaritis Schinas, Greece).

The EWC, the FEP and the EIBF are deeply worried about this development. Giving up on culture and education as priorities is a demotivating signal that European literary and cultural policy could in future be treated as negligible.

"Communicating European values is an essential element of literature. A promoted and independent culture is the backbone of diversity and democracy. Culture should not be a political hobby, but a priority for Europe," says Nina George, President of the European Writers' Council.

"Having a high-level interlocutor specifically responsible for culture and the cultural aspects of any given European policy is a crucial asset for the all cultural sectors, including the book world. The European Treaties have enshrined the importance of culture: 'The Union shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity, and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore (and) take cultural aspects into account to respect and to promote the diversity of its cultures.' An ambitious Commission must count a Commissioner for culture and education", underlines FEP President Rudy Vanschoonbeek.

"Culture is a fundamental European value which differentiates us, while bringing us together. Having a Commissioner whose portfolio title encompasses culture is more than just a name, it is the guarantee for all creative and cultural industries, including the book sector, that culture be brought at the forefront of the European agenda as a political priority, as well as an intrinsic and founding value of the Union. A portfolio that integrates culture at its core, will not only stand for the diversity of our continent, it will also stand for a strong and united Europe, a Europe which takes at heart to proudly represent the cultural industries which make it so unique", writes EIBF President Jean-Luc Treutenaere.

We urge you, Madam President-elect, to include "Culture" in Commissioner Mariya Gabriel's title. We look forward to working with your team in close partnership.

Sincerely,

Nina George
President EWC

Rudy Vanschoonbeek
President FEP

Jean Luc Treutenaere
President EIBF