

The Conference was organised by Interact in Valencia with the occasion of the European Cooperation Day, which was included in a series of cultural events in the city (high visibility).

The event was hosted at the Cultural centre of the University of Valencia, by Dr Antonio Arino the vice rector for Culture of the University.

The target of the event was to take stock of the actions, which were conducted by DG REGIO, Interact and DG EAC in the framework of the EYCH 2018. The inspiration of the event (content and panellists) was the e-book: "connecting people – connected citizens" that the two DG s and the Interact have published last year with the best Interreg cultural and CCI projects.

With 76 Interreg projects approved by DG EAC to be the best cultural projects and awarded with the label of the EYCH 2018, Interreg scored first among all other categories of projects in the successful application of the Year.

The two Commission services stressed their similar objectives within the EU Year of Cultural Heritage, which are to encourage the sharing and appreciation of Europe's cultural heritage, to raise awareness of our common history and values, and to reinforce a sense of belonging in a common European space.

DG EAC stressed the good momentum for culture, which marked last year and that was expressed at EU level by:

- The New European Agenda for Culture and Staff Working Document (May 2018)
- The EU Work Plan for Culture 2019 (November 2018), and
- The European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage (December 2018)  
*[DG REGIO has substantially contributed to the aforementioned documents]*
- As well as, by an increase on the budget dedicated to culture from €1,46B currently to €1,85B for 2021-2027,
- Last but not least, under the Cross-Sectoral Strand of Creative Europe has funded the following policy project "Cultural and Creative Spaces and Cities", for 2 years (end 2018-end 2020) for €1,5m

#### **The results of the EYCH2018:**

- 37countries;
- 38 stakeholder organisations;
- 19 Commission's DGs;
- EU institutions/bodies;
- Over 23.000events reaching 12,8 million people;
- 14.000 labelled projects and events. incl. over 900 EU funded projects (Interreg, Creative Europe, H2020,Erasmus +, etc.);
- The social media campaign reached some 18 million people (FB/Insta=10.9 million and Twitter = 6.9million).

DG REGIO, stressed that important investments have taken place through ERDF. Do far, **up to EUR 11 billion of European Regional Development Fund** support have been allocated over the last two periods (2007-2013 and 2014-2020) for "Fostering culture and creative industries". Smart and

sustainable investments in creative and audio-visual industries and clusters will continue to be eligible in the upcoming programming period under thematic areas related to local initiatives [PO 5 "Europe closer to citizens"] and innovative economic transformation processes [PO1 "A smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation"].

**The added value of the European Territorial Cooperation** to this approach is the following: In one hand side, ERDF Cooperation stimulates social cohesion aspects because it brings partners from different countries and regions under different social dynamics to work together. On the other hand, Interreg investments in creative industries, cultural innovation, and art businesses, can be most effective because of their strong economic impact and spill overs generating jobs and growth in regions and macro-regions because they result from bottom up consultations.

Within the current programming period **"cultural heritage and arts" is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most popular topic in Interreg.**

The intervention of the Dr. Arino, vice-rector of the University highlighted the benefit of leaving and working in a common European space. He explained the conservative dimension of "cultural heritage", and the creative dimension of "art and inspiration". He also addressed the cultural rights, which characterise a societal diversity and by no mean inequality.

Sylvia Amman representing the "Inforealism" AT cultural network stressed, "Culture sets opportunities to shape positively the future" and pointed out the notion: "hubs versus labs" for expressing that hubs support the traditional forms of culture, whereas labs produce innovation. SMEs are at the centre of cultural and creative economy, and it is quite heavy procedure to combine different funds and rules. She stressed the necessity of Interreg in the support of the creative industries, in the future.

Different EU cultural and creative Initiatives and working groups have highlighted their contribution to the promotion of the EU cultural heritage, whereas a panel with important Interreg programmes demonstrated their bottom up approach and their inner procedures to select best cultural and creative projects and to capitalise on the projects afterwards. Humans are in the centre of this process.

On the second day, a panel of significant Interreg programmes presented various best-case cultural and creative projects, whereas lead partners of successful Interreg projects have presented their point of view on investments through Interreg. It was interesting to hear that some of them preferred to be funded by Interreg instead of Horizon 2020, because they find Interreg functions more efficiently than the H2020. Some projects explained how successfully they have established "creative jams" (groups of people from different countries working on specific thematic approaches. Some other projects have successfully developed the function of volunteers / Ambassadors and Mentors (experts, coaches).

The programmes and project promoters are eager to actively participate in the preparations of the Interreg 30 years 2020. Their experience with the e-book on Interreg and the EYCH2018: "Connecting people connected citizens" was exceptionally positive. They have also required the Commission to proceed with the editing of a second volume of the e-book. Lastly, they have discussed different ways for promotional activities and dissemination of the Interreg values.