

An introductory note for the yearly magazine "Sounds in Europe"

by Andris Piebalgs

European Commissioner for Development

I come from a country that illustrates a fascinating example on how the musical heritage has helped to develop and foster a modern state. Over a million of our folk-songs, nurtured through out centuries, have been passed on from generation to generation and they still live today as a unique part of the UNESCO world heritage. This outstanding musical heritage has enabled us to accumulate knowledge that has been a vital element in building national identity and guiding the nation's development.

It is important to note that I am not merely talking only about the historic value of music. It is a tool in creating dialogue between different groups within a society as well as between different nations and cultures. Music is more than a symbol of community or social inclusion and plays an important role of individual's creative and innovative expression. It is an essential part of personality development from a very young age.

Education is another crucial area where music brings in enormous value and enhances a cultural identity. Countries that have succeeded in creating strong music industry traditions gives us evidence of a correlating impact on their national brand reputation – it activates international visibility and awareness, contributes to export growth and tourism flows. Thus the link between music, development and social stability is clear. It is for this reason that in recent years the European Commission has engaged in a number of projects providing support to musical education, local music industries and various socially-oriented musical projects. Through programmes launched in the Ivory Coast, Senegal, Burkina Faso and other developing countries, we have encouraged young musicians to develop musical careers, supported the strengthening of music sectors, and fostered access of local musicians to the international music market.

I firmly believe that culture, and especially music, can be used in support of reaching the MDGs. I am proud to say that the European Commission and the EU Member State together with UNESCO is at this moment in the lead to increase the importance of culture and cultural industries in development policies. Music will prove to be more than just a soundtrack for this ambitious strategy.

* : for more information, see www.culture-dev.eu

** : for ACP Culture see http://ec.europa.eu/development/procurements-grants/grants_en.cfm