



## **Open letter to the European Council, European Parliament and European Commission,**

The European Union stands at a crossroads and the decisions made in the coming months by European leaders are critical for the future of the EU.

Recent referenda in France and the Netherlands, traditionally some of the strongest supporters of European integration, show that citizens are not satisfied with the direction and speed of Europe. There is a wide gap between the daily lives, concerns and interests of citizens and the activities of the EU institutions.

Bridging this gap is not simply a question of better communication about Europe but a need to engage on what matters most to people.

The Financial Perspectives is an opportunity for the European institutions to set the economic framework for policies, activities and legislation for 2007 – 2013. The financial allocation for each budget heading provides a clear signal about the future priorities for Europe.

Budget heading 3 is entitled '**Citizenship, freedom, security and justice**'. In the Commission's original proposal for the Financial Perspectives, this budget line received the smallest overall allocation (560 million Euros) of the 5 budget lines.

The European Parliament, on 8 June 2005 adopted a report that stated that the policies in Heading 3 are high priorities for parliamentarians and for citizens. The MEPs specifically called for a balanced approach with larger financial allocations for Youth, Culture, Health and Consumer Protection programmes. The Parliament insisted that the programmes under this budget heading should not be cut so that funds could be dedicated to security issues <sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [REPORT by MEP Böge Reimer, http://www2.europarl.eu.int/oeil/file.jsp?id=5209442](http://www2.europarl.eu.int/oeil/file.jsp?id=5209442)



The Luxembourg Presidency document of 19 May 2005 splits Heading 3 into two smaller sub-headings:

*Heading 3a) 'Freedom, security and justice'* with a proposed annual budget increase of at least 18 % over 2006 figures. Essentially, these funds will be used to develop a common approach on issues such as asylum, trafficking, terrorism, organised crime. The key mechanism and benefit will be enhanced cooperation between Member States.

*Heading 3b) 'Other internal policies'* includes culture, youth, audiovisual matters and health and consumer protection but is allocated a maximum annual increase of 5 % over 2006 figures. This is the budget line that will have direct impact on quality of life for citizens. It represents what 'Europe does for me' .

There are now 450 million citizens, several nationalities, dozens of languages, and countless regional variations in culture within the EU. Europe seeks 'unity in diversity', but this can only come about through much greater knowledge and experience of each other's cultures. Arts and heritage have a unique role to play in creating and sustaining this important dialogue.

The empowerment and active participation of youth in shaping the society in which they live is crucial to the success of Europe. Young people should be seen as key actors in influencing the direction of Europe, and programmes and actions at the European and international levels should encourage and involve young people. The YOUTH programme has and continues to play an important role in the personal, social and cultural development of hundreds of thousands of young people, in that it supports a range of activities which are both complimentary and supplementary to National youth policies and programmes. Likewise the 'Youth in Action' Programme is welcomed by the European Youth Forum as a good starting point for establishing the legal base for EU action in favour of young people.

Good health for all people living in Europe is a fundamental right. Public health means working towards societies are equitable, inclusive and responsive to the needs of all



individuals. In Europe today, there are significant health inequalities. Ill health and premature death causes suffering and undermines Europe's competitiveness. Health is also a critically economic and social sector for Europe, representing 10 % of all employment and 8-10 % of GDP. Most EU policies have a direct or indirect impact on the health of citizens, yet this is rarely addressed in policy-making and the financial resources allocated to public health at EU level are inadequate.

We, the undersigned, call upon the EU institutions to restore financial balance in Heading 3 in favour of the policy areas that are closest to citizens. **An annual increase of at least 20 % over 2006 figures is needed for Budget Heading 3 b.**

Signed:

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The **European Public Health Alliance** is the largest network of not-for-profit, non-governmental organisations working on health in Europe. With more than 105 member organisations in 23 countries, EPHA is committed to improving the health of people living in Europe and increasing their participation in decision-making.

The **European Youth Forum** is an international organisation established by 93 national youth councils and international non-governmental youth organisations to represent the interests of young people from all over Europe. It serves to channel the flow of information and opinions between young people and decision-makers in international institutions.

The **European Federation for Arts and Heritage** is a platform of organisations in the cultural and heritage fields, working to establish a central role for culture in the life and policies of the European Union. EFAH represents over 75 networks and associations, who in turn represent over 3,000 cultural organisations across Europe.