

Brussels, 05 January 2009

Official launch of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009

The Czech Presidency of the EU and European Commission will officially launch the European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009 on Wednesday 7 January with the slogan "Imagine. Create. Innovate". The aim of the Year is to promote creative and innovative approaches in different sectors of human activity and help equip the European Union for the challenges ahead in a globalised world.

The European Year will be launched in Prague in a conference attended by a host of personalities including high representatives of EU member states, Commissioners, members of the Czech government and several Ambassadors of the Year. The Conference will run in parallel to the meeting between the Commission and the Czech Government. After that, during a ceremony in the National Theatre in Prague, the launch of the Year will be announced by the **Czech Prime Minister, Mirek Topolánek**, and **Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso**, simultaneously with the inauguration of the Czech Presidency.

The Prague conference will be preceded in the morning of the 7th of January by a **round table attended by a dozen Ambassadors of the Year** and presided by Esko Aho, Executive Vice President Nokia, and Former Prime Minister of Finland. These eminent personalities will adopt a set of recommendations for EU governments and institutions which will be presented by Mr Aho at the afternoon conference. German inventor Mr. Karlheinz Brandenburg, French researcher Dominique Langevin, Hungarian creator Erno Rubik or Romanian film director Radu Mihaileanu will be among the participants, together with top businessmen, artists and designers.

The European Year of Innovation and Creativity (EYCI) aims to raise awareness of the importance of creativity and innovation as key competences for personal, social and economic development. It has acquired a special meaning in the context of the current economic slowdown - the message it should convey is that Europe should not react to the crisis by reducing investment into skills and innovation. By emphasizing these priorities, the EU aims at shaping Europe's future in a global competition by fostering the creative and innovative potential in all of us. The EU will offer a framework for raising awareness of the issues concerned and promoting a policy debate on how to increase Europe's creative and innovative potential. As for previous European Years, measures will include promotion campaigns, events and initiatives at European, national, regional and local levels.

On the eve of the campaign launch, the **European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, Ján Figel**, said: "*This European Year is a horizontal, cross-cutting exercise involving many areas. Apart from education and culture, it involves enterprise, regional and research policies, social and employment policies, energy, transport, environment and the information society. I am pleased at the response shown already by all EU institutions and the Member States, and they are all planning to make the best use of the Year. It is also a sign of the importance of creativity and innovative capacity in Europe that many companies, associations and organisations have expressed the wish to become partners of the Year.*"

A website, <http://www.create2009.europa.eu>, has been set up, which is dedicated to the Year, with news, events and activities updated regularly throughout the year, policy and publicity messages, reports of the outcomes of activities and separate pages for partners of the Year. A special section will be dedicated to activities held in Member States, and another to the two-dozen Ambassadors of the Year.

The planned activities include a large-scale conference on the contribution of the EU's funding programmes to creativity and innovation, which will be held in Brussels at the beginning of March. Also in Brussels, a series of six **public** debates will be held on key topics relating to Creativity and Innovation from February onwards, to provide a platform for reflection and exchange of ideas which can contribute to policy discussion on Creativity and Innovation. They will cover such issues as cultural diversity, public sector, education, knowledge society, sustainable development and the creative arts and industries.

For more information:

<http://www.create2009.europa.eu/>

Press release for the Media Launch:

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