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LETTER OF SUPPORT TO
ASOCIACIJA, association of NGOs and free-lance artists in the fields of
Culture and the Arts

Dear Sirs

We have heard about the alarming situation that all NGOs and free-lance artists in the field of Contemporary Arts in Slovenia have been pushed into.

The reduction in funding by the state cultural authorities has already harmed many producers and free-lance artists. Furthermore, we hear that there is an intention in the Municipality of Ljubljana, not to subsidize the so-called “independent production” sector at all, which consequently means the decline in the development of contemporary arts in Slovenia and, for some branches, even the cessation of existence.

As the majority of cultural NGOs are based in the capital there will be a drastic impact on the city, as without subsidies to NGOs and funding for the artistic projects of free-lance artists, there will be a reduction in Ljubljana’s lively urban culture, for which the capital of Slovenia is well known – in Europe and worldwide. This activity currently attracts many international visitors, as well as the local citizens.

Our appeal goes to the highest national and local cultural authorities of Slovenia to take all necessary acts in their power not to allow such a disaster to happen and to provide the necessary conditions for contemporary arts to develop and flourish, in Ljubljana and in Slovenia.

Experience in Belfast over recent years shows that action such as this can only be harmful. It damages both the City's capacity, internally, and its reputation, externally.

A number of years ago, the City of Belfast made drastic cuts to its funding support (and its moral support) to the independent arts sector – the very sector that fosters initiative, creates development and supports the freelance artist community with employment, a sense of purpose and a sense of home. This is also the sector that delivers huge value for money, because small amounts of funding support are often partnered with great commitment and the addition of much voluntary contribution. The terrible demoralisation, disruption and division that resulted from this action in Belfast seemed to be one of the reasons that Belfast was unsuccessful in even being short-listed for the European Capital of Culture, 2008 – at a time when many across the UK thought that Belfast had a very good chance of being selected. The local City authority was sure of it.

The situation has now turned around in Belfast (with thanks to the protest and determination of the arts sector) and a new City arts and culture strategy has enabled strong partnerships to be developed between the City and the independent and contemporary arts sector – to the clear benefit of the whole City.

We encourage the authorities in Ljubljana to consider this and similar experiences. We urge Ljubljana City to reconsider in the light of these experiences. More information to expand that very brief overview can of course be provided if requested.

Best wishes

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