

## **Response to Green Paper “Unlocking the potential of Cultural and Creative Industries”**

I've grouped together a number of questions from the Green Paper that I feel are pertinent to the areas that I am interested in drawing attention to and potentially providing a solution.

**How to create more spaces and better support for experimentation, innovation and entrepreneurship in the CCIs? More particularly, how to increase access to ICT services in/for cultural and creative activities and improve the use of their cultural content? How could ICTs become a driver of new business models for some CCIs?**

To answer some of the above question, I have been developing and promoting an initiative called the International Content Services Centre, a sort of Digital IFSC, which has been endorsed in the current programme for government. The inspiration for the ICSC came from my work with FAS/Screen Training Ireland on their European Screen Leaders programme where I was a tutor. It became rapidly clear to me that those on the programme – film and television programme makers from around Europe – were not taking advantage of the opportunity of digital technologies. The reason for this were due to the machinations of traditional funding structures and copyright legislation throughout Europe. The aim of the ICSC is to create a “clearing house” for all digital content to allow for its distribution online globally.

The International Content Services Centre is an internationally-focused content cluster to be located in Ireland. The ICSC aims to provide content holders and digital content services companies (i.e. Cultural and creative industry practitioners) with an environment to offer a range of end-to-end services to help exploit and distribute intellectual property globally.

The International Content Services Centre (ICSC) is a joint Industry and Government initiative to create favorable conditions for the international trade and exploitation of digital content and intellectual property.

The ICSC will promote the development of a digital content cluster in Dublin through leveraging existing strengths (i.e. existing cluster, tax advantages, legal advantages) and identifying investment and regulatory requirements to ensure Ireland's continued development as a world class digital content cluster.

The ICSC Taskforce Committee has provided a forum for discussion and advocacy between Industry and Government. The Committee is chaired by Lord David Puttnam, and comprises representatives from Industry and senior officials from the Department of Communications, as well as the State enterprise development agencies. The ICSC aims to be the engine room for digital content distribution throughout Europe and globally.

However, that is only one part of the puzzle. The other critical thing is training – traditional content creators - as well as the end user - need to get up to speed with basic digital skills. With the Digital Media Forum in Ireland ([www.digitalmediaforum.net](http://www.digitalmediaforum.net)), which I chair, we have created a modular online Digital Skills programme called I-CANDO which teaches people the basic skills to use a computer, a digital camera, a video camera, an MP3 player and basic social media applications like Facebook, Skype and Twitter. This accredited programme is now being mapped into the European Framework and provides a straight-forward curriculum for teaching people basic digital skills. We would like to see this curriculum rolled out across Europe with the aim of providing basic digital skills training to two core audiences:

- 1) The Content creators who are not 'au fait' with digital technology
- 2) The End User who will consume the content. From recent EU reports the levels of digital illiteracy extend to some 20% of the European population. For

example, in Britain there are 10 million people who are “offline”<sup>1</sup>. In Germany, the recent report from research firm TNS Infratest<sup>2</sup>, suggests that one third of Germans are on the wrong side of the digital divide.

**Q: What new instruments should be mobilised to promote cultural diversity through the mobility of cultural and creative works, artists and cultural practitioners within the European Union and beyond? To which extent could virtual mobility and online access contribute to these objectives?**

Culture is at the heart of the European identity. However, the majority of that cultural output now exists in digital format. The recent Google Books case highlights the fundamental threat that old copyright legislation and red tape poses for Europe. Google, by scanning European books in libraries across the US and making them available online to US customers (geo-blocking all others as copyright only extended in the US), were potentially hijacking 2000 years of European culture. Court intervention has stopped that ... for now.

In the recent reflection paper “**Creative Content in a European Digital Single Market: Challenges for the Future - A Reflection Document of DG INFSO and DG MARKT**”, the EU pondered this fact. But now is the time to act. Europe has to create a single market for digital content if it is to compete with US or Asian content. Otherwise, it may well end up ghettoized in the digital era. The International Content Services Centre aims to be the engine of that change but it will need to develop European wide policy that is effective to quickly counter the influx of content from outside Europe. Already, many countries have lost the battle in the cinema multiplexes and the TV screens as the well-oiled distribution machine of Hollywood plies its trade in the market with increasing force, subtly engendering American ideology through the most powerful media platforms. This is not to be anti-American in any way, but we need to have a balance of cultural

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<sup>1</sup> Digital Britain report (2009)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.warc.com/News/TopNews.asp?ID=26472>

content and creativity that subtly reflects the European sensibility as well as the US or others.

We also need to strengthen our content creators in the new media fields – especially the increasingly pervasive games industry. Again, fractured funding structures, territorialisation, lack of Venture capital investment, red tape, over-reliance on unfocussed European funding mechanisms and disjointed thinking has meant that the US and Japan are cultural leaders in this field. Likewise, Europe is not leading in the internet content space – considering that the internet was itself a European invention (coming out of Cern Institute in Geneva and led by Tim Berners Lee) like the printing press. But the US again now leads in terms of sizeable multi-nationals monetizing the invention. Google, Facebook, Twitter etc. are all US companies, many born out of University R&D labs.

So in summary, these are the steps that need to be taken:

- 1) The International Content Services Centre based in Ireland will provide a centralized point or clearing house for all European content, both legacy and newly created to distribute globally and provide a collection facility for content creators. This initiative needs to be underpinned by European legislation to ensure that “rights clearance” is standardized and that the European market becomes an open, transparent marketplace for the delivery of content services.
- 2) Archiving and digitization standards need to be set – in terms of meta-data, semantic web ontologies, digital rights management, copyright ownership, watermarking etc. This will help make Europe a global leader in terms of digital content as well as ensure the ease of distribution of the content. Again, the ICSC would look to spearhead this initiative.
- 3) A curricula for Digital Skills should be enforced and standardized Europe-

wide (much like ECDL was) to ensure that everyone in Europe has a basic level of digital skills to engage in cultural and creative content online. A curriculum has been developed and is mapped into the European Framework by an Irish company called I-CANDO ([www.i-cando.ie](http://www.i-cando.ie))

- 4) Dedicated venture capital funding needs to be promoted or encouraged for the creative and cultural industries.
- 5) Funding for the Creative and Cultural industries must be re-thought – and largely removed from the dead hand of the state. In order to create a sustainable industry, creative and cultural content needs to be aimed at the market and informed by the market. Whether this is match funding venture capital or incentivising organizations who distribute state funding, we need to create a healthy, self-financing creative and cultural industry that in turn can be potentially levied for supporting non-commercial or risky creative and cultural endeavours. We need to overcome the over-reliance on state-subsidy among the industry.
- 6) The Research & Development agenda in universities, particularly around creative and cultural products and services needs to be strengthened and commercialized so that we can create scaleable companies that can contend with Google, Microsoft, Apple etc. Again, state intervention in funding streams and academic insularity needs to be re-thought and R&D should be enterprise-led with real focus on markets – not dreamt up calls from consensus which inevitably turnout academic orientated development with little commercial value.

## PROFILE

### Neil Leyden



Neil started his career at Windmill Lane Pictures in Dublin, Ireland in 1995, working as both a script-writer and director in their Corporate Communications Division. During this time, he also wrote his own film and television material and worked as a script doctor on various feature-length film projects for Irish and international film and television production companies.

He developed an early interest in digital media and was involved in the start-up of Windmill Lane's multi-media division. He became Head of Productions at Windmill Lane Interactive in 2000 and oversaw the development of a range of innovative and award-winning educational and corporate multi-media titles across web, CD-Rom and DVD. It was during this time that he saw the opportunity to merge traditional and new forms of media to tell stories.

Neil left Windmill in 2002 to concentrate on his writing career and to also pursue work as a digital media consultant for traditional television and film companies (through his company Calico Media [www.calico.ie](http://www.calico.ie)). In 2003, he set up the Digital Media Forum, a network of digital media companies based in and around The Digital Hub in Dublin. He is currently working on a number of live action and animation drama scripts, both feature and TV serial. His feature length animation script, Alphabet City is currently in development with Fiddler's Screen in Denmark. His ambition is to continue to develop stories (like Alphabet City) that can work across a range of media, both new and traditional, and offer audiences new and exciting ways of engaging with stories.

He is a non-executive director of a number of digital media start-ups as well as a Board member of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland's Contracts Committee. Neil lectures regularly in a number of universities and institutes of education on the subject of emerging technologies and digital media. He also conceived the International Content Services Centre, a proposition for a Digital IFSC in Dublin, which is now part of the programme for government with a view to being implemented in late 2010. He is currently involved as Project Co-ordinator on Gateway Ireland, an initiative by Riverdance creator John McColgan to connect the Irish diaspora online.

Other relevant links:

[www.calico.ie](http://www.calico.ie)

[www.digitalmediaforum.net](http://www.digitalmediaforum.net)