

We are writing to draw your attention to an enormous threat currently being made to the way live performances are presented in Europe.

The EU is proposing, in its Eco-design Working Plan 2016-2019, to change the rules that govern the light sources used in theatrical productions. In effect, they want to bring all of these light sources - including both tungsten light bulbs and the specialist, high-quality LED lighting fixtures which have finally become available to theatres in the last few years - under the same rules that govern domestic and office and industrial lighting.

This would mean that the majority of lighting fixtures in our theatres would quickly become obsolete as the supply of suitable light bulbs was exhausted.

Furthermore, the cost of replacing those lights with an entirely new rig of LED lighting fixtures and replacing the building's entire lighting infrastructure - dimmers, cabling, control consoles, would be vast. For many venues, this would be ruinous. They would, quite literally, go dark.

More troubling still: while many shows and theatres have started adopting some new LED lighting fixtures, none of these new lights meet the proposed EU standards. The indication from manufacturers is that no new fixtures of this type will be able to meet these new regulations even by 2020.

A rudimentary version of stage lighting would be left – but it would be crude and simple. We would lose the ability to have light as part of our story telling.

The impact on theatrical production across Europe would be immediate, and overwhelming.

While we as a community must applaud the move towards lower energy consumption, this proposal does not acknowledge nor accommodate the way light is used in performance.

It would create immense waste with the entire infrastructure of our theatre buildings having to be replaced.

The money spent on an enforced replacement of existing theatre lighting systems with poorer quality equipment in an attempt to create a tiny reduction in energy use is money not being spent on reducing the other 95% of a theatre's energy consumption, where much greater energy savings are possible.

The estimated figures for making these changes are huge. £180 million in the UK alone. It is quite possible we could see the financial collapse or closure of many of Europe's treasured cultural institutions.

Article 2 of the Lisbon Treaty clearly states that the EU “shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe's rich cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced.” This new legislation seems to be destroying rather than safeguarding.

We cannot believe that the repercussions of this shift in legislation are the intention of the Committee in question. It is therefore vital that we make a group response to the public consultation that comes to a close on May 7, and ask that we have an exemption for stage lighting. We need your urgent support. Attached is a document we would like to ask you to agree to put your name to so that we might send it to the EU.

There are also a number of other ways you as individual institutions can help:

- Before May 7, fill in the consultation form by pasting this link into your browser: https://ec.europa.eu/info/consultations/evaluation-and-review-ecodesign-and-energy-labelling-regulations-energy-labels_en
- Demonstrate to the EU Culture and Education Directorate the widest possible cultural opposition to these proposals, so that they can bring pressure on the EU Energy Directorate who are responsible for creating and implementing these regulations.
- Contact your MEPs and government representatives to draw their attention to this issue and the damage it will do if left to pass as is. Encourage them to ask questions and to have the proposal changed.
- Forward and share this information with everyone in the cultural sector.

I attach some more detailed information about the legislation as well as our proposed letter to the EU.

We thank you, in anticipation of your help and support.

Yours sincerely

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