

Au revoir KEA!

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I fell into the culture industry by accident (life is unfair). The regulatory development during the building of the EU Internal Market in the late 1980s was the enabling circumstance. The international music industry association, based in one of the world's capitals of the growing entertainment industry, required an EU copyright lawyer. The London time, combined with public affairs experience in Brussels, laid the foundations for the start of KEA in 1999. A lucrative position in a multinational media company or the prospect of becoming a European civil servant would not distract me from pursuing what would become a fabulous professional and human ride.

KEA is an original creation. Based in Brussels, it was and remains unique as an enterprise not linked to any national interest, focusing on the culture and creative industries (CCI) and policies across EU Member States. KEA is *"European Affairs"*.

KEA plays a pivotal role in changing the perspective of public authorities on the value of the CCI. We developed an inspirational narrative to justify investment and regulatory support, beyond the narrow and marginal cultural policy field. KEA also highlights CCI as an integral part of the European integration project, a Europe that acknowledges and celebrates its democratic and creative achievements. KEA shared its vision of Europe and the contribution of culture to addressing global challenges, working as an agent of transformation. We aspired to positively contribute to an ideal of humanism, empathy, and solidarity.

We relentlessly work on supporting the networking of entrepreneurs in creative sectors to mutualise resources and increase advocacy capacity. For instance, KEA launched IMPALA (the association of independent music companies) and WIN (the international branch of IMPALA) or b.creative the international network of cultural and creative entrepreneurs.

KEA publications document the outcomes of its research and activities to share the learning, experience and suggest impactful policy narratives. We developed a Manifesto on policies to support CCI. Radical Creativity is a digital publication for cultural practitioners, artists, and researchers to exchange on artistic innovation and multidisciplinary collaboration.

KEA contributed to landmark EU competition and merger cases to highlight the danger of media concentration and help SMEs benefit from EU law. KEA is also associated with major EU policy initiatives aimed at supporting structural changes, such as the EIB guarantee facility, to help investors and lenders better understand the sector and its potential, the upcoming European Partnership on Resilient Cultural Heritage, or the EU sport policy.

In short, KEA acts as a bridge between policymakers and the creative sector. We built trust with both communities because we master the respective languages and understand the way to reconcile their objectives in a context in which the EU is the main regulator of the sector (trade, copyright, competition law, state aid), although enjoying limited competence in cultural policy. Because of our international experience, KEA is supporting policy development related to the CCI, notably in the Balkans, Ukraine, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, China, and in South America.

As an entrepreneur, I take pride in the fact that KEA achieves its successes through competitive tenders, sustained credibility, strong partnerships (notably with universities, industry professionals, public authorities), sustained marketing efforts, and hard work with a strong team ethic.

As democratic and humanist values are under threat, we must remain determined to advocate for a robust policy agenda that promotes inclusion, freedom of expression, and creativity. To be more effective, the cultural sector must combat its conservatism, unite to advocate for better outcomes, and persist in reaching out to disenfranchised citizens.

I would like to thank my mentors for giving me the confidence to build KEA. In return, I wish my mentorship has effectively assisted the many colleagues who often started their professional careers at KEA. They are an integral part of KEA's DNA as a fun, empowering, and challenging place to work. I want to thank all of those who took the risk and lent their positive energy to make KEA exist and endure.

I am glad that Arthur Le Gall has taken over the company. I am confident that under his leadership, KEA will continue to play a pioneering and emancipatory role, building on the company's legacy.

I will remain a fan and ambassador of KEA.

In the spirit of the Loony Tunes: "That's all folks!"

