

p o l i c i e s f o r c u l t u r e

Workshop report

based on the proceedings of the seminar held in Bistritsa, Bulgaria, on 18-20 January 2001.

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Decentralisation: Investing in Culture in the regions

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All case studies presented at the workshop, as well as a full list of participants are available from:
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Preliminary remarks

The 2nd seminar organised in the framework of the programme *Policies for Culture*, managed by the European Cultural Foundation, ECUME - ECUMEST Association, was held in Bistrista, Bulgaria on 18-20 January 2001. The seminar gathered over one hundred participants, mainly Bulgarian cultural operators and arts managers and representatives of cultural departments of national, regional and local authorities and the Ministry of Culture. Foreign experts and practitioners from Eastern and Western European countries also attended the seminar to present case studies and provide information and reflection on the issues at stake. The seminar focused on the topic of decentralisation, as agreed at the Bulgarian Steering Committee Meeting.

The workshop was divided over 3 days. Day 1 was intended primarily for the third sector. Days 2 & 3 were dedicated to the topic of decentralisation to tackle the following issues:

- Partnership between the different central and local bodies in making and implementing cultural policy;
- Working together (NGOs and municipal authorities) locally to stimulate cultural activity in the regions;
- Decentralised funding and local investment in culture;
- New funding initiatives and new partnerships;
- The role of the media in the cultural policy-making process.

This report reflects the main discussions held during the workshop (“what was said”), provides some of the “good practices” described, and summarises the main conclusions reached and recommendations proposed. It is structured as follows:

- § The third sector - Developing cultural policy in partnership;
- § The decentralisation process. Implications and opportunities;
- § Decentralised funding of culture and local investment in culture.

Despite the fact that the seminar was hosted by Bulgaria, the workshop and this report reflects on common dynamics and trends recognisable to more countries in the region as a whole. In this respect, the main recommendations drawn from the discussions are meant to be applicable to the cultural sector of all countries of the region.

In the analysis of the Bulgarian cultural sector, one must bear in mind that Bulgaria is under the Currency Board Arrangement and follows the International Monetary Fund directions in order to re-balance the economic situation. The Ministry of Finance is heavily involved in all aspects of the day-to-day life of the country (cultural aspects included to a large extent) and the establishment of stability and confidence in the economic structure is the main national priority. The reporter is well aware of these conditions, which lessen the cultural sector’s manoeuvrability capacity and has tried to base this report on the projection of the sector’s potential in the mid-term, with the hope that the encompassing conditions will improve.

Another remark that must be made is that, despite having been invited and having confirmed participation, the turnout of the third sector (independent cultural managers, artists and professionals) was disappointingly low at the workshop. The Project Management regrets that this level did not better use the possibility to enter into discussion with the policy-making level. The Ministry of Culture was well represented, as were local authorities. Several elected deputies failed to arrive. Those who were present were very active in the discussions.

It also proved very difficult to find published information on the latest developments in Bulgaria’s cultural policy that was up to date and available for dissemination. If this information had been available, all participants could have been better informed of the local situation at the outset. In the preparation of this workshop, the organisers were forced to rely on information published between 1998 and 2000,

which is publicly available (also on the internet) and is used by many international institutions and cultural operators as a reliable source of information. This information must be kept updated at all times.

The Third Sector - Developing cultural policy in partnership

The first session of the seminar was mainly intended for third sector organisations, although representatives from government institutions also took part in the discussions. The main goal was to assess their potential role in cultural policy-making and to look into the way that they are currently working and organising themselves to actively participate in the formulation of a national cultural policy.

Two main questions were thrown to the floor for discussion:

- How cultural organisations, artists and professionals participate in redesigning and reorganising the country's cultural policy?
- How can policy makers stimulate cultural organisations, artists and professionals to contribute to the development of cultural policy?

The third sector is a term that is widely used today to refer to the independent zone of activity, which lies somewhere between the field of government on the one hand, and the field of commerce (the profit or business sector) on the other. It includes the non-commercial, non-profit and independent organisations, foundations, institutions and professional individuals. Third sector institutions operate at their best when they remain as independent as possible (even if they are heavily dependent on subsidy), but run as if they were a commercial enterprise. (Nowadays the boundaries of this independent zone are becoming slowly ever more vague. Some successful third sector institutions are those that operate in public-private partnership).

The number of third sector organisations active in the cultural field has significantly increased over the past 10 years in Bulgaria. Foundations, non governmental organisations (NGOs) and associations currently provide and manage 1 out of each 10 Leva devoted to cultural purposes in the country, whereas public institutions provide for the remaining 90%.

Despite the growth of third sector organisations, it was noted by some that the activity of many seems to run in isolation from other initiatives and that no common places nor dialogue instruments are being created, thus making it difficult for both cultural public institutions and third sector organisations to come together to build and design a national cultural policy in partnership. Indeed, there seems to be a general idea that this lack of dialogue between both parties is preventing the whole sector to grow from a solid ground.

However, there do exist national councils which comprise third sector representatives, as well as representatives of the Ministry of Culture, of business organizations etc. To what extent are these being recognized as potential "spaces" for fruitful debate? Also one has the example of the **Culture Fund** which, besides receiving budget allocations, is raising funds from NGOs, donors etc. and is therefore a place where the dialogue among different levels is indeed beginning to happen and where the main lines for promotion of culture in the long term are being drafted. The fund is quite a recent actor in cultural field (since December 2000) and its role can therefore maybe not be felt yet.

This complex situation in the frame of which third sector organisations are carrying out their work, was analysed and discussed and the following main conclusions were reached.

Lack of communication

Despite the fact that many of the cultural organizations that have NGO status, many cultural associations and around 3000 Chitalishta (NGOs also) are in regular contact with the Ministry and the regional and

municipal administrations, there still seems to prevail then a general idea that there is a certain lack of communication between the public institutions handling cultural affairs at a national, regional and local level, and the third sector cultural organisations. Where does this idea come from? Organisations such as the Euro-Bulgarian Cultural Centre are successfully helping to provide a communication link, but the lack of communication and understanding that remains and that is considered by all stakeholders as a crucial matter to be solved, seems to be due to a number of unsolved issues:

- § There is still a **fear of the notions that pertain to cultural policy**, mainly due to the fact these notions were used for propaganda purposes by the socialist regime, and this legacy still remains in the mindset of many citizens. In several South-eastern European countries there seems to be an opposition between the state on one hand and civil society, which is growing ever stronger. This has a strong effect on the notions pertaining to culture and cultural policies, which are marked by this opposition.
- § Neither public institutions nor civil organisations are used to holding “**regular**” and **strategic oriented dialogues**, or to **take decisions jointly**. This is still a recent practice for most of the actors concerned and it shall take sometime to establish and foster the dialogue space and the trust for it to be effective.
- § The existence of a **space for public debate** is essential in order to formulate a democratic cultural policy fed from a pluralistic participation. A **common arena** where ideas, parliamentary practices, NGO policies, market representatives and civil society representatives’ proposals can be compared has yet not been defined, although the national councils could provide a good point of departure for such a space and for regular and intensive, in-depth consultation.
- § The aims and objectives of both public institutions and third sector organisations are not inferable from their “behaviour”. This **lack of clear communication threatens the capacity for dialogue**. Moreover, the lack of objective and rigorous data on cultural activities is contributing to this lack of clarity.
- § The media has a key role to play in removing distrust, and in creating a broad public space for dialogue, engaging the whole of society in the debate on cultural policy. Nevertheless, and for the time being **the independent media is not giving enough attention to the cultural debate**, and it could be said that they underestimate cultural activities. They cannot bear all the blame for it, as the entire cultural sector is responsible for legitimising the importance of holding the cultural debate openly in the media.
- § The “practical discussion” on concrete issues that has been held so far, is still considered insufficient (not often enough, too ad-hoc). Apart from specific “forums” meant to tackle and address concrete issues (i.e. legislation, financing; administration, etc.), a plural, continued, **long term and strategic-oriented debate on culture** is required in order to formulate a cultural policy in consensus.
- § The lack of reliable data regarding the cultural sector contributes to the situation of miscommunication. If the general state of the cultural sector in the country is to be assessed (and addressed where necessary), the **constant provision and acquisition of up to date, reliable qualitative and quantitative data** is essential, as it is impossible to make either prognosis or analysis without recognising the cultural situation in real terms.

As a result, this situation characterised by the lack of dialogue between potential partners prevents the sector to identify and put to practice the means to develop a **real and practical partnership scheme**; a partnership where goals are set jointly, where common work is undertaken and the benefits from which are shared. A partnership that leads to the settlement of a long-lasting and sustainable co-operation scheme. A “**social contract**” is required, in order to define the space where NGOs can compare their ideas with the proposals and formulations offered by the state, and vice versa; and this, indeed, requires dialogue between the partners.

The analysis of the strong and weak points of each of the stakeholders allows the situation to be fully understood, and to identify what role can be played by each of them in order to address the situation.

The Third Sector organisations

In first place, the third sector organisations as well as the entire artistic community are to be congratulated, as despite of the economic difficulties and restrictions the country is suffering, they are keeping Bulgarian culture alive.

As already mentioned, the number of cultural non governmental organisations has increased significantly over the last 10 years, and the foreseen trend is that the number of such organisations, foundations, associations, etc. is to grow in the coming years. Despite this quantitative growth, the activity of much of the sector is taking place parallel to national cultural activities, and they are not providing a real feedback element for the development of a national policy. In this respect, cultural organisations face a number of challenges:

§ **Cultural organisations are not organised** in order to be able to speak with one unique, powerful and legitimate voice. As stated by their members, they know each other on an informal basis, know most of their counterparts, and have developed basic horizontal co-ordination schemes. Many of them are extremely active in their field of the arts (be it visual arts, theatre, dance, etc.) but yet they have not managed to organise themselves across disciplines to gather their aims and purposes into one unique voice.

The **lack of interim organisations** makes it more difficult for small local organisations to participate in the dialogue process at national level. The possibilities for setting up such structures should be explored.

The **creation of umbrella organisations** was highly recommended. Cultural organisations and representatives should meet in regular forums, networks, and ad-hoc events, in order to forge links and synergies, and become acquainted with each other's activities and goals. A good case was described: in Latvia groups in the cultural sector came together and set out a charter of basic expectations (not exactly demands), which they put before the government and the parliament on a certain piece of legislation. Because they did this together, they were in a strong position and moreover, did not allow any player to have a dividing role amongst the diverse cultural sub-sectors (dance, music, visual arts, etc.).

§ The **legitimacy of third sector organisations to represent the artistic community** was questioned. It seems as if third sector organisations are stronger than the civil society itself, which in a country like Bulgaria is still under construction and still learning what its role is, after only 10 years of democratic practice. Of course, they cannot all be put under the same cliché; some of them come from traditional and grassroots cultural clubs or groupings, whereas others have been recently created, and are less representative of just one segment of the population.

This is, indeed, a difficult issue to tackle, as it concerns civil society's degree of maturity, internal organisation and awareness of the key role it is to play. The debate underlying the third sector organisations' capacity to represent civil society is a very complex one, as it has to do with national collective values. As expressed by some of the seminar's participants, South-eastern European countries used to have one unique system of values, featured by its verticality and rigidity, but which worked to a certain extent. Nowadays, and in the framework of the globalisation process and the difficult economic situation, resulting from a sudden change of the market rules, the existence of a clear and consensus system of values is questioned, and a process of value judgements should be enhanced. This debate on values exceeds the scope of this report, but it has an extremely important weight in defining the roles that each party has to play when formulating specific policies.

§ The third sector still sometimes feels suspicious about the way information is disseminated by the public institutions, even though the Ministry of Culture and the National Centres have done a lot to increase their transparency and publish their aims and objectives. They feel they are not equally treated, and that they actually don't have the same rights that state-participated cultural institutes have, for instance, when applying for central government subsidies or grants. Even when the law (Protection and Development of Culture Act) disposes the competition base equally for public or private contestants, they feel they are not equally treated. This feeling may not be completely legitimate, but it continues to exist.

§ For cultural organisations to participate in the redesigning and reorganisation of the country's cultural policy, an in-depth knowledge of the process of policy making is first needed. Greater efforts are needed on behalf of the third sector organisations to find their means to articulate community

consensus and to express it to the public institutions. In this respect, they should identify who their allies are, pool interests and **create lobbies to access the policy making process in the optimal momentum**. It is not recommended that a network or association of NGOs should be set up at the initiative of the state structures, because these will be automatically accused of state trusteeship (the memory of the state monopoly on culture is still quite alive). The Ministry of Culture is not responsible of course for the third sector development, but does have a responsibility in ensuring that its strategy is clearly communicated to the outside world.

The “Green Paper” practice followed in the United Kingdom was recommended as a means to articulate the contribution of sector representatives in the legislative process. This practice consists of elaborating a so-called “Green Paper”, a discussion paper which describes a legislative project the government is planning to enact. Before the new draft of the bill is approved by the parliament and it becomes an Act, the Green Paper is published and open to wide discussions, giving the opportunity to individuals, representative organisations in the sector concerned, academics, the press, and commentators to feed in comments at an early stage. By this means, the initial draft of the law already reflects the views and removes rules, which could only be implemented with difficulty, or would arise huge hostility. The result is that there is more general ownership of the new law at the point it is implemented. Time and energies are then not wasted in oppositional politics when it might be to late to influence that.

- § On the other hand, if the third sector is to engage itself in the discussions of cultural policy- making, it must be capable to come up with strong and irrefutable arguments in favour of cultural investment. **Universities, academics, research institutes, can become good allies** of the cultural sector, and can provide reliable data and expert information to back up their arguments.
- § Some participants claimed that they had better information on how to apply for grants and funds to foreign organisations, than on how to apply to their own Ministry of Culture programmes. They might not be prepared enough, and might need to undertake some training, in order to **become better acquainted with the national and international financing mechanism and schemes**, and also with alternative initiatives which enhance sponsorship and mixed systems to finance cultural activities. It must be noted, however, that institutions such as the Euro Bulgarian Cultural Centre, which was set up in partnership with the Ministry of Culture, provide excellent services and advice on these topics.
- § Speaking of the third sector, cultural organisations may become confused at some point, since there is diverse range of needs in each of the sub-sectors in the arts field. The main priorities of theatre makers may largely differ from those of the visual artists, for instance. This uneven situation lessens their capacity to address the official institutions as a strong collective, and dividing dynamics can be created, which detriment the artistic community’s power to be heard and taken into consideration. **Setting up sub-sector forums**, in order to assess the needs and expectations of each of them could be an enriching practice, as it would forge links and prepare the ground for the creation of stronger networks.
- § **Cultural organisations themselves don’t seem to have mid term goals and programmes**, and seem to operate on event-oriented schemes. They are also too dependent on public grants, and not very skilled yet in generating own incomes.

Public institutions

In the course of the seminar, representatives from public cultural institutions (national, regional, and local) remarked that the cultural challenges Bulgaria is facing mainly deal with the need to settle wider communication flows in order to allow the development of an own cultural policy based on the country’s tradition and frame of values. They also stressed their will to address the situation, and in this respect, steps have been taken to improve the conditions in which the cultural policy has been formulated and implemented over the past 10 years, although the results reached for the time being are not satisfactory. National debates to adopt the annual report on the Bulgarian cultural sector *have* been held (although not regularly), and the central government has co-operated with international organisations (such as the Council of Europe, or the European Union) to jointly assess the development of the national cultural policy.

Government bodies handling cultural affairs have a strong political will to recognise the contribution of cultural organisations of all kinds to create a public opinion flow and spread the extent of the public debate on culture. The development of a cultural policy is understood to be an ongoing process, which must involve all agents and actors in the cultural sector, as well as all kind of cultural administrations. The fundamental principles of the Bulgarian cultural policy were set and adopted in July 1999, by enacting The Protection and Development of Culture Act.

However, the public institutions have not yet been able to set up **a real partnership scheme** in the country. Some features, as described in the following paragraphs, can be considered obstacles for reaching further development in this.

- § Despite the Ministry of Culture's political will, real measures to facilitate the collaboration of third sector organisations have been limited to administrative reforms that do not really improve the capacity of third sector organisations to "infiltrate" the policy formulation process. Besides this, the **lack of continuity of the elected representatives** contributes to an irregular and uncertain process of policy making. Bulgaria has had 8 ministers of culture since 1990. Regardless of their political affiliation, all of them were in favour of cultural policy priorities, which are now officially established in the Protection and Development of Culture Act, but the real implementation of this cultural policy has boiled down to administrative changes, some of which have been frozen or denied by the next minister.
- § One still remarks that, public institutions (mainly the Ministry of Culture and local authorities) do not make public what their priorities, aims, objectives and programmes to fulfil them are, which is confusing the sector. Despite the fact that the fundamental principles are listed in the Protection and Development of Culture Act, the policies and programmes set to guarantee the accomplishment of the nation's main cultural objectives, are according to some, not made accessible enough to the arts community. It must be noted that **the Protection and Development of Culture Act (Art.14) engages the Ministry of Culture to ensure publicity in developing and conducting its policy for the preservation and development of culture** by means of (i) permitting access to information about its activity; (ii) publishing annual reports of its activity and intentions and (iii) celebrating meetings with creators, activists of culture and experts for actual issues of cultural policy. The Ministry does indeed announce its competitions in the newspapers, including the amounts available for each project. Programme 2000 for example was published in the press and on the internet. Furthermore, since 1997 there is a Culture Division in the Programme of the Government, which has been disseminated in all the usual ways. There is also a Strategy prepared for the period until 2005 that will be published soon. So why are these opinions voiced? Is enough use being made of the independent media to disseminate new developments to the general public? Indeed, is the media being used to engender debate?
- § **The policy-making process** (mainly the legislative and executive mechanisms of designing and implementing a policy) **is also not well known by the sector**. In this case, responsibility falls on both stakeholders: public institutions could develop means (such as bulletins, Green Papers, etc.) to facilitate technical information to the operators concerned, and the latter could make bigger efforts to comprehend these mechanisms and detect at what point can a policy process can be entered into for a constructive contribution.
- § The issue of the **criteria used by public institutions to set up policies and programmes** was raised. The general rule is that when a specific decision is taken with regards to allocation of public funds, the cultural or artistic quality of the product is the main criteria used, together with the principle of seeking the optimal use for public investment. However, this general criterion appears to be insufficient and more detailed, objective and long-term established criteria could be provided.
- § However, and provided public dialogue between third sector representatives and politicians can not be solidly established in the context of the above, bigger efforts should be done on behalf of the public institutions to **win the confidence of the sector**. Trust and confidence can not be regulated, but are to be gradually built up by daily action and public entities are responsible for providing an institutional frame in which all stakeholders can come together and develop long lasting and proved confidence. In this respect, **means to facilitate the access of third sector organisations to establish regular dialogue** with members of the executive, parliamentarians, political parties representatives, etc. should be clearly established. Consultation mechanisms and advisory boards could be set up to

enable proper consultation of the sector opinion on concrete issues of cultural policy and to assist administrative bodies in solving managerial problems. Positive choices and constructive contributions could be drawn from these consultative bodies, and efforts should be done to prevent them to become a forum of individual complaint and criticism.

- § **Lack of evaluation and assessment of the implemented projects and programmes.** This lack of self-critical analysis is preventing the cultural institutions to learn from their own experiences and mistakes.
- § It was recommended **to assess and evaluate the work done by consultative bodies**, where they have been established. The question of whether consultation councils and bodies task was being useful and successful or not, was left without a response during the seminar.

The role of the media in the cultural policy-making process

The specific role that media can play in fostering a public space for debating cultural policy issues in a wider arena requires specific treatment, considering its great potential to address the current situation in the mid term. Independent television, press, radio and electronic media coverage of cultural policy issues is still insufficient and there is a wide feeling that they are not aware of their responsibility in assisting the cultural sector in the process of formulating a cultural policy owned by and fed by the whole society. The following are detailed aspects of this situation:

- § Media generally underestimates cultural activities, as well as their potential and their representation. It is very **difficult to find faithful critics of concrete cultural events** in the independent newspapers. There is only one paper in the country that focuses specifically on cultural issues, but which happens to be too specialised and professional-oriented, and therefore not suitable for generic audiences. These kinds of publications, even when they are of extreme importance for the sector, keep the debates within the professional parameters. On the other hand, there are no reviews which describe to amateur groups the particularities of the arts and culture market, in order to prepare them to take further steps in their cultural activities to become professionals.
- § Greater media attention is given to the “important” cultural events taking place in the capital, to the detriment of cultural activities undertaken at the level of regions and towns, or promoted by small cultural operators.
- § A lack of awareness of their potential to contribute to creating public restlessness and opinions and to spread the extent of the public debate on cultural policy issues.
- § The media cover most relevant cultural events, but **do not usually include the theoretical and political discussions on cultural policy issues**. The public debate on how to manage public resources for cultural purposes is not at all on the media, and therefore, does not reach the citizenship.
- § Some 3rd sector representatives claimed that the central government, and **specially the Ministry of Culture should develop a “Public Relations” strategy to gather the attention of media**, and to have them reflect through their channels and newspapers the debates held within the sector. **A way must be found to bring the debate out of the core of the professional cultural sector, and to spread it over the whole society**. Reminding and reinforcing the power that audiences have, as consumers, and therefore, stimulators of the cultural production, could be an argument to explore.
- § Media could become one of the allies of the third sector organisations, but it is up to the latter to **find a strategy to make the media understand its crucial role**. As said before, the legitimacy of culture to be in the media on a daily basis is to be won by the arts community, and their capacity to transmit the feelings of the society they represent and reflect. Only when media recognises the importance of a broad discussion on cultural policy issues and of becoming a tool for dialogue, wider sectors of the society will have an adequate approach to it.

The whole cultural sector (public institutions and third sector organisations) needs to find means to develop a real and practical partnership scheme. For the time being, it requires the establishment of dialogue tools which permit the discussion of the goals and objectives to be set, the mechanism to achieve them, and they means to jointly benefit from the common work.

The Decentralisation process – Implications and opportunities

Decentralisation is a concept that was introduced in politics in post-war times, and it was originally conceived as a progressive solution to reducing the exceeding concentration of power and bureaucracy in the central political and administrative bodies. It's a complex term, which essentially implies a new definition of the relations between central and regional or local powers on a number of levels: executive, administrative, decision making, etc. The term "decentralisation" can involve different conceptions, depending on the context of reference.

Based on the principle of decentralisation, and as result of long term negotiations between the parties involved, different structures, practices and organisational schemes have emerged in different countries. In this respect, there is not one unique pattern of decentralisation; the existing models are the result of the development of a particular cultural model, based on the effects of a country's history, tradition and values and restructured on the basis of the decentralisation principle.

The basis of decentralisation lies on the principle of subsidiarity; the principle of bringing responsibility for action down to the lowest possible level in the community, and therefore, as close to the citizens as possible. The criteria are to obtain an optimal share of responsibilities in order to guarantee the most effective management of collective affairs, and the balance between central and local powers' interests.

The use of the term "decentralisation" can be confusing and assessing the exact meaning given to it was considered an inevitable requirement to start discussions from a solid ground. Therefore, the session intended to tackle the decentralisation process of cultural policies in Bulgaria, started with a clarification of the different conceptions of the term, which are briefly summarised in the following paragraphs.

Assessing the exact meaning given to the term "decentralisation"

When negotiating the degree of decentralisation that is to be implemented in a given country and for a given sector, 4 key questions must be addressed. Discussing and responding to these questions, from a pluralistic approach, that is, taking into account the expectations and interests of all agents involved in the result of this process (central, regional and local public administrations, third sector organisations and the private sector), can guarantee the development of a more functional and effective management scheme.

1. *WHAT is to be decentralised?*
Assessing the content of decentralisation.
2. *WHY should certain services, resources and attributions be decentralised?*
Assessing the values behind the process of decentralisation.

If **cultural activities** are to be dispersed in order to achieve a fair distribution of the arts, we would be speaking of "Cultural Decentralisation" or "Democratisation of the Arts". This process is based on the principle of *equality*, and aims at providing common cultural standards across the country.

If the **power to decide on cultural affairs** is the object of the decentralisation process, we are facing a process of "Political Decentralisation" or "Civil Democratisation" based on the principle of *democracy and subsidiarity*, and we mean to delegate the decision making power from central to lower political levels (regional or local). This scheme aims at enhancing the possibility for citizens to participate and influence the process of political decision making, and to allow the infiltration of those concerned by the resulting policy, in order to express what they need and how they would provide for it.

Often the object of decentralisation negotiations is the management of **financial resources**, referring to the diffusion of public expenditure for culture. Based on the principle of *freedom*, it implies that in order to freely put into practice decisions made, the required resources must also be handled. We would be speaking of "Fiscal Decentralisation".

These three types of the decentralisation processes, cultural, political and fiscal, can be aims in themselves, or tools to serve other purposes. The pattern observed in most West Europe countries is featured by the establishment of Cultural Decentralisation as the main goal to be achieved, and the use of Political and Fiscal Decentralisation mechanisms as tools to reach this goal. But other cases can be also observed, where Cultural Decentralisation is set up as a tool to reach further Political Decentralisation. Of course, in this second case, Culture is used as a tool for other political purposes, meaning that cultural quality itself might not be necessarily favoured or enhanced by this means.

3. *TO WHOM to be decentralised?*
Assessing actors enabled and competent to overtake tasks from the central government.
4. *HOW MUCH to be decentralised?*
Assessing the extent of the process.

In order to completely achieve a process of decentralisation, competent and efficient entities must be ready to take over the competencies and attributions that are to be devolved. Depending on the political location of those bodies, different decentralisation models can be established.

When central government institutions take steps to set up new non-departmental bodies to manage concrete functions and services, but keep these new bodies at the same political level (not bringing them down to lower levels of administration), we would be speaking of Horizontal Deconcentration.

We speak of Functional Deconcentration when control remains as an attribution of the central government, and only the executive capacity is handled to an other body or institution. Depending on the ownership of the recipient body (private, mixed, public) different scenarios are drawn up, ranging from centralised to des-etatised and privatised structures. Public authorities, thus, do not withdraw from their responsibilities and obligations, as they are still responsible for providing conditions (mainly resources), but other legal separated bodies take over the executive responsibilities.

In the case where representative bodies of the central government are set up in a number of regions, we would be speaking of Geographic Deconcentration. No attributions are released, but only local branches of the central government institutions are set at regional levels.

Only when the whole set of attributions required to fully develop a policy, that is, when legislative, executive and control competencies are transferred from the centre to lowest levels of decision and implementation, we are speaking of devolution of competencies, where a strong degree of autonomy is handled to regional or local administrations. This is the case in many Western European countries organised on federalist schemes, and it is based on the principle of *sovereignty* of the recipient regions¹.

It is obvious that following this theoretical scheme does not guarantee any success in designing the most adequate formula to manage cultural affairs in a given country. However, these 4 key questions are to be answered collectively. That is, once dialogue mechanisms capable to allow a pluralistic participation in the policy-making process are set, and once there is a general consensus in developing the cultural sector on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity, suitable responses shall be found to the mentioned questions (what, why, to whom and how much is to be decentralised).

It must be borne in mind that the decentralisation process is a very complex one, and endless by its own nature. Even in federal states it is often uncompleted; the reporter is well acquainted with the case of Spain, which despite of not being a federal state, in some specific sectors behaves as such. The debate on cultural competencies has been going on since the end of the dictatorship (1975), and even when many competencies have been devolved to the regions, the process is not completed. Regions are always demanding a greater degree of autonomy, following the principle of subsidiarity, and with the aim of

¹ This theoretical frame was explained in the plenary session, and also provided in the seminar documentation dossier (*International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 1997, Vol.3 Num.2. Ed. O. Bennet, Warwick University. KAWASHIMA N. "Theorising Decentralisation in Cultural Policy: Concepts, Values and Strategies"). It has been recalled in this report, due to the precise conceptual frame it provides.

building up their own structures, in order to be more capable to maximise collective welfare for their population.

Decentralisation in the Cultural sector in Bulgaria

Comprehensive information on the decentralisation process undertaken in the Bulgaria cultural sector was provided. Decentralisation, when abolishing the monopoly of the state, was one of the main principles on which the new cultural policy was based. Regardless of the will and the efforts of the central government, this process has not yet achieved satisfactory results, and, provided that regulating the cultural sector anew is not a main priority of the government, it has been so far insufficiently tackled.

The actions implemented to define a more decentralised structure for cultural services, have included a certain level of decentralisation of decision-making, of funding and of resources. As far as re-modelling structures is concerned, the first step taken in the early 90's was the setting up of centres for arts and cultural activities, which were originally enabled to act as arm-length bodies from the government, and to implement autonomous sectoral policies for culture. Later on though, these arm-length centres were closed down and their competencies were devolved to the auspices of the Ministry of Culture. And later on again they were reinstated as independent legal entities, answerable to the Ministry. This meandering shows the unpredictable difficulties that appear when defining a model of national cultural policy based on the principle of decentralisation.

Other steps and plans for action were taken and put to practice, in a sort of "test" scheme. Joint efforts with local authorities have been done to produce and support specific cultural activities and projects. But a general rule for these kinds of joint ventures has not been well enough developed for the time being.

The legal framework to develop the process of decentralisation is included in the "Protection and Development of Culture Act", although it only touches slightly upon the political decentralisation process, by means of transferring to the municipalities the possibility of undertaking larger competencies in the cultural field, but not resolving the financial aspect of this process. Attempts to secure the financial aspect of this reform have been done: certain types of state and municipal cultural institutions were enabled to be jointly financed, and competition schemes were introduced. Nevertheless, it must be noted that this process is being undertaken in a context of economic difficulties, which constrains the manoeuvrability capacity especially of local authorities.

Difficulties at the local level

Decentralisation has proved to be an uneasy process, given the current circumstances accompanying the development of the cultural sector. Some systematic obstacles were detected:

- § Each sharing of responsibilities with local authorities is a lengthy and difficult process. The negotiation processes require big efforts on both sides, and sometimes overload the central institutions capacity to manage the negotiations, and to complete specific contracts and memorandums. The fact that municipalities establish individual negotiations with central institutions, contributes to these difficulties. **New schemes should be found to allow groupings of neighbouring municipalities to pool interests** and establish dialogue with higher institutions jointly.
- § The extent of the decentralisation mechanisms established is limited, due to the scarce funds available at local levels for cultural purposes. Municipal budgets are under strict control of the Ministry of Finances, due to the Currency Board Arrangement, thus preventing new financial structures to be set up, i.e.: municipal funds for culture can not be established for the time being, because the settlement of non-budgetary accounts is prohibited by the Ministry of Finance, for the sake of re-establishing economic stability in the country. These are transitional measures aimed at addressing the country's economy, and therefore **initiatives aimed at creating new financing partnership schemes should not be discouraged**, as they will hopefully be allowed in the short term.
- § Municipalities are faced with a dilemma when deciding funds' allocation. With the scarce funds available in their budgets, they have to respond to unemployment, education, health, and cultural

challenges. Culture is often the last in the list of priorities, and in order to invert this trend, new arguments and approaches must be found. Representatives of local cultural institutions and cultural departments within the municipalities must come together to find the way in which culture can improve the community life standards. A new approach to this issue is required. It is no longer easy to legitimate cultural activities *per se*, and therefore, those appointed to protect and develop cultural life at the local level should be able to describe and **prove how culture can be an asset for the municipality**, and how it can create synergies which result in a general improvement of the collective welfare.

- § Local authorities' approach to culture is very much "event-oriented". Their capacity to set up long-term programmes for cultural actions has not yet been developed to the full, and for the time being, they have proved to be effective in pooling interests, initiatives and resources to produce important cultural events, and to design annual programmes for cultural action, but not to formulate mid-term strategies for culture at local level. **The goal of local authorities should be to develop a policy**. And for it to happen it takes raising funds for specific cultural events and programmes, but also identifying new allies, and formulating in partnership mid-term programmes for cultural action.
- § In fact, it could be said that the process of decentralisation, and the capacity of local authorities to design cultural policies to be implemented at the local level, suffers the same structural problems that are effecting the whole cultural sector. There is a lack of communication, and most importantly, a lack of effective tools for dialogue. Municipalities should make bigger efforts to jointly **set up the required means to foster horizontal dialogue** (across municipalities) **and vertical dialogue** (with higher institutions and grassroots organisations).
- § Steps have been taken in these directions in some municipalities, and good cases were described in the course of the seminar (advisory boards, mixed foundations, etc.). These new initiatives are to be encouraged and their experience and results should be broadly shared with other municipalities. Furthermore, the results of these pioneering experiences should be evaluated and assessed, in order to come up with faithful demonstrations of how culture can improve living standards at the local level and be an asset for local development. Moreover, assessment of the actions that are to be amended in further editions is needed. Indeed, **mechanisms to learn from outstanding municipal experiences must be set up**.
- § The decision-making pools have been removed, and according to the new Law, there is no longer a central power imposing its cultural standards to the periphery. Effective mechanisms should be set up to implement the Law's contents. Now there are many poles allowed to perform as decision-making devices, and therefore, many issues need to be negotiated and resolved in the most effective way. Developing a decentralisation process should be understood as a direct consequence of establishing tools for dialogue and opening a wide debate on how citizens, third sector organisations, public administrations of all types and the private sector want the cultural policy making and implementing mechanisms to function.

There are a lot of obstacles preventing the creation of an inter-communal co-operation scheme. And in the case of the arts and culture sector, this mission becomes more difficult. As was mentioned, it is not so complicated for a group of municipalities to unite efforts and dialogue jointly with the Ministry of Public Works to build a road. When speaking of culture, the criteria are much more abstract and subjective, and can be easily politicised. However, irrefutable arguments can be impelled, if the right partners are invited to become part of this taskforce. **Universities, research institutes and academies, and the media should be engaged in the process of proving to the whole community that Culture can be an engine for local development**. Besides, this is a strong argument backing cultural public investment policies in the European Union countries, and many pilot projects have been undertaken to further explore its veracity.

In the course of the seminar, practical cases of local cultural action were presented and analysed, thus permitting the drafting of a list of practical recommendations to be considered. Precisely, an example concerning decentralisation of culture on the horizontal level (central authorities sharing responsibilities with local authorities) was provided by the Municipality of Plovdiv, and the Municipality of Sevlievo described how it managed to establish co-operation schemes with the private sector.

Findings and recommendations from case studies

- § **Mixed funding schemes have been adopted.** Bilateral agreements have been concluded between the Ministry of Culture and municipal councils, under the auspices of the Budget Law that permits mixed financing. These contracts stipulate a project or institution budget breakdown. Too often the contribution made by the Ministry of Culture is basically spent for covering salaries and social insurance expenses. Thus, the **funds obtained from these partnership schemes are mainly used to maintain the existing network of cultural institutions** (opera houses, theatres, museums, etc.), many of which are overstaffed.
- § Municipality representatives admitted that they do not have a clear strategy for the decentralisation process, and that **supra-municipal co-ordination schemes have not been established**. Annual programmes are set and followed, but no mid-term strategy has been discussed. Besides this, these annual programmes are not transparent, nor accessible for the knowledge of third sector organisations willing to contribute to them.
- § Municipal programmes for culture are based on criteria that are not clear, and programmes and projects implemented are not evaluated in order to assess the extent of an event's success in terms of social impact. **Clear and reachable objectives must be set in the first place, and then evaluations to assess to what extent the objectives have been achieved** is to be undertaken. There is a strong need to change the overall approach to the design of local cultural policy: from the current "annual event planning" approach, to an "**objectives achieving**" mindset.
- § The decentralisation mechanisms set up for the moment, are not sustainable. Joint efforts have been pooled only for precise cultural events or projects, but once the project or event is completed, the partnership scheme disappears. Long lasting mechanisms must be set up, enhancing the participation of civil society organisations in the processes of decision-making, drafting and implementation of a local cultural policy.
- § Assessing the current situation would be a good start. Are the objectives of municipalities and the Ministry of Culture the same? Do their expectations meet at some point? Further research would also help to obtain a clear picture of what the situation is, and identify the country's imbalances, if they are to be addressed with decentralisation mechanisms.
- § Furthermore, faithful information on the cultural consumers' patterns is required. Data on cultural consumption and participation should be gathered, analysed and used at the local level. **Municipalities should bear in mind that they are the closest public administration body to the citizenship, and should therefore take advantage of their privileged position.**
- § National councils on specific cultural issues have been organised (on books, theatre, etc.), accounting a great participation success. In the framework of these encounters, representatives from a diverse range of public administration come together to tackle specific issues of one cultural sub-sector. **Nevertheless, such National councils have never focused on the national cultural policy debate.** Again, the dialogue has been kept down to very practical matters and pieces of legislation are being passed on concrete issues (museums, theatre, etc.). Discussions must be held in order to jointly draw the overall structure that all parties want to benefit from, once all the small pieces that will configure the so called cultural policy are ready to work.
- § **Representatives of arts and culture should take part in the decentralisation debates, where it concerns them and their connection with the society around them.** Arts festivals are successful when the special and unique link between an artist and its audiences is given its own space to develop. Therefore, they should also be given the chance to express how do they want the new frame for cultural activities to be like.

Decentralised funding of culture and local investment in culture

Municipalities are developing means of involving new partners in local cultural activities, and are becoming more active at seeking potential partners willing to collaborate in financing culture. Further to the classic public grant system, municipal councils are identifying new alliances with the business sector, and new forms of joint financing have recently been established.

This new trend requires some analysis of the opportunities that the performance of new alliances (such as the tourism industry, or the foreign investment) can bring to the cultural sector.

The current arts funding system is predominately based on the grant relationship. Provided that the available public funds for culture are scarce, and that public grant dependency is preventing many cultural organisations to grow and find their own means to generate incomes, new opportunities for fundraising should be explored in order to identify new and creative mechanisms to fund culture.

The debates on fundraising opportunities were accompanied by a deeper debate about the value of culture, and the specific situation and weight of culture in South-eastern European countries. In Western Europe, culture is no longer a value of its own, and has lost much of its legitimacy for public funding. In this new scenario, culture is treated as a tool: an instrument for local development, for employment creation, for social cohesion, for minority languages promotion, for quality of life improvement... This new framework for culture though, is based on the strong and shared believe that culture *per se* is part of the welfare state, whereas in South-eastern Europe culture has been used as an ideological tool over the past 50 years. Its credibility is questioned and the role it can play to improve the welfare state is not so clearly perceived. In this respect, the very first recommendation to be proposed is to make strong efforts to push forward arguments that prove and demonstrate that culture can become an asset for local, regional and national development.

The cultural sector must find the right allies to fulfil the mission of legitimating culture anew, in the framework of the new political and economical context. Universities can play a key role in providing arguments and objective data to endorse them. There is more to be done in carrying out audiences surveys and research studies in order to be able to actively demonstrate that there are positive benefits from the cultural sector, in a whole range of areas and be able to “word” those benefits in ways that would be understood by the finances Ministry or the economic development departments representatives.

Public fundraising opportunities

§ The cultural financing system is predominantly based on grants and subsidies schemes, fed by the money collected from taxation. The Bulgarian tax system is rather simple (the central government collects taxes directly from the citizens, and allocates funds downwards, providing for the budgets of the regions and partially for the municipalities). A whole set of taxation systems was described, and offered for discussion and reflection, being the main suggestion to open a national debate (in the mid term, due to the current monetary restrictions) on taxation reforms.

Some good examples of cases where taxation has an effect on public debates about culture financing were provided. In Hungary, citizens are given the choice to give 1% of their income tax declaration to a specific NGO, cultural institution, or church. This is a healthy practice *per se* (even though animal protection associations are the organisations taking the bigger stake, cultural organisations received last year 10% of the money collected by this means), but further on, it has a sort of “echo effect”: once taxes are collected and the 1% is handled to the recipient organisation the final result of “who received how much” is published in the press, and it seems as if the topic is gathering much attention, thus revitalising the debate on public money allocation for non governmental purposes. This experience could be explored as a means to relocate the debate on cultural policies to the core of civil society; it’s easier to approach this issue from a more tangible and material point of view, than from an abstract one. And provided that public money allocation is a concern of most citizens, throwing the

issue of public money allocation for cultural purposes to the public arena can be a strong argument to attract public attention.

- § Opportunities to develop the cultural sector in conjunction with other areas of government policy should also be explored. If culture is to be linked to development parameters, common goals could be set in accordance with other ministries programmes for action. Moreover, there are larger amounts of funds available to finance other areas not directly related to culture (infrastructures, environment, job creation, etc.). The cultural sector can benefit also from these funding schemes, as long as it is capable to bring in arguments endorsing the benefits of across-sector action. Colleagues from the Bulgarian Ministry of Culture recognised that they should work in conjunction with colleagues from other ministries over the next few years, to see how this might develop.
- § As far as municipal and regional levels are concerned, it is rather clear that their fund provision mechanisms are insufficient. They meet bigger difficulties to raise funds for cultural purposes and alternative structures were suggested for reflection. **Pooling municipalities' efforts to jointly raise funds could be carried out in the shape of "municipal consortiums", which could be created to solve collectively, with the contribution of a number of municipalities, a concrete problem that cannot be resolved by each municipality alone.**

Cultural institutions grant-dependency reduction

All cultural institutions, be they public, mixed or privately owned, are very much dependent on public grants and subsidies. This is a feature of the cultural sector across Europe (except for the entertainment and cultural industries). Even when the trend is that the State continues to provide or even increase the amount of funds or subsidies, cultural organisations need to move to a smaller degree of dependency on public grants. There are means to raise alternative funds, which will make cultural organisations more independent, efficient and sustainable. New approaches are being explored in Western Europe, and some trends can be detected in the cultural sector, as responses to this new approach:

- § **Hybridisation of structures:** in the Netherlands many museums became foundations by legal status, but at the same time, their collections are still publicly owned. These hybrid structures are missing in South-east Europe countries. The legal frame could be softened and made more flexible in the mid-term in order to allow the creation of these kinds of structures.
- § **Sharing of responsibilities:** in many cultural institutions, responsibilities are shared and very precisely defined, measured and evaluated. This sharing scheme contributes to the building of a co-ordinated partnership atmosphere, which is indeed a strong basis for establishing long-lasting co-operation schemes.
- § **Union of funds:** funds are gathered from many different sources (private sector, 3rd sector, public administration), to finance concrete cultural projects, as consequences of the sharing of responsibilities.

These dynamics have not yet been created in South-east Europe countries, and they are not interrelated, but they can be enhanced in the mid or long term.

Alternative sources of financing

A number of alternative financing schemes were described and proposed for reflection, and its applicability in South-east Europe countries is to be explored in the mid term. Because even if there are restrictions at the moment on the manoeuvrability of arts and Culture activities within Bulgaria and the region, and even though the context is not going to change overnight, there is an agenda to be set up for the next few years, and the patterns and models that would be desirable to established in the next decade, can and should already be projected and discussed.

Three main lines of funding where described²:

² Further information at www.bankingonculture.com

- § State and public investment, which can be in the traditional form of grants and public investment in culture but also under other formats. This sort of funding is also available for generic business support, and a number of small business opportunities can be explored. Cultural sector organisations should consider themselves eligible for small business opportunities and study their possibility to turn a certain cultural activity into an income-generating device. Self employed and small businesses can access micro-credit, as they do not necessarily need large amounts of money.
- § Donor funding (sponsorship, donation - be it individual, corporate, voluntary, charity, etc.-).
- § Profit driven investment (where there would be investment in business, for some form of return).

If cultural organisations are to develop their profit making and income generating capacity in the mid term, steps can already be taken in this direction, in order to acquaint themselves with this mechanisms. In this respect:

- § Cultural and arts managers training schemes should include a new approach to cultural enterprise management. The staff of cultural organisations will have to behave like product sellers, when looking for financial partners, and a new type of arts professional, well acquainted with the manners used in the sponsors business world, will be required. This consideration is to be taken into account in the curricula designs updating.
- § If cultural organisations are to be made hybrid in the long term, and financed (in part) by a number of partners of different nature (private and public sponsors, individual and corporate, etc.), large efforts will have to be done to guarantee the balance of the resulting partnership. For hybrid organisations, as long as more partners are involved, nobody will succeed in monopolising a cultural institution for its own particular interests, be it political or commercial. Thus the main challenge is to keep the balance amongst all this different supporters, for what it takes big efforts in external and internal communication.
- § If new partnerships will have to be established in an existing or a new cultural institution, the precise reasons why private founders would support a particular cultural institution should be identified. In the case of the South-eastern European business sector, the benefits from investing in a cultural organisation must be widely described to potential sponsors, provided that this is a relatively new form of collaboration in the region (specially for domestic entrepreneurs). The business sector might perceive sponsorship as another means for advertising and public relations goals. More arguments can be provided, in order to encourage sponsorship (i.e. tax reduction applicable to donations for cultural purposes, prestige gain, local development, etc.).
- § Research should be carried out to detect what is preventing local entrepreneurs from engaging in sponsorship schemes and the real “public relations” needs of small local companies should be assessed, in co-operation with business schools and / or research institutes and universities.

Dialogue between “stakeholders” in cultural process

(25.02.2001)

By Yurij Vulkovski

This text was provoked by the “Policies for culture” workshop held in Bistrica, Bulgaria on 18 and 20 January 2001. It is an attempt to summarise, but it cannot cover the variety of issues that were raised in Bistrica. Nevertheless it is inspired by a multitude of concepts and thoughts that have sprouted during the workshop. Decentralization was a general subject at the seminar, but the following notes are focused on

the topic of dialogue, because this appeared to be crucial for understanding the situation in Bulgarian culture as a whole.³

Firstly, there is an urgent need for discussions on the Bulgarian cultural policy. “There is a fear of talking about “cultural policy” and to use this concept” – said both Mr. Stoyan Raichevski and Mr. Raymond Weber. This must still be a complex remnant from the frightening purposefulness of the socialist cultural policy.

Secondly, the problems of the separate cultural sectors have to be scrutinized in the context of an integral national cultural policy. There are, of course, specifics in theatre reform, but there are also many links to the difficulties facing the film industry or the fine art sector.

Thirdly, there is a need for strategic, long-term oriented discussion on culture. Furthermore, there is a need of “value judgments” in the debate about cultural policy. Therefore, pragmatic talk about cultural problems is insufficient.

Fourthly, the cultural policy debate is being implemented on different levels, by people with different levels of competency, but finally it must involve all the actors in the cultural process and then – the whole of society.

The first question we must ask ourselves is whether, here and now, we have insight into the indispensability and inevitability of a dialogue that is: inter-sectoral, strategically oriented and approachable⁴.

The second question concerns the “room” where this dialogue could be held:

Firstly: The “room” could be an institution, a permanent public council, a non-governmental organization or network, an uninstitutionalised structure, or even “virtual” – Internet based site for discussions (?).

Secondly: Specifics of such a “room”. One of the more important of them is that this “room” is, as Mr. Guy Saez said, “a room of confidence”.

Thirdly: Could the mass media be developed as the “site” for this dialogue which could involve the whole society? Is the mass media able to promote a constructive, positive, unpoliticised and useful dialogue?

The third question relates to the basis of this dialogue.

Firstly, the dialogue must be based on documents in order to be concrete and constructive. Documents could be:

1. conceptions, blueprints, timetables
2. reports

The Ministry of Culture, as well as the other public institutions, including the municipalities, have to regularly publish their intentions, as well as reports for the actions accomplished. The negligence of the Ministry cannot be ignored: no “annual report for its activities and intentions” has been published, which is inconsistent with the Law for Protection and Development of the Culture (article 14, paragraph 3,

³ I would like to thank to Mrs. Rayna Gavrilova, vice-minister of culture, whose speech on the last day about the necessity of overall, intersectorial dialogue on the cultural problems was the direct stimulus to draw up these notes.

⁴ There are, however, different points of view and opposite arguments:

- The dialogue has to take place inside every art discipline separately. The differences between them are too big to consider common decisions and joint initiatives.
- The dialogue has to be held among the professionals in the cultural sector. Society as a whole cannot contribute anything to the development of a constructive dialogue. Most people are not competent to make statements on the specialized issues of the different arts.

section 2). During the Bistrica seminar it was emphasized that the regional and the municipal institutions also do not announce their programmes publicly, the opportunities for funding that they offer, their reports and intentions.

Secondly, the precise, reliable and detailed data are indispensable in order to achieve a realistic and constructive dialogue. It is impossible to make either prognosis or analysis without thorough recognition of the cultural situation.

There are several possible sources of such data: the Ministry departments for research and analysis, other public institutions – i.e. the National Statistic Institute, independent research centres. One cannot omit the role of the universities. The universities have the requisite potential power to develop themselves as research and consultative centres with decisive participation in the design, building and evaluation of cultural policies not only in the capital but also on regional and municipal level.

Finally: The context of the cultural policy is larger than it is represented here. It includes the relationships with other public spheres as well as the international dimension of the cultural processes. It is important for culture not to be comprehended isolated from the overall trends in the society, as well as its value exactly as an integral part of the general social, economical, political and other processes.

This text is a diagnosis of certain problems as they were revealed in front of me thanks to the Bistrica workshop.

This text is also the first step to the elaborating of an action project.

Analysis of evaluation forms

By Mrs T.Andreeva, Local Project Coordinator for Bulgaria of the *Policies for Culture* Programme.

Participants (staff excluded)

Bulgarian participants' forms: 33/67

Foreign participant' forms: 13/30

I. WORKSHOP FORMAT

The overall seminar format facilitated an exchange that led to concrete, practical results:

- 5: 14/45 31%
- 4: 20/45 44,44%
- 3: 10/45 22,22% (most foreigners)
- 2: 1/45 2% (1 answer only)
- 1: 0%

unranked: 1/46

Comments:

Few comments that deserve to be mentioned are that “**a real network has been established**” but the follow up depends entirely on the activity of each participant / organization.

Few remarks on the fact that participants were not equally prepared so that we've had some passes out through the discussion, which could be due to the moderation of some sessions, or , as several foreign participants say, due to the vagueness of the aims of the event.

“The “physical” arrangement: having the Ministry, Parliamentarians and invited foreign participants in the “inner” circle may have inhibited some of the Bulgarians from intervening in the initial stages”.

Enough time was allocated for discussion:

- 5: 17/45 37,8%
- 4: 16/45 35,6%
- 3: 9/45 20%
- 2: 3/45 7%
- 1: 0
- unranked: 1/46

Comments:

Most part of the participants , both Bulgarian and foreign, evaluate the time as **enough** (Only one BG-participant says: “Extremely insufficient time for discussions”(Form - a parliamentarian), but also . Too many introductions and co-comments; **too big group** for a quality debate, **language barriers** and is should be taken into account in proof of the opposite opinion –for insufficiency of time.

“Case studies – not connected with the topic” (Form - foreign participant);

More discussions to be dedicated to the Third sector, especially during the first day”;

The plenary sessions provided useful foundations and background information for the working group sessions:

- 5: 21/46 45,7%
- 4: 20/46 43,5%
- 3: 5/46 10,9%
- 2: 0%
- 1: 0%

Comments:

Over 90% think that the plenary sessions gave a useful background for the working group sessions, but the conclusions were not clear enough according to several opinions, and on certain topics the discussions were rather superficial.

“I’m not sure how you can expect local authority people to be about problems when the Ministry is so overt”.

The workshop atmosphere contributed to an open, frank, comfortable discussion:

- 5:21/44 47,7%
- 4: 18/ 44,41%
- 3: 4/44 9%
- 2: 0
- 1: 0

unranked: 2

The atmosphere would best be described as (check one):

- *Formal:* 9% (4 answers)
- *Informal:* 91%

Comments:

The foreign people’s opinions differ to a certain extent, speaking about gaps of understanding between local and foreign participants as well as the significant differences of styles.

Several opinions that consider attentions are that there was certain “**unwillingness**” to formulate the problems.

“Original combination of formal and informal” (Form – foreign participant).

II. CONTENT / PREPARATION + materials

The case studies Bulgaria:

- 5: 2/13 15,4%
- 4: 10/13 77%
- 3: 1/13 7,6%
- 2: 0
- 1: 0

Comments

Bulgarian case studies are qualified in few of the forms as “party” reports (too rosy).

More focus on Central European is recommended because of the big differences between CEEurope situation and the Western one.

(completed only by foreigners)

The Bulgarian situation/context was well presented

- 5: 10/45 22%
- 4: 21/45 46,7%
- 3: 11/45 24,9%
- 2: 3/45 6,7%
- 1: 0
- unranked: 1

Comments

We distinguish herewith the **lack of vision** on Bulgarian cultural policy, both on central and local level; comments on the “too pink” or “too black” colored presentations or interventions.

The opinions that foreign people were not very well informed on the situation.

The problems of Bulgaria in cultural sphere were not clearly and exactly formulated.

In general foreign participants were well informed about the Bulgarian context

- 5: 6/44 13,6%
- 4: 16/44 36,4%
- 3: 18/44 41%
- 2: 4/44 9%
- 1: 0
- unranked: 2/44

Comments

In general, foreign participants were informed about the Bulgarian context

Comments such as “Not many of the foreign participants know the situation from the last 2-3 years” reveal the question about the information available abroad about Bulgarian situation /mentioned in question 9/. If being Bulgarians, we are not able to provide it, who would be able to do it then?

The **differences in terminology** should be mentioned as well as a factor of confusions in the presentations and discussions.

III PARTICIPANTS

- Fields (balance)
- Foreign participants
- Usefulness – network

The participants at the workshop represent a pool of experts that will be useful to me in the future:

- 5: 21/46 45,6%
- 4: 16/46 34,7%
- 3: 9/46 19,5%
- 2: 0
- 1: 0

Comments:

“During the working group (Sevlievo case study) the Ministry people didn’t provoke a useful discussion, but a double-sided rapport: both from their own part and from the part of the good examples of municipalities, chosen by them. As a result we have had a false image (thank God) only for foreign participants that there is no problem on local level, so that important topics have been evaded; (essential for the focus theme – the decentralization)”;

The majority of the participants estimate that this WS represent a pool of experts that will be useful in future. We can perceive, however, in some comments, the **lack of third sector representatives** and artists, as well as of their low participation in the discussion and even one opinion of “**very random selected audience**”.

The participants included the necessary balance of the different sectors in order to have an effective discussion of the agenda topics (i.e. enough parliamentarians, ministerial and local government representatives, as well as non-governmental cultural organisations, experts and professionals):

- 5: 11/45 24,44%
- 4: 17/45 37,8%
- 3: 10/45 22,22%
- 2: 6/45 13,33%
- 1: 1 2,22%
- unranked: 1/46

Comments:

A very important question concerning the balance between different sectors at the workshop – the overall result of which tend to medium/good/ balance (4); The comments reveal more information on that topic than the evaluation in figures. We must emphasize the following remarks, and respectively, recommendations for **more**:

- Representatives of other ministries the activity of which has cross-topics with the discussed themes (such as the Ministry of Finances, Education etc...)
- Parliamentarians and their low activity
- Artists
- Business representatives
- Local authorities and elected bodies (mayors); districts and regions.

Foreign participants were well selected

- 5: 29/45 64,44%
- 4: 15/45 33,33%
- 3: 0
- 2: 1/45 2,22%
- 1: 0
- unranked: 1/46

Comments:

Very positive feedback on the selection of the foreign participants. In the comments we distinguish the common willingness and openness of Bulgarian participants to foreign experience and presence in such an informal way, which presumes a good follow up of the programme in the region.

The presence of participants from neighbouring countries form the region provided a valuable contribution to this workshop:

- 5: 19/45 42,2%
- 4: 21/45 46,7%
- 3: 5/45 11,1%
- 2: 0
- 1: 0
- unranked: 1/45

Comments:

The same opinion on the presence of neighbor countries. Unfortunately, several comments reveal that neighbor countries' representatives didn't participate thoroughly in the discussion; a positive consideration is that the exchange with them was useful, because of the similarities of the situations.

A neighbor country representative has emphasized the need of more examples about similarities/differences within the region.

IV RESULTS

As a group we were able to move beyond discussions of present problems, in order to identify potential strategies for the future

- 5: 7/43 16,3%
- 4: 19/43 44,2%
- 3: 10/43 23,25%
- 2: 6/43 13,6%
- 1: 1/43 2,3%
- unranked: 3

Comments

Having a look at the comments we realize that the evaluation figures doesn't exactly correspond. The most part of the comments consist the information that it was mostly an exchange of ideas, but nothing very clear as **strategic issues** had been clarified through the discussion, nor a **clear vision**.

I believe this process can/will contribute to a more effective partnership among all the actors necessary for the development of sound cultural policy in Romania:

- 5: 20/42 47,6%
- 4: 17/42 40,5%
- 3: 3/42 7,1%
- 2: 2/42 4,8%
- 1: 0
- unranked: 4/46

Comments

Everyone seems very positive about the contribution of the process to the effective partnership among the actors, because it always depends on the activeness of all the actors and on their conscience of their role in the civil society.

"This is the way" - is a proof for the **raising awareness** of the roles of the actors in the process, but also the different level of development of cultural policies in Bulgaria embarrasses the partnership between the three parts.

"There were blames and self-criticism about the ministry's openness to dialogue. Whether it is true or not, such opportunities, generated from outside are essential and useful".

"It is necessary all the participants to be introduced currently into the development of the project in Bulgaria as well as to be involved in the working groups".

I guess the discussion will help, but I am afraid that there is a long way to go, also because the necessary funds are not available".

The fundamental differences between cultural policy and legislation were made clear in the course of this seminar

- 5: 12/42 28,6%
- 4: 13/42 31%

- 3: 13/42 31%
- 2: 3/42 7,1%
- 1: 1/42 2,4%
- unranked: 4/46

Comments:

Mostly positive correlation (more than 65%) on identifying misbalances between legislators and cultural policy. Several comments reproaching the economic legislation (*not specified though*)
The terminology problem appears again.

In this seminar we succeeded in identifying critical issues for Bulgaria, which need immediate attention:

- 5: 11/44 25%
- 4: 23/44 52,3%
- 3: 7/44 16%
- 2: 2/44 4,5%
- 1: 1/44 2,3%
- unranked: 2/46

Comments:

Some of the problematic issues have been made clearer, but very important problems remained not mentioned; there is an impression that the problems were not identified, no emergency cases have been resolved.

Special accent on the lobbying issue

At the end of the workshop, I feel that I have a clearer vision of the many components of cultural policy than I did before the workshop

- 5: 22/41 53,6%
- 4: 13/41 31,7%
- 3: 4/41 10%
- 2: 2/41 4,8%
- 1: 0
- unranked: 5/46 (10,8%)

Comments:

Very positive on the role of the WS for the personal **vision** of the cultural policy components:
Existing or not, the cult. policy and strategy is needed both on central and local level. We may consider this rather encouraging, because it will give at least, a wider point of view to all cultural policy makers in their further activity, although the comments such as :

“It made much clearer my vision why **we lack it [the cultural policy]**”

This seminar will help make my own involvement more effective in the formulation of cultural policy in my country:

- 5: 20/42 47,6%
- 4: 15/42 33,(3)%
- 3: 6/42 14,3%
- 2: 2/42 4,8%
- 1: 0
- unranked: 4/46 (8,7%)

Comments:

The most part of the participants have enriched their points of view on that topic.

This seminar improved my understanding of the role that artists and other professionals can play/contribute in the formulation of cultural policy:

- 5: 17/43 39,5%
- 4: 15/43 35%
- 3: 6/43 14%
- 2: 3/43 7%
- 1: 1/43 4,7%
- unranked: 3/46

Comments:

“At that stage, a lot of artists are not aware how they could participate in the formulation of cultural policy”.

The Ministry blames the artists for their “passive” position. The question is whether the Policies for Culture programme may become the **mediator**

This programme increases the awareness of legislators and other policy makers regarding the role that outside, non-governmental experts can play in the process of formulating and implementing cultural policy:

- 5: 17/45 38%
- 4: 15/45 33,(3)%
- 3: 6/45 13, (3)%
- 2: 5/45 11%
- 1: 2/45 4,(4)%
- unranked: 1/46

The comments are more illustrative :

Comments:

“It’s a pity that the deputies were not present; although it has been made clear in which direction the legislation is supposed to develop, especially financial legislation”.

“To be effective and useful, the discussion needs transparency, larger scale of trust and dialog”.

”However more active participation of the NGOs concerned should reveal their ideas about their own participation in the cultural policy”.

“Let’s first hope that they will do something with this awareness”.

In this seminar we succeeded in clarifying the possible manners of partnership for:

a) legislators:

- 5: 7/42 16,(6)%
- 4: 13/42 30,9%
- 3: 10/42 23,8%
- 2: 10/42 23,8%
- 1: 2/42 4,8%
- unranked: 4/46

A balance of the opinions, almost because it is difficult to judge when the legislators were not so many and not very active.

b) members of the Ministry of Culture:

- 5: 15/40 37,5%
- 4: 15/40 37,5%
- 3: 8/40 20%

- 2: 2/40 5%
- 1: 0
- unranked: 6/46 (13,5%)

Rather **Yes** than No

c) central government and local government officials:

- 5: 10/43 23,3%
- 4: 17/43 39,5%
- 3: 13/43 30,2%
- 2: 3/43 7%
- 1: 0
- unranked: 3/46

d) NGOs and professionals

- 5: 9/42 21,4%
- 4: 18/42 42,8%
- 3: 14/42 33,(3)%
- 2: 1/42 2,4%
- 1: 0
- unranked: 4/46

At this seminar we reached agreement on the basic process and principles necessary for interaction and cooperation in the future formulation of cultural policy:

- 5: 13/42 30,9%
- 4: 18/42 42,9%
- 3: 8/42 19%
- 2: 3/42 7,1%
- 1: 0
- unranked: 4/46

Comments:

“I have the feeling that no real “agreement” had been formulated”.

The trends and principles for future cooperation in building up the cultural policy is positive in general (over 70% with marks 4 and 5). The most important recommendation is to enlarge the scale of participation from business sector in order to clarify the vision of which groups, how and why have an attitude toward culture.

Generally, the workshop achieved the results that I expected:

- 5: 2/13 15,4%
- 4: 10/13 77%
- 3: 1/13 7,6%
- 2: 0
- 1: 0

Comments:

“I am not sure about the immediate impact on Bulgarian government and NGOs”.

KEY WORDS that appear for the results of the workshop for the Bulgarian participants:

-INFORMATION ACQUIRED
-TRANSPARENCY
-AWARENESS THAT THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE THIRD SECTOR, PARLIAMENT, OTHER MINISTRIES, AND BUSINESS SECTOR IS NEEDED FOR BUILDING UP OF A RELIABLE CULTURAL POLICY AND STRATEGY.

MOST ESSENTIAL RECOMMENDATION from the evaluation forms:

To invite:

- representatives of other ministries (such as The Ministry of finances)
- more parliamentarians and elected mayors;
- more business people;
- more 3rd sector representatives and artists.
- to enlarge the scale of participation from business sector in order to clarify the vision of which groups, how and why have an attitude toward culture;

Other:

- Stress on the lobbying issue
- Suggestion for seminars by sectors as a follow up;

Discussion:

- More discussions to be dedicated to the Third sector
- Terminology – equal for all the participants
- Stress of HOT issues, not on too “pink” presentations

V MATERIALS

The reading material that I received before the workshop was (check one only):

a)

- *too basic* – 4/31
- *just right* – 24/31
- *too complex* – 3/31

b)

- *not enough* – 4/32
- *adequate* – 27/32
- *too much* - 1/32

General Comments:

“About the quality of the WS materials, over 80% of both Bulgarian and foreign participants find them “**just right**” and “**adequate**”. Very few have mentioned them as “not enough”. However, we have several comments such as those of people (mostly from the part of the Ministry of Culture of Bulgaria) that the information about Bulgarian cultural policy was outdated. Few remarks on the late distribution of the dossier.

In the future, I would recommend more of the following information in advance (check as many as apply):

- *theoretical literature – 6/13*
- *short, practical articles 7/24*
- *more comparative case studies – 11/13*
- *internet sites to visit – 7/13*
- *none of the above - 0*

Other comments:

- translation of legislative acts to be better performed (referring to the translation of the Bulgarian Cultural Act)

Action project proposals received for follow-up

The following action project proposals were submitted to the *Policies for Culture* Project Management before the deadline of 1 May 2001. They have been assessed by the Project Management according to their relevance and applicability in the framework of the *Policies for Culture* programme, looking at:

- 1) do the objectives contribute to realizing the PfC philosophy of “partnership” and “participative policy-making”, whereby all levels of the policy-making process are involved (third sector, executive and elected legislature)?
- 2) does the project match PfC’s strategic objectives at this stage?
- 3) can the project be linked to other PfC initiatives in other countries or in the region?

1. **Construction of a local cultural strategy for the city of Plovdiv** and setting up of an effective structure for an active social dialogue.

Submitted by: European Cultural Month – Plovdiv ’99 Foundation

Partners: 1. Cultural Department of the Municipality of Plovdiv; 2. Municipal Institute for Museum Activities – Plovdiv; 3. Ancient Plovdiv Trust

2. **Discussion forum for partnership “Culture and Business”.**

Submitted by: Euro-Bulgarian Cultural Centre

Partners: 1. Civil Institute and European Law Society; 2. Soros Centre for the Arts.

3. **Strengthening the cultural institutions of the third sector** / the experience of Varna as a cultural and tourist center.

Submitted by: Dobri Hristov Foundation

Partners: 1. Municipal Council of Varna; 2. Tourist Chamber of Varna; 3. Regional History Museum, Varna; 4. Sociological Agency Appea-Gallup; 5. Ohrid Summer Festival, Macedonia

4. **Technological Park “Culture” - The role of the academic world** in the shaping of cultural policies in Bulgaria (the necessity of a new kind of dialogue in the cultural field).

Submitted by: Department “Theory and History of Culture” at Sofia University together with the Institute for Modernity - INFORMO

5. **Bridging Arts and Business in the Balkans.**

Submitted by: Soros Centre for the Arts Foundation - Sofia

Partners: 1. Orbitel, Inc.; 2. EuroBulgarian Cultural Centre; 3. IBM – Bulgaria; 4. S Team Saatchi & Saatchi; 5. United Partners; 6. Interspace Media Centre – Sofia; 7. Open Society Clubs in Rousse, Varna, Bourgas and Plovdiv; 8. Bulgarian Cultural Server www.cult.bg; 9. Bulgarian National Television; 10. Bulgarian National Radio; 11. Literary newspaper, Culture newspaper, Dnevnik daily newspaper, www.liternet.bg.

6. **Legal context of cultural sector** in Bulgaria – Institutional development and dynamics.

Submitted by: European Law Society

Partners: 1. EuroBulgarian Cultural Centre; 2. Union of Bulgarian jurists.

7. **Balkan Music Network Festival**

Submitted by: “KOTA” Tourist Information Club, Sofia

Partners: 1. Mladinski Center, Celje-Slovenia; 2. PHONO, Budapest-Hungary; 3. Post War Sound, Sarajevo, Bosnia /to be confirmed/; 4. Lithium Records, Skopia - Macedonia /to be confirmed/; 5. S. STYLE Agency-Bulgaria; 6. PR NET Agency- Bulgaria; 7. Varna Jazz Society, Varna, Bulgaria; 8. Varna Summer Jazz Festival.