ANALYSIS OF THE COMMISSION COMMUNICATION

“A EUROPEAN AGENDA FOR CULTURE IN A GLOBALISING WORLD”
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NOTE

Content:
This briefing paper provides critical reflections on the European Commission Communication: ‘a European agenda for culture in a globalising world’ (COM(2007)242 final) of 10th May 2007. It highlights some potential points of progress that have been proposed to improve the EU’s difficult and faltering attempts to deal with ‘culture’ since the Treaty of Maastricht, while also identifying important issues that require greater clarity.
This study was requested by the European Parliament's committee on Culture and Education.

This paper is published in the following language:
- Original: EN.

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Manuscript completed in August 2007.

This study is available on the Internet at:


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Executive Summary

This briefing paper provides critical reflections on the European Commission Communication: ‘A European agenda for culture in a globalising world’ of 10th May 2007. It highlights some potential points of progress that have been proposed to improve the EU’s difficult and faltering attempts to deal with ‘culture’ since the Treaty of Maastricht, while also identifying important issues that require greater clarity.

Culture is both a means and an end. The focus of the document’s proposed actions is on instrumental applications of culture, although its language sometimes seeks to imply concern for the value of culture for its own sake (where policy and action are very constrained under Article 151 of the Treaty). Apart from what some might consider to be exaggerated claims for the results of the EU’s small-scale cultural programmes, the Communication does not concern itself with the arts or heritage in their own right. There is an inbuilt elision (or confusion) of the non-commercial contemporary arts and creativity with culture which is produced and disseminated on an industrial scale.

The questionnaire used for consultation with the sector in the process of drawing up the ‘Communication’ was focused on the Commission’s own priorities. In order to achieve better trust and co-operation to the mutual advantage of the EU and the sector, there needs to be a more balanced relationship, with the Commission investing more productively in its natural allies, as has happened in other ‘non-legislative’ policy areas such as environment and health. The proposed Forum should help in this regard.

A key feature of the Communication is its argument for new EU processes and structures through which cultural issues could be raised and taken forward at European level. The context is predominantly instrumental. This is tactically astute and appropriate given the legal constraints of the Treaty and the known positions of certain Member States, but might risk sidelining vital cultural issues of concern to the sector and to civil society.

The main objectives proposed offer the most promising opportunity to date for ‘culture’, as it is institutionalised within the Commission, to escape from its ghetto and be treated more holistically as a force for integration and progress. These aim to promote (1) Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue, (2) Culture as a Catalyst for Creativity and Innovation and (3) Culture as a key component of EU External Relations. This is to be welcomed in terms of horizontal connections and ‘joined-up’ policy thinking, in line with the aim of Article 151.4, but it does not reduce the need to ensure that proper instruments and levels of resourcing are put at the disposal of culture on its own terms.

Intercultural dialogue is an important current EU concern. The 2008 ‘Year’ focus is a useful symbol, but for this to have any real purpose the key point is continuity and what follows afterwards. Mobility in the arts and culture has been a major concern of the professional sector in Europe for over 25 years, but it is rather more honoured in political rhetoric than it is in any significant financial or practical capacity. Nevertheless, there seems to be the will to make progress and it is vital to seize the moment.

In relation to the Lisbon Agenda, culture is being identified as an important catalyst in terms of the creativity and open capacity for innovation it embodies. This is a welcome recognition – but the targets and any means of making the most of the potential linkages are unclear. Good examples tend to be located within local or regional structures, so that sharing and fostering good practice at European level is going to require much more detail and clarity.
Culture as a ‘missing’ element in the EU’s external relations has received a boost through the Member States’ unanimous adoption of the UNESCO Convention on Diversity of Cultural Expressions, now in force. The Commission is proposing a specific fund to support distribution of cultural goods from ACP countries, which is welcome given the many other political priorities of such countries. More generally, the EU should be encouraged to think constructively about how the cultural values of the Member States are jointly promulgated externally.

To deliver its ‘agenda for culture’ the Commission is proposing some constructive ways forward which deserve and need support. Developing positive dialogue and trust with the rather disparate cultural sector is vital. The proposal for improving the evidence base is helpful – although this must take full account of what already exists.

The proposed ‘Open Method of Co-ordination’ is a creative way round the negative constraints of Article 151.5. However, lessons of its application in other policy areas need to be fully learned so that false expectations are not raised. Realistic targets and proactive agendas must be established from the outset to deliver concrete progress and genuine policy influence with the Member States.

‘Mainstreaming’ culture across the EU and its policies is a major – and long overdue – ambition. This needs to be a two-way process which, if it is to have any effect, will require strong support from the Commission at the highest level. The DG for Education and Culture will have to focus some attention on the likely effects of existing and new Directives on its natural constituency, as much as other DGs will have to be helped to develop some awareness of the cultural dimension and what this will mean in practice.

The Communication’s format and content are clearly tactical, taking account of the relatively weak position DG Education & Culture occupies in the Commission and Article 151’s subsidiarity clause. To build strong support for its own legitimate agendas, the DG will need to listen to the professional cultural sector’s own concerns, which include issues raised through the consultation process but omitted from the Communication.
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Analysis of the Commission Communication “A European agenda for culture in a globalising world”
Introduction and Background

Culture under the Treaty is treated as a largely ‘non-legislative’ policy area. An attempt to codify and spell out the limits and possibilities for action was agreed as Article 128 of the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 (later consolidated as Article 151 in the Treaties of Amsterdam and Lisbon). Prior to that, of course, the EEC had engaged with the creative industries as legitimate commodities in trade policies (the MEDIA programme has been in place since 1991), as well as establishing – through inter-governmental agreements – certain limited initiatives such as the European Capital of Culture (at the behest of the Council of Ministers) and support for emblematic organisations such as the European Union Youth Orchestra. It should also be recognised that through cohesion policy substantial contributions have been made to developing the cultural infrastructure in many assisted areas, with some input also through rural development policies. Representative cultural networks such as the European Forum for Arts and Heritage (EFAH) and Europa Nostra have long called upon the EU to make much greater use of the existing ‘complementary competences’ under the Treaty.

On a European Agenda for Culture in a Globalising World

The Communication spells out unequivocally that “Culture is and will therefore primarily remain a responsibility of the Member States... Action at EU level is to be undertaken in full respect of the principle of subsidiarity, with the role of the EU being to support and complement, rather than to replace, the actions of the Member States, by respecting their diversity and stimulating exchanges, dialogue and mutual understanding”.

Exchange, co-operation and mobility are key concepts in this. Article 151 refers specifically to ‘co-operation between the Member States’ and ‘third countries’ as well as to ‘non-commercial cultural exchanges’. Cultural practitioners in the Member States regularly encounter considerable problems in securing financial support to assist mobility given that local, regional and national governments and/or their relevant agencies very often see international exchange as a ‘European’ responsibility, not included within their own policies or budgets. Mobility and networking in the independent civil society and public authority cultural sectors is vital in sharing best practice, evaluation methodologies and exploiting what is created in addition to joint actions which help improve overall effectiveness at EU level.

Article 151 at certain key points incorporates the ambiguity and common confusion over what precisely is meant by ‘culture’ in different contexts. Debate at European - and national - level frequently conflates the very broad sense of the term (e.g. questions such as ‘what unifies Europe?’, ‘can any such unity be understood in cultural terms?’ ‘is there anything approximating to a European culture?’ or ‘what is the appropriate understanding of the dialectic between unity and diversity in Europe?’) with culture in a much more specific sense. This latter refers to culture as the domain of the arts and the heritage, and (both in its amateur and professional expression) as a particular feature and sector in society and as an object of public policy.

This distinction between culture as a means of helping achieve other desirable objectives and culture qua culture must be borne in mind – even if the second mode is often still regarded as an instrument for unity and development in terms of the first. The reason is compelling. When we refer to cultural dialogue (which is what much of the Communication sets out to address) then this usually denotes ‘culture’ in the general sense of the word. It is within the more specific domain of ‘culture’ as a sector that the frustration with a lack of EU strategy or policy has usually arisen, both in relation to the professional sector and a substantial number of the
Member States. A much more focused debate on this area is still missing, but this must not be narrow, defensive or in isolation from the wider social and economic contexts. What is needed is a full relationship (i.e. as an equal partner) with other important policy areas such as education, trade and foreign policy. This concentration on culture as a vitally important sector and ‘soft power’ broker for Europe also implies that sufficient attention is paid to how it operates and the conditions which govern it at European level. This is what the hitherto unimplemented Article 151.4 strongly seems to imply.

The Communication as a whole fails to confront – let alone resolve – the ongoing problem concerning confused understandings of culture within the EU in terms of (a) the contemporary and traditional arts, (b) the European heritage and (c) the profit-driven and profitable ‘creative industries’. The opportunity has therefore been missed to clarify precise references in relation to proposed actions and indicate what the likely effects might be on those very different realms of ‘culture’.

The Europa website provides the following quotation from José Manuel Barroso, President of the Commission, made when the ‘Communication’ was issued: “Culture and creativity are important drivers for personal development, social cohesion and economic growth. Today's strategy promoting intercultural understanding confirms culture's place at the heart of our policies.” The key ‘objectives for a European agenda’ for culture in a globalising world are stated in the Commission’s paper as:

1. promoting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue in Europe;
2. promoting culture as a catalyst for creativity and innovation in the context of the Lisbon Strategy for jobs and growth;
3. ensuring that culture becomes a key component in the EU’s external relations so as to build bridges with other parts of the world.

It should be noted that the above statement and priorities represent culture as having important social, economic, political and generally ‘instrumental’ value, but do not incorporate the issue of culture qua culture (see 3 below for comments and reactions from professionals in the sector).

**Squaring the Circle: EU cultural aspirations and constraints**

The final form of the original Article 128 resulted from compromises and diplomatic trade-offs between Member States, some of which had positive agendas for expanding EU competence into cultural policy, while others clearly had national concerns about limiting it and any consequential expenditure. This explains why the aspirational rhetoric of the opening paragraph of the Article is at odds with the inbuilt practical and political constraints of its paragraph 5. The Communication is open and factual about Member States being reluctant to permit the Commission to initiate any substantive action in this vital policy area, which is firmly designated as coming under subsidiarity rules (now Article 151.5).

In drawing up its ‘Communication’ the Commission has had to tread this difficult path between the known divergent attitudes of the Member States and the hopes and needs of the sector, in order to suggest some positive routes forward which would not lead to almost automatic rejection on principle. No doubt this is partly responsible for the document’s rather cautious and overtly tactical approach and its clear avoidance of any statements affecting the cultural sector itself which might be questioned by Council members on grounds of legitimacy under Article 151.
There are important questions remaining to be asked about the relationship between the EU and the professional cultural sector. How – and to what extent – this can be a more mutually helpful and constructive process? The approach of the consultative questionnaire used by the Commission in the preparation of the Communication (see Section 4 below) was a mixture of top down EU policy-driven and bottom up ‘sector needs’ questions. In the emerging proposals of the Communication a focus on ‘what the sector can do for the European Union’ seems to take precedence over any practical consideration of ‘what Europe can do for culture’.

Europe does now have a range of prominent, respected and efficient international professional networks as key interlocutors for the Commission to use for dialogue and consultation. Indeed the Commission can take some credit for this situation being more stable than was the case ten years ago. These networks, which are membership-based (i.e. reflecting voluntary civil society rather than government or public structures), provide the rudimentary infrastructure for international cultural co-operation. They have an under-appreciated capacity and successful track record in reaching out to cultural operators in ‘new’ Member States, peers in candidate states and further afield to ‘third countries’.

**Process: Consultation Through the On-line Questionnaire**

The Commission declared its intention of taking stakeholder views (i.e. from the subsidised and commercial cultural sectors in particular) into account in the formulation of its Communication. An on-line questionnaire was devised to encourage participants to express their views on issues likely to be raised in the Communication (see Annex 2). This allowed for reasonable reaction time and was accessible up until 9 November 2006. The DG for Education and Culture used this as the basis of a public hearing in Brussels in early December, which was attended by the President of the Commission and the Commissioner for Culture.

The Commission is to be commended for making these stakeholder observations freely available on the web site. The DG says that its consultation was ‘extensive’. Whilst the range of comments submitted was quite wide, there is an issue about the representative nature and statistical validity of the actual number (comparatively low, surely, given the pan-European potential). There is also a marked northern European bias in the volume of those who located the questionnaire and took the trouble to respond. This is partly explained by the preponderance of networks based in Brussels and Northern Europe, but it is disappointing that Mediterranean and Eastern/South-Eastern European responses are rather sparse. It also appears that any serious input from the commercial sector is lacking, as is comment from the professional heritage sector. The Communication claims nevertheless that this consultation has enabled it “to identify a strong consensus for a new EU agenda for culture.”

The style, format and key stated concerns of the questionnaire inevitably reflect a somewhat Commission-centric view of the world. One wonders what advice was sought directly from the sector about the choice and formulation of the questions (and if so, how and from whom it was obtained). The rather more ‘Copernican’ outlook of the sector itself - which was clearly invoked as the main target for stakeholder consultation - is reflected in many of the comments posted, for example:

- “I do not think the way of asking questions helps get any closer to the audience intended. Being able to answer in your own language might be a good start. Why only English and French? Not really open or user-friendly.”
“Most institutions seem to speak a kind of secret language and don’t have the slightest idea of what life is like for artists and consumers. They live in their own European and political constructs, unfortunately.”

“The European Commission is not communicating with the stakeholders of culture” (e.g. in relation to Rights)

“First solve the problems we have.”

“We do not fit the official framework.” (sc. and therefore feel excluded)

“The bulk of the difficulties lie in nationalism as expressed by member states in the Council.”

“Bureaucracy is antagonistic to flexibility and fast processes – which are important in the cultural field.”

“Decentralisation and a reduction in bureaucracy would benefit the sector.”

Certain of the questions which, at first sight, appear to be helpfully open so far as the sector is concerned, actually limit themselves to a small number of pre-determined responses which seem to feed directly into the subsequent content of the Communication. There is, therefore, an unavoidable question to be asked about the tactical purpose and use of the consultation. Question A2, for example, concerning ‘the most important cultural challenges for Europe and the ‘European Project’ in the 10 years ahead’ offers five pre-selected choices to grade in order of priority, viz:

- identity / citizenship
- deepening integration
- intercultural dialogue
- cultural diversity
- EU enlargement

Whilst one can entirely sympathise with DG Education & Culture in its need to design a format allowing it to process the responses in due course in a systematic and meaningful way, the construction of the form inevitably limits the range of sincerely held views likely to be communicated (although, to be fair, there was a final open opportunity for ‘Other Comments’). One would imagine that professionals in the sector, allowed a free choice to state their overriding concerns looking ten years ahead in a European context, would have highlighted some rather different problem issues such as finance, mobility, over-regulation, bureaucracy and transparency, and centralism/nationalism. They would also – and most certainly did – embrace cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, while probably regarding the other three options offered as less relevant to their significant professional concerns. It is correct, however, to identify EU enlargement as a significant issue for practitioners in many new Member States and in relation to future accession countries, to some extent recognising the cri de coeur frequently heard from Eastern and South East Europe about loss of opportunity since the wind down of the Soros OSI programme for culture.
Realpolitik and the Context of the Communication

The approach evident throughout the Communication is overwhelmingly tactical. The influence of the Lisbon Agenda in general, and in particular of the important independently commissioned Report which gauged the economic significance of ‘culture’ in and for Europe are clear to see. It is therefore not surprising that the Communication has a central concern with what the Commission’s DG Education & Culture recognises may appear politically to be the most favoured current ‘drivers’ of EU policy across the board. The non-commercial cultural sector, however, would be unlikely to cite the economy, social policy or employment (in the abstract) as its primary concerns, even while naturally recognising their general importance. The real difficulty that the sector has in relation to the Lisbon Agenda is in identifying specific themes or targets it can contribute to in relation to the knowledge economy and employment. Lisbon as an agenda for action in a ‘non-legislative’ and low priority policy area is too diffuse to be serviceable at operational level in individual cultural organisations, however positive their will to contribute to the greater contemporary European whole.

The Communication is therefore important mainly for its consideration of, and proposals for, new processes and possible structures for cultural issues to be raised, debated and progressed at European level. It is helpfully innovative in looking beyond the very limited EU programmes that promote dedicated cultural initiatives to the role that other EU policies and programmes might play. It is weaker on providing any specific suggestions for action (as opposed to generalised action areas) – and some of those areas indicated may need further consideration in terms of the practicalities or parallel experience in other policy domains. This seems to be the area of most concern to those in the cultural sector who wish the Commission well in its intelligent attempts to take a ‘cultural agenda’ forward, but where the disappointment and ‘fall-out’ in both directions risks being greatest for reasons beyond anyone’s particular control.

No doubt because of the long shadow cast by Article 151.5 there is little specific recognition of the significant contributory role of the value of culture for its own sake. This is regrettable – especially as the Communication looks ten years ahead at a time of concurrent and active institutional reform. This seems to be a missed opportunity which might come to be regretted. A paper on the ‘crisis of legitimacy’ in culture in one of the Member States, published in 2006, ascribes the ongoing problem to lack of distinction and/or confusion between the intrinsic, instrumental and economic values of culture. Cultural policy is characterised as ‘a closed conversation among experts.’ The Communication does little to advance clarity in this regard, on the contrary perpetuating the difficulties and misunderstandings through confusing ‘values’ which are not one and the same thing.

Furthermore, there is no mention or acknowledgement of one of the sector’s long-standing criticisms of DG Education & Culture and its predecessor DGX – namely that it fails to identify, concern itself or monitor the effects of European legislation on its sector on any useful timescale when its intervention might be beneficial. Yet this crucial issue appears to be directly covered under Article 151.4. This seems to be symptomatic of the continuing and damaging vertical ‘silo’ structure operating within the Commission, even if there is some recognition of the need to take practical steps to address the absence of effective horizontal communication and cooperation.

‘European Value Added’ in a cultural context has no real meaning beyond political rhetoric, unless culture is treated and respected as having absolute value in its own terms. The Danish Government during its 2005 EU Presidency did try to produce a workable definition, but unfortunately the attempt failed. The Communication does at least acknowledge (paragraph 3.3)
that ‘culture is a resource in its own right’, but mainly in self-referential mode in relation to the EU’s own poorly funded cultural programmes. Examples of well-intentioned European Directives which have had unforeseen negative consequences on the sector and its customary working practices would include legislation on Data Protection and its impact on marketing, Working Time, which took no account of the nature of work in the performing arts for example, and other professional/occupational and public safety matters (e.g. issues in cultural venues regarding fire risk, permissible noise levels, air quality, etc). General legislation (or lack of it) on authors’ and creators’ rights is also seen as favouring commercial producers much more than individual creators who need the protection within working practice, which operates in a mixed subsidised/commercial context and where there is considerable mobility between employed and self-employed or limited contract status at differing career stages. However, we should acknowledge EU progress on challenging issues such as stabilising book prices, regulating copyright and introducing Droit de suite for artists.

The Communication makes significant claims for the success of the EU’s culture programmes. Exchange and mobility, co-production and literary translation are key themes which require more systematic encouragement and support. Valuable though some of these schemes undoubtedly have been, they tend to be somewhat artificial and overcomplicated in their construction, and slow and cumbersome in their over-bureaucratic processes of implementation and operation, which discriminates against the way individual artists and SMEs are obliged to work (not least in relation to cash flow).

The paper is undeniably a shrewd and careful tactical attempt finally to put ‘culture’ more visibly onto the EU agenda but, so far as the sector is concerned, there is the difficult issue of how to get its own priorities and concerns usefully and effectively defined within the Commission’s three priority themes of (1) the Lisbon Agenda (creative practice), (2) International Relations (exchange and mobility) and (3) Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue. The Communication’s proposals in relation to developing Open Co-ordination and data collection/sharing might be of assistance over time to the sector within Member States. OMC in its application to cultural affairs will need much more discussion. Some Member States will no doubt resist or exclude themselves and it will be important for the Parliament to be seen to be supportive of the concept.

The General Approach

The Communication declares that one of its main purposes is to “seek to establish new partnerships and methods for co-operation between them” including the Commission and Member States and involving civil society and the European Parliament (mentioned in that order). Early acknowledgement is made of an increasing awareness of the ‘unique EU role’ in promoting Europe’s cultural richness and diversity – besides culture’s importance as a key concomitant in achieving strategic objectives in relation to prosperity, solidarity and security. So while the preamble in the document superficially appears to major on culture qua culture and its European history and value in linking the continent, the document’s self-declared purposes are really much more instrumental. The arts and heritage, extraordinarily enough, hardly get any substantial mention in the document other than in the brief section where the Commission claims credit for the 2007-2013 ‘Culture Programme’.

Section 2 begins with a statement to the effect that “the main focus (sc. of the document) will be on the importance of the various facets of culture in developing strategies both within the EU and with third countries.” This is to say that the main focus is not so much ‘strategies for culture’ but ‘strategies using culture’. Nevertheless, the Section’s title is “The Contribution of
the EU to Culture”. Perhaps it would be more accurate to reverse and rephrase it as “The Potential Contribution of Culture to the EU.” Some Member States in their initial responses welcoming the Communication have acknowledged its instrumental approach and its clear recognition of the limitations imposed by subsidiarity. Other States will regret its timidity and the failure to challenge - at least for exploratory discussion purposes - any of those existing severe limitations.

So far as the professional sector and consultation of it is concerned, any direct benefits are consequently likely to be only of a secondary nature. The views expressed in the consultation have been welcomed and used where they concur with the Commission’s own developing agendas, but apparently sidestepped where this may be inconvenient or contentious. The sector will see this as a fault line in the Communication. The Commission – always looking back cautiously over its shoulder at the Member States and Article 151’s subsidiarity clause – is clearly not minded to take any risks in attempting to expand the brief, but is seeking rather to find ways of making progress within already well-established frameworks.

Charting Positive Ways Forward

To quote the report of a discussion organised by EFAH about the Communication shortly after its publication, it is perceived as important “not so much for putting forward specific proposals regarding future European Community action in the cultural field, though it does include a number of such proposals, but for its consideration of new processes and structures through which cultural issues can be raised and debated at the European level.” This seems to be a fair summing up of the way in which the Commission has accepted the political and legal constraints, but means to show willing to make tactical progress wherever possible.

Given that the Communication includes helpful and positive proposals, it is important that any agreements secured from the stated partners are grounded in some realistic belief that the mechanisms suggested will deliver progress, and that the key stakeholders share that belief (see below).

The objectives set out in the document couple ‘a new EU agenda for culture’ with ‘build(ing) on past achievements and reinforcing on-going activities’. The two main strands of the Communication’s proposals, may be summarised as follows:

- establishing clear objectives, aiming to focus EU actions in relation to culture and
- identifying improved ways of formulating and integrating cultural ‘policy’

They should prove useful in helping provide better horizontal co-ordination and some hope of the missing initiative to tackle Article 151.4 being taken up. However, policy and implementing strategy require instruments, which brings us face to face with Article 151.5 and the need for at least some minimum budgetary capability of achieving anything realistic in line with the stated aims.

Proposed Community Objectives for Culture

As indicated above one of the two principal progressive strands in the Communication is to try to establish ‘core’ objectives, and then to identify possible ways of formulating cultural policies and – crucially – tackling how ‘culture’ can be integrated into other EU policies. The focus is on the important ‘hidden’ role of culture in the processes of European integration, a political agenda which the cultural sector may see as more calculated to address the EU’s ‘democratic
deficit’ than the sector’s own essential needs. It seeks to address the role culture can play in bringing people closer to the EU. Culture, despite its identification as ‘a resource in its own right’, is being treated as subordinate to social cohesion, economic development and foreign relations. Bearing that reservation in mind, each of the three objectives nevertheless have their own broader merit. The third one – foreign relations – is treated more substantially than the other two, with some action points clearly drawing on the recent UNESCO Convention spelled out.

Mobility is integral to the first objective on the ‘Promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue’ in Europe. A possible ‘Erasmus’ programme for Culture, based on the well established mobility programme in higher education, was a specific proposal that was discussed and welcomed at the German Presidency’s Berlin Cultural Conference on 7-8 June 2007. If such an idea was pursued, no doubt apparent simplicity of operation and high visibility (as seen from Brussels) might suggest the need for a single programme. The view and experience of the professional sector, on the other hand, would probably argue for a framework initiative capable of including and respecting a number of effective, if limited, existing mobility programmes across Europe and the possibility of developing similar new programmes. This would require careful mapping to ensure that unintentional damage was not wrought by a larger-scale initiative, as existing schemes cover different art forms or sectors with varying target groups as well as national, regional and even département origins. The strength of some of these existing schemes lies in their very proximity to and understanding of their target groups. Their context means that informed decisions can be taken rapidly with the availability of good independent advice, not features for which the Commission’s own programmes are renowned. Any Commission risk of being unwittingly involved in double funding (e.g. with Culture 2007) would need to be carefully considered.

The objective also refers to enhancing intercultural competence, which will be useful not least because it could help provide a context and framework for the necessary continuity and development after the 2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue has concluded. The Commission has yet to make any clear statement of how this important issue will be consolidated and progressed after 31 December 2008. There is no reference to the very significant amount of work done over the years by the Council of Europe in this field, nor any attempt to locate these general proposals within the existing body of academic research or writing on multicultural societies. National and regional authorities will also have concrete and successful cultural policies to share, maybe opening up sensitive but vital issues, such as recognition and representation, which do not appear to be mentioned.

The second objective – ‘Promotion of culture as a catalyst for creativity and innovation in the context of the Lisbon Strategy for jobs and growth’ is what it states, but can only acquire any meaning or real force if the totality of Member States are strongly supportive and are prepared to take individual action which is not always overt in national policies (although over the past ten years the ‘creative industries’ have been receiving greater policy priority). The clear Commission line seems to be to demonstrate synergies with the Lisbon Agenda on the knowledge economy and employment and to make use of that to help achieve better recognition of culture as an important factor in creativity’s role in embracing change and ensuring Europe’s future economic competitiveness. The objectives to promote creativity in education and capacity building through training (already a dimension of EU programmes) are important. However, if this is to provide a credible and useful focus for the proposed 2009 ‘European Year of Creativity and Innovation’ there is a huge amount of detailed thinking and planning to be done very rapidly.
It has already been noted that the Commission’s own surveys into cohesion policy and culture admit to enormous problems in identifying targets and comparability of expenditure. As a framework for action the Communication seeks to secure some broad principles through agreement. Nevertheless, given the Communication’s stress on ‘respecting subsidiarity’ and the Lisbon Agenda’s very broad targets, it is difficult to see how this new objective could be implemented effectively in the rather vague terms stated. Furthermore, it seems to assume the economy as the key driver which, we have already observed, is not a view supported in the sector’s comments responding to the consultation.

The Communication acknowledges the role of the cultural sector in building creativity in education and amongst Member States there is an impressive range of good practice carried out by professional cultural organisations. However, this is not always so visible at European level, as the majority of the effective policy interventions linking the interdependent creative (i.e. arts based) operators and the flow and exchange of talent, ideas and innovation (= ‘creativity’) takes place at the local and regional levels. So far as the sharing of skills is concerned, the increasingly common movement between cultural production in the profit and not for profit sectors is not a practice that sits easily with the Commission’s rigid vertical structures.

The third objective – Ensuring that culture becomes a key component in the EU’s external relations so as to build bridges with other parts of the world – is in line with the frequently expressed wishes of the professional sector, whose mind is engaged at European and international level, and also with a substantial number of comments recorded in the consultation. As the Communication states, it also harnesses the agreement of all 27 Member States to the UNESCO Convention on Diversity of Cultural Expressions. The Commission is proposing the creation of an EU-ACP Cultural Fund to support the distribution of ACP cultural goods. Promoting market access to European and other markets for cultural goods and services from developing countries through ‘targeted actions’ and preferential/trade-related assistance measures will be useful if it encourages more developing countries to recognise the potential significance of emerging cultural industries in the hierarchy of their other priorities. It also opens up the possibility of mutual exchange and mobility within the sector in a more systematic way.

The more detailed objectives set out in the document for addressing in relation to international relations are:

- Develop political dialogue with all countries and regions in the field of culture and promote cultural exchange;
- Use external and developmental policies to protect and promote cultural diversity through technical and financial support;
- Ensure that all co-operation programmes and projects take full account of local culture, person to person contact and culture/education integration;
- Promote active EU involvement in the work of international organisations dealing with culture.

We consider the issue of culture in the EU’s international relations as important. Misconceptions about the EU exist not only among European citizens, but also in the wider global arena. As a recent report says: “The EU needs to elaborate some core messages that will not only explain what it is, why it does what it does, in the way that it does it, but also what values this unique
collection of states represents". Culture - in the broader sense - has a central role in this, but not if it is on the basis of ad hoc events organised at the behest of the Commission’s external offices to doubtful effect. This is an area where a clear strategy needs to be applied. It is also important in the context of culture’s role in development for Member States to recognise that the primary objectives of EU actions in, for example, African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries (ACP) countries, is to facilitate the local population to develop markets for their own cultural goods and not for the promotion of new markets for Member States’ own cultural goods (or, even worse, their short term exploitation of what may appear, superficially, as ‘exotic’).

Responses to the consultation made reference to the earlier proposal that there could be 'European houses of culture' in key 'third country' cities (e.g. Moscow, Istanbul, Cairo) run by professional cultural operators - not diplomats or civil servants - awarded through open competitive franchise. There is also, we suggest, a need for a coherent 'European Visitor Programme' enabling visitors from 'third countries' to take in several different events within the EU in a single trip.

Proposed Methods of Improving Co-ordination and Policy Development

The Communication usefully identifies what it sees as four essential dimensions in the required partnerships to deliver its ‘agenda for culture’:

- Further developing dialogue with the cultural sector;
- Setting up an open method of co-ordination;
- Supporting evidence-based policy making;
- Mainstreaming culture in all relevant policies.

Because this will provide the real test for the sector of whether or not the Commission can really deliver on it's hoped for progress, each ‘dimension’ is worth examining in turn.

Dialogue: the Commission states that it is committed to a ‘structured dialogue’ with the sector to provide a framework for regular exchange of views and best practice, input into policy making, follow-up and evaluation. The Commission welcomes sector progress towards what it terms representative organisations’. We should not, however, oversimplify the situation. A perceived weakness in any ‘structured partnership’ to date is that the broad sector’s voice can be dissipated precisely because the professional interests are disparate. The concerns of the contemporary creative and performing arts are often very different from those of heritage organisations, while the needs of the subsidised or mixed-economy organisations and individuals may often be very different from those of commercial operators. We should not underestimate the extent to which divergence and plurality of interests and concerns are inherent features of culture as a ‘sector’.

Traditionally, the professional cultural sector has tended to observe that the DG Education and Culture has failed to invest in its own natural constituency and stakeholders, while the DG has found it difficult to deal with the wide-ranging demands of the sector in a ‘non-legislative’ area and with Article 151.5 as the backdrop. However, the contrast with, for example, environment or public health demonstrates what might be possible as relationships and trust improve, leading to a broader base of cumulative NGO and structural support in the Member States. The Commission is also suggesting that a Cultural Forum should be created for consulting stakeholders. The composition of any such group will need very careful thought if it is to be regarded by the sector as genuinely representative of its legitimate interests. Using the constituency as allies is a positive change, but gaining trust will require rather more detailed explanation of how professionals and civil society will actually be engaged and involved.
Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC): in order to make progress and, in particular, have a means of dealing with the restrictive or hitherto negative aspects of Article 151.5, this soft mechanism (which formally can be traced back to the March 2000 Lisbon Summit) is proposed. It is described as a ‘structured, but flexible’, co-operative approach between the Commission and Member States, involving benchmarking and sharing best practice (which have had considerable success, incidentally, in the Council of Europe’s cultural policy over the years). The European Parliament seems to be remote from the process despite what one could argue is its closer proximity to civil society. This may simply be an accident of the way the Communication is worded, as the document does say that the Parliament, ECOSOC and CoR ‘should be involved in the process’, but this requires rather more detailed clarification. Flexible and non-binding, OMC is sometimes represented (or possibly misrepresented) as a way of the Commission getting a ‘foot in the door’ of national policy areas covered by subsidiarity. However it has a productive record in relation to social protection and inclusion etc. where it has a regular – but relatively light – reporting mechanism.

The key question for cultural policy has to be “will OMC operate only on a laissez-faire basis or can it be established with some real targets from the outset to ensure that the profile of important cultural issues actually is raised at the domestic level and can therefore influence policy?”

What will the indicators be, who will set them and how? The Communication says that the OMC allows the cultural sector “to have a voice at the European level”. However, will the sector have any role in the setting of the measures – potentially a very contentious area calling for early dialogue with regional and national authorities? Some may see this ‘half-way house’ as not having sufficient authority, and commentators in other policy areas have noted the absence of any real sanctions for poor performance and the ignoring of uncomfortable findings that might prove politically embarrassing. There is also some anecdotal evidence from the social field that Member States have been reluctant to engage because of allegedly bureaucratic processes acting as a disincentive.

Evidence Base: OMC operating in the cultural field might be of some use in policy development at a national level through exercises in mapping and data collection that can be shared. Unless this is taken forward on a well-informed and professional basis, however, there might be a risk of duplicated effort. Data collection in the cultural field has quite a long and complicated history (even within the EU itself). Ministers of Culture have been engaged on and off with EUROSTAT about the collection of cultural data for well over ten years. The work of EUROSTAT in establishing agreed frameworks for collecting and analysing data has made progress, especially in the area of employment in culture, but its work and that of cultural researchers and statisticians has been hindered by the apparent unwillingness of some Member States to commit resources at national level to address the variable quantity and quality of statistical information. The OECD has recently entered into this field, and the Council of Europe’s impressive published series of national cultural policy evaluations started in the late 1980s and its ‘Compendium of Cultural Policies’ is readily available on the web (though this too suffers from incomplete data in Member States). Care will need to be taken to target and concentrate effort where it is actually needed and can serve some useful policy development purpose.

Mainstreaming Culture: President Barroso gave a strong personal indication of the need for change and progress on this front in 2005. Subsequently, he identified and met with a representative group of professionals from the sector. The Communication now speaks of a ‘structured but flexible’ co-operative approach between the Commission and Member States. However, despite apparent commitment at the highest level within the Commission, progress
has been extremely slow. Unless Article 151.4 – almost fifteen years on – is at last properly implemented and effectively monitored, it is difficult to see how the Commission’s aspiration for culture to be mainstreamed into all other relevant policies could be realised. This problem seems to persist from a combination both of political will and of Commission structure and ingrained practice.

The Communication refers to an ‘inter-service working group’. This is an interesting and welcome concrete development by DG Education & Culture, but how will it function in practice – and from where will it draw advice? The sector is likely to remain sceptical until greater and more convincing detail is presented by the Commission. The record of cross-departmental cooperation in cultural matters (both ways) is very poor and we note the unproductive but long-standing lack of connection between culture and education within the DG itself. Reference has already been made to the complete failure of communication between DGs in relation to what is now one of the Communication’s key priorities. A recent opportunity for consultation on cultural matters by DG Trade was issued at only three days advance notice, and DG Education & Culture appears to have no standing group which can advise on this.14

**Regular Operation Procedures and Monitoring**

10.1 The Commission seems to accept the need for some more regular monitoring of cultural policy, but is sensitive to the charge that this should not become an end in itself. In any case, a major recommendation of the 2001 European Parliamentary Resolution on Cultural Co-operation in Europe to create a European Observatory was not adopted as originally conceived. This will no doubt put considerable pressure of expectation on the proposed Forum, rendering the manner in which its members are recruited and how it will operate in an open and transparent manner even more important. OMC on the other hand – arising it would seem out of the President’s initiative – is not a Commission mechanism but one which needs to have the close involvement of the Member States.

**What is Missing from the Communication?**

Given the Communication’s focus on a tactical need to secure some progress from the basis of a small DG and the constraints of Article 151, the document has much to commend it. However, from the point of view of the sector and civil society (who responded to the consultation in good faith) there is bound to be a degree of disappointment at what does not feature prominently or is omitted. The Commission’s priority list of objectives reflects its legitimate concern to move the cultural agenda forward at EU level by strengthening issues which Member States have been considering for some time within the Council of Ministers and with which, on the whole, they are likely to be comfortable. Nevertheless, they are by no means the only or main concerns of the sector. Some of the professional practitioners’ most pressing current issues would include:

- The unmet resource needs of arts and heritage themselves;
- Copyright protection and employment conditions;
- Freedom of movement and the means to exercise it (already a key theme in the Culture 2007 programme) (Decision No. 1855/2006/EC).

In order to achieve progress, there are also many more technical questions about how the Communication is to be debated, agreed and taken forward. Who is going to be asked to chair the individual discussion sessions in Lisbon in September 2007 and, more importantly, who is going to brief them, and on what basis? Will there be a real opportunity for genuinely open discussion and the raising of missing topics, or is it mainly intended by the Commission as a
limited tactical exercise to consolidate past practice and obtain the Member States’ agreement to the newly articulated objectives?

Conclusions

The opportunity created by the Commission to make much-needed progress on the broad cultural policy front is very welcome. The Commission has clearly taken account of what it sees as politically achievable in the current circumstances and within the constraints of Article 151. It must be recognised that gains are unlikely to be immediate, and that common sense dictates the selection of some limited themes likely to deliver success and visibility. Nevertheless, whether the priorities identified are the most important issues is open to question. The concrete objectives will certainly need more detailed proposals and, in some cases, the timescale for achieving the necessary inputs and agreements is bound to be very challenging.

In the light of the process of drawing up the Communication, the arts and heritage sector may feel that their own expressed concerns are not adequately represented in the document which has been released. There is a background history of sector expectation and frustration dating back to Maastricht in 1993. It is crucial that, in what follows the Communication, the Commission and the sector can work together towards objectives which are agreed and mutually supporting.

The Communication rightly draws attention to the Commission’s failure up until now to deal with cultural policy or strategy in a horizontal manner. Whilst we presume that formal agreements on inter-service arrangements have been secured from other DGs, it is harder to know whether ‘culture’ is really now registering on the EU’s radar, or whether DG Education & Culture is still having to argue the case in principle, point by point, with more powerful and much better resourced DGs which think they can afford to ignore it. Are there officials designated to fulfil a constructive monitoring and co-operation role? To what extent are Commissioners themselves signed up to the new spirit of co-operation across policy agendas and their own designated spheres of influence?

The Communication seems to reflect the increasing trend within the EU to seek to validate cultural ‘policy’ in the light of its capacity to facilitate integration, contribute to a multicultural ‘citizens’ Europe’, and to economic growth and development coupled with innovation. Whilst these ‘instrumental’ uses all have considerable value and may be less contentious politically, the document appears to continue the undervaluing of culture itself. This issue remains to be addressed.
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## Annex 2: Stakeholder Consultation in the preparation of the Commission Communication

The on-line questionnaire of DG Education & Culture

### A. Important challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>List of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A.1</strong></td>
<td>Are art and culture linked to the process of European integration and how can they contribute to it?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A.2</strong></td>
<td>Which are in your view the most important cultural challenges for Europe and for the European project in the 10 years ahead? Please explain briefly your choice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A.3</strong></td>
<td>Do you think that culture plays a role in individual personal development and social cohesion in Europe? If so, please indicate how this role could be supported at European level?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A.4</strong></td>
<td>Do you see a role for culture as a stimulus for creativity in Europe and as a catalyst for innovation and knowledge? If so, please indicate how this role should be supported at European level?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### B. The cultural sector, Community policies and cooperation in the European Union

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>List of Participants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>B.1</strong></td>
<td>Which are the most important challenges for the cultural sector in the European Union in the 10 years ahead?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B.2</strong></td>
<td>In your opinion, which are the Community policies and their specific aspects that have the greatest impact on the activities of the cultural sector at European level or to which the cultural sector could make an important contribution? How are you affected by these policies, which developments in these policies could contribute to the development of your sector and its cross-border activities, what might this contribution consist of, serving which specific aims and with which partners? Have you identified any concerns or difficulties in relation to these policies? Which European developments could facilitate the involvement of your sector?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B.3</strong></td>
<td>In addition to the Community policies and areas mentioned above, have you identified other fields in which coordination or cooperation at European level could significantly contribute to the fostering of the cultural sector? If so, which one(s)? What should such coordination/cooperation consist of and what would be the added value?</td>
<td></td>
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### C. International aspects and co-operation with international organisations

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>List of Participants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>C.1</strong></td>
<td>What is the scope of your activities and/or co-operation with and/or in third countries (outside the EU)? In which geographical areas and in which cultural sector(s)? Which should in your view be the objectives of the European Union in its relations with third countries in the field of culture? Which types of action(s) would contribute to these objectives?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C.2</strong></td>
<td>What is your experience of relations/cooperation with other international or regional organisations active in the cultural sphere, such as UNESCO or the Council of Europe? How do you see the relationship between action at EU level and within the framework of those organisations?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## D. Arrangements for dialogue and co-operation at European level

**Question D.1** Do you think there are particular difficulties in the framework of the dialogue between the cultural sector and the European institutions? If so, what are they? How do you think this dialogue should develop, both with regard to the cultural sector and the European institutions in order to make it more structured and sustainable?  

**Question D.2** What could be in your opinion the objectives common to the whole of the cultural sector at European level?  

**Question D.3** Among the areas of action in which more advanced coordination between Member States of the EU might be feasible, which are the ones with significant European value added for the world of culture? Should this coordination involve all Member States or could it be developed by a group of interested countries?  

## E. Other comments
Notes

1 An independent Report commissioned from Bates & Wacker by the former DGX under instructions from Culture Ministers calculated that in the budget cycle 1989-93 only 7% of EC ‘cultural’ spending came from identifiable ‘culture’ budgets. 83% was identified within Structural Funds, with 10% accounted for through research and development or exemplary ‘instrumental’ pilot projects (Community Support for Culture, published June 1993).

The more recent Commission compilation which examined this expenditure between 1994-1999 notes three rather different elements of ‘cultural’ expenditure within ‘operational programmes’: (1) direct support for cultural infrastructure or installations (e.g. concert halls, conservation or archaeological sites); (2) indirect infrastructure support facilitating access to culture (e.g. roads leading to a site), and (3) general support for a region (roads, hotels) which can help promote the economic development of a region through tourism relying partly on culture.

2 See discussion paper by Christopher Gordon and Theodoor Adams, The European Union and Cultural Policy – Chimera, Camel or Chrysalis? commissioned by the European Cultural Foundation and also published by the German Presidency on its Kultur macht Europa website (June 2007).

3 The oldest established is IETM (the informal performing arts network international network for contemporary performing arts) originating in 1981, followed by Europa Nostra and EFAH/FEAP (the European Forum for the Arts and Heritage). There are many other more specialised voluntary networks within the arts and heritage, as well as powerful and better resourced commercial lobbies such as the European Music Office.

4 “It would be helpful to set up regional funds for cultural exchange to address the gap that has existed since the Soros Foundation ended its funding. Similarly, funding for artistic mobility should be improved throughout the new Member States.” Lidia Varbanova in The EU Enlargement Process: Culture in between National Policies and European Priorities in ‘Journal of Arts Management’, Law & Society, Vol. 37.1

5 KEA European Affairs The Economy of Culture in Europe published December 2006. The Report estimates the massive and increasing importance of the creative economy to the EU, indicating that the culture and creative sectors – television, cinema, music, performing arts, entertainment, etc. – in the EU generated €654 billion in 2003 (2.6% of the Union’s GDP). The authors also draw attention to the less direct and broader benefits of the sector (e.g. in relation to the links between creativity and innovation generally [cf. the Hong Kong Creativity Index], to ICT, to regional development and to urban regeneration and commercial relocation decisions).


7 As pointed out in the briefing note on Article 151.4 to the EP by Rod Fisher (International Intelligence on Culture) dated 18 June 2007, this is an obligation and not merely an option. The internal Commission task of scrutiny for impacts of EU legislation on cultural practice has been neglected and demonstrates both a failure of will and management across Directorates (for example in contrast to normal practice in respect of the environment).

8 One specific instance: the UK’s Department of Culture, Media and Sport in a short paper circulated to solicit views from the sector and civil society as well as other government Departments states that “the Communication reiterates the basis for cultural activities within the EU while making clear that it will remain primarily the responsibility of the Member States”.

9 European Forum for the Arts and Heritage, A New EU Agenda for Culture? by R. Craufurd Smith (May 2007). The note concludes by observing that while the Communication “may appear rather thin on substance it is potentially important” in a number of ways relating to processes and wider international relations.

10 This and related issues are explored in Fisher, R (ed), A Cultural Dimension to the EU's External Policies: from Policy Statements to Practice and Potential, Amsterdam, Boekmanstichting and LabForCulture, 2007.

11 The EFAH discussion note mentions a good example in the Netherlands’ cross-cutting policy to integrate access to culture and cultural awareness into their formal education system.

12 The Commission’s working document on use of Structural Funds for culture during the 1994-1999 Budget Cycle notes that “The amounts are significant, but must be considered with a great deal of caution. Because of the range of definitions of the concept of culture, these figures take into account differing situations from one country to
another. Moreover, the Member States have frequently stressed the fragmentary nature of the data forwarded, linked to the highly decentralised management of the Structural Funds.”

13 President Barroso, in a speech to an informal joint meeting of EU Ministers for Culture and the professional sector held in Budapest in November 2005 (Inclusive Europe? – Horizon 2020), first stated publicly that he was convinced of the need to ‘mainstream culture’ in EU policy. He subsequently announced that he would be setting up a cross Commission Task Force to progress this idea. Concrete results are awaited.

14 The DGs responsible for Regional and Social Development have, in the past, published reports on exemplary cultural projects they have been involved in funding, but with little or no cross-referencing to the DG responsible for cultural affairs. Major opportunities for the Commission to highlight key roles of culture and their success at European level have consequently been lost. DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities tendered for and commissioned a major piece of independent research (from the University of Northumbria) in 2003 to identify, analyse and compare cultural policies and programmes used to reduce poverty and social exclusion in eight Member States. Despite the research team’s specific suggestion, DG Education & Culture was not asked to be involved at any stage in the Commission’s process, not was it invited to the concluding seminar in Brussels when results were discussed. DG Education & Culture itself however abandoned any attempt to assess the social impacts in its own commissioned evaluation of the Culture 2000 programme as ‘too difficult’.