

Note on the type of products and distribution networks that could be used on behalf of the Council of Europe's initiative ' Cultural identities and shared values of citizenship'

September 2005
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The following note intends to draw a synthetic picture of a number of elements and proposals that could render more effective the Council of Europe's initiative in the field of 'cultural identity and shared values of citizenship'.

An informed observer would start by addressing, however, a couple of critical aspects that render this task less easy and appealing than it might seem.

One could say that the Council of Europe went, in the last 5-7 years, through a serious erosion of the capital of image and of trust that, more generally, the cultural milieus and more specifically, the European cultural governments used to put into its original and outstanding action. Today, the Council endorses, unfortunately, for new generations of European cultural operators an old fashioned, outdated look, that does not correspond either to its founder's generous and forward looking ambitions, nor to its real and still inspiring potential.

Why should the approach change?

Hence, in order to develop our proposals, one feels necessary to look into some of the 'easy to notice' reasons for this 'uneasy' situation. They can be summed up as follows:

1/ A gradual loss of a sense of the visionary and pioneering role of the Council of Europe within the cultural cooperation field.

The various initiatives taken within the cultural committee and implemented through its executive secretariat and other different instruments of cooperation starting 1954 (year of the European Cultural convention) had dramatically weakened, during the last decade, their catalysing impact, their capacity to mobilise and respond to present needs and mirror the preoccupation of cultural operators of the member states. Hence, people working in the cultural domain lost interest in the Council's initiatives and indirectly looked for other reference points for building and comforting their scale of values.

2/ The fact that some of the main, small, but effective instruments of grass root cultural cooperation (mobility schemes on behalf of cultural management training, financial support to cultural administration training certificate Marcel Hicter and to the ENCATC network, substantial support to networks development, whose influence and impact in the European cultural sphere became extremely important in the recent years)... in short: the more or less direct link with the cultural civil sector, disappeared and nothing replaced it. We have to note the paradox that, when pioneering, but weak, cultural administration training or/and networking were just emerging, they were supported and gained critical political caution through the CoE substantial moral and financial investment. It is, therefore, a paradox to notice that now, when giving support to these, since, well established structures, would really mean investing into healthy advocacy on Council of Europe behalf, assistance and attention completely vanished.

3/ In the unfair financial competition with EU, whose cultural action was launched in the first part of the 90's (after the signature of the Maastricht treaty) Kaleidoscope and later on, Culture 2000 and despite the severe criticism of the cultural milieus concerning the

bureaucratic complexity and heaviness of the EU cultural programs , the Council of Europe failed the opportunity to reaffirm its humanistic oriented approach and the universal values system that it always put forward .

4/ For new democracies, after the successful and unequalled immediate reaction of the Council of Europe's initiatives in accompanying the just emerging post communist cultural governments to understand and promote the values of democracy through programmes like the one of 'evaluation of cultural policies', but also through rapid and thorough institutional integrating into the Council's public debate instances and allowing them, thus, to better learn what democratic debate looks like in real, followed the mitigated and irrelevant impact of schemes like Mozaic or other and the engagement in ad-hoc, short term, unsustainable relationship with local and regional intellectual communities, as well as the chronic incapacity to engage long term, sustainable follow up activities in the field of participative and democracy driven policies for culture.

5/ An important weakness to be noted is also the late absence of really forward looking new subjects to be dealt with in the light of the recent critical geopolitical evolution, the more and more complex generational gaps appearing in European societies and the need for a revised set of reference to be invented, one in resonance with the present generation's aspirations and context.

6/ Last, but not least, the effective impact of the very, very many interesting and valuable documents and reports that Council of Europe experts have been producing for decades now , is not visible. Also, the effect at national government levels in Europe, the fact that the cultural and intellectual milieus are stakeholders and active promoters of the ideas and values promoted by these texts remains unseen and unknown..

These general critical remarks are to be taken into account in the light of an urgent need of the Council of Europe's cultural initiatives to come 'in from the margins' and back to formerly better used practices of collaboration and connection with the European cultural broad community, practices that had , in the past, consolidated and nourished its image and could boost its authority today.

How should the approach change

There are three practical lines of action to be considered in order to obtain an effective impact of the Council of Europe's initiatives in the field of 'cultural identities and shared values of citizenship'. They are:

1. The instalment, as much as possible of concrete partnerships with the European cultural independent sector (networks, foundations like ECF), but also with the diplomatic agencies (cultural centres of different countries that have networks all over the world: British council, Institute Minkiewicz, The French cultural Centres, Goethe institutes). These organisations are critical distributors of ideas and good interfaces with national and regional realities.
2. The involvement of identified personalities of cultural mediation that can borrow their charisma to the Council's of Europe often rigid transmission modalities. Thus, a system of rotating 'Council of Europe cultural ambassadors' could be labelled and used for presence in the very numerous meetings and seminars organised yearly in Europe, on behalf of the Council's initiative on cultural identities and shared values of

democracy. This involvement of cultural personalities would allow not only visibility but a new quality of the Council presence at national cultural events of international nature

3. A more result oriented way of connecting with national levels of an initiative like 'cultural identities and shared values of citizenship', as, for example: organising public debates in the enlargement countries on the subject of cultural identities and in collaboration with local operators and the national governments, or: using the momentum of expert consultations for the compendium of cultural policies supported by the Council and realized by Erikarts, which deals at the moment with the issue of cultural diversity indicators in European national cultural policies .

Suggested instruments

These three main 'lines of conduct ' could be complemented with a couple of other instruments. Thus, the initiative 'cultural identities and shared values of citizenship' could become the necessary pilot ground for a new generation of reconnecting initiatives between the Council and the European cultural public space. The products of this initiative could be:

- A. The setting up of a European mobility scheme addressed to emerging artists, cultural operators and scholars and independent European organisations, aiming at the familiarisation of the grantee with a specific local or regional European context and offering him or her the possibility of a 'cultural European journey ', being more prospect and research oriented than product oriented. The shaping of this scheme (design, criteria of selection and assessment and even matching funds...) should be done in strong collaboration with networks and other cultural organisations with European focus, so that the broadest and most informed way of launching and implementing the scheme be facilitated at grass root level; a toolkit for artistic mobility like the site on-the move (IETM) could be one of the main partners and implementers of the scheme on behalf of the Council. The notions of intercultural competence and virtual and real democratic communities can be developed and can be treated according to the scope of the Council's initiative . The involvement of partners would function, on one hand, as a reminder of the preoccupation of the Council of Europe concerning one of the critical issues today for the cultural sector: mobility and the multiple identity dimension of our societies and would allow networks and other independent organisations representatives to endorse and advocate the initiative(as part of cultural identities and shared values of citizenship) at their respective national levels.
- B. The realisation of a broad inquiry run on behalf of the Council of Europe by research partners like CIRCLE, Ericarts , Culturelink or other research networks about the meaning of identity and citizenship in today's Europe and how to translate this in the reshaping process of cultural policies (eventually, collaboration with the ECF's laboratory for cultural cooperation research in progress activities, with ECUMEST 'Policiesforculture' programme , Balkankult, Apollonia, ...).
- C. The design of a videogame that addresses the issues of citizenship and cultural identities and distribution on behalf of the Council of Europe in partnership with the ELIA network of arts and media schools, the European Council of artists, EuNetArt and TransEuropHalles. These three strong European artistic networks are the ideal in-between distributor for a Council of Europe initiative, being themselves brought to be

in need of this type of media product to be presented and commented during their annual meetings and forums, but also on behalf of the very numerous education establishments that compose their membership.

- D. The setting up of joint workshops during the cultural networks annual meetings, on the issue of cultural identities and values of citizenship and translate the Council of Europe approach in a grass root context in order to augment its effectiveness.
- E. Build up, in cooperation with some European Universities, special modules on the Council of Europe action lines and approach to modern problems; The proliferation of European masters in cultural administration or international relations would allow motivating and interesting partnerships from this point of view. The pedagogy of the European process would , thus, be endorsed by the organisation which is better placed that EU to debate about values.
- F. Consider a specific presence inside the virtual space for the initiative on cultural identities and shared values of citizenship'; the interactive , new media sector in Europe is today extremely effective and appealing for new generations. This could either be realised in partnership with different already existing and well known cultural sites, like On-The-Move, Enicpa, MARCELL, HEREIN(the link with the heritage could be crucial!) or be realised as an initiative in itself, allowing direct interactive participation of the younger generations in the European debate of these issues and in a way much more familiar to them.

To sum up, product and effective distribution channels for the above mentioned Council of Europe initiative, should consider:

- How to make cultural diversity effective
- The pedagogy of the European process
- How to address the split between academics and operators and their involvement in the European cultural project
- The necessity of a 'retour aux textes' (revision and dissemination of the 1954 desiderates and commenting, revisiting them and adapting them to the new realities) in national context, but with Council of Europe input
- Active partnership with cultural diplomacy agencies
- Active collaboration with European cultural networks-to use them as disseminators and legitimate interface with the cultural sector
- Using cultural figures as 'Council of Europe ambassadors' for a certain content oriented mission of transmission
- Addressing the generational gap, the new media, the virtual public space as disseminator and interface

Through this kind of action lines, to which other pilot-products can be added, the policies and practices might come back together on behalf of the Council of Europe's need to reaffirm its value oriented approach as well as the capacity to continue be a legitimate reference of the mission it endorsed after WW2.