A STEP CHANGE IN CROSS-BORDER ENGAGEMENT? THE POTENTIAL OF A EUROPEAN OBSERVATORY FOR CULTURAL CO-OPERATION

An initial discussion paper for the European Cultural Foundation

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CONTENTS

1.   **INTRODUCTION**

1.1   The intention of this paper is to contribute to the reflection and debate on cultural co-operation in Europe in general and the potential contribution to this process of a 'European Observatory on Cultural Co-operation' in particular.

1.2   The idea of a European observatory came from a European Parliamentary *Resolution on Cultural Co-operation in the European Union*, adopted on 5 September 2001. It seems to have provoked curiosity, support and even antagonism, to such an extent that some of the other suggestions in the same Resolution are in danger of being overlooked. Nevertheless, it is important to consider, among other things, what such an observatory might do, examine possible goals, look at the relationship of such an organisation to the complex ecology of cultural observatories, research centres and European networks that currently exist in Europe, and note the experience in other sectors where an 'observatory' has been introduced. It is important to emphasise this is not a feasibility study. The European Commission will appoint an organisation to undertake such a task[1]. The aim of this brief paper is to indicate and examine some of the issues that will need to be considered if a European Observatory on Cultural Co-operation is to be established. If this work is also helpful to those commissioned to undertake the feasibility study that will be of added value.

1.3   The convergence of pressure from the European Parliament to re-energise cultural action at European level, the interim review of the Commission's Culture 2000 programme, the assessment of the impact of clause 4 of the Treaty article 151 legitimising EU action on culture, and the Convention process reviewing EU institutions, operations and policies in the light of enlargement, provide us with an opportunity for a cultural debate that might not re-occur for a generation. It is an opportunity that should be grasped.

1.4   In compiling this paper, I have been able to draw on the following: my participation in and the report of the UNESCO Workshop 'Towards an International Network of Observatories on Cultural Policies', held in Hanover in September 2000 and which I attended; Professor J Mark Schuster's report *Informing Cultural Policy*, prepared for the Pew Charitable Trust in 2001; an internal report of a brainstorming meeting held at the European Cultural Foundation, Amsterdam, in March 2002; conversations with a few research colleagues in Europe; and my own experience in European co-operation since 1980, including my role as co-founder and chair (1985-94) of the CIRCLE (Cultural Information &

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[1] As this paper was nearing completion the European Commission issued a restricted tender to carry out the feasibility study (contract DG EAC/47/00). Accordingly, the approach taken by this paper was modified in a number of respects, as what had been largely conjecture about the scope of the observatory became clearer. A section outlining possible parameters of the feasibility study has been omitted for the same reason.

Research Centres Liaison in Europe) network. Although work on the paper commenced in June 2002, a number of intervening priorities meant that it was not possible to finalise it until September.

2. SOME CONTEXT FOR THIS PAPER

2.1   There has been a growing predilection in recent years for politicians and officials at a European level to summon up the virtues of culture as integral to the 'European Project'. In January 2002, for example, the Council of Ministers issued a Resolution that culture should be at the heart of European integration[2]. Resolutions by the European Parliament and pronouncements by the European Commission reinforce the impression that culture is important in the hierarchy of European Union concerns. However, when it comes to the allocation of resources for the programmes that directly support cultural initiatives (Culture 2000 and Media Plus), a more realistic picture emerges in which the importance of culture at a European level remains largely symbolic[3].

2.2   This was recognised by Georgio Ruffolo, former vice-president of the European Parliamentary Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, Media and Sport, in his introduction to the report, *The Unity of Diversities - Cultural Co-operation in the European Union*[4]. The time has come, he suggests, for the Council of Ministers to match their solemn declarations on the importance of culture with concrete commitments.

2.3   Article 128 of the Treaty of Union at Maastricht (re-numbered Article 151 of the Amsterdam Treaty), which legitimised European Community action in the field of culture for the first time, raised expectations within the cultural sector that legitimisation would also bring with it serious financial investment. Perhaps expectations that the European Community could 'contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States', to quote directly from the Treaty, were always unrealistic - the Treaty Article was worded carefully to reflect the wishes of those national governments concerned to safeguard the principle of subsidiarity. Nevertheless, the cultural programmes that were introduced by the European Commission have contributed to the stimulation of a demand for cross-frontier cultural collaboration, to which the programmes themselves have been only partially able to respond. The single framework Culture 2000 programme has exhibited all the failings of its predecessors (Kaleidoscope, Raphael and Ariane),

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[2] Council *Resolution on the Role of Culture in the Development of the European Union*, issued 21 January 2001

[3] Of course the cultural sector has benefited considerably from other EU programmes, particularly the Structural Funds, but generally this has been on the basis of the sector's *instrumental* contribution to employment, social and other non-cultural objectives.

[4] Parliamentary Group of the PSE, European Parliament (2001), *The Unity of Diversities - Cultural Co-operation in the European Union*, Angelo Pontecorboli Editore, Firenze

including the length of time it takes to reach decisions, a fondness on the part of the Commission for a rather artificial thematic approach and, most of all, a relatively small budget. This has frustrated many in the cultural sector to the extent that an alarming number openly declare they will not participate in the process again[5]. This, in turn, undermines the work of the Cultural Contact Points (supported by the Commission and, usually, national governments) and other bodies who have sought to heighten awareness of such funding opportunities.

2.4   A Convention on the Future of Europe, was set up by Heads of State at their meeting in Laeken in December 2001, to review the European Union's institutions, structures, operations and treaty obligations in an enlarged EU. The fact that the Declaration issued at Laeken makes no mention of culture has been a reality check for those who were persuaded by all the persuasive rhetoric that culture was not marginal to the EU's interests. Given the immense challenges that the enlargement process poses for the EU and its institutions and resources, new concerns about such issues as cross-border cultural collaboration with non-Accession States and those countries 'waiting in the wings', may seem relatively minor in comparison. However, that does not make them any less real for those engaged in cultural co-operation.

2.5   Today, the need for clear policies and approaches to cultural co-operation in a larger 'European cultural space' seems more evident than ever.
Presumably, that much was recognised by the Council of Ministers which has been preparing a Resolution to develop new working procedures to strengthen European co-operation in the field of culture[6]. The draft Resolution stresses the need for "a more coherent approach to action at Community level in the field of culture" and suggests this could be achieved by creating a structured framework with a work plan as well as developing new strategies over the next few years.

2.6   The premises of *The Unity of Diversities* (the so-called Ruffolo Report) are that:

   ♦ EU cultural programmes are poorly co-ordinated and, as far as the dedicated cultural funds are concerned, poorly resourced;
   ♦ the principle of subsidiarity, as it is employed, acts as a brake on cultural co-operation, rather than a factor that would provide 'added value';

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[5] Many cultural organisations the author of this paper has spoken to will contemplate participation in bids for Culture 2000 only as co-organisers or associates and not as lead organisations, as the latter is considered to involve more onerous administrative work with very uncertain outcomes.
[6] European Commission (2002) Draft Council resolution on developing new working procedures to strengthen European Co-operation in the field of culture (ref 7810/02 CULT 12) dated 10 April 2002

- the diversity of national and regional cultures reflects the wealth and specific features of European culture;
- a void exists between programmes managed at EU level and the cultural policies in Member States[7].

Addressing this last point, a Resolution on Cultural Co-operation in the European Union, adopted by the European Parliament, calls on the Commission to submit to the Council of Ministers and Parliament a draft decision whereby Member States would contribute to drawing up and carrying out a three year cultural co-operation plan incorporating a range of targets including the strengthening of the information base[8]. The same Resolution also calls for a decision for the purposes of setting up a European observatory to monitor cultural information and co-ordination between the cultural policies of the Member States and Community cultural policy[9].

3.   KEY DEFINITIONS

3.1   Defining the term 'Observatory'

3.1.1   In a draft paper prepared for UNESCO's Hanover Workshop 'Towards an International Network of Observatories on Cultural Policies', Eduard Delgado of Interarts Observatory, Barcelona, reminds us that the term 'observatory' is indebted to astronomy and particularly the notion that the regular movements of the solar system and galaxy of stars can only be assessed on the basis of observation of changes over a period of time[10]. To function effectively, he points out, data must be systematically collected and interpreted and 'fed back to the observing instrument to correct its focus'[11]. However Delgado notes a problem:

> 'It is a paradox that as the cultural sphere contains one of the most dynamic and future-oriented sectors in the world, the instruments for gathering, contextualising and transferring data or experience remain vastly under-developed'[12]

Whether the cultural sector is especially future-minded as Delgado suggests may be open to debate, but it is difficult to disagree with his comments on the relative lack of adequate tools to measure activity and performance in the sector. In recent years, however, there has been a marked growth of organisations performing observatory functions, whether or not they style themselves 'observatories'.

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[7] *The Unity of Diversities*, op cit
[8] *Resolution on Cultural Co-operation in the European Union* (ref 2000/2323(INI) adopted on 5 September 2001, para 8
[9] *Resolution on Cultural Co-operation in the EU*, op cit, para 10
[10] Delgado, Eduard (2000), *UNESCO World Observatory of Cultural Policies*, draft paper (unpublished)
[11] Delgado, op cit
[12] Delgado, op cit

3.1.2   A common understanding of the term 'observatory' might lead us to imagine an organisation that collects information and data, monitors activity and disseminates its findings. This is primarily a passive function. An observatory might, in addition, provide trend analyses and some forecasting, but it does not necessarily offer judgements. The European Parliamentary Resolution on Cultural Co-operation in the EU, however, envisages - or at least implies - an observatory with a more proactive function. Certainly, its task is to monitor cultural co-operation but also it:

> 'will have a duty to systematically identify and promote best practice in the Member States' policies and successful experience with sponsoring schemes or public-private partnerships…..'[13]

This suggests an observatory for cultural co-operation will need to develop instruments and tools to facilitate cross-border collaboration and not simply dispense facts and figures. Why this should be so is evident from the genesis of the Resolution. When it was being drafted, what was envisaged was not so much an 'observatory' but a European 'Agency' for Culture comprising not more than 10 officials to carry out various tasks such as project evaluation and the management of funding programmes. The aim was to free Commission officials from administration so they could concentrate their efforts on monitoring policy, respond quicker to the needs of the sector and develop strategies. That the Agency would disseminate information on the policies of EU countries and on best practice are tasks which appear to have been envisaged somewhat later. Moreover, the designation 'Agency' metamorphosed into the more politically neutral term 'observatory', not least to ensure the Resolution was not blocked by those who feared the insertion of another tier of bureaucracy between the Commission and Member States.

3.1.3   While there may be a lack of consensus on what an observatory is, it is interesting to note that since the Ruffolo Report was published, such debate as there has been in the cultural sector has tended to reinforce the perception that an observatory would fulfil broader tasks than simply monitoring cultural co-operation.

3.2   And the term 'Cultural Co-operation'?

3.2.1   The term 'cultural co-operation' is used somewhat ambiguously in the Ruffolo Report. According to the European Parliamentary Resolution, the aim of an observatory is to promote information exchange and synergies between the policies of the Member States and Community cultural policy[14]. While the intention, self-evidently, is to ensure policies at a European level complement those at national and regional level (and perhaps vice versa), this begs the question of how broad is the

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[13] *Resolution on Cultural Co-operation in the EU*, op cit, para 10, ibid.
[14] Ibid

scope of activity envisaged? Is it to be all aspects of cultural policies? By way of illustration, the experience of the Council of Europe in 'cultural co-operation' over many years has encompassed the exchange of information and experience and the sharing of good policy practice on a wide range of issues, such as the evaluation of national cultural policies and the analysis of policy approaches and appropriate tools for all levels of governance to promote creativity, participation, diversity and cultural democracy. It was not by accident that the implementation of the Council's European Cultural Convention was entrusted to a Council for *Cultural Co-operation*, comprising representatives of the governments of Member States. Today, among other things, the Council of Europe supports a web-based compendium of cultural policies of Member States in Europe updated annually[15]. Surely the intention of Ruffolo was not to cover the same territory?

3.2.2. What about those most obvious of European cultural co-operation activities bi-lateral and multi-lateral cultural collaboration and networking, co-productions, and exchanges artist to artist, cultural organisation to cultural organisation or city to city? A lot of these happen outside the purview of governments and funding agencies and may not be easy to track. Yet, arguably, they lie at the heart of cultural co-operation. Rather than interpreting 'cultural co-operation' as embracing all aspects of cultural policies and developments that have a European or transnational dimension, the most sensible way to approach the term, especially in the light of the European Commission tender, was to presume it was intended to be used in the more focussed sense of cultural exchange and collaboration while, at the same time, taking cognizance of the broad cultural policy framework in which such activities take place.

4. **TRENDS AND CHALLENGES TO CULTURAL CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

4.1 Prior to the astonishing political events of 1989, cultural co-operation in Europe between East and West was fairly rigidly controlled. Bilateral exchange was pursued through cultural agreements that were based on political theory and economic reality; the theory involved the exercise of state control of the cultural and intellectual life of Central and Eastern European countries and governed who could officially participate in the process; the reality, of course, was non-convertible currencies. Political change created a surge of interest in cultural collaboration throughout Europe. However, practitioners and cultural organisations from Central and Eastern Europe often lack the tools and certainly the resources to participate on an equal footing in the cultural partnerships being forged. State funds have diminished in real terms in almost all those countries and the seriously reduced role of the Soros Foundation in the future is likely to accelerate the current problems.

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[15] ERICarts (2001), *Cultural Policies in Europe: a compendium of basic facts and trends*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg

4.2   It wasn't so long ago that national cultural institutes, acting as adjuncts of foreign policy, engaged in the competitive promotion of their national culture. Ministries, whether of Culture or Foreign Affairs, and national cultural institutes, such as the British Council, Goethe Institute and the Institute Francaise, held a monopoly on official transfrontier cultural co-operation. However, the effectiveness of cultural exchange programmes to achieve political objectives is increasingly questioned. Today, moreover, much cultural co-operation takes place without government or quasi-governmental involvement. In recognition of this, the role of a number of institutes is now more closely associated with cultural relations and cultural development. This is intended to promote mutual understanding and partnership building rather than the one sided advantage associated with the cultural diplomacy that often characterised cultural exchange in the past. This change of emphasis sometimes reflects shifts in the foreign and trade policy priorities of governments following the end of the "Cold War" in Europe. It also comes as a consequence of resource constraints to which a number of the institutes have been subject. It is not uncommon to see institutes actively engaged in European cultural projects in the Culture 2000 programme. Driven by the need to replace cutbacks in domestic funds, some even accept commissions from the European Union and bodies such as the World Bank to generate additional income. While cultural institutes have continued to maintain their national profiles inside EU countries, economic pressures has encouraged them to consider joining forces elsewhere in the world, where it may be considered as important to promote broader European culture and values as it is the arts and life of a specific nation state.

4.3   If the role of the national cultural institutes has changed or even diminished, that of other actors, such as cities and regions and transfrontier networks, has certainly increased. Culture has been one of the principal tools used by cities and regions to project their profile on the European and international stages during the 1990s. Such interest has been fuelled by a desire to capitalise on new economic opportunities and political imperatives. The perceived success of cities such as Barcelona and Glasgow has encouraged others not only to utilise culture as drivers for urban regeneration, but also to build cultural alliances across Europe on the basis of common objectives rather than out of a desire to promote reconciliation and assuage guilt that often characterised town-twinning arrangements in the post-war years.

4.4   Much has been said and written about the exponential growth of European networks in the past 20 years. If we disregard the eulogies that sometimes accompany debates on the virtues of networking, it is possible to recognise the need for cultural practitioners to work together and share information and experience. Domestic practice, as many individuals have discovered, no longer provides sufficient creative stimulus and context for their work.

4.5   Cross-border traffic in the arts in Europe has changed considerably in recent years as organisations seek to take advantage of new European markets and revenue-raising opportunities, and to achieve economies of scale and costs through co-productions and other joint initiatives. Galleries and museums increasingly seek European or international partnerships in mounting exhibitions. In the peforming arts there has been a new emphasis on joint explorations, rather than ready-made 'product' as was previously the case. The boundaries between traditional disciplines of the arts are blurring with new interest in interdisciplinary and process activity. Professional training and workshop opportunities have mushroomed in Europe for practitioners involved in theatre and music. Similarly, the demand by artists and writers for studios and residencies in other countries considerably exceeds the opportunities available.

4.6   Despite the removal of internal frontiers in the European Union that used to impede the free flow of artists and their works, and touring theatres and their sets, some obstacles to mobility remain. At the same time, as a recent study for the European Commission reminds us, it is important to distinguish between serious obstacles and minor hindrances[16]. The former have diminished – at least for EU nationals – though some problems remain, such as those associated with dual taxation or differences in the tax treatment of professional costs incurred by artists/performers outside their own country. On the other hand, shortcomings and minor constraints such as quotas for national artists in international co-productions have actually increased and act as a disincentive to mobility. The relative absence of information, whether related to different tax regimes or the inability to find appropriate partners for transnational projects is also considered to be an impediment, or at least an irritant to those who might otherwise be actively engaged in European cultural co-operation.

4.7   As the European Parliament has recognised there is an increasing need for financial mechanisms at European or domestic level that will facilitate those in the cultural field to become more engaged in cultural co-operation by funding travel for research, production, networking etc[17]. However, the demand for cultural engagement across Europe outstrips the resources available. The Culture 2000 programme (and its predecessors Kaleidoscope, Raphael and Ariane) have only ever operated with modest resources, yet, paradoxically, the existence of such transnational programmes has stimulated the creation of new networks, which has placed further demands on the available funding. Most European cultural networks lead a precarious existence, either dependent on their members contributions and/or on project funding via the EU cultural programmes or assistance through the

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[16] *Study on the Mobility and Free Movement of People and Products in the Cultural Sector* by CEJEC-Universite Paris X, EAEA for the European Commission (DG Education & Culture), April 2002

[17] See for example the European Parliamentary *Draft Resolution on Theatre and the Performing Arts in an Enlarged Europe* (2001/2199 (INI) PE 312.505)

Parliamentary Budget "A" lines, which themselves face an uncertain future. European networks fall between two stools: national, regional and local governments generally consider they should be funded at European level, but European institutions do not have sufficient resources to meet the demand for project funding let alone year-on-year support. Hitherto, networks have not been able to provide the hard evidence that politicians demand of the tangible benefits network operators insist they deliver. This was a key factor in research commissioned by the Informal European Theatre meeting on the impacts of networking[18].

5 A COMPLEX ECOLOGY OF INFORMATION SOURCES

5.1 A significant number of players

5.1.1 If a new observatory is to be created it will not be in a vacuum. In Europe today, there is a complex range of organisations at transnational, national and regional levels which collect and analyse data, undertake research and monitor cultural policies and practices - just the kind of information, in fact, on which a European observatory is likely to draw. Not all of these bodies are called 'observatories' by any means. There are also differences in their status: some are universities or independent research centres; others are government departments or quasi-governmental cultural agencies or foundations. Some are stand-alone; others are grouped into networks or consortia. Some centres are relatively well resourced, while others find themselves administering diminishing budgets. The sustainability of a number is dependent on one-off contracts or, in the case of networks, perhaps European funding and an over-dependence on the voluntary unpaid input of professionals.

5.1.2 Ideally, it would be desirable to cluster the range of organisations by function. However, on closer examination we see that this is not an easy task, because many, including the self-styled 'observatories' are hybrids embodying combinations of information and data collection, research, and documentation. Attempting to categorise by geographical focus also has its limitations, because it is clear that these organisations combine elements of regional/local, national and international interests. For the purposes of this paper the terrain will be mapped by grouping 'players' in Europe today according to the following typology:

- discrete government departments or publicly funded 'observatories' at national, regional or local level;
- foreign affairs or cultural ministries with cultural co-operation departments or units;

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[18] *How Networking Works* (2001), IETM Study on the Effects of Networking, Informal European Theatre Meeting /Fondiazione Fitzcarraldo/Arts Council of Finland

- quasi-governmental or arm's length agencies and cultural institutes;
- independent cultural co-operation centres;
- 'observatories' or cultural research and documentation centres usually in receipt of mixed funding;
- European/international 'umbrella' networks or advocacy fora;
- European/international thematic networks or cultural NGOs;
- foundations supporting cultural co-operation;
- Cultural Contact Points;
- private sector enterprises or consultancies;
- European and national level organisations or 'observatories' monitoring activities in broader fields;
- intergovernmental organisations.

5.1.3 No doubt the categories could have been drawn in slightly different ways and perhaps some readers may query the inclusion of individual organisations in one grouping rather than another. Consequently, it is important to emphasise that this exercise is merely intended to be indicative of the range of organisations with an interest in this area and must not be construed as an attempt to provide a comprehensive list. Nor should the inclusion of an organisation be interpreted as a value judgement on its operations and perceived effectiveness.

5.2 **Government departments or publicly funded 'observatories' at national, regional or local level**

5.2.1 Publicly financed research and monitoring of cultural sector trends is sometimes undertaken in dedicated departments of ministries or in partnership with university-based research centres. Historically, one of the first in the field was the **Departement des Etudes et de la Prospective** in the French Ministry of Culture and Communication. The DEP is the largest and certainly one of the best resourced research centres in culture and cultural policy in Europe. Established in the 1960s, it has responsibility for research on the economic and social aspects of culture, public financing, cultural employment, arts education, participation and audiences, cultural practices and, of particular relevance in this context, the international dimension of cultural activities and cultural policies. Some of this it commissions; some is done in-house.

5.2.2 The origins of the **Observatoire Politiques Culturelles** in Grenoble was an acknowledgement by the French Government in the latter part of the 1980s that it needed more information on cultural policy at a local and regional level in France. This was reflected in its original title: Observatoire des Politiques Culturelles Territoriales. However 'Territoriales' was dropped from its title at an early stage as this was seen by the organisation itself as restricting its focus. The observatory today calls itself 'a national organisation whose mission is to accompany the decentralisation of public cultural policies through the

organisation of research, meetings, continuing education and the release of information'[19]. The focus is on secondary research. For primary research it often looks to the *Centre de Recherche sur la Politique, l'Administration, la Ville et le Territoire* (CERAT) at the University of Grenoble.

5.2.3   Other than the fact that the term 'observatory' may be fashionable, it is not easy to explain the growth of cultural observatories at local and regional level in Italy. However, some of these seem to have disappeared almost as quickly as they emerged. A number appear to focus primarily as a source of information on local cultural events. One of the first observatories and still surviving is the **Osservatorio culturale e reti informative**, in the Direzione Generale Cultura, identitia e autonomie of the Region of Lombardy.

5.2.4   The **Observatorio das Actividades Culturais** was established by the Ministry of Culture in Portugal, the Institute for Social Sciences of the New University of Lisbon and the National Institute for Statistics in 1996. It undertakes studies, analyses trends and disseminates information on a range of cultural policies and activity.

5.3   **Foreign affairs or cultural ministries with cultural co-operation departments or units**

5.3.1   In many countries bi-lateral and multi-lateral cultural relations are the prerogative of ministries of foreign affairs and, most European embassies have career civil servants as cultural attaches or staff with a cultural portfolio. Even where quasi arms-length cultural institutes have been established to disseminate culture, education and language teaching, the paymaster is often the foreign ministry. A ministry, whether of foreign affairs or culture, is likely to have a role in preparing the ground for meetings of the Council of Culture Ministers of the European Union or for the Cultural Co-operation and Cultural Heritage Committees of the Council of Europe. Such ministries may have instituted mechanisms to monitor policy developments and cultural relations, though frequently this will be for internal use – ministries are not always noted for their interest in, or skills at, disseminating information to the wider cultural sector!

5.3.2   France and the Netherlands provide illustrations of cultural ministry involvement in cultural co-operation. In France the **Département des Affaires Internationales (DAI)** is responsible for the preparation and implementation of the cultural co-operation policies of the Ministry of Culture and Communication. The DAI promotes French culture internationally and supports foreign arts activity in France. International cultural policy in the Netherlands is shared between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of Education, Culture and Science. There is a separate budgetary provision for international cultural activities via the

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[19]   This description was cited in Schuster, J Mark, op cit

HGIS funds, whose priorities are determined by the four year Cultural Plan. For various reasons the Dutch have rejected the notion of national cultural institutes, but an independent information service on cultural co-operation has been established (see 5.5).

5.4 **Quasi-governmental or 'arms length' agencies such as cultural institutes**

5.4.1 Experience and information on cultural co-operation, albeit primarily from a national perspective, is also to be found in the cultural institutes established by a number of countries to promote their language, lifestyle and culture. Generally, the emphasis will be on 'official' artistic exchange and collaboration, e.g. directly managed projects or tours of a nation's arts, or those cultural activities which receive endorsement through financial assistance. There may also be reciprocity with other nations' arts and culture.

5.4.2 In terms of global spread the leading cultural institutes are undoubtedly the **British Council**, the **Goethe Institut** and the French cultural institutes in their various guises - **Centres Culturels et de Co-opération Artistique** and, for language learning, the long established **Alliance Française**. France, of course, has one of the oldest traditions in cultural diplomacy dating from the time of Diderot and Rousseau if not before. **L'Association Française d'Action Artistique** (AFAA) is an arm's length agency of the DAI of the Ministry of Culture and Communication (see 5.3.2), which helps co-ordinate arts events and programmes of exchange involving French artists. L'AFFA works in partnership with the worldwide network of French institutes and cultural centres. It established CLUB AFAA to foster international exchanges at a local government level. Other cultural institutes of European countries include Spain's **Cervantes Institute**, the **Finnish Institute**, the **Austrian Cultural Institute**, the **Hellenic Institute** of Greece, the **Italian Institute** and **Institut Camoes** of Portugal.

5.4.3 Some arts council related agencies have a role in supporting international cultural co-operation, notably the long established **Pro Helvetia**. This Swiss foundation differs from the cultural institutes referred to in having responsibility not only for cultural relations and exchange and with other countries, but also in supporting Swiss cultural activity domestically.

5.4.4 **Visiting Arts** was set up during the 1970s to promote and encourage the flow of international arts activity to the UK with modest grants. From the outset it received financial assistance from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, the Arts Councils in the UK and especially the British Council, with whom it remains closely identified. At the same time, Visiting Arts has been gradually carving out a more independent role for itself; and this is reflected in the expansion of its activities to include advice, information, consultancy, training (e.g. for cultural attachés) and project development overseas. Its series of arts

directories of different countries are among the most comprehensive sources of information available on the cultural sector. Although it is now an independent registered charity, Visiting Arts does not yet qualify for entry in the next category.

5.4.5 Reference should also be made to the **Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen** in Germany, which houses one of the largest collections of documentation on cultural co-operation in Europe.

5.5 Independent cultural co-operation centres

5.5.1 Some centres have emerged which, strictly speaking, are not quasi-governmental or arm's length; at the same time, because their focus is on cultural co-operation and exchange, they also differ from the independent cultural research and documentation centres referred to in 5.6. Two of these centres are especially worth mentioning. The **Service Centre for International Cultural Activities (SICA)** operates as a reference and co-ordination point for organisations with an international orientation looking for contacts or information on activities in the Netherlands and worldwide. Established in 1999.

5.5.2 The **Danish Centre for Culture and Development (DCCD)** was also established relatively recently to foster cultural co-operation between Denmark and the non-Western world. In support of its role as an 'entry point' for the promotion of non-Western arts into Denmark, it provides contacts, promotes projects and offers some financial help.

5.5.3 In addition there are a number of building-based cultural centres supporting cultural engagement especially with non European cultures, such as *Maison des cultures du Monde* in Paris, and the *Royal Tropical Institute* in Amsterdam, though many of these will also be part of European networks (see 5.8)

5.6 Independent 'Observatories' or cultural research and documentation centres

5.6.1 As Schuster has observed there has been a dramatic increase in investment in policy relevant information and research in cultural policy[20]. Such tasks have been entrusted to, or developed by, a number of research and documentation centres in receipt of a mix of public and private funding. In cases where they are genuinely independent they may be insulated from the political pressures which can be applied to government agencies. Some act predominantly as mediators, bringing policy-relevant information to the attention of decision-makers and the sector. Others are more proactively engaged in research.

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[20] Schuster, J Mark, (2001), op cit.

5.6.2 Among those with the rubric 'observatory' is **Interarts,** the European Observatory for Cultural Research and International Cultural Co-operation, established in Barcelona in 1995. Integral to Interarts work is the Factus database which it set up to monitor the cultural policies and resources of cities and regions across Europe. This serves to identify good practice, effective strategies and provide basic comparative cultural indicators for research and policy development. Interarts also acts as an instrument to further co-operation between cultural departments in various cities and regions in and beyond Europe.

5.6.3 Seed money from UNESCO helped to establish the Regional Observatory on Financing Culture in East-Central Europe, more usually known as the **Budapest Observatory**. This observatory collects and disseminates information and data on the way cultural activities and products are being resourced in the newer democracies of Europe. It also facilitates research and contacts in relation to cultural policy, legislation and statistics.

5.6.4 The founding members of the **Cultural Observatory of Piedmont** were the Region City of Turin, the CRT Foundation, Compagnia di San Paulo, AGIS (Italian Association of Entertainment), IRES (Economic & Social Research Institute of Peidmont) and Fondazione Fitzcarraldo. It provides an information base and monitor trends in the cultural sector in the region for practitioners, producers and policymakers. Another body, the Associazione per l'Economia della Cultura provides an important platform for cultural research analysis both in Italy and the wider world and issues a regular journal in Italian.

5.6.5 The **Boekman Foundation** collects, analyses and disseminates information on a broad range of issues related to the cultural sector and cultural policy. Established in 1963 in Amsterdam, it is funded by a mix of ministry and foundation support. The Boekman Foundation Library of 28,000 volumes (2001) is the largest on culture in the Netherlands. It has established an international online database on cultural research on progress.

5.6.6 The **Oesterreichische Kulturdokumentation** International Archive for Cultural Analysis is a non-profit making institute for applied research which monitors, analyses and documents Austrian, European and international developments in culture, cultural policy and research. It produces publications and manages a resource centre with specialist library, including an extensive section on EU cultural actions.

5.6.7 The origin of **ERICarts (European Research Institute for Comparative Cultural Policy and the Arts)** was the intention to create a research arm of the CIRCLE network capable of undertaking paid research related tasks to strengthen the effectiveness of CIRCLE's work. However, differences of opinion within CIRCLE about the need for a research arm led to the establishment of ERICarts as a separate entity in 1993. Unlike CIRCLE which, at that time, was a

network of institutions, ERICarts operates more as an institute of individual researchers[21]. Based in Bonn, ERICarts has undertaken a number of research tasks for the European Commission and Council of Europe, most notably *Cultural Policies in Europe: a compendium of basic facts and trends*. This Council of Europe web based and hard copy publication provides information on the historical context, administrative structures, legal framework, policy issues, support programmes and data for some 20 European countries.

5.6.8   A number of universities in Europe have developed research centres or undertake cultural research and sometimes monitor and document cultural trends. Often this is an adjunct to cultural administration training. In the UK, for example, these include **Warwick University** (which edits the *International Journal of Cultural Policy*), **City University** in London, **De Montfort University** in Leicester, the **University of Northumbria** at Newcastle (which compiles the current awareness journal *Arts Research Digest*) and the **University of Westminster**, which is now responsible with the Policy Studies Institute for the journal *Cultural Trends*. **Nottingham Trent University** has a dedicated Cultural Policy and Planning Unit which undertakes research including the relationship between sustainable cultural development and the quality of life in cities, regions and nations.

5.7   **European/International umbrella networks or advocacy fora**

5.7.1   A further problem in this complex ecology of information providers has been the lack of co-ordination at European level. It is hardly surprising that there is sometimes evidence of overlap and, even though they may co-operate with each other in projects or networks, when it comes to the quest for resources, some organisations may find themselves in competition.

5.7.2   Various attempts have been made to address the need for co-ordination and co-operation. Reference is made separately to the Hanover Expo meeting which led to the creation of an International Network of Observatories on Cultural Policies (see section 8). In the field of cultural policy research, information and documentation, the earliest move was the creation of the **CIRCLE (Cultural Information and Research Centres Liaison in Europe]** network in 1985. CIRCLE was established when representatives of 10 different national institutions agreed to formalise co-operation through information exchange on cultural research and documentation and through the organisation of annual European (originally East-West) Round Tables addressing a specific policy research issue. From the outset CIRCLE was supported by the Council of Europe, which believed the network would also function as an antenna on evolving policy trends in European countries. This encouraged CIRCLE at an early stage to

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[21] Subsequently CIRCLE decided to accept individuals in membership and, given that a number of these participate in both CIRCLE and ERICarts activities the distinction between the two bodies today is somewhat blurred.

provide a bridge between cultural researchers and cultural policymakers. Many of the emerging cultural policy and research issues were first explored at a European level through CIRCLE initiatives including, for example, the organisation of a European Round Table in Poland on international cultural co-operation policies[22].

5.7.3   The Council of Europe also had a role in supporting a UNESCO initiative to respond to the emerging need for the exchange of cultural information and documentation globally. At a meeting at UNESCO headquarters in Paris in 1989, both intergovernmental agencies agreed to establish a body, **Culturelink**, to disseminate the outputs of the growing number of organisations involved in cultural research and documentation. Responsibility for this 'Network of Networks for Research and Co-operation in Cultural Development' was assigned to the Institute for International Relations in Zagreb, Croatia. In addition to the dissemination of information through the eponymous *Culturelink* journal, the organisation also undertakes work on the development of databases and some international research in cultural development and co-operation.

5.7.4   The **European Forum of Cultural Networks** provides an annual platform for the growing number of European networks to exchange information and experience and to discuss issues of common concern in relation to cultural co-operation. Its origins lie partly in an attempt by the Council of Europe in 1988 in Barcelona to set up a network of European cultural centres to encourage and support informal exchanges and joint ventures at local level. It is generally accepted that the original initiative was not a success, partly because the participating cultural centres (mostly selected by governments) were of all types and sizes and had relatively little in common other than the eternal quest for money[23]. However, several more focused networks emerged as a result of the initial encounters (in London, Arc-et-Senans etc) that brought practitioners together. Eventually, the original idea metamorphosed into a Forum of European Cultural Networks, conceived as a 'meeting point' to discuss network practice and to debate issues affecting cultural co-operation and arts exchanges. The Council of Europe acted as a privileged partner providing financial support wherever possible. The Forum now provides a platform to debate the values and ethical and social implications of arts exchanges and co-operation. Currently almost 40 'networks' and cultural organisations are listed as members.

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[22] 'Beyond Cultural Diplomacy – International Cultural Policies: Whose business is it anyway? Organised by CIRCLE in conjunction with the International Cultural Centre, Krakow, 10 – 13 June 1999.
[23] In fact a European Network of Cultural Centres exists today to provide a platform for the exchange of experience in programming, audiences, facilities, personnel etc between centres which are multidisciplinary. However, its focus is more specific than the original Council of Europe concept.

5.7.5 A number of the networks which participate in the European Forum of Cultural Networks are also members of the **European Forum for Arts and Heritage (EFAH)**. As an advocate for the cultural sector and an interface between that sector and the European institutions, EFAH tracks EU policy developments and provides a platform for the concerns of those engaged in transnational cultural co-operation. These include such issues as the Culture 2000 programme, and the need for institutional support of European cultural networks.

5.7.6 The **European Council of Artists (ECA)** brings together national federations or associations of professional artists in different disciplines to promote their interests at a European level and to lobby for improvements to their economic and social conditions.

5.7.7 The **European Music Office (EMO)** was concerned to promote musical life, education and awareness in Europe and to develop more effective co-operation between national/regional centres of the International Music Council, societies of composers, performing artists and producers and the European institutions. Whether it is appropriate to categorise it here or in the next section is less important than the fact that, with the financial assistance of the European Commission, it established a European Music Observatory in 1998 to better understand the evolution of music industry trends in Europe and the flow of the broader music repertoire across EU Member States. Unfortunately, the observatory closed after two years due to lack of continuing funding.

5.8 **European/international thematic networks and cultural NGOs**

5.8.1 Many of the networks that are engaged in either/or both EFAH and the European Forum of Cultural Networks periodically organise conferences or meetings and produce reports which serve to document cultural co-operation in Europe. Involved operationally in cultural exchange and multilateral co-operation, networks have experiences that could be useful to the work of a European Observatory. There is no space to list them all here, but by way of illustration, the **Informal European Theatre Meeting (IETM)** brings together practitioners to facilitate information exchange on the production and presentation of contemporary theatre and dance. As one of the oldest European networks it commissioned one of the first directories of sources of European funding[24], instigated research to assess the qualitative value of cultural networks[25] and sought to address the imbalance in cultural co-operation between Northern and Southern Europe. Members of two

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[24] The first national directory of European Funding in the cultural sector is believed to be one produced in 1982 by Rod Fisher for the Arts Council of Great Britain (*Who Does What in Europe?*), but this had only a limited circulation. This was revised, extended and published for wider circulation in 1992. IETM published *Bread & Circuses*, a European funding directory in the same year. Subsequently, IETM and the Arts Council (by now, renamed the Arts Council of England), collaborated on a joint publication, *More Bread & Circuses – who does what for the arts in Europe?* Published in 1994.

[25] *How Networking Works*, op cit.

other theatre networks, the **European Theatre Convention** and the **Union of European Theatres** collaborate on co-productions and facilitate the exchange of information and personnel.

5.8.2   **Trans Europe Halles** was established to encourage international co-operation between independent multidisciplinary cultural centres, often housed in converted industrial or commercial buildings. It has had a particular emphasis on young people and cultural diversity**.**   Young people are also the focus of a number of other networks including **EUnetART**, the (**European Network of Art Organisation for Children & Young People)**

5.8.3   The **European League of Institutes for the Arts (ELIA)** promotes co-operation between students and teachers of academic institutes of the arts throughout Europe. The **European Network of Cultural Administration Training Centres [ENCATC)** also has an academic focus and provides opportunities for information exchange between the staff of higher education institutions and centres involved in cultural management training.

5.8.4   The **Network of European Museum Organisations (NEMO)** was created to strengthen European co-operation among museum organisations, and operates a partner search facility for museums looking to engage with others in transnational projects, especially in relation to the Culture 2000 programme. The **European Heritage Network (HEREIN 2)** was conceived following a recommendation from the 4th European Conference of Ministries responsible for the Cultural Heritage, organised by the Council of Europe in Helsinki in 1996. The Network seeks to provide a permanent information system to monitor heritage developments in Europe and one of its first tasks was to provide an on-line databank on cultural heritage policies in 15 European countries. The longer established **Europa Nostra** is a network of heritage NGOs, local authorities, museums, universities and individuals which seeks to heighten awareness and influence policy on the protection of Europe's architectural and natural heritage.

5.8.5   The **European Visual Arts Network** (EVAN) was created by artists from 11 European countries to advocate the interests of visual arts practitioners and influence decision-making at European level in as much as it affects creators. The **European Writers Congress** represents the interests of writers and literary translators

5.8.6   The **International Association of Music Information Centres** supports transnational information exchange. The **European Festivals Association** performs a similar function for major festivals, while the **International Artists' Managers Association** brings together many of the manager's of performers in the classical music field who will be negotiating with festivals, opera houses and symphony orchestras etc.

5.8.7 From the early days of its inception, UNESCO recognised the importance of international engagement between creators and practitioners as integral to building cultural co-operation. To this end it developed official relations with a large number of international non-governmental organisations concerned with culture and provided modest financial assistance and often hosted the Secretariat for several of these at its Paris headquarters. Examples of such NGOs include the **International Council of Museums**, the **International Theatre Institute**, the **International Music Council**, the **International Association of Art** and **PEN International,** which campaigns for freedom of expression and highlights the repression of writers globally.

5.9 Foundations in Europe supporting cultural co-operation

5.9.1 Of course experience in multilateral cultural exchange is not confined to the networks. A long commitment to European cultural co-operation has meant that the **European Cultural Foundation (ECF)** has built up a considerable degree of knowledge on cultural collaboration, especially in relation to Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean countries. In doing so, it has facilitated the creation of a number of cultural networks, as well as a network of national committees. The ECF has managed EU funding programmes that have a co-operation dimension, such as Erasmus (part of Socrates), and Tempus. It also previously managed the information network on education, Eurydice (see 8.3). The ECF has been forging strategic partnerships with key networks and foundations in a Network of European Foundations to advance the debate on cultural co-operation in the context of the enlargement of the EU. The most recent illustration of this is a colloquium on 'Culture in the Future Architecture of Europe', organised in Brussels on 2nd October 2002 in association with the European Forum for Arts and Heritage.

5.9.2 In establishing a network of international centres for contemporary arts, the **Soros Foundation** has played an important role in facilitating the mobility of cultural practitioners from Central, Eastern and South-eastern Europe. The International Contemporary Art Network, which emerged as a consequence of the transformation of the Soros centres into NGOs, has provided a platform for cross-cultural exchange and collaboration.

5.9.3 Attention should also be drawn to the **Felix Meritis Foundation** which, during the 1990s, and with only modest resources, sought to promote programmes and exchanges to stimulate transnational cultural co-operation, with a particular focus on facilitating the mobility of practitioners from Central and Eastern Europe to engage with their counterparts in the West.

5.10 Culture Contact Points

The Culture Contact Points were set up with European Commission and, usually, matched support from governments, to promote awareness of and access to the EU culture programmes (essentially Culture 2000). Most CCPs are small and either attached to ministries of culture or are from the private sector. A number have been compiling information, e.g. in partner searching, that would complement the work of a European Observatory.

5.11 Private sector enterprises or consultancies

The growth in demand by governments and public sector agencies for policy research and consultancy led to the emergence in the 1990s, especially in the UK, of profit seeking enterprises competing with universities and research centres to provide specialist advice to the cultural sector. Within this field there is a very small number that focus on the international dimension of the arts. Information technology developments and the wider availability of information in the public domain, has enabled such organisations to capitalise on the opportunities that have arisen to respond more speedily to the needs of the sector.

5.12 European and national organisations or 'observatories' monitoring activities in broader fields

There are also a number of organisations analysing information and data in broad fields which include culture. Chief among these are the agencies which have a mandate to collect statistics. For a number of years **Eurostat**, the European Commission's statistical agency has been working with cultural researchers, statisticians and national officials to develop a common classification of cultural activities as a framework for the collection of data in all EU countries on cultural expenditure, employment and participation. In this exercise they will often be co-operating with national statistics bureau such as **Statistics Nederlands** and **Statistics Finland**. Other national bodies can also be the repository of information of relevance to cultural co-operation. The **Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA)** is a case in point. SIDA's task is to create conditions conducive to change and to foster socially, economically and environmentally sustainable development in poorer countries of the world. This has included support for the evaluation of cultural policies in Vietnam and South East Asia and for international co-operation with African Museums. Networks such as **Eurocities**, representing many of Europe's major cities, also have a role in monitoring cultural policy and co-operation.

5.13 The intergovernmental organisations

During the 1990s the **Council of Europe** sought to establish a European Resource Centre for Cultural Policies. However, insufficient practical support and budgetary constraints led to the creation of a more modest scale Research and Development Unit. This

commission's policy notes which provide comparative or synoptic reports on topical cultural issues. Despite budgetary problems **UNESCO** has also maintained a modest role as a clearing house for information on cultural policies and on culture in development.

5.14 **Information gaps remain**

It should be evident by now that if there is to be a European observatory on cultural co-operation it will need to draw on information sources such as these if it is to fulfil its brief and not to reinvent the wheel. At the same time it is also clear that the telescopic lenses of the existing cultural observatories and research centres have not necessarily been focused on European cultural co-operation practice (in the sense of arts exchange and collaboration on productions, exhibitions and so on), but on broader policy issues or data collection. Even cultural institutes programming cultural exchange are only likely to be monitoring cultural co-operation activities of their own nationals which have the official imprimatur of government/quasi-government support. So while there is considerable activity to build on, there remain identifiable information gaps in our knowledge about the real extent of cultural co-operation that a new observatory instrument would need to address.

6 **THE RATIONALE AND GOALS FOR A EUROPEAN OBSERVATORY**

6.1 **Basic principles underpinning cultural co-operation**

The principles which justify cultural engagement and interaction internationally have been rehearsed countless times. Nevertheless, they can stand repetition:

- The arts and culture may be local, but the stories they convey, the values they represent and the emotions they engage are also frequently universal; by broadening perceptions, international understanding is increased;

- The work of the cultural sector and the quality of life of the public is enriched as a result of exposure to, and involvement in, the arts and culture(s) of other countries or regions;

- Many communities in European countries have historic or cultural links with other countries, whether in Europe or beyond and naturally wish to explore them;

- Statehood, territory and language may *define* the arts and culture but, as history demonstrates, it has rarely been able to *confine* them. In common with many other aspects of a

post modern society, culture and the arts are being transformed by international contact. European cultural co-operation is no longer limited to a small number of individuals and organisations. What purpose would be served by trying to obstruct this reality, even if it were possible to do so?

It is difficult to quarrel with the logic of such observations, but the practitioner needs tools to translate them into a reality we can all recognise. Thus a key role of a European observatory on cultural co-operation could be as a catalyst and facilitator, underpinning the practice and building capacity through a range of appropriate support measures.

6.2 Developing and consolidating the information infrastructure

'In any policy arena, as Mark Schuster has observed, 'the crafting of appropriate and effective policy depends on the quality of the information infrastructure that is available to the participants in that arena. Such an information infrastructure does not develop on its own accord. Rather, it is designed, developed and managed as a critical element in policy formulation and implementation. That should be no less true in cultural policy than in other policy arenas.'[27]

As far as cultural co-operation is concerned, we have seen, in section 5, how the information infrastructure has evolved in different ways. Thus today, if policies for cultural co-operation are sometimes ill defined or ineffectual, and if resources are frequently inadequate, it may well be a reflection of information deficiencies and the absence of a full picture of the extent of the activity taking place. It may also be a consequence of a failure on the part of the cultural sector to make sufficiently convincing arguments in favour of what they believe to be the importance of cultural co-operation. However, would a European observatory make a difference? To enable us to answer this question we must be clear about the nature of the role of a new observatory and how it might best serve the interests of cultural practitioners and policy makers. We also need to be convinced that the information and messages revealed by an observatory feeds into policy development, i.e. where is the added value?

6.3 Monitoring activity and trends

Arguably, if we are to gain greater awareness of the extent of cultural co-operation in Europe and the policies that underpin it, there is a need for monitoring and action in at least the following areas:

- The identification of existing information providers and their geographic, linguistic and sectoral scope and end users;

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[27] Schustér (2001), *Informing Cultural Policy,* op cit.

- The systematic gathering of information and statistics on the nature, volume and expenditure on bilateral and multilateral collaboration between cultural organisations, practitioners, cities, regions and networks;

- The identification of good practice and innovative developments as well as obstacles to mobility and co-operation and ways these might be overcome (see 6.4 and 6.5)

- The analysis of incentive schemes, residencies and other measures that stimulate mobility;

- The analysis of data and information to discern trends and make predictions as a contribution to policy evolution;

- The comparative analysis of different policy approaches to cultural co-operation and exchange;

- The development of a suite of indicators to measure change from a quantitative and, if possible, qualitative perspective.

6.4 Knowledge management - sharing innovative and good practice

Over the years a significant corpus of experience in cultural co-operation has been built up by organisations and individuals. Yet it remains an unfortunate fact that far too little of this experience and good practice is shared with newcomers. Of course there will always be some practitioners, promoters and agents reluctant to part with information that they might have acquired through sensitive negotiation and at some cost, both in time and money. Nevertheless, the growth of networking has encouraged information exchange and, indeed, it is difficult to imagine how cultural co-operation in Europe can develop without a climate that encourages openness. A European observatory could be a focal point for the dissemination of innovative approaches and good practice whether in relation to new tools, co-operation methods, the organisation of events, or policy making. In particular, it could examine how experience that is currently wasted for want of appropriate mechanisms could be unlocked.

6.5 Monitoring obstacles to mobility and recommending how they might be overcome

An observatory could monitor hindrances to the free flow of practitioners and suggest tangible ways such barriers could be overcome. The results of research in this area are already in the hands of the Commission and an observatory could keep the issue under continuing review[26].

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[26] Study on the Mobility and Free Management of People and Products in the Cultural Sector, op cit.

6.6   **Developing tools and schemes to stimulate cultural co-operation**

The business of a cultural co-operation observatory should not be to simply monitor and analyse what is happening, but also to encourage greater transnational engagement. Generating enthusiasm will not be enough; practitioners need the tools and resources to make connections and to build and sustain partnerships. Accordingly, an observatory could pilot innovative schemes to encourage mobility and, with Commission support or assistance from individual governments or foundations, provide modest resources to facilitate co-operation, especially for practitioners from Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe. Job shadowing, internships, training, travel assistance and other ways of imparting knowledge could be actively considered.

6.7   **Providing network support**

Although networking is consistently regarded by cultural practitioners as one of the most valuable aspects of their professional development, it is also the most difficult to resource. Whether it is the individual wanting to engage in network activities or cultural networks themselves seeking to survive, this low level, but self-evidently productive way of connecting people continues to be a cornerstone of cultural co-operation in Europe. An observatory is unlikely to have the resources to provide financial support directly to networks, but it might be considered appropriate to remunerate networks for their contribution to information and data collection, or to commission further research on networking impacts, tracked, for example, over several years. A fund to assist with travel expenses would also enhance networking opportunities.

6.8   **Ensuring marginalised communities become fully engaged**

For many Asian, Afro-Caribbean, African, Turkish and other groups marginalised in society such as disabled people, the barriers to cross-border co-operation are as much attitudinal as they are geographical. Rightly or wrongly, such groups sometimes perceive themselves as outsiders in existing networks and they often lack the resources to build their own communities of cultural interest across and beyond Europe. An observatory should be charged, for example, with the task of disseminating ideas and good practice and perhaps provide training assistance for capacity building to ensure that cultural co-operation is inclusive.

6.9   **Assisting the development of appropriate cultural co-operation policies**

How can we be sure that the messages revealed by the monitoring and analysis are taken into account in the policies of the EU, Member States as well as the quasi-governmental agencies? We cannot of

course. A key role, therefore, of an observatory would be to develop appropriate mechanisms to ensure that information is disseminated systematically to policy-makers at all levels of governance. An observatory could also be a link between EU policies on the one hand and national, regional and local cultural co-operation policies on the other to encourage synergies and complementarity.

7 HOW MIGHT AN OBSERVATORY BE STRUCTURED AND MANAGED?

7.1 Different structural approaches

Having established a rationale for an observatory, consideration needs to be given to how it might be structured and managed. At least three approaches can be envisaged, with variations on these:

- Creation of a new European level observatory responsible for producing and disseminating new or available information and data and, if appropriate, instigating and managing project support, training etc.

- The networking of existing institutions either:

  - with an agreed division of labour between them and administered by a committee or board responsible for agreeing how relevant information is collected and disseminated;
  or:
  - with one institution or group of organisations taking a co-ordinating role, perhaps on a rotating basis;
  or:
  - creating a 'virtual observatory' based on the information the network already collects.

- a combination model involving a decentralised approach, but with central co-ordination and administration, either as a unit within the European Commission or stand alone.

The feasibility study will determine which of these or other approaches would be capable of delivering services that facilitate cultural co-operation and in section 9 we will indicate some of the factors that will need to be taken into consideration.

7.2 Operations and staffing

7.2.1 Organisational arrangements, including operational and staffing matters, will be dependent of course on which (if any) of the options referred to in 7.1 are favoured. It is presumed that the creation of a 'stand alone' European observatory will necessitate a greater number of personnel than the alternative network or combination approaches. It is not appropriate in this introductory paper to the debate to

conjecture what the levels of staffing should be, though this writer considers that strong arguments would need to be advanced if the number proposed initially for a central observatory were to significantly exceed 10 (i.e. the number originally mentioned by Ruffolo), in view of the dependence of such a body on information collected at national and regional level etc by others (see 7.4). In any case, decisions on staff levels should be the province of an advisory board or steering committee or possibly both.

7.2.2   It would be logical for an advisory board to comprise representatives of each of the EU and EEA states and of the European Parliament, and European Commission. It might also be considered appropriate for observers to be present from the Council of Europe, UNESCO, the new Network of European Foundations and Accession States. The Board could meet once or twice a year (i.e. during each EU Presidency). Its task would be to agree policy, the budget and staffing. It could be advised in this exercise by a Steering Committee, comprising independent experts nominated by governments, the European Parliament, cultural networks etc with representatives of the CCPs as observers. The Committee would need to meet more frequently, especially in the initial stages. Its task could be to recommend priorities, comment on the formulation of strategies and action plans and advise on mechanisms for evaluation. Of course these are only initial observations and, in any case, it is beyond the remit of my brief to look in detail at how these governing and operational structures might function. Work is needed to test different scenarios for innovative and stable structures.

7.2.3   Observatory personnel would be engaged in monitoring and documenting activity. In their analysis and interpretation, they would need to transform data into information and information into evidence. Communication of such findings and information dissemination will be important tasks, as will promotion and liaison with politicians, European and national government officials, arms-length agencies, foundations, networks and practitioners. Staff should also have responsibility for fund-raising to increase the operational budget.

7.2.4   Broadly, the same policy making and operational tasks would be involved if a decentralised network or combination structure was preferred. It is likely there would be an impact on numbers of personnel needed. Less energy might be expanded on information gathering at central level, but more effort would need to be devoted to liaison with information providers and to ensuring such things as quality control. Arguably, the more decentralised the activity the more complex the management of the operations can be. Again, further reflection is needed on models and their potential consequences.

7.3   Establishing priorities

A European observatory should not attempt to be all things to all people. It should focus on a small number of realistic and achievable tasks. Rather than attempting to be comprehensive and accumulating a huge amount of information, it should collect data and material within agreed parameters, supplementing this, if necessary, through commissioned research. In this way the number of core staff can be limited and more time can be devoted to analysis and dissemination. Some indication was given in 6.3 of the type of tasks that could be undertaken by an observatory. Initial priorities would need to be discussed with the cultural sector and worked out with national governments. However, they might include:

- Mapping the information landscape (e.g. existing observatories, research centres, networks, cultural institutes, arms-length agencies, governments at all levels etc) or re-affirming the mapping exercise undertaken in the feasibility study;
- Determining the framework for information to be collected;
- Putting in place effective mechanisms to monitor cross-border activity and collaboration, incentives and obstacles, policy developments etc;
- Establishing contractual partnerships with national correspondents to provide this information;
- Creating a website with links to relevant existing sites;
- Analysing and evaluating information and determining sectoral, geographical and overall trends.
- Ensuring there are linkages between macro level issues and sector specific realities;
- Promoting debate and reflection on support mechanisms, issues etc through encouragement and modest support of seminars and conferences;
- Stimulating co-operation through the development of pilot schemes and appropriate tools with modest financial assistance;
- Commissioning research in partnership with foundations, arms-length bodies, governments etc.

7.4   Drawing on the experience of existing players

The information landscape may be patchy. Nevertheless, it would be a nonsense for a new observatory not to make use of existing relevant sources of information on cultural co-operation, including some of those identified in section 5, to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort. Some of these sources might be contracted as partners by the observatory to provide information on a systematic basis to an agreed formula. Initially, such correspondents should be established in at least the same number of countries that currently participate in the Culture 2000 programme [27].

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[27] The 15 EU Member States, three EEA Nations (Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein), Cyprus, Malta and 10 countries from Central and Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic and Slovenia).

In due course the ambition should be to establish correspondents in all European countries. Correspondents could be other observatories, research centres, cultural institutes, national statistical agencies, ministries etc. A key determining factor in the selection of correspondents should be the extent to which they provide relevant information currently, or are able to furnish it without significant financial or human resource implications.

7.5 Integration of the observatory's work with the Culture 2000 programme and CCPs

7.5.1 An observatory would need to open and maintain a dialogue with the Cultural Contact Points (CCPs), Commission officials and those involved in cultural co-operation so that it is responsive and flexible to emerging needs. If the role of the Cultural Contact Points is to promote and demystify Culture 2000 (or any successor or related programmes), the role of an observatory could underpin this by highlighting examples of good practice, providing documentation for training purposes, and commissioning research on the sustainability of project partnerships and long term outcomes. For their part, the CCPs could be a vital conduit in the information gathering process which the observatory would instigate.

7.5.2 Of course there is a limit to how much can be done in support of what is generally regarded by practitioners as an imperfect and poorly resourced programme. Nevertheless, an observatory and the CCPs could pool information to provide evidence to the Commission and participating states on how improvements could be made to EU programme(s) to ensure they are sufficiently flexible and adaptive to the real needs of those involved in, or keen to engage in, cultural co-operation. Relationships between the observatory and the CCPs could be formalised by concordats which set out clearly their respective roles. The observatory would also participate in CCP network meetings.

7.6 Relationships with governments and end users

7.6.1 An observatory would be an interface between policies and practice and between European level policies on cultural co-operation and those at national and lower tiers of governance. Self-evidently this would necessitate clear and productive lines of communication to be established with end users. These will include the European institutions, national, regional and local authorities, cultural institutes and arms-length agencies, the Culture Contact Points, foundations, employer/employee federations, networks, NGOs, research institutes and observatories, as well as cultural organisations and individual practitioners. It is important to point out that a significant proportion of the target audience for an observatory's services will be, at the same time, also the producers of the content that an observatory will collect.

7.6.2 The European observatory should have responsibility for negotiating with governments any additional support that might be necessary to ensure the information can be collected at national and regional level to support its work. This will include encouragement to establish instruments to promote information in countries where none exists. Further analysis is required on the nature of these crucially important relationships.

7.6.3 Given the recommendation by Ruffolo for Member States to draw up a three year cultural co-operation plan, it will be especially important for the observatory to encourage synergies between EU policies on cultural co-operation actions and those elaborated by and within Member States.

7.7 Legitimacy, 'ownership' and ethos

7.7.1 Inevitably, the EU, Member States and the cultural sector will each regard an observatory as a potential instrument to meet their own agendas. Thus, the European Commission may consider an observatory will strengthen arguments for a cultural dimension to the process of European integration. Cultural practitioners, on the other hand, may expect an observatory to reinforce their concerns that cultural co-operation is under-valued and under-resourced in Europe. Meanwhile, EU Member States may be exercised as much by their interest in ensuring that an observatory delivers measurable outcomes and represents value for money, as they are by the concerns of the Commission, European Parliament and the cultural sector. This begs a fundamental question: is the Observatory intended to be an advocate for cultural co-operation as well as a monitor of it and, if so, on whose behalf is it acting?

7.7.2 In the strict sense of the term, an observatory is simply monitoring and reporting on the levels of activity and their context in a scientific way (as suggested in Section 3.1). The tasks of analysis and interpretation should not affect the need for objectivity. However, the boundaries between fact and opinion are sometimes blurred and there is a possibility that the 'neutrality' of an observatory may be questioned, especially if its role is proactive as well as reactive. Consequently, clarity about the Observatory's independence, role and ethos at the outset will be essential for its legitimacy in the eyes of practitioners and policy-makers.

8 ORGANISATIONAL MODELS IN PRACTICE – THREE APPROACHES ELSEWHERE

8.1 What can be learnt from the experience of observatories in related sectors? Two examples from the audiovisual and education fields appear to have been conceived rather differently, but ultimately have adopted broadly convergent approaches. The first model involved the creation of a new and effectively centralised observatory. The second

was established as a network of national corresponding units with a central administration and co-ordination unit. It may also be useful to look at a third model which eschews a central observatory in favour of a networked approach.

8.2   A dedicated observatory

8.2.1   The **European Audiovisual Observatory** collects and disseminates information on the audiovisual industry in Europe. It was established in 1992 as the result of the joint initiative of countries participating in the Audiovisual Eureka programme of film support, professional audiovisual organisations, the Council of Europe and the European Commission. Currently 35 countries are in membership of the Observatory.

8.2.2   The European Audiovisual Observatory operates within the legal framework of the Council of Europe and is based in Strasbourg. There are 14 personnel including an Executive Director. Each member nation appoints a representative to serve on an Executive Council that meets twice a year to decide on the observatory's programme and budget. A Bureau, elected from within the Executive Council, prepares meetings and monitors the work of the Observatory. An annual Action Plan is agreed on the basis of recommendations from an Advisory Committee comprising representatives of professional organisations in Europe's audiovisual industry.

8.2.3   The aim of the observatory is to improve the transfer of information within the audiovisual sector and thus promote greater transparency and a more accurate overview of the market. It provides information on the market, legislation, production and financing in the areas of film, television, video/DVD and the new media. To assemble such information it relies on partnerships with a number of co-operating institutions. The information, including some trend analyses, is disseminated through a range of print and on-line publications, an on-line enquiry service, databases, conferences and workshops. Its *European Audiovisual Statistical Yearbook* (The Blue Book) is regarded as the definitive source of data on the audiovisual sector in the participating countries.

8.3   The combination approach: a central administration and network of national units

8.3.1   **Eurydice** is an information network on education in Europe that functions as an observatory on different education systems and policies. It was established in 1980 for the exchange of information and experience between the Member States of the European Community. The aim was to provide a continuous flow of information on policies, developments and trends in education and thus contribute to the knowledge of the European Commission as well as Member States themselves. Its role was strengthened following a Resolution of the

Council of Ministers in 1990 and the treaty of Maastricht which legitimised EU action in the field of education for the first time. Since 1995 Eurydice has been an integral part of Socrates, the Commission action programme on education.

8.3.2 Today Eurydice has a network of National Units in 31 European countries (the 15 Member States, three European Economic Area countries, 11 Central and Eastern European nations, plus Cyprus and Malta) which supply basic information and data. Most of these Units are located within ministries of education. The network and its activities are co-ordinated by a European Unit, set up by the European Commission in Brussels. This Unit, staffed by c.30 people is responsible for undertaking comparative analyses, and for database design and administration. The European Unit and National Units meet twice a year in sessions chaired by the Commission. The meetings enable the future work programme to be developed and provide an opportunity for progress reports on various studies, and for the exchange of good practice.

8.3.3 The tasks of Eurydice are to prepare and publish regular analyses of the organisation of education systems, comparative studies on specific education-related topics of European interest and to produce surveys on current policy issues. A database, EURYBASE, has been created as a reference source on education systems in Europe. Eurydice works with Eurostat to compile indicators on the various levels of education, published every year as *Key Data on Education in Europe.* Other information partnerships exist with Cedefop (the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) and the European Training Foundation.

8.3.4 The target audience of Eurydice is ministerial advisers, national civil servants, senior Commission staff responsible for devising and implementing educational policies and programmes, and members of the European Parliament. Domestic politicians at all levels, educational practitioners, trades unions and associations are also beneficiaries of the information disseminated.

8.3.5 Over the years Eurydice has moved from being a network simply exchanging information to one based more on the comparative analysis of systems and good practice. This has led to difficulties in some instances because of the additional workload involved at national level. At the same time, Eurydice claims that ministries of education have begun to co-operate more closely with one another as a consequence of staff involvement in the network.

8.4 **A fully decentralised or networked approach**

8.4.1 An alternative approach to the creation of a new institution or a combination is to consider the observatory as a system rather than a centre. By networking the existing institutes and information sources, it

might be feasible to deliver broadly the same services at less cost and in the process avoid the danger of duplication of effort. A precedent exists with the **International Network of Observatories of Cultural Policies.**

8.4.2 The Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development, held in Stockholm in 1998, gave UNESCO a mandate to review the pioneering work it had undertaken on cultural policy in the 1970s and early 1980s. One recommendation in the Action Plan adopted at Stockholm invited the Director-General of UNESCO to:

> 'encourage the establishment of networks for research and information on cultural policies for development, including study of the establishment of an observatory of cultural policies'[28]

There was a need, in UNESCO's view, for comparative data gathering and analysis on cultural change in the context of globalisation processes. Best practice and innovative approaches in cultural policymaking was also to be shared. In this way UNESCO sought to reactivate the observation and clearing house function it had previously undertaken.

8.4.3 A preliminary feasibility study implementing the recommendation for UNESCO to establish an observatory on cultural policies revealed there was a proliferation of organisations at national and regional level calling themselves 'observatories' or at least performing such a function[29]. As a consequence, the UNESCO Secretariat considered that to establish a new entity to monitor all the disparate activity was neither feasible nor necessary. Instead UNESCO opted to foster an international network of observatories and related bodies undertaking similar functions.

8.4.4 Accordingly, in conjunction with the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Swedish National Commission for UNESCO, a workshop was convened by UNESCO at the Hanover Expo 2000 World Exposition to examine whether such a network was desirable and, if so, facilitate the dialogue and interaction that would enable it to be launched and to define operational rules[30]. The workshop brought together 36 individuals from 29 diverse entities in 22 countries worldwide. Although the organisations differed in their status, mission, size, human and financial resources, disciplinary focus and geographical scope, the discussions also revealed things they had in common.

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[28] UNESCO (1998), *Action Plan on Cultural Policies for Development*, Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development ('The Power of Culture'), Stockholm, 30 March-2 April 1998
[29] Delgado, op cit
[30] UNESCO (2000), *Workshop: Towards an International Network of Observatories on Cultural Policies*, held at the Expo 2000 World Exposition, Hanover, Germany, 19-20 September 2000

8.4.5   There was broad agreement on the need for a network, though there was less clarity on the nature of it. There was a consensus that this would be the only inter-regional and interdisciplinary network devoted to research on cultural policies. It was also agreed that the network should not focus on cultural issues only, but should seek to shed light on culture's interaction with development issues and policies in other sectors. Among the recommendations to emerge were that the network should develop the systematic exchange and dissemination of information on policymaking and provide access to trend information and it should provide analysis, evaluation and future-oriented study of cultural policies. In doing so it would aim to strengthen the knowledge base for cultural policy design and evaluation.

8.4.6   Following the workshop a website and discussion forum was set up for the fledgling International Network of Observatories on Cultural Policies. From the start it was understood that the network should be more than an instrument for the electronic exchange of information and an ambition was harboured to meet occasionally. However, although bilateral relations between some of the institutions have been initiated, the network appears not to have evolved any further. Its last website entry was July 2001 and no future activities are indicated. Motivations for participating in the network were variously described in Hanover as 'staying in touch, surviving, collaborating, forging compatibilities, carrying out joint projects and building links across disciplines'[31]. It is unlikely these have changed, so what appears to be the cause of the apparent lack of progress? Two factors seem to have had an impact on the lack of forward momentum. First, it was agreed in Hanover that the UNESCO Secretariat should set in motion the follow-up. However there have been personnel changes at UNESCO and the individuals in charge of the Hanover initiative have moved on. Secondly, Canadian input was an integral dimension of the Hanover workshop. However, since 2000, the Department of Canadian Heritage has launched its own national observatory on cultural policy (the Canadian Cultural Observatory) and the energies of the individuals involved may necessarily have been focused on this rather than the international network. UNESCO is interested in arranging a reunion, but this will depend among other things on political will and available resources.

8.5   **Some observations on the different approaches**

8.5.1   Certain points emerge clearly from these first two of these illustrations. The creation of an 'observatory' in each case considerably accelerated the process of information exchange and dissemination. Having a point of reference helped to ensure a more systematic approach to data and information collection and the introduction of standardised frameworks governing the nature of the information being sought has facilitated comparative analysis. What is also evident is the reliance of even the centralised European Audiovisual Observatory on national and supra-

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[31] UNESCO (2000) op cit

national partners. The quality of the input of those partnerships in both cases has been and remains crucial. Their operations would be seriously undermined, if not impossible without the continuing commitment on the part of national governments and the European institutions to the provision of resources to underpin the operations of both observatories.

8.5.2   The experience in the decentralised case need not rule out the network approach as a serious alternative to the institutional model of an observatory. However, it does reveal a problem which may be inherent in a network, whether or not it is formalised. As long as a network is dependent on busy professional individuals volunteering their time on top of their normal workload it may be prone to slippages in meeting deadlines and advancing the agenda. In theory, at least, a dedicated centre with paid staff should have no such constraints and should be able to survive personnel and other changes (whether internal or external). A network solution may only be feasible with resources and a paid co-ordinating administration. Moreover, there has to be sufficient political will to ensure the various partners are funded at a level commensurate with the nature of their expanded information gathering and monitoring tasks, because a network will be faced with the same problem as a dedicated observatory in having to plug the information gaps which currently exist in cultural co-operation across and beyond Europe.

8.5.3   In assessing different models, inevitably a question arises as to why cultural policy does not feature more strongly in the terms of reference of the European Commission's feasibility study. Of course, the Commission's approach has the virtue of simplifying and focussing a potential observatory's work – cultural policy is a broad church and there could have been a danger that European cultural co-operation in the sense of bilateral and multilateral collaboration and exchange would have been submerged by wider policy concerns. Nevertheless, it is difficult to imagine that policy issues will not surface in relation to European co-operation in the performing and visual arts, the cultural heritage, and books and translation. Moreover, the need for an instrument(s) to monitor cultural policies more generally in Europe remains.

9.   **FACTORS TO DETERMINE THE APPROPRIATENESS OF AN OBSERVATORY OR OTHER MODEL**

9.1   Of course the question is not simply whether it is feasible to establish an observatory, but whether it is necessary. Would the resources that the European Commission and possibly Member States set aside for the operation of an observatory be better spent directly on cultural co-operation activity? While that may sound an attractive idea in theory, the re-allocation of the funding available for the observatory is unlikely to be sufficient to have any material affect on the extent of cultural co-operation practice. The following factors could provide some initial

indicators of ways to test the likely effectiveness of an observatory (or other model) in fulfilling its intended functions, however they may be defined.

9.2   If a new observatory is to be created a key factor in any kind of decision on its nature has to be the cost benefit ratios. What would be the anticipated annual operational costs? Which of the operational models provides both effectiveness and value for money? Interestingly the European Commission's eContent Committee came to the conclusion in its assessment of costs associated with the establishment of a Digital Content Observatory, that the costs of developing a network structure would be some 20% higher than the costs of an umbrella observatory of existing observatories and their networks[32].

9.3   What operational conditions and methods of work will make the observatory initiatives most productive and sustainable? Can a balance be struck between proactive and passive functions?

9.4   Which operational approach would be best able to deal with the methodological, analytical and comparative issues involved in the monitoring of activity?

9.5   What factors will govern the recruitment of staff? Will personnel be appointed on the basis of direct experience of the cultural sector in general and cultural co-operation in particular, whether from a practitioner or policy-maker's perspective? Alternatively, will the emphasis be on researchers or civil servants?

9.6   What is the relationship of cultural practitioners to the observatory and how could their needs and opinions best be channelled into the process of its design and operation?

9.7   What evaluation mechanisms will be established to ensure that an observatory is responsive to the requirements of the end users?

9.8   It is also important to examine the proposals in the context of the broader European Project. Is there European added value? Are the services to be provided only deliverable at a European level? Would an observatory contribute to the ambitions for cultural co-operation set out in Article 151 of the Treaty of European Union (formerly Article 128 of Maastricht)?

9.9   Finally, is there sufficient political will in Member States and participating countries to provide an appropriate and sustainable level of investment in the information infrastructure, to ensure it is capable of delivering the content on which the Observatory would draw (whether

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[32] I am indebted to ERICarts for drawing my attention to the eContent Programme Committee 2002 document.

via existing information services or through the creation of new ones)?

10.   **SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

10.1   This paper has attempted to draw attention to some of the issues
involved in setting up a European observatory on cultural co-operation,
and possible ways forward by reference to the current information
landscape
and operational models in other areas. However, one option has
deliberately not been discussed: that of taking no action at all. In the
views of the writer, to maintain the status quo would be the worst of all
possible scenarios. The creation of a European observatory in itself is
not going to lead to a huge acceleration in cultural engagement in
Europe. For that to happen, significantly more financial and human
resources would need to be available. However, if a European
observatory is set up it should improve conditions and create an
environment to promote and stimulate cultural co-operation throughout
Europe and beyond. It should become an authoritative source of
information for practitioners and policy makers, providing access to
trends, good practice, policy models, incentive schemes, research and
innovative tools. It could build links across disciplines. If it did this by
making use of all relevant information sources and expertise and thus
avoid duplicating or competing with existing initiatives and services, it
could also provide value for money. If the political will were found to
carve out a dedicated space for the development of cultural co-
operation, the EU's abiding preoccupation with European identity,
which faces further challenges with the process of enlargement, might
be tempered by a growing recognition of the sustaining power of
culture to value both shared experience and individual and collective
difference. Failure to take any action will simply lead to a widening of
the gap between the political rhetoric at European level on the
importance of culture and the reality experienced on the ground.