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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL,  
THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**Report on the Second External Interim Evaluation of the Culture 2000 Programme**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Culture 2000 has been the European Union's chief financing and programming instrument for its activities in the field of cultural cooperation over the 2000-2006 period, with a budget of around €236 million.

This report is based on the Second Interim Evaluation of the Programme, carried out by an independent consultancy. It presents the consultancy's main findings and recommendations as well as the Commission's position on the latter.

The evaluator concludes that the Programme has achieved its goals and provided an adequate mechanism for addressing both the original and current needs regarding cultural cooperation in Europe. It also confirms that there is a need for a programme dealing specifically with the cultural sector, rather than culture being included in other programmes.

According to the evaluator, Culture 2000 clearly addresses shortcomings in fostering transnational cooperation in Europe and generates substantial new cooperation through new or strengthened links between European cultural operators.

A number of benefits for organisations taking part in Culture 2000 have been identified: gaining experience in the cultural field at European level; increased professionalism through enhanced management skills; improved organisational and individual capacity; increased dialogue among cultural actors. It is worth noting that the participants spanned the full artistic spectrum and came from organisations of all types and sizes, with half of the beneficiaries having fewer than ten employees.

According to the evaluator, these achievements and the European dimension of the Programme have led to strengthened cultural links among countries, increased perception of European identity and better integration of the new Member States.

As an example, half of the respondents would not even have conceptualised their project without Culture 2000. The Programme has therefore been an important catalyst for ideas.

A high level of sustainability has also been achieved. Nearly two thirds of the survey respondents indicated that they would continue the links with partnerships they had formed. Equally, two thirds of respondents indicated that they would continue their activities after the end of their project.

Finally, the evaluator made some recommendations, most of which have already been partially or totally implemented, or will be adopted in the new Culture Programme<sup>1</sup>, which will replace Culture 2000 from 2007 onwards. This applies particularly to the recommendations concerning the need for better awareness and promotion of project achievements through an active dissemination strategy, thereby increasing the visibility of both the Programme and the projects funded under it. Only by putting in place highly effective dissemination mechanisms can the benefits of the Programme be better shared and developed, especially since Culture 2000 - due to its relatively small budget - is not intended to be a high-volume programme.

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2004) 469 final.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This report is presented under the terms of the fifth recital of Decision 626/2004/EC<sup>2</sup> prolonging Culture 2000 for the years 2005 and 2006. It puts forward the Commission's position on the main conclusions and recommendations of the Second Interim Evaluation of the Programme that can be obtained via the link below:

[http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/evalreports/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/evalreports/index_en.htm)

## **2. BACKGROUND TO THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION**

Culture 2000 was established by Decision No 508/2000/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 February 2000<sup>3</sup> (hereafter "the Decision"). It is intended to support cultural cooperation with a view to contributing to the promotion of a cultural area common to the peoples of Europe. To this end, eight specific objectives are set out in Article 1 of the Decision.

The support is achieved through three types of action. Action 1 supports annual projects, implemented by cultural operators<sup>4</sup> from at least three countries, as well as translation projects with no partnership requirements. Action 2 supports multiannual projects covered by cooperation agreements, involving cultural operators<sup>5</sup> from at least five countries. Finally, Action 3 promotes special cultural events with a European and/or international dimension.

Culture 2000 is a centralised programme encompassing a network of Cultural Contact Points (CCPs) in the participating countries. The CCPs are mainly responsible for promoting the Programme, facilitating access to it and linking it to cultural sectors at national level.

## **3. THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION**

### **3.1. The terms of the evaluation**

Following a call for tenders<sup>6</sup>, Ecotec Research and Consulting Ltd was selected to carry out the evaluation. This evaluation was intended to follow on from and complement a first evaluation, the report on which was presented in 2003. Consequently, it mainly covers the years 2002-2004 for Actions 1 and 3 and 2000-2001 for Action 2.

### **3.2. Methodology**

The methodology included interviews with Management Committee members, CCP representatives, experts, project leaders, co-organisers and Commission staff. An e-survey was launched, targeting the project leaders and co-organisers, and case studies were carried out *in situ*.

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<sup>2</sup> OJ L 99 of 03.04.2004.

<sup>3</sup> OJ L 63 of 10.03.2000.

<sup>4</sup> One project leader – in charge of coordinating the programme – and a minimum of two co-organisers.

<sup>5</sup> One project leader and a minimum of four co-organisers.

<sup>6</sup> Invitation to Tender No EAC 31/04.

### 3.3. The evaluator's findings

On a general note, the evaluator found Culture 2000 to be an adequate mechanism for meeting the needs of cultural cooperation in Europe.

During the 2000-2004 period, 1072 projects received funding: almost 40% of Action 1 and 18% of Action 2 applicants received funding<sup>7</sup>.

The Culture 2000 participants constitute a wide range of organisations, as regards cultural field, size and legal form (NGOs, national cultural institutions, local authorities, private enterprises, etc.). It is worth mentioning that most of the cultural operators receiving funding were relatively small in terms of organisational capacity; half of the respondents to the e-survey had fewer than ten employees, and most of those had fewer than six.

As far as the cooperation aspect is concerned, some two thirds of the projects built new partnerships<sup>8</sup>.

#### 3.3.1. Financial aspects

In order to secure real project cooperation, a 5% rule was introduced in 2001, requiring a minimum contribution towards the total budget from project leaders and co-organisers. The evaluator found no evidence that either organisations from the new Member States (NMS) or small operators (see 3.3 above) had been excluded as a result of this requirement. As far as NMS are concerned, the explanation might be that national/regional match-funding has been created in seven of them, as well as in Romania. By means of these funds, successful Culture 2000 applicants receive national/regional co-funding. The evaluator states a strong case for requiring a minimum level of financial input from all co-organisers as a means of ensuring a solid level of commitment.<sup>9</sup>

In 2004 the financing for Action 1 projects was changed, from 50% as an advance and 50% after acceptance of the final report by the Commission, to 70/30 instalments. 60% of the respondents considered that this had improved cash flow<sup>10</sup>.

#### 3.3.2. Annual focus on cultural sector

During 2002, 2003 and 2004, annual priorities in respect of cultural sectors were applied (visual arts, performing arts and cultural heritage). Neither the current nor the previous evaluation endorses the model – the general approach in the cultural field is cross-sectoral.

#### 3.3.3. European added value

Many interviewees stressed that Culture 2000 is the only mechanism for supporting transnational cooperation in Europe, since each country has its domestic priorities.<sup>11</sup> And, according to the evaluator<sup>12</sup>, bringing together players with different backgrounds and cultures in itself generates new concepts and is a springboard for further collaboration.

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<sup>7</sup> Second Interim Evaluation, tables 3.6 and 3.9.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.* table 4.7

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.* chapter 7.1.3

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.* table 4.18

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.* chapter 7.1.5

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.* chapter 7.1.5

Strengthened cultural links between countries, increased perception of European identity and better integration of the new Member States are mentioned as other examples of outputs.

#### 3.3.4. *Relevance*<sup>13</sup>

According to the evaluation, Culture 2000 provides an adequate basis for addressing both the original and current needs as regards cultural cooperation (98% of respondents), and the cultural fields to which it applies<sup>14</sup> adequately reflect the nature of the domain of culture (97% of respondents). There is a widespread view that the programme is well focused in terms of aims and objectives.

There is also a widespread perception of the need for a programme specifically supporting the cultural sector (rather than including culture in other programmes).

Moreover, Culture 2000 clearly fills a gap in funding for transnational cooperation in Europe, which is not addressed by national or regional funding programmes. The Programme has also generated substantial new transnational cooperation. Many partnership links and activities have continued after the end of Culture 2000 funding, and in some cases links have led to additional transnational cooperation activity unrelated to Culture 2000.

#### 3.3.5. *Effectiveness and impact*<sup>15</sup>

By its very existence, Culture 2000 is contributing to the core objectives of increasing cooperation, dialogue and exchanges among cultural operators in Europe.

It can also be said that the eight objectives mentioned in Article 1 of the Decision have broadly been achieved, some of them to a greater extent than others, particularly in terms of improving knowledge of European cultures and heritage and improving understanding of European cultural diversity.

The evaluator identifies likely obstacles to achieving these objectives, in particular: the disparity between the Programme's broad objectives and its limited resources; the complexity of the administrative and organisational requirements; the lack of information on potential partners; the weak management skills on the part of cultural operators and their lack of experience in European projects as well as the lack of resources within the cultural sector in general.

#### 3.3.6. *Efficiency and cost-effectiveness*<sup>16</sup>

Overall, the administrative and management resources available for running the programme are quite modest. The evaluator concludes that this appears to make for efficiency in terms of delivery. However, it has also been found that there is an underspend on administrative costs<sup>17</sup> and an overspend on projects. According to the evaluator, increased administrative resources would lead to higher efficiency if spent on improving feedback to applicants, compiling an up-to-date contacts database and having a more active dissemination strategy.

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<sup>13</sup> Extent to which the Programme objectives are relevant to the cultural sector in Europe today.

<sup>14</sup> For the period covered by this evaluation, the applicant was asked to categorise the project within one cultural sector.

<sup>15</sup> Extent to which objectives set are achieved.

<sup>16</sup> Extent to which the desired effects are achieved at a reasonable cost.

<sup>17</sup> Second External Interim Evaluation, table 3.4

Regarding the outputs and results, the evaluator states that, due to its comparatively low budget, there is a limit to how many projects can be supported by Culture 2000. Quality and visibility are, however, strong assets and the evaluator mentions the programme's potential critical *impact* as something to strive for and exploit.

### 3.3.7. *Utility, added value and sustainability*<sup>18</sup>

There is evidence of a range of benefits to organisations and individuals involved in Culture 2000, including: gaining broader experience in the cultural field and participating in European projects; increased professionalism owing to the management skills needed; improved organisational capacity and competence of staff; increased dialogue between cultural actors.

Culture 2000 has clearly generated momentum: most survey respondents indicated that they would not have started without the programme, but perhaps even more significantly half would not even have conceptualised their project. The programme has therefore been an important catalyst for ideas.

20% of the projects reported that they had never worked with any of their project partners before and 50% reported that they had worked with only some of them. 25% reported new links, while 33% pointed to stronger links with cultural operators in other countries. Many respondents to the survey also indicated that they would continue their cooperation activities in some way, and nearly 67% of them said they would maintain links with partnerships they had formed.

According to the evaluator, it is unlikely that any other instrument would have been more useful than Culture 2000 in promoting cultural cooperation. The breadth of the objectives affords wide scope to participants, while the focus on experimentation and innovation encourages creativity and new forms of cultural expression.

## 4. **MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION AND COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSION**

The main recommendations of the evaluator are presented in bold, while the Commission's answer is in italics.

**The allocation of funding available for each cultural field and action should be presented in the annual call for proposals, in order to enhance transparency in the selection process.**

*The distribution of resources between Actions 1 and 2 is indeed already indicated in the calls for proposals in percentage terms, along with the distribution between the cultural fields (by approximate numbers of projects per field). The future Culture Programme does not explicitly mention any specific cultural sector, as all are included without restriction. However, there will be various types of action (support for projects; support to European cultural bodies and support for analysis and information) and the allocation of budgetary resources between the strands will be clearly indicated.*

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<sup>18</sup> Extent to which positive effects are likely to last after an activity has ended.

**The Commission should ask all project leaders (and unsuccessful applicants) to complete a short questionnaire seeking their views on the application and selection procedure. Collecting information in this way would facilitate the adoption of a set of Key Performance Indicators for each programme objective, against which the impact of the programme could be measured.**

*In general terms the Commission shares this concern, since such data would constitute the basis for solid statistics regarding the Programme and its performance. However, in practical terms and in the current context, it may be difficult to find the necessary human resources to conceive and implement this task.*

**A programme dissemination strategy should be developed and published to promote the programme and its achievements to key stakeholders.**

*The Commission is well aware of the need for properly targeted information and communication activities as well as for better exploitation of the projects' results and outputs. Such communication and dissemination activities will be strongly emphasised in the new Culture Programme (strand 3).*

*Indeed, it is vital to increase the visibility of the Programme and the projects funded by it in order to improve its critical impact (as opposed to critical mass). The Commission will continue to publish its Internet newsletter and efforts will be made to have more articles published in the cultural sector publications. Moreover, in collaboration with the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), the Europa website is currently being developed with a view to making it more user-friendly and increasing the space dedicated to presentation of projects. High-quality projects presented in detail could then be exploited in other contexts.*

**The Commission should start up an online searchable partner-matching database to enable cultural operators to search for potential partners and also to provide links from the Culture 2000 web pages to similar partner-matching databases provided by the CCPs.**

*The Commission intends to look into the best way of developing and maintaining an exhaustive and effective internet-based tool. Such a tool could be operated by the CCPs (which are best placed to obtain the details of cultural operators at national/regional levels), in conjunction with both the Commission and EACEA (performing an umbrella function). Please see also the Commission's comments concerning its website: in this context, more direct links could be made to any partner-searching mechanism already provided by CCPs.*

**The application forms for Culture 2007 should be simplified.**

*This recommendation shall be taken into account within the limits imposed by the Financial Regulation and its implementing rules. The evaluator has been repeatedly asked by the Commission to give concrete proposals for improvement but has given poor guidance in this respect.*

**Every applicant should receive detailed written feedback on their application along with an official letter stating the outcome of their application.**

*Since the beginning of Culture 2000, efforts have been made to meet this challenge. Efforts will be stepped up in the framework of the new Culture Programme. However, up to now, the Commission has given priority to funding the maximum number of projects, with rather limited staff resources. This means that it is virtually impossible for the Commission to provide around 700 applicants each year with a detailed response.*

**Short-term staffing levels of the Technical Assistance Office (in charge of checking the eligibility of applications) should be increased in order to shorten the procedural timescale.**

*There is no longer any TAO. Its activities were taken over on 1 January 2006 by the EACEA, which is responsible for managing certain parts of the Culture Programme. This specialised body should be able to provide better managed and improved services to beneficiaries. It is also worth mentioning that other factors such as the Management Committee procedure and the subsequent EP Right of Scrutiny have a greater impact on the lengthy selection process<sup>19</sup>.*

**The number of times each application is assessed by external experts should be limited to two. A briefing day for the experts should be held before or during the application assessment week in Brussels. Experts should be retained on a multi-annual basis. Feedback from national authorities should be sought in order to discover why experts tend not to return in subsequent years. The work of each expert should be properly assessed.**

*The Commission is aware that the use of external experts is important for a high quality and transparent selection procedure.*

*Until 2005, six experts assessed each application. This number was reduced to two for the 2006 selection. However, the open character of the new Culture Programme must also be taken into account; with a stronger focus on cross-sectoral activities, the breadth of knowledge (and thus the number of experts) needed to assess the content of applications will increase.*

*The experts are informed by post beforehand and are briefed during an introduction meeting upon arrival. They are proposed by the participating countries, and the Commission requests that they are not invited more than twice, for reasons of objectivity. An underperforming expert would breach the contract that binds him/her with the Commission and measures would be taken. In the framework of the new Culture Programme, alternative ways of recruiting external experts could be envisaged, bringing the procedure into line with the practice followed by other programmes of the Directorate-General for Education and Culture.*

## **5. The Commission's conclusions**

The Commission shares the overall assessment of the evaluator that the Programme has provided a unique contribution to cultural cooperation in Europe. Culture 2000 has been instrumental in enhancing the vitality of cultural exchanges in Europe. It is unlikely that any other instrument would have been more useful than this programme in promoting cultural

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<sup>19</sup> COM(2003) 722, page 11.

cooperation throughout Europe. The objectives established in Article 151 of the Treaty have therefore been fully realised.

Indeed, thousands of cultural organisations of all sizes and kinds - theatres, museums, professional associations, research centres, universities, cultural institutes, public authorities, etc. - from all over Europe and representing the whole spectrum of cultural activities have been working together to create and implement cultural and artistic projects. In this way, an even greater number of European citizens have been given the unique opportunity to meet and explore the cultures of their European counterparts.

It is thus imperative that Community support for cultural cooperation activities in Europe be continued. That is precisely what will be achieved with the new Culture Programme. By focusing EU action on three main objectives which have been identified as having strong European added value - the transnational mobility of people working in the cultural sector, the transnational circulation of works of art as well as of artistic and cultural products, and intercultural dialogue – this programme will go further than its predecessors in strengthening cultural cooperation in Europe.