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cover story

Cultural policy & media: communication facilitator and image promoter

Before discussing the role of the media as an instrument of cultural policy, it should be noted that, broadly speaking, the relationship between culture and the media is one of inclusion. Culture, defined in the widest sense, incorporates all 'articulated symbolic practices' (hence a culture of dressing or a culture of everyday life).

by **Andrea ZLATAR**, PhD

Member of the city council; Chief Editor, *Zarez* cultural magazine, Zagreb, Croatia

Contemporary theory (primarily in the field of cultural studies) puts forward a social definition of culture as the 'description of a separate way of life in which specific meanings and values are not only expressed in the arts and education, but also in institutions and everyday behaviour' (Williams, 1965:58). In this sense, culture also incorporates the media: the media are a particular form of cultural practice, which have experienced a remarkable development in contemporary society, assuming an increasingly large number of active social roles. On the other hand, when speaking of cultural policy that focuses on specific areas of culture (among them basic cultural heritage, cultural activity, the culture industry), the media become a *mediator* between—to use the traditional terms—culture and society, meaning that they mediate in a process of conveying cultural products from the producers to the consumers. In this capacity, the media are always, even implicitly, instruments of cultural policy. The task of formulating cultural policy would then involve a clarification of the role of the media in promoting the objectives of that cultural policy.

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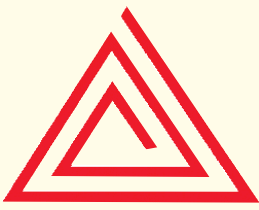
breaking news

Building on experiences

International workshop in Bucharest builds on the past experience and the current practice of Local Cultural Strategy Development in South-east Europe

A major international *Policies for Culture* event on this theme is due to take place in Bucharest, 9-10 May 2003. A variety of workshop sessions feature on the programme which aim to consolidate methodologies and practices established by recent initiatives in local cultural policy development in the cities and counties of the SEE region. Using the illustrative power of their own past practice, local initiators and experts, along with international participants, will translate the experience resulting from numerous *Policies for Culture* projects into theoretical models applicable in a wider context. For in-depth analysis, leading to recommendations, the workshop will bring together a comparative presentation of recent *Policies for Culture* action projects, with a theoretical discussion of relevant examples drawn from Eastern and Western Europe. ■

The workshop is organized in close cooperation with the Central European Initiative (CEI) and the Romanian Ministry of Culture.



editorial

Policies for Culture 2003

Continuing local action – consolidating achieved outcomes

Ever since its first action projects in Romania and Bulgaria, *Policies for Culture* initiatives have been attracting the attention of diverse cultural print media, local radio and television stations, and national broadcasting stations in our countries of operation. However, South-eastern European media, in all its forms (printed, broadcasted, online), is understood by *Policies for Culture* to be much more than just a useful promotional tool for making known the programme's work in the region. It is part of *Policies for Culture* 'philosophy' to recognise SEE media institutions as important and appropriate means to lobby for the interests and needs of the cultural sector, to ensure that innovative practices developed by local initiatives are given the crucial public attention and support they need. To this end media institutions play an essential role in transferring the programme's participative policymaking approach into the cultural policy realities of the *Policies for Culture* countries in South-east Europe.

In 2002, *Policies for Culture* launched a major media initiative, which by the beginning of 2003 resulted in extensive coverage of *Policies for Culture* topics and articles in a total of ten cultural magazines and daily newspapers in Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia. The results of this initiative are outlined in the present Journal. In response to the great interest which the focus topic of the last issue evoked within our network; this Journal also features an additional section on Advocacy for Culture in South-east Europe. The supplement includes stories, post-scripts and interviews on recent developments and additional aspects of the subject.

The Journal's cover story features an inspiring policy paper on the role of the media in processes of cultural policy development, and the ongoing challenge of establishing proper relations between the cultural sphere of the SEE countries on the one hand and their media institutions on the other. The paper was prepared by Andrea Zlatar, member of the city council in Zagreb, and Chief Editor of Croatia's high profile cultural magazine *Zarez*. Her text was part of a broader *Policies for Culture* research initiative also launched in 2002. The outcome of altogether six commissioned research papers can be further explored in this Journal (cf. Dan C. Mihailescu's text on cultural journalism in SEE) and will also be available on the programme web page (www.policiesforculture.org).

The recent *Policies for Culture* research and media activities have been highly successful initiatives, which will therefore be continued in 2003. However, these are not the only programme activities envisaged for this year. The year 2003 will be, first and foremost, another year of continuous ground-level cultural policy action. Until 7 April 2003 a new *Policies for Culture* Call for Proposals is open to new project applications from Albania, Bosnia – Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro and Serbia.

At the same time, major emphasis will be given to consolidating the project outcome of the various initiatives supported since the programme started in 2000. To this end, a large international symposium on SEE Local Policy Development in Bucharest will take place in May 2003, and the 'Force of Example' Publication Series will be continued with more case studies on our projects in Timisoara, Arad, Zagreb and Bulgaria. Moreover the following issues of this online Journal will include additional items on the focus topics Local Cultural Strategy Development in South-east Europe as well as Artists & Cultural Policy Development in South-east Europe.

By the end of the year our existing info-tools and services will be completed and updated, with the launch of a SEE cultural policy information portal, which will include numerous online resources and a new methodological toolkit for participative policy making in the region. Selected universities will be invited to take part in our pilot initiative for the introduction of a cultural policy guest-lecturing scheme for students, practitioners and policy makers, to be tested during the winter semester 2003/2004. The programme will also continue to provide small-scale grants for the exchange of knowledge and experience between past and ongoing *Policies for Culture* action projects and lobbying initiatives in South-east Europe.

An exciting and promising year full of new developments and opportunities in the region lies ahead of us. For questions and further details regarding support and initiatives offered in 2003 please refer to our web page www.policiesforculture.org or contact the *Policies for Culture* team in Amsterdam, Bucharest, Sofia or Zagreb.

Philipp DIETACHMAIR, *Policies for Culture* Central Coordinator, Amsterdam.

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Media and cultural policy: central issues

The first set of problems stem from the general relationship between policy—including cultural policy—and the media. Although it is impossible to provide a uniform description of the status of the media in transition countries, certain common features become apparent. There are two key issues in this field: the issue of media ownership (private or public/state) and, in the case of state ownership, the official management structures and the practical ways in which political forces influence the media.

In all cases, governments must:

- a) *aspire to protect 'democratic society from excessive concentrations of private media ownership' (Mundy, 2000:89);*
- b) *secure programming standards and diversity of opinion in the public media (state-owned radio and television, state-owned press);*
- c) *safeguard the 'right of public access' to national, cultural and linguistic minorities;*
- d) *resist pressures for the exclusive commercialisation of cultural products.*

The majority of these tasks (b, and in particular, c and d) are normally the direct responsibility of the national Ministry of Culture. As a specific example, I note the new law on public-owned

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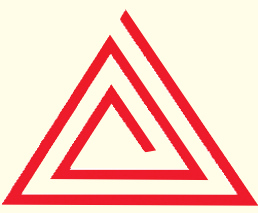
Policies for Culture

encourages participative cultural policy—making in South-east Europe by forging a real working relationship between the Ministry of Culture, the Parliament, Local Public Authorities and the Cultural Sector in developing new cultural policies.



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radio and television, drafted by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia in 2002, as well as a series of successful measures it launched with the purpose of protecting non-profit cultural activities (e.g. publishing).

The second set of problems stems from the types of media and their diverse roles. When cultural policy is used to set down measures in relation to the media, it must be done on the basis of an analysis (however simple) of the media situation in a given country (or region). Such an analysis of types of media includes the following elements:

- a) *question of ownership (private, public, mixed);*
- b) *range and audience (national, regional, local levels); percentage of viewers, listeners, readers;*
- c) *type of media (broadcasting: television, radio; the press; new technologies);*
- d) *degree of specialisation (news and general media; media specialising in culture or specific fields of culture).*

A sticking point in formulating a cultural policy of conduct towards the media is the obvious gaping chasm between the two 'types' of media: those which have high-circulation (a large number of viewers/listeners) but are not primarily interested in culture, and those which have low-circulation (a small audience/readership) but higher standards and more exacting criteria in portraying cultural themes. The principal characteristic of high-circulation media is their treatment of culture as a separate field, as something of a 'ghetto', dedicating separate broadcasts or special sections to it. These contributions (broadcasts or printed features) are regularly placed at the periphery of central topics (with precedence over sport and weather reports, but second to local crime, tabloidesque news and 'human interest' pieces), and according to surveys of viewers/readers they have a much lower priority than central news broadcasts. Specialised broadcasts on television dealing with culture and the arts (fine arts, literature, and so forth) are normally at the bottom of the viewer ratings and are scheduled in unattractive time-slots: either early in the afternoon, combined with educational broadcasts, or late at night. In my opinion, the fundamental reason for this in transition countries is that, lacking a comprehensive cultural policy and cultural development strategy during the 1990s, these countries inherited the practice of treating culture as something 'separate' from the social context, and 'above' it. Although this separation is often explained as 'elitism', as a sign of 'high culture', I believe that it brought about a series of negative consequences, the most fundamental of which, bases cultural practice on the principle of exclusion ('cultural is for the above average') rather than inclusion ('let's secure the conditions for transmitting culture

to the largest possible number of people'). The political heritage of transitional countries, as typically centralised states, includes the notion of culture as an activity representing the state. In media practice, this means that the major media promote for the most part those cultural activities which directly represent the state, most often on the back of the idea of national cultural identity: staging historical themes in which the national and cultural are unified, representative exhibitions, neo-conservatism, favouring a concern for heritage over the promotion of contemporary cultural products.

Objectives of cultural policy toward the media

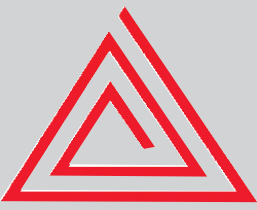
When considering the relationship between cultural policy and the media, the following primary themes should be taken into account:

- a) bridging the gap between 'high' and 'low' culture, between elite and pop culture;
- b) creating a strategy of media openness to new segments of the public rather than closing in to narrow specialist groups (which, according to available data, means small groups of 300 to 500 readers of arts journals in transition countries);
- c) creating a strategy of improved criteria and raised standards in promoting cultural content in high-circulation media and news broadcasts which include culture reports;
- d) supporting cultural projects which have no recognisable commercial value; refusing to engage in futile competitions with the commercial market;
- e) promoting a *dimension of the new* in culture in relation to existing culture.

Cultural administration and cultural institutions in relation to the media

Administration in the field of culture in transition countries (at national and local levels and in individual cultural institutions) does not make use of professionally trained staff, qualified to communicate with the media. While a feature of political structures is that they are, in principle, still closed to the media, showing a certain apprehension and passivity towards them, cultural institutions generally employ inadequately trained staff who simultaneously perform marketing, advertising and public relations functions. Cultural policy vis-à-vis the media should be based primarily on the perception

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that the media are *allies* in the promotion of cultural values and objectives, and that those working in the cultural field should have a proactive stance toward the media—in short that they should *offer* content to the media on a continual basis for promotion, in a form which the media can *understand*, and in which they can convey the message as mediators. Cultural administration charged with the task of communicating with the media must learn the language of the media (media discourse) and their rules of behaviour, rather than remain closed to the media on the feeble pretext that the media are ‘politicised’, ‘scandalous’ or ‘kitschy’. Whatever the character of the media in a given area, cultural administration at the municipal, regional or national level cannot directly influence their change (the idea of so-called ‘fixing the media’). It can only accept the rules of the game as they are presented on the media scene and transmit its own, high-quality media-suited messages.

Promotion of cultural objectives

Every cultural administration or cultural institution needs to have a strategy for media actions. Such a strategy should include:

- a) *regular information on the routine cultural activities of individual institutions (press conferences, bulletins, websites);*
- b) *formulation of media strategies for each individual cultural event, from advanced promotional activities to concluding assessments;*
- c) *selecting and maintaining links with permanent media patrons who also assist in sponsorship initiatives;*
- d) *varied means of contact with reporters: press screenings and productions, informal communications.*

The promotion of cultural events and cultural products is most effective through the promotion of persons—those, that is, who produce culture. The personalization of culture and cultural events, rather like the notion of ‘individualised reception’ (creating the feeling in the consumer that a cultural product is intended specifically for him/her), are the fundamental principles of cultural strategy towards the media.

Cultural policy must be tailored

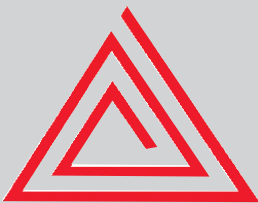
Cultural policy must additionally be tailored to the needs of its various fields. The cultural heritage, contemporary cultural activities and the culture industry all require different media strategies. The cultural heritage is an exceptionally difficult

challenge for media promotion, as certain procedures need to be in place for its actualization—to render itself contemporary. Promotion of the cultural heritage can be conducted with the help of the third sector—with links to tourism promotion—and of the public media in the field of educational broadcasting. On the other hand, the culture industry (motion pictures, music, and, to a certain extent, publishing) has its own media promotion mechanisms—in the sense of promotion in the culture market. Here cultural policy measures must be reduced to a minimum. Finally, the real challenge for cultural policy in relation to the media is the production of contemporary art, which demands proactive, contextualized activity at the local level. The local media, with their more focused outreach can be most effective in the promotion of contemporary artists and their products.

Providing information through the media implies first and foremost an awareness of communication through the media. This means institutions must obtain feedback on the effect of their media messages as well as on the forms of direct communication with the public (open mailboxes, open telephone lines, open office hours).

Formation of media identities and roles

In the last quarter-century, the idea of cultural identity has been replaced with that of national identity. In my opinion, cultural identity is not based on national identity in the sense of ethnicity. Media promotion of the idea of cultural identity must not portray it as the result of unification processes nor of reduction of differences. On the contrary, cultural identity must be promoted in the plural, as a *network of cultural identities* which emerge through the blend of linguistic, poetic, aesthetic and cultural differences which interact and coexist. The idea of multiculturalism must also be promoted as a means of cultural communication in the broadest sense of the word, outside the national borders of culture. Multiculturalism preserved within the borders of one nationally and culturally dominant region (e.g. concern for the local customs of minorities in a limited area) is not productive; what should instead be supported is multiculturalism as a form of intra-regional communication and cooperation. Cultural and sub-cultural identities, local, national and regional identities, should be promoted as simultaneously existing identities, which are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. In this vein, I believe that it is exceptionally important to promote intra-regional projects that bring countries together based on the logic of cultural rather than ethnic identity. Good examples of this are cultural projects associated with the courses of individual rivers, such as the Danube or the Sava, which create a common cultural sphere regardless of geopolitical borders.



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Developing a cultural identity

Taken as a whole, the region of South-east Europe does not have a currently formulated cultural identity: even today's image of South-east Europe is based on nineteenth century notions which Western Europe has created of the 'other', personified in the stereotype of the barbaric Balkans. The question of the possibility of forming a cultural identity for the region through media promotion immediately confronts the problem of a deficit in the common media scene. Whether in broadcasting or the press, the South-eastern European region lacks media mechanisms that could function to form a cultural identity and to ensure its media promotion, both within the region or outside it. In the promotion of their own cultural values, countries in the region must insist on internal diversity and individuality; on images of themselves as new and culturally productive communities that transform over time, to replace the foreign media promotion of the Balkans as countries fossilized by the preservation of their traditionally and nationally grounded heritage, as has generally been the case so far. The nature of the media as the scene of communication must contribute to mutual knowledge and recognition, the exchange of programmes and content, and the sharing of experiences and links in similar cultural and social contexts.

Conclusion

Having identified the central issues to be addressed, further action needs to be developed and pursued in two main areas:

Education and Training

Two types of programmes should be considered in the formulation of cultural policy in relation to the media, with the objective of finding concrete mechanisms for promotion in individual fields and through different types of media, based on an awareness of the media's role in the promotion of cultural values and goods.

1. Educational programmes concerned with the training of administrative and management staff in culture, in the field of public relations and media communication, promotion and marketing;

2. Educational programmes aimed at specialized supplementary training for reporters and other media professionals who are involved in specific cultural fields.

Research and Projects

Special research should trace the relationship between culture and the media by analysing the results of media actions, promotional programmes and media sponsorships. This means it should monitor the effects of the role of media promotion in the formation of public perceptions of individual cultural products or events. The monitoring of the results of media actions and cultural activities should become an ongoing commitment, in statistical analysis of the numbers of visitors, as well as analysis of the financial impact of individual cultural events.

In a theoretical way, cultural studies should also deal with the general role of the media in the formation of ideas on culture in contemporary society, particularly the complex relations that emerge in the 'confrontation' between the traditionally imposed elitist representative culture and various forms of sub-cultures and pop culture. ■

Literature

- ♦ *Eagleton, Terry: The Idea of Culture, Blackwell's 2000*
- ♦ *Graziani, Serge; La communication culturelle de l'état, Paris 2000. Presses universitaires de France.*
- ♦ *Lloyd, David & Thomas, Paul: Culture and the State, London 1998. Routledge.*
- ♦ *Mundy, Simon: Cultural Policy, A short guide, Council of Europe 2000.*
- ♦ *Williams, Raymond: The Long Revolution, Penguin 1965.*



Emerging from a ‘culture of darkness’ into a ‘culture of light’: Journalism in contemporary Romania

When we deal with the post-communist cultural crisis, most complaints are financially rather than spiritually founded. They are based on the administrative crisis, not on the moral/professional crisis of the elites, on the real crisis of cultural institutions (yes real!), not on the crisis of creativity or the acute feeling of social uselessness creators actually experience. Then again, whereas the financial crisis, the drift of the administrative system, the legislative chaos and the deficit of financial and managerial inventiveness are issues which could easily be addressed/solved, the deep crisis experienced by the creative consciousness and the new mediators requires a long-term cure. The same goes for the training of young talent, for the establishment of new priorities and the adaptation to market laws etc. Since we are dealing with several aching parts of an ill body, each part requiring a distinct, difficult (and delicate) process of diagnosis, the applicable cure should also be complex and differentiated. With contrasting hopes and results...

by Dan C. MIHAILESCU, literary critic and editor, Bucharest, Romania

Ailing parts

Obviously, the first aid to be provided as emergency treatment is the material support granted to the creative act: cultural institutions, collective creative emulation (provided by arts unions), a stimulating legislation (regarding copyright and intellectual property in general, sponsorship legislation, laws regarding copyright libraries, museum and theatre laws and so on), the efficient use of public money, of real estate endowments, of pension funds, the training in new media structures, almost without precedent in the communist regime (TV hosts; e-media specialists etc).

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Developing and consolidating working relationships with the media in South-east Europe: a recent *Policies for Culture* initiative

by Oana RADU, *Policies for Culture* Regional Coordinator, Bucharest, Romania

By the end of 2002, *Policies for Culture* initiated a broad media collaboration project in the countries of South-east Europe. Ten magazines and newspapers in eight SEE countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia) published, or will soon publish, cultural policy dossiers and specific supplements in one of their regular issues. This initiative made texts and publications, prepared by the *Policies for Culture* network and its guest writers, available in the local languages of South-east Europe, and thereby encouraged dissemination of cultural policy expertise to a broad band of readers throughout the region.

The aim of this initiative was to bring current challenges and approaches in SEE cultural policy development to the attention of a wider audience, and also to develop closer working relationships with media institutions in the participating countries, which will be pursued in the future. ■

Culture media initiative

All SEE magazines and newspapers supported by this *Policies for Culture* media initiative are listed BELOW:

Albania

Përperjeka cultural quarterly: www.perperjeka.com

Bulgaria

Kultura weekly: www.online.bg/kultura
Dnevnik newspaper: www.dnevnik.bg

Croatia

Zarez cultural magazine: www.zarez.hr

Macedonia

Margina cultural quarterly:
www.templum.com.mk/margina/

Moldova

Contrafort magazine: www.contrafort.md

Montenegro

Vijesti newspaper and its weekly cultural supplement: www.vijesti.cg.yu

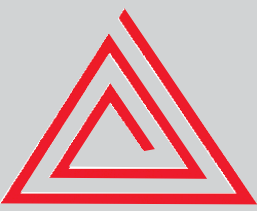
Romania

Observer cultural magazine:
www.observatorcultural.ro
Cotidianul newspaper: www.cotidianul.ro
and its weekly cultural supplement Litere, arte, idei: www.cotidianul.ro/lai

Serbia

Danas newspaper: www.danas.co.yu

More information about this collaboration and links to the online versions of these dossiers available at: www.policiesforculture.org



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However:

- recovering creators' self-confidence;
- revitalizing the social instinct and the forces able to create long-term cultural strategies;
- restoring cultural elites, and the solidarity of specialized talent;
- resuscitating interdisciplinary work;
- efficient communication between creators and different sectors of society, and a mutually inspiring relationship between the mass media, with its commercial character, and the artistic phenomenon, with its spiritual character;
- involving as many types of audience as possible, recaptivating young people for the forces of intelligence against the overwhelming power of vulgar entertainment and mercantilism;
- exerting a positive influence on inculture (putting primitive psychology to the test) for the sake of true cultural ethos;
- recovering the (enormous) undisputed and productive prestige which art had attained in dictatorship times.

all these aspects (and others too) require an emergency cure that would presuppose:

1. Inciting, training and promoting cultural mediators—people who constitute true bridges or crossroads, able to harmonize opposite forces and opinions, to ease the flow of communication and so make possible/effective the dialogue between different or opposite positions (between an uneducated audience and true culture; between politicians and journalists; between writers and editors, artists and sociologists; between the economic, technical and creative sectors, so far engaged in what seems to be perpetual conflict; between the educational/academic worlds and mass media; between scientists and visual artists; between the Church and lay artists, etc).

By 'mediators' we mean connecting-people who could act as human links, from the literary agent to sociologists specialized in opinion polls, from TV/radio hosts to entertainment management and consultancy agencies, to the journalist able to harmonize the commercial, profit-making spirit with erudition, the accessibility and 'ready-made' nature of art works with the aesthetic and ethical values of art.

*2. Eliminating the **improvisation** that has been dominating Romania's cultural perspective for thirteen years and outlining long-term strategies—cultural policies—conceived from top to bottom, but started from the bottom up: from apparently irrelevant or small-scale purposes, strictly utilitarian, to strategies aimed at 'cultural engineering'.*

Vulnerable points & priorities

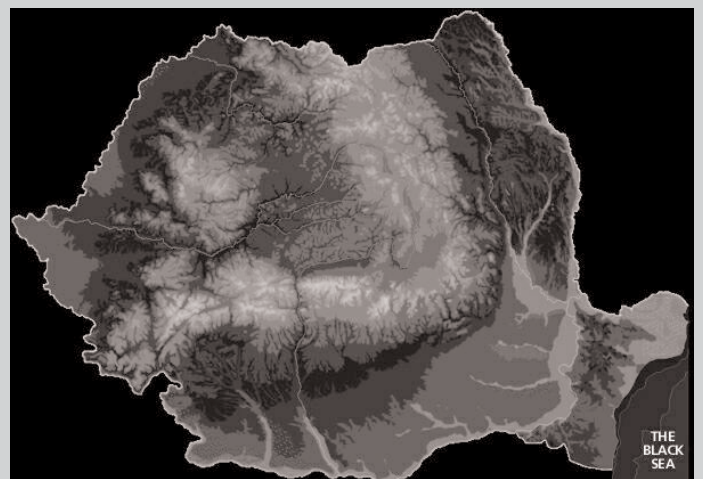
What is the cause of the divisive tensions that have been tearing apart Romanian cultural life, both **before** and **after** the collapse of the communist regime?

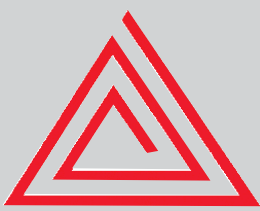
First of all, the artistic act (be it a book, theatre performance or whatever) lived in fervour, in insurgent hope and exasperation. Suffocated, stifled among the masses, and systematically humiliated by the political regime, the audience (like the author himself, of course) escaped vertically, in an almost ecstatic way. Seeking refuge in culture in this way substantially modified the purely aesthetic or simply entertaining substance of artistic performances or works. Politically subversively charged, experienced as resistance and psychological therapy for the aggression of politics, or as insubordination through the cult of beauty and daydreaming, the cultural act gained huge symbolic proportions, whereas nowadays, in freedom and diversity, regaining normality seems to be like falling into the abyss.

This calm, this return to normality, to the natural gesture of communication, is felt by the artist and creator as a lethal indifference, as a betrayal, as a breaking of all idols. On the one hand, every 40-60 year old journalist, mediator, or specialized critic will cultivate nostalgia for the 'ghetto harmony' of yesteryear, in a suicidal refusal to adapt to the new circumstances, and will blame (justifiably, though barrenly) the current explosion of subculture and gang-spirit, without trying either to evaluate the negative, or to create proper tactics to drain negative energies. On the other hand, young journalists, aged 20-25, representatives of the internet generation, cultivate reductionism, up-to-date exclusivism, out of indifference or spite towards Yesterday's values, and towards local traditions, glorifying the new linguistic stereotypes of globalization. They are partly motivated by a terrible thirst for recognition, but also show an astonishing lack of culture (*inculture*), ranging from the American pronunciation of French names to mentioning the presence of a certain writer at a book fair, ten years after his death!

The arts unions (in the field of literature, visual arts, music etc) once had substantial funds at their disposal, allowing them to cultivate a system of patronage which proved as profitable, as it was damaging for creativity. Nowadays, these unions limit themselves to either cultivating political power or fantasize about the benefits of unionization. They are run by out of date, senile, embittered, rusting structures, often acting against the interests of

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the mass of creators whose works are ultimately their livelihood. On the other hand, creators actually no longer consider these unions as the most favourable platform for communication, but as mere bureaucratic institutions. Hence the generally expressed need for reviving the true institutions that were represented in the 1930s in Romania by the literary café, the *'bohème'*, the more or less selective clubs—an apparently minor aspect, but one which could be very influential in a Latin/Mediterranean artistic world.

In a society which considers diversity of beliefs and opinions as 'atomization', where individual creators expect government subsidy and prefer collectivization, despising the elites; in a society where even the most humble request for the work of art to be attractive is judged as 'mercantile cynicism' and 'self-prostitution'; where corrupt bureaucracy, aggressive stupidity, dogmatic opacity, shallow festivism, and party patronage are dominant; where public libraries acquire a thousand times fewer books and where a book enters public circulation two years after being published; where book archives keep moving or are shut down at the good will of their owners; where marketing of the

performing arts institutions is but a sweet dream; where the agent institutions of Communist times have split into a variety of illegal bureaus, genuine fraud clubs; where museums claim an 'obligation' on the part of the Education Ministry to 'provide them with an audience', without any efforts to attract one; where, in the life cycle of a book, everyone gets paid (from typewriter to bookstore seller, from driver to proof-reader) ... except for the author. In a country such as this, there is an obvious need for a group of people, a think-tank, to reflect, to monitor and to act, keeping in mind the fact that everything connected with culture is—both directly and indirectly—based on civic education and on the will of integration in the democratic world.

What this group should be, and how it should act, are questions open for discussion and probably much debate. ■

Voices from the field: comments by SEE editors

Objectives of cultural policy towards the media

Andrea Zlatař is proposing five key themes/objectives of cultural policy towards the media:

When considering the relationship between cultural policy and the media, the following primary objectives should be taken into account:

- a) bridging the gap between 'high' and 'low' culture, between elitist and popular culture;
- b) creating a strategy of media openness to new segments of the public rather than closing in on narrow specialist groups (which, according to available data, means small groups of 300 to 500 readers of arts journals in transition countries);
- c) creating a strategy of improving criteria and raising standards in promoting cultural content in high-circulation media and news broadcasts which include culture reports;
- d) supporting cultural projects which have no recognisable commercial value; refusing to engage in futile competitions with the commercial market;
- e) promoting a dimension of the new in culture in relation to existing culture.

PfC has therefore asked the representatives of a series of publications in the region to assess themselves and their publication, with respect to these five proposed objectives, by

answering the following questions:

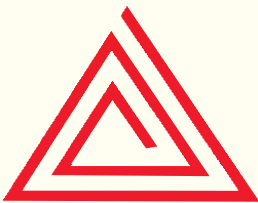
- Do you consider these objectives as being the key ones to be addressed by cultural policy towards the media? Do you consider any others as being of equal importance?
- Has such a policy been designed and implemented in your country?
- Regardless of your answers to the above, how would you position the media in your country and your publication in relation to the five objectives?

Two of the responses are summarized below:

1. KULTURA weekly, Bulgaria

First of all, I would like to distinguish between wide-circulation media and specialized cultural material. Some of the five key objectives regard the former, others the latter. The first objective—bridging the gap between high and low culture—refers to the mass media to a much greater extent than to the specialized ones, since the specialized media publish, in one form or another, critical reflections on certain emblematic 'products' of mass culture. That is to say, these editions are not exclusively focused on the output of high culture. Wide-circulation media, on the other hand, treat both high and low culture indiscriminately. The problem therefore is not how this gap should be bridged but how it should be demarcated in the mass media, how the high should be distinguished from the low, and how it should be professionally evaluated. This would be rather difficult to achieve

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in Bulgaria as the wide-circulation media—all of them private—serve the lowest common denominator of taste.

The second objective—openness to new sections of society—is closely related both to the social prestige of culture in the country, including the attitude of the State, and to the respective market niche of specialized cultural material. Unfortunately in almost all transition countries the prestige of culture (for a variety of reasons) has sunk to unprecedented levels. This determines the attitude of both society and the State. I hope this situation will change with time, but so far this seems to be the prevailing one. As regards the market niche, it is exceedingly narrow, not only for the above reasons but because of the shrinking demand for print media.

The best option for specialized cultural material is to stop fighting turf wars (as is usually the case) and to try to get together in a more closely knit network in order to demarcate a wider territory. And when this has been defined, it can be expanded through shared effort. Otherwise it is futile to fight the wide-circulation media and cooperating with them has not proved particularly fruitful so far. I think that for the time being it would be more efficient to invest means and efforts in the stabilization of specialized cultural editions rather than in the building of bridges between them and the rest of the print media. Expansion is not possible on shaky terrain. You can only 'take off' from solid ground.

This, by and large, is the strategy of *Kultura Weekly*, the newspaper I represent.

by **Koprinka CHERVENKOVA**
Editor-in-chief *KULTURA Weekly*
Chairman *CULTURE SPACE Foundation*

Short profile of the publication

Name:

Kultura (Culture)

Location & country:

Sofia, Bulgaria

Profile:

- ownership: private
- status of the legal person editing the publication: non-governmental organization
- range and audience: national
- type of media: press
- degree of specialization: specialized cultural magazine

www.kultura.bg

2. MARGINA quarterly, Macedonia

Culture and media: still waiting for a meaningful relationship

'I've seen things you people wouldn't believe; attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I watched C-beams glitter in the dark near the Tanhauser gate. All these moments will be lost, in time, like tears in rain. Time to die.' (Extract from the film *Blade Runner*)

There is a danger of being indifferent to the state of the media in countries where communication at all social levels is in a state of virtual paralysis. Take Macedonia, a country with a quite complex path of development. In the last ten years, it has been striving for stability in the dissemination of information but it is hampered by inertia in forging a thorough and open-minded approach to everything cultural.

Culture shouldn't be comfortable

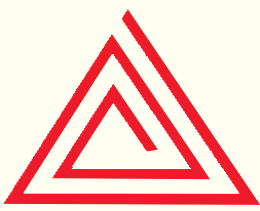
The Macedonian media is in an alarming state of stagnation. It maintains that it 'fulfils its obligations' in satisfying cultural needs, but the very short list of its components tells all. There are six magazines, one newspaper and one on-line journal. Four of the six magazines have been in existence for some fifty years and are rigidly traditional in their approach to culture. It is frustrating that it has taken so long for anyone even to take issue with their policy of 'sticking to what is comfortable and familiar' with no ambition to seize any initiative. This is a media with a signal lack of editorial direction.

Trading the provisional for cross border influences

Macedonia now needs a dynamic new world view, in which it should not be afraid to profit from the experience of other countries and, charged with a new sense of self criticism, ally them to Macedonia's own intellectual resources. The themes treated in specialized publications are a paradigm of escapism—either an elitist depiction of the, mainly, literary potentials of the country, or demonstrating a complete incapacity to reflect current themes, such as modern theoretical ideas. As a result, everything in the cultural domain has descended to a provincial level, with no attempt to see a broader picture.

A challenge for change

The situation in respect of the daily and weekly papers is even more discouraging. They dispense superficial, practically illiterate reports based on secondhand information, with no analysis or commentary. Neither is there any opportunity provided for feedback from the readership. The media submissively conveys the general disposition and wishes of those who exercise power over the country's culture. In the relationship between culture and the media there is only one rule: comfort without responsibility. It could be described as 'post-modern moral crisis'. What is most depressing is the absence



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of any polemic, critique or reappraisal in the media. If we take a look from the opposite side, we could conclude that the indistinct and almost entirely erroneous signals put out by those who oversee official culture on cultural policy, are in proportion with the manner it is treated in the media. This surely should be recognised as signalling the moment to clamour for change.

by **Iskra GESHOSKA**
Vice editor-in-chief *MARGINA Quarterly*

Short profile of the publication

Name:

Margina

Location & country:

Skopje, Macedonia

Profile:

- ownership: private
- the range and audience: national
- type of media: press
- degree of specialization: specialized cultural publication

www.templum.com.mk/margina

Culture in the audiovisual media: *A burden?*

One may say that ‘culture in the media’ is a non-sense, because media is a part of culture, so, media *is* culture. But not for the Romanian common opinion—and laws are made to reflect this vision: that of the electorate. ‘Culture’ is understood, usually, as classical literature, music and fine arts. This is the opinion of the electorate, and thus the opinion of the politicians elected, by this electorate, in the Parliament.

by **Virgil NIȚULESCU**
Committee on Culture, Arts and Mass Media, Chamber of Deputies,
Parliament of Romania

During the first six or seven years after 1989, audiovisual media were conceived (as were the entire mass media) almost exclusively as a powerful tool in modelling public opinion and in the political battles. It was, in fact, a prolongation of the role the State television had during the anticommunist uprising in December 1989. Almost no one thought of radio and television as *cultural* media. Having said that, when the first law organising the former State radio and television (promulgated in 1994) was drafted, a special provision for culture was included: the two restructured public companies (SRR and SRT) were asked to ‘promote, with proficiency and to high standards, the values of

the Romanian language, of authentic—national and universal—cultural and scientific creativity, the values of the national minorities, as well as the values of democratic, civil, moral and sporting life’. The two public companies had to present annual reports to the Parliament. These were good occasions for the MPs to ask the boards of the two companies to increase the time and the quality of cultural programmes. Public radio had a channel (*Programme 2*)—broadcasting 16 hours, daily—which, from 1996, was called *Cultural*. On a similar basis, public television claimed that its second channel had a marked cultural content. However, the two parties (the Parliament and the two companies) did not have exactly the same understanding of the word ‘culture’. SRT, especially, had the tendency to consider almost any entertainment as a part of ‘culture’.

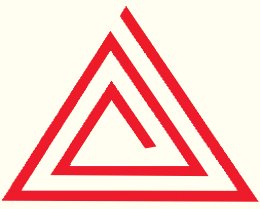
The situation got worse after 1996. A real boom in the private broadcasting industry (especially from 1995 onwards) increased the need for advertising on a, still, small advertising market. The managers started to look at the figures offered by the audience ratings. The channels became more and more commercial, the news and movies more and more violent, and prime time was reserved for cheap entertainment. If public radio has managed to keep its main characteristics, public television started to look more and more similar to the private channels: more commercial. The MPs made an attempt to correct this trend, in 1998, taking advantage of several amendments brought to the law regulating the public companies of radio and television. Thus, the two companies were forced to include in their programmes at least 51% ‘European works’, of which at least 30% had to be Romanian works (that included programmes in national minorities’ languages). 35% of the Romanian programmes had to have cultural content. However, as no definition was given for ‘cultural content’, the provision is, in fact, useless.

Trying to cope with the permanent critics of the way in which the public television was flooded with commercial programmes, SRT decided, in 2000, to establish a third channel: *Cultural*. The channel started to broadcast in 2001, with 4-6 hours daily to begin with, expanded now to 110 hours weekly.

Everybody assumes that all the programmes of the two public channels called *Cultural* are wholly filled, with cultural content, though no analyses of this are available. In addition, one may take into consideration that some of the programmes broadcast by the other public channels (News, Radio 3 and Musical—George Enescu—at the SRR—and Romania 1 and TVR2²) are, in fact, ‘cultural’ programmes.

A general law regulates the activity of the entire audiovisual media. The Audiovisual Law was promulgated in 1992, and was replaced with a new one in 2002. The first one had no special cultural provisions. The second one has some general provisions, such as the following: ‘Political and social pluralism, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, information, education and public entertainment are accomplished and ensured by the transmission and retransmission of programme services observing the freedoms and fundamental rights of the person’. The National Audiovisual Council (that is the autonomous regulatory body for the Romanian audiovisual landscape) ‘must ensure the following as the guarantor of the public interest in the field of audio-visual communications: (...) the protection of the Romanian culture and language, as well as of the culture and

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languages of national minorities'. The private channels—be they radio or television—have no obligation to include a prescribed amount of 'cultural' programmes. Moreover, most of them are not interested in offering 'cultural' or 'non-cultural' programmes; the only important criterion is that of the rating obtained by the programme. This leads to an almost entirely non-cultural content (if we are not counting the movies). In view of the fact that Romania has a significant number of radio and television stations³ with a huge range (considering Romania's 21.6 million inhabitants) of opportunities for the viewers, it means that most of the population watches programmes with almost no cultural content at all. Most of the cable operators, for instance, are not interested in programmes such as *Arte* and *Mezzo* (which are not subtitled in Romanian); however, we should note the fact that some of the most popular TV programmes seen on cable are Discovery and Animal Planet (both of them including subtitled programmes)⁴.

Defending the Romanian language

Since 1999, a new debate has begun in the Parliament: that of preserving the Romanian language and 'defending' it from 'assault' by foreign languages. A bill that was initiated then is going to be approved in 2003. It has implications in several fields, including the audiovisual. It demands that speakers pronounce correctly the Romanian language and the languages of the national minorities⁵. It also binds the broadcasters to translate into Romanian all foreign words and expressions (written or spoken). While the law has not yet been promulgated, the National Audiovisual Council has already started a campaign to 'clean' the programme from bad language, taking into consideration one of its legal duties: that of 'monitoring correct expression in the Romanian language and in the languages of national minorities'.

It is worth noting that the eleven members of the Council are appointed by Parliament (proposed by the political parties, the President of Romania and the Government) and so they bear a political mark, in spite of the fact that they are not allowed to have any political involvement. That is why the members' involvement in debating the way Romanian language is spoken on radio and television was perceived as a political debate: the Council was accused of censorship. The members defended themselves, using a monitoring report for 2001. The errors cover the full range of grammatical fields: orthoepy, morphology, syntax, and vocabulary. The Council has issued a

recommendation, asking broadcasters to improve the use of the Romanian language in their programmes. This initiative was more than welcomed by the Parliament. Beginning in 1994, when, complying with the Law's requirements, the National Audiovisual Council started to present yearly reports to Parliament, the MPs had issued, year after year, at least one recurrent observation: that of asking the Council to force the broadcasters to increase the number of cultural programmes and their quality. The Council made recommendations regarding the use of the Romanian language, as well as another set of recommendations asking the broadcasters to reduce the violent content in the audiovisual programmes.

One of the most important international debates put forward in the last two decades, has been the one relating to the 'cultural exception' by the European Union states, in connection with the Council Directive Television without frontiers (as amended by the Directive 97/36/EC of the European Parliament), during the Uruguay Round of the GATS negotiations. However, almost nothing of this debate was an object of internal discussion, in adopting the new Audiovisual Law. Thus, Romania has complied with the obligation of broadcasting European works in at least 51% of the total broadcasting time (excluding news, sports events, games, advertising, teletext services and teleshopping), starting with the date of accession to the European Union (expected to be the 1 January 2007). However, most of the MPs who are members of the Culture, Arts and Mass Media Committees in the Parliaments are hoping that this provision will increase the number and the quality of 'cultural' programmes, reducing the percentage of cheap entertainment. It is, in my opinion, a vain hope, as long as the most popular programmes broadcast by the Romanian TV stations are Romanian works (under the definition provided by the Law), produced or not under a foreign licence, but still of a very low artistic and moral quality.

After more than a decade of free legal broadcasting, it is obvious that, in spite of all the political pressure, the Romanian media consider the cultural programmes to be a burden for their daily schedules. On the other hand it is true that there was no public debate on the meaning of 'culture' and the result is that some of the programmes would be considered of high enough cultural content elsewhere, including in the European Union, but not in Romania; and there is a good chance that some of these programmes would be a part of the stations with a high commercial value. ■

Footnotes:

¹ No definition was given for 'European' works.

² Radio 3 is devoted to the young audience (up to 35 years) and Musical – George Enescu, bearing the name of the greatest Romanian composer, is reserved, mostly, for classical music. Romania 1 is a generalist channel, while TVR2 has a mixed profile (mostly, for an audience up to about 35 years, including sports, arts, movies and games). Each of the two public companies has, also, a channel, called International, broadcast for listeners and viewers outside Romania. Though they are not, officially, exempt from the 'cultural content' rule, nobody is, in fact, counting their contribution to the general landscape of the Romanian public channels. In addition, each of the two companies has a series of local stations (7 for the SRR, 4 for the SRT).

³ The last official figures are those from the 25 July 2002, when there were granted a total of:
• 308 licences for radio • 120 licences for television • 2217 licences for cable television (CATV) • 10 licences for satellite radio • 2 licences for satellite television

⁴ The most viewed programmes in important Romanian cities (all of those with more than 200,000 inhabitants), in the span of time from 20 January – 16 February, 2003, are:
1PRO TV (national private channel, owned by an American company: CME); 2. Antena 1 (national private channel); 3. Romania 1 (national public channel); 4. Prima TV (national private channel); 5. Acasă TV (national private thematic channel—telenovelas and soap operas—owned by an American company: CME); 6. TVR2 (national public channel); 7. Realitatea TV (national private thematic channel – news); 8. B1 TV (national private channel, co-operating with the FOX network); 9. HBO; 10. Tele 7 abc (national private channel, co-operating with Deutsche Welle); 11. Atomic TV (national private thematic channel, pop music); 12. Discovery a.s.o. In this ranking, TVR Cultural, the public specialized channel, is placed in 32nd position.

⁵ There are 17 national minorities officially represented in the Parliament, the most important being: Hungarians, Rroma, Germans, Ukrainians, Russians, Turks, Serbians, Tartars and Slovaks. Most of these minorities have special programmes, in their languages, at the public radio and television stations.

Postscripts to the December 02 Journal

'There is still not enough lobbying capability in culture...'

An interview with Mr. Zlatko Šešelj, member of the Croatian Parliament; member of the Committee for Education, Science and Culture; member of the Committee for Family, Youth and Sport; member of SDP (Social Democrats Party)

by Ela AGOTIC, *Policies for Culture* local coordinator, Zagreb, Croatia

What is your opinion on lobbying as a legitimate (or, perhaps, illegitimate?) means of fighting for one's own interests or the interests of a group?

We live in a state of transition, which, I'm afraid, is understood only as an economic-political transition: a transition from socialism to capitalism, and much less as a spiritual transition: a transition from a tribal to a civil society. Thus, lobbying is understood in this tribal sense, in the sense of kinship, and not based on the common interest of a group. Because we have still not progressed from a tribe to a *polis* (city state)¹, to a community organised on the basis of reconciled interests; and because we are burdened with the tradition of HDZ's version of tribal community lobbying, in which one didn't fight other interests on the basis of arguments, but one actually used to remove them from sight and accomplish one's objectives that way, lobbying has a negative connotation in our community. But it shouldn't be like this. Lobbying simply means bringing one's legitimate interests to the fore, arguing your case and challenging someone else's, nothing more.

Is there such a thing as lobbying for culture?

Lobbying for culture is still very rare, almost non-existent. There was some lobbying for culture during the process of defining the Law on obligatory benefit taxes, and it was, I think, because people's pockets were hurt. I witnessed some lobbying practices as a member of the Committee on Family, Youth and Sport; we were faced with the interests of families with drug addicts, families with disabled persons, of socially handicapped groups; all in all, with the interests of social groups with a high level of self-awareness, which gave them their lobbying capability. Unfortunately, culture still has no lobbying capability. These socially handicapped groups have become quite successful at lobbying, fighting for their own interests. Just the fact that they are coming to the Parliament to represent the interests of their own group is already a very positive step. They are the representatives of a civil society. I have never seen this happening in the field of culture. It is interesting to note that our Committee is mainly concerned with education even though it is supposed to be dealing with culture as well. Perhaps this is a good sign—maybe culture doesn't need any help.

Groups of people with special needs are very homogeneous and therefore it is easier for them to lobby...

A great deal of cultural and artistic output in itself is very individualistic. It is hard to find a common denominator and reach



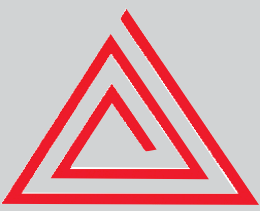
the level of homogeneity that is indispensable when it comes to realising the need for lobbying, as happened when the law reached for the artists' pockets. And I think that this lobbying about obligatory benefit taxes has even been successful! I believe it is harder to bring together people in the field of culture and arts to lobby for a specific issue because their interests are not homogeneous, there are few areas of common interest.

So, when you said that the cultural sector doesn't need support from the Committee for education, science and culture, because in fact they are doing fine without it, you were not in fact being only ironic?

After all, culture is oriented for the most part towards the market. This is why there is usually not a lot of pressure group activity during the process of drawing up the State budget—I guess there is always a hope that the amount not granted by the public authorities will be compensated for on the market. Whilst the educational and science sectors depend almost entirely on the State budget, it covers only 30% of the salaries of cultural sector employees. There is also the fact that decentralization has taken place in the field of culture for quite some time already, resulting in some local communities playing a part in financing cultural projects. The legislative measures have lately also been going in the direction of decentralization, of allowing the cultural community to strengthen its own position...Perhaps because of all this there has not so far been a great need to lobby. And as I've already mentioned, there is always this fragmentation of individual interests where everybody thinks he's better off going it alone, resulting in a lack of lobbying awareness.

There are, in fact, a certain number of common interests within the cultural sector which could enhance its lobbying capacity, but the sector has not yet become aware of them... You have just put culture in opposition to education and science because of the possibility culture has in relation to the market, and since I have prepared my question on culture as part of the non-profit making sector, I now find myself in an awkward position...

That is exactly one of the elements holding us back! I think that culture and education should both be more active in the market and less dependent on regular government funding! This is good for mental health! It is not an easy position to be in since one



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depends on his/her own capability when in the market... However, the market in our community is still very small and hampered by political interventions (though this is not unique to our country by any means). Art *per se*, art communicating with man as consumer or as participant, and asking for affirmation, is better than State art. Art *per se* proves itself in the open and not from behind the back of politics where it is judged according to some other criteria—not artistic and cultural, but national or social... We've witnessed this first hand... The market is not 'fair', nor is it perfect, but I don't see any better mechanism. In the same way that democracy is the least bad way of governing a State, the market place is in my opinion the least bad medium of human affirmation. So far we haven't found a better one...

There are always some 'marginal' fields and disciplines of art, those which could not survive without State support... I suppose you don't share the opinion of a total abandoning of the arts and culture to the market place?

No, I don't think the market is something absolute, I don't think it should be the only regulatory body! On the other hand, one should avoid giving the State the role of cultural arbitrator... I think that is the worst thing that can happen. Luckily, in the former Yugoslavia, it was precisely the arts that were the first to cross the State frontiers; the arts were the first to have been evaluated, albeit in a reduced way, by some other criteria, not only political. Those works of creativity have been the ones to prove that State culture is the worst of all possible cultures: unlike other social-realist countries, we had here some top quality works of fine art, music, animated films, etc...

Let us get back to lobbying. What is your opinion on the 'White Square of Croatian Culture' action? And have you ever been personally lobbied for something?

I think these people from the White Square action have never even reached the interior of the Parliament... The closest they got was when they were standing in front of the Parliament building distributing leaflets to all of us deputies... But all right, since this is a small country where everyone knows everyone else, it was more or less clear what their action was all about, and so maybe it was not indispensable that every single step in the lobbying procedure be made... In our small community, life is perhaps more intensive than in some larger centres, where the cultural and the political communities are indeed close, but the whole system is far more hierarchically elaborated. Here, a parliamentary deputy is neither held in high esteem, nor particularly difficult to get hold of, one can buttonhole him wherever... Therefore it seems that it was not even necessary for the 'White Square' people to reach the parliamentary offices—the problem they were concerned with was sufficiently clear.

If someone came to you with a proposal for an amendment to a law or with a proposal for a change of the law, what characteristics should the proposal have in order for you to support it?

Here the possibilities are rather restricted. In other words, every amendment proposed by the Parliament can be either adopted or

rejected by the Government. This fact—that Parliament is not empowered to impose an amendment on its own because the Government is not obliged to say whether it will adopt it or not—puts the Parliamentary majority in an awkward position: if it is promoting an amendment and the Government doesn't want it, then what? Shall it vote against such a law or simply abandon its own amendment? Practical experience in this matter has been quite diverse. Bearing in mind the way this government has been formed, the fact that it's a coalition government; bearing in mind all the diverse interests existing in such a coalition government, one comes to the conclusion that it is very hard to act as an individual. Amendments are, undoubtedly, a weapon for us to use when working with the executive branch of government, but given the Parliamentary procedure, every law is ultimately decided upon by the parliamentary majority. In this regard the governing coalition finds itself in a very embarrassing situation because, and this goes especially for the important laws, if there is no unity within the coalition, (and this unity is, unfortunately, something decided upon on the level of the parties' presidents,) then there will be practically no room for manoeuvre! When it comes to the less important laws, one can meet some softening of attitudes, but the problem is in the fact that every party supports its minister no matter what the quality of his work. Decisions made in the Parliament are mostly reached through significant political and party pressure. In the fields not concerning some party's particular interest it is very easy to vote on an individual basis and to push through an amendment regardless of the desires of the executive branch. But, when it comes to the laws connected to some party's interest, one is actually faced with blackmail...

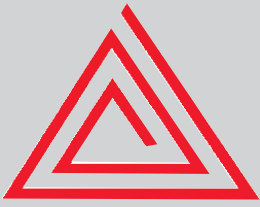
Well, one could perhaps say that in such a constellation, where it is no longer in vogue for culture to hold the place it used to hold during the previous HDZ regime, culture has a chance of pushing through some of its interests, right?

The fewer people in power busy themselves with culture, the better. That's why I said at the beginning: the fact that the cultural sector has decided to act only where the fees were concerned; the fact that there were very few laws brought about concerning culture; and the fact that there were very few objections by institutional culture regarding the allocated share of the State budget..., this all indicates that politics has withdrawn from culture and that makes me happy. I think that a correlation can be established between the withdrawal of politics from culture and a certain blossoming in some areas of culture.

I'm not so sure that the lack of commotion in the cultural sector means that everybody's doing just fine...

I'm not saying that everybody's doing fine, but that at this moment I just don't see the one issue that could initiate unification of the cultural sector in order for it to protect its interests. When it comes to cultural strategies, I think that there is no consensus about what should be done in this field.

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Well, yes! That is exactly what it's all about: cultural strategy! The cultural sector is not aware that it should participate in the creation and implementation of such documents. The same goes for cultural councils: they have no strategy, no programme, no policy, they just deal with allocating the funds...

As I said, I don't belong to the cultural sector so I cannot comment on that. The State has left a great deal of its competencies to those to whom they logically belong: to the people involved in culture. In the year 2000, the newly-elected government said that it is not interested in either of the two cultures existing during the HDZ period—glorificatory on the one hand, challenging on the other—but the dichotomy still remains. Therefore it is unrealistic to expect that culture, disconnected in this way, should get involved in issues that concern its future. The two poles of our culture refute each other, that's all they do. This dichotomy is disabling, it prevents participation in the thinking process of what culture is. That is why the Cultural councils also keep shifting position, because having a strategy means taking sides, making choices. This government (but you should talk to the Minister of Culture about this) has decided not to deepen this dichotomy, and therefore, not to align itself. This may or may not be a good position. This government has perhaps intentionally chosen to provide a space for artists to shout and argue with each other, because maybe with time the artists will understand that they are actually doing the same job and that they should start working together. How long this phase of recovery in the cultural sector will last, I don't know. But once this situation of unhealthy dichotomy comes to its end, an opportunity for cultural strategy and for taking sides will open up. And then we shall finally start to evaluate cultural products instead of people and persons. But until this time comes, lobbying will be of no help at all, not even when used in establishing one's individual position. The change will take place first in our mental attitude. We need to transform this tribal 'Croatianhood' into something belonging to the 21st century, into something that will not be bothered about whether you or I were born here or there and whether we have these or those blood cells...

The lobbying you're talking about, the self-consciousness of the professionals in arts and culture, these are the terms of a well-balanced community, of a modern community that is not only aware of the differences it contains but also of the fact that there are laws made in order to harmonize the differing interests, that these laws are brought about through a certain procedure and that influence can be brought to bear upon them. ■

Interview held in November 2002

¹ Polis: (Greek) self-governing urban community. Officially translated as 'city state'.

Margin, niche or mainstream?

Points of departure for a debate regarding the Slovene cultural policy and the attitude of the art and culture sector towards non-governmental organizations and independent creators

by **Emil HRVATIN**, Director of Publications at MASKA Slovenia Performing Arts Network and Performance Artist, Ljubljana

In the eleven years since its independence the state of Slovenia has succeeded in reforming large social systems such as healthcare, education, retirement, private property and the tax system... One of the few areas that remains untouched and which is operating within practically the same systemic framework as in the previous regime, is the area of culture. Both the State and local communities still see culture as a transfer of financial, infra-structural and human resources to public institutions that perform a representative function.

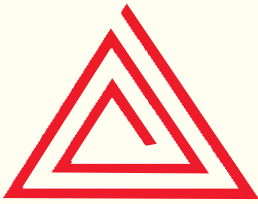
In the last ten years, the distribution of, for the most part, financial resources has become somewhat more dynamic, thus supporting the cultural and artistic productions of NGOs and of independent artists. But the decision-makers in matters of cultural policy still have not taken the decisive step towards a modernization of the system that would put different elements in the field of cultural production on an equal or, at least, on a more equal footing. The Ministry of Culture, as well as the City of Ljubljana, slightly increase the funds earmarked for the programmes and projects of the NGOs and independent artists every year, but these increases do not reflect the changing dynamics of new and contemporary works that spring from the different kinds of cultural production now being developed. In real terms, in the last five years, the funds for specific projects; events, shows etc., have been shrinking while costs continue to rise. This has had an impact, not only in terms of production (decrease of reruns in local communities), but also on the ability of artists to be creative (if we take performing arts as an example, projects are logistically increasingly less demanding, more and more shows feature only one or two performers...). On the other hand, a whole range of artistic content has appeared that cannot be integrated in the customary methods of cultural production (i.e. new media and interdisciplinary arts). Visual arts have also completely changed. They now include the media, technologies, installations, etc.

Also, cultural policy does not take that decisive step in the new proposed law of integrating the production of the NGOs into the system. The proposal provides for the possibility that the NGOs compete for programmes on an equal footing with cultural institutions, but their starting points are fundamentally different. The State and local communities have legal responsibility to finance the permanent, non programme-related expenses of public institutions that also manage the infrastructure. It would be completely absurd to expect that the programmes of public institutions should not be financed in accordance with the institutions' size.

And yet the problem is not that public institutions are privileged and the NGOs are not. The cultural policy creates this bipolarity and, in some way, also maintains it. The cultural system needs to become more dynamic, so that various forms of cultural production in which the public manifests its interest can gain acceptance. A modern, dynamic and flexible cultural system can be created only by granting concessions, long-term contracts and the management of public infrastructure to subjects whose work realizes the public interest, regardless of their status.

The problem that arises in this context is in the financial consequences of the change of such a system. It is known that according to UNESCO standards Slovenia should devote 1.5% of its budget to culture. But in fact this share is smaller than 1%. The State and the local communities do not undertake systemic change because it would entail either an increased share of the State budget for the cultural budget or a redistribution of the

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◀ continued from previous page

existing cultural budget. Neither of the political groupings that have been in power in Slovenia so far, or that have been in charge of the Ministry of Culture, has taken this step. The question is how was it possible to reach a consensus regarding the crucial reforms (healthcare, education, tax reform, private property...) that concern all citizens, whilst there was not enough political will to reform the cultural system likewise in a way that would reflect the state of affairs? Is the culture lobby that seeks to maintain the status quo so strong and homogenous in every political grouping?

A frequent question, and at the same time the answer from culture lobbies and implicit in the cultural policy, is why the State and local communities should support the NGOs' cultural and artistic production in its current scope in the first place. This question undoubtedly reflects, in the field of cultural politics, a lack of vision and understanding of the intricacies of artistic and cultural production, which is in constant flux. The State and local communities respond to contemporary cultural and artistic production primarily only when certain subjects experience acclaim abroad. This means that they value cultural and artistic production from the viewpoint of the representation of the country or the local community.

The answer to the above question certainly isn't a narrowly political one but rather a broadly political one. It is significant that contemporary artistic forms such as contemporary dance, performance art, new media art, and new technologies' art, as well as the art of marginal groups, minorities and different life style groups, are all produced in democratic environments. The phenomenon and the development of new art forms is an indication of the openness, plurality, democracy and tolerance of an environment. This is not only about artistic and cultural production but also about the needs of citizens that can in no way be met through the programmes of public institutions alone. Contemporary democratic societies are articulated through the plurality of needs that are expressed in the public interest in the area of culture as well. The Ministry of Culture recognizes the 'otherness' of the production of the NGOs and characterizes it in the introduction to the proposal of the new law as a 'niche' in the cultural system, which meets certain cultural needs of the citizens that would otherwise go unfulfilled. The understanding of a certain type of cultural production as a 'niche' points to the hierarchical nature and awkwardness of the cultural system and not to its openness and commitment to an equal opportunity of access to public support, which is an important category from the human rights perspective as well.

What we expect and what the Association of Non-Governmental Organizations and independent creators from the field of culture and art will strive for is an articulation of the political will on the level of the makers of cultural policy that will make possible a long-term, developmental and dynamic cultural and artistic body of work.

On a practical level this means:

- 1) equal opportunity of access to public funds
- 2) equalization of working conditions for independent creators and NGOs (solutions to infrastructural problems: there isn't a single European capital either in the East or the West without a Centre for Contemporary Arts)
- 3) equal opportunity for all subjects in cultural production in the evaluation of their work
- 4) the formation of mechanisms of social protection for independent creative artists (i.e. unemployment benefits that some EU members know)



Data that need repeatedly *emphasizing*

In the year 2002 the City of Ljubljana earmarked a total of 369,724,625 Tolars for 76 NGOs and 15 independent creative artists. At the same time it budgeted 2,487,222,811 Tolars for 25 public institutions. It is significant that the projects and programs of 76 NGOs received only as much funding as the programme of the Ljubljana Festival.

Because the State set up and is funding most of the cultural institutions, the NGOs are the sole organizations that represent the exclusive domain of live cultural production. The cultural institutions that were founded by the City are either libraries or purveyors of artistic and cultural events. In the year 2002, NGOs and independent creative artists, for all the live creativity within their production, have at their disposal only 11.7% of the City's entire cultural budget. Within that, when we speak of funds earmarked for programmes, the NGOs share among themselves amounts of up to 30%, while the funds that go for investments amount to 0.8%. The NGOs do not manage a single site of public infrastructure, and no provision exists for one, either now or in the future, in any of the City's legal acts. The fact that the most vital part of live culture does not even have the most basic infrastructure and is often forced to rent space at commercial rates puts this work of creative production in an impossible position.

At the State level, the report of the Ministry of Culture for the year 2001 writes that the share of funding allotted to the production of the NGOs and independent creative artists is 5% of the budget for the performing, musical and visual arts. Let's illustrate the discrepancy in the example of performing arts: public institutions have produced 75 shows while the NGOs have produced 65 projects. The former's share of the budget for performing arts amounts to 95.7%, while only 4.3% goes to the NGOs' projects.

Neither the State's nor the City's policy of culture shows even a trace of positive development. The vegetative state of the non-government sector is simply prolonged with the help of symbolic injections. We expect from the makers of cultural policy that they will take note of the findings of surveys, expert advice etc. regarding the needs of contemporary art, of its creators, viewers and others involved in its formation and dissemination, and convert those findings into a political will to change the current inertia, and lead contemporary creative activity to blossom. ■



1 step closer to recognition

Project DCM Foundation, Romania

In the November 2002 issue of the *Policies for Culture Journal*, Cosmin Manolescu, in his article 'Three steps to recognition', wrote about the efforts that the Romanian dance sector made in an attempt to gain the authorities' recognition and support.

As an illustration of these efforts, he referred to an initiative of the Project DCM Cultural Foundation, which consisted in labelling all the promotional material (posters, postcards, press releases etc.), with the slogan 'Project implemented without the support of the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs'. This campaign targeted the lack of transparency of the Ministry in allocating its funds and the general indifference of central authorities towards the initiatives of the dance sector.

It seems that in view of the recent events, Project DCM Foundation will not be able to use this slogan on its promotional material anymore. The reason being that last December, the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs, during the 2002 session of the National Culture Fund, awarded a grant to the Project DCM Cultural Foundation for the first time, for its 'Balkan Dance Platform' that will take place this autumn. An interesting fact, although maybe an irrelevant one, is that the Ministry's press release announcing the names of the twenty-eight grant beneficiaries put Project DCM Foundation at the top of the list.

Paraphrasing the title of the article in the last issue, we can say that the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs has in its turn taken a step towards recognizing the importance of the dance sector in Romanian culture. ■

Dan GHITA, PFC Local Coordinator Romania & Moldova,
ECUMEST Bucharest

'White Square of Croatian Culture'

The story continues...

The last issue of the *Policies for Culture Journal* featured an article about Croatian artists who, since October 2001, have been engaged in a long, demanding struggle against the introduction of a Bill on obligatory retirement and health insurance benefit tax.

by *Ela AGOTIĆ* *Policies for Culture Local Coordinator Croatia, Zagreb*

According to the Bill, this tax would be worked out on the basis of artists' fees and the part-time work of artists and authors, including scientific and journalistic work. The proposed figure for the retirement benefit tax is 19.5%, and for the health insurance tax, 16%. The Bill was intended to come into force on 1 July 2002. Croatian artists, whether freelance or on a payroll, have remained impressively united in opposition to the Bill from the very beginning.

The Croatian Music Union voiced its disquiet immediately. Several actors in film and theatre soon followed suit. The Croatian Association of Independent Artists (HZSU), an umbrella organization, has been constantly involved. In May 2002, the association of artists in applied plastic arts in Croatia (ULUPUH) joined in and it was this association which proposed the 'White Square of Croatian Culture' action.

As a continuation of the last Journal's story, the following paragraphs describe what happened after summer 2002. In addition Renata Skrinar, a local photographer, comments on the recent developments from the artists' point of view.

September 2002

After the summer vacation, a new element was introduced into the draft of the Law, something never mentioned in the previous drafts: the retirement and health benefits minimum of the free-lance artists. This minimum is calculated in the following manner: the average salary in Croatia multiplied by a particular coefficient (determined according to the complexity of a particular job). In this new draft of the Law, the proposed minimum has been cut down to 65%, thus corresponding to the lowest basic salary in Croatia.

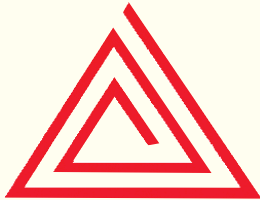
3 October 2002

The Ministry of Culture reacted to this new draft of the Law and wrote an official letter to the Ministry of Finances, to the Office for legislative matters of the Government of Croatia, to seven other related ministries, to the Croatian Chamber of Economics and to many other public bodies. In this letter the Ministry stated that, 'the proposed minimum for free-lance artists' retirement and health insurance should be increased, since the envisaged minimum is in reality lower than that corresponding to the regulations currently in force, and since at this moment it is unjustifiable to expect that free-lance artists, the majority of whom live in unenviable material situations, should be made to pay higher benefit taxes where they choose a higher minimum rate.' The Ministry of Culture appealed for keeping to 'the favourable position of cultural and artistic creative endeavour, which is an important factor in overall development.'

23 – 25 November 2002

The Croatian Association of Free-lance Artists (HZSU) wrote a proposal for the amendment to the draft of the law, in which it suggests that the retirement and health benefits minimum for free-lance artists should correspond to the average, not to the lowest basic salary in Croatia. This proposed amendment, accompanied by a letter signed by the representatives of twenty seven professional art associations was sent to the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Finance and to the Government of the Republic of Croatia...

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29 November 2002

The Croatian Parliament voted the law on obligatory benefit taxes in which the demands of the White Square of Croatian Culture action were partially taken into account, meaning that the authors' fees of the artists would not be taxed in addition to the obligatory benefit taxes. However, HZSU's proposed amendment about the new minimum for artists' retirement and health benefits seems never to have reached the Parliament: the transcript of that session shows that this proposed amendment was never touched upon during the usual discussions prior to the voting in of a law.

2 December 2002

A letter accompanied by the HZSU's proposed amendment was sent from the Government of Croatia to the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Finance and to the HZSU. Its purpose: to inform them of the existence of the HZSU's proposed amendment.

More than a year after the draft law on obligatory security benefit taxes (in which artists were initially not even mentioned) has seen the light, a number of contacts between the officials of the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Finance, with Parliamentary bodies for culture have been established, and a series of artists' protest meetings on a public platform have taken place in the large towns of Croatia.

Significant media attention was achieved, and the action was so well coordinated that it succeeded in postponing the final voting of the law and in changing some regulations that were important for the artistic community. There was a general confidence that the negotiations had been successful and that the action of deleting the regulation on additional benefit taxes had been fruitful. This was the case until 29 November 2002, when our amendment to the draft law was not even mentioned during the Parliamentary session. When the law was published in the National Gazette, it became clear that the suggested coefficient had not been increased, but actually lowered and that our perceived success was simply an illusion. While actively reacting to one problem, the artists, overnight, were confronted with a new and completely different problem, so that all of a sudden they found themselves forced by the sponsors of the bill to yet another round of action and negotiation. And so the story goes on...!? ■

Comment by Renata ŠKRINAR, photographer, member of HZSU



SEE action projects

Serbia, Macedonia & Romania

Representatives of the 2002 *Policies for Culture* initiative in Sabac, Sombor, Kragujevac and Uzice in Serbia, and representatives of cultural initiatives in other cities of the country, recently met with Minister for Culture, Branislav Lecic, in Belgrade. Topics of discussion focused on processes of decentralisation, policy development and strategic planning, all in the sphere of culture. The Serbian Ministry was well acquainted with the recent *PfC* project and affirmed its effectiveness for further processes of decentralisation. During the meeting an informal consortium of all the people present was established. Its current members commit themselves to developing and lobbying for effective strategic planning partnerships between the local authorities, inhabitants and institutions of the cities represented by the membership, and to improving national cultural policy frameworks in this respect. The consortium will hold its next session on 7 May 2003. ■

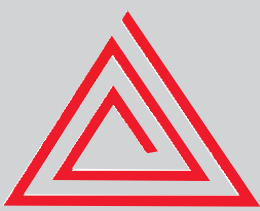
PHD

On 5 February 2003, Corina Raceanu, initiator and manager of the *PfC* Action Project 'Developing a Local Cultural Strategy for Timis County, Romania' (2001-2002) was invited by the Commission for Culture, Arts and Mass Media of the Romanian Parliament's Chamber of Deputies to give a first account of the project to the Romanian Members of Parliament. In an hour long presentation followed by an open discussion, the eleven members of the Commission were introduced to the cultural problems identified in Timis County, the main methods devised by the cultural strategy for tackling these problems, namely dialogue, partnership and negotiation, and the results and the impact that the project had on its target group. The MPs expressed the Commission's interest in this project and the desire to extend the Timis example of good practice to other counties and local authorities in Romania, which resulted in a letter of support from the Romanian Parliament for disseminating the methodology and the results of Timis County Cultural Strategy at a national level. ■

OR

On 27 February 2003 the local cultural department of Prilep, Macedonia met in order to discuss the outcome of a local cultural policy survey recently carried out under the auspices of the local *Policies for Culture* action project. The main subjects of this first-ever public cultural debate in Prilep, were the current needs and challenges facing independent artists, cultural NGOs, and institutions in the city. It also focused on how a structured and united approach by the cultural sector to the local cultural authorities would improve the climate for creating a sustainable local strategy for Prilep's vibrant artistic scene. Some forty participants, including the mayor of Prilep and his advisor for culture, along with various representatives from other Macedonian cities, local cultural policy experts, a significant number of local artists and two *Policies for Culture* representatives, engaged in a heated debate about structures and the identifiable benefits of organized representation of the independent sector in Prilep. Although the debate was undoubtedly complicated by current challenges for local cultural policy processes in Macedonia and the need to re-focus the reflection process on these problematic issues, the final outcome included an agreement by all participants to establish organized structures for the local sector and institutionalized relations with the local policy authorities, which is most promising for the final phase and for sustainable follow-up of this *PfC* action project. ■

PHD



News from PFC countries

A round table on Media & Culture

The Croatian Society of Artists in Fine Arts - Istria¹ organized a Round table on Media and Culture in Pula, Croatia on 30 November 2002.

Besides the artists in fine arts who initiated this round table, the meeting gathered art critics, journalists, editors, gallery owners and writers.

The items on the agenda were as follows:

- Updates and information on topics of cultural interest
- How culture is represented and treated in the media
- Should scandals attract more attention than important events
- Mutual respect in relationships between agents at local, national and global level
- The effect of two or more articles covering the same event
- Cultural reception: consumer / public / audience / reader / spectator / listener
- Combating indifference: scarcity of interest and polemics
- Existence of theoreticians of art in the media
- Ranking of the news and press: from daily tabloids to magazines & prime time viewing
- An overview of the situation in Istria

EA

¹ The Proceedings of the round table were published in January 2003 and can be ordered by email from: hdlu.istre@inet.hr



National Civil Forum for Culture



First anniversary meeting: cultural rights and civil society in Bulgaria 14 February 2003, EUBCC

Report by Sofia ZAHOVA, NCFC coordinator & Tsveta ANDREEVA, PFC local coordinator, Bulgaria

The National Civil Forum for Culture was established on 14 February 2002 with the signing of the Agreement for Common Will and Action by thirty-nine organizations in the cultural field, united in their common purpose of participating in cultural policy-making in Bulgaria.

At present, fifty-eight civil organizations (unions, associations, NGOs) make up what is the largest coalition in culture in Bulgaria. On the occasion of its first anniversary, Forum representatives discussed and clarified their future intentions and priorities for the coming year.

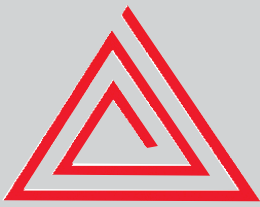
During this first year of activity the Forum has adopted the principle of equality among all the member organisations, as well as agreeing to function as a non-centralized and non-hierarchical organization. In the course of its active life, the Forum has issued six provisional statements representing the particular positions of the various arts and cultural sub-sectors.

'We, the fifty-eight civil institutions brought together by the Forum, hereby declare our desire to continue to analyse and to partner the public institutions in culture [...]. Although our six representatives have elaborated six statements on five draft bills and organised a series of meetings with members of the Bulgarian cultural scene to deal with areas current concern, we would now like to shift the emphasis of our work towards establishing a new cultural policy agenda in Bulgaria.'

[extract from the Decisions of the NCFC from 14 February 2003, ref. T.A.]

For this purpose, the Forum intends to initiate a series of public discussions aimed at detecting and analysing the main areas of concern in the Bulgarian cultural scene so as to identify the best proposals and solutions. Right from the start, the Forum has already in fact identified several key problems faced by the Bulgarian culture scene. During the forthcoming year, the Forum will concentrate its efforts on isolating the main areas of concern and having them included in the agenda for discussion by parties concerned in order to recommend relevant mechanisms and solutions.

Ideally these discussions will take place throughout the towns and regions of Bulgaria since the Forum aims to engage with the local cultural situations and to bring the discussion forums to the local and regional level. These new areas of work run parallel to the ongoing efforts for improvement under national legislation. Raising the debate with the Bulgarian population at large will also raise the awareness among cultural 'consumers' of their cultural rights. In 2003 the Forum will focus on fulfilling its objectives by establishing a healthy partnership with the media and thereby obtaining national coverage for these cultural issues. ■



Croatia: Working together for a new and better ... Law on Theatres

A tempestuous emergency meeting of the Croatian Association of Drama Artists (HDDU) ended in the HDDU giving an ultimatum to the Ministry of Culture and to the Minister Vujić to come clear about the exact nature of the preparatory activities that the Ministry has undertaken for the new Law on Theatres; otherwise the HDDU would demand Minister Vujić's resignation. The members of the HDDU had previously requested that the Ministry establish a working group for the drafting of the Law or, should such a group already exist, that theatre professionals be given the opportunity to participate in its activities. The HDDU gave the Ministry 60 days to act upon its demands before taking further action. Three days later, during its meeting held in the Ministry of Culture, the National Cultural Council for Performing Arts recommended that the Ministry of Culture give professionals from the field of theatre the opportunity to participate in the process of formulating the new Law on Theatres.

The Council has invited all the professional institutions to submit proposals for the new Law on Theatres by the end of January 2003. The Council has also invited the Croatian Association of Drama Artists (HDDU) to put forward its ideas regarding the issue of private theatres and of freelance artists. The HDDU was also invited to give the opportunity to all its members to submit proposals for the new Law. As well as to professional theatre institutions, the Council's invitation to cooperate extends to the cultural departments of local authorities in the cities of Zagreb, Split, Osijek, Varaždin, Rijeka, Zadar, Dubrovnik, Vinkovci, Pula, Šibenik and Virovitica, as well as to the theatre managers of the four Croatian National Theatres, and to the administrative boards of theatre festivals in Croatia: Dubrovnik Summer Games, Split's Summer, International Child Festival of Šibenik, Festival of the Actor, Croatian Festival of Small Stages.

The National Council for Performing Arts considers that the new Law on Theatres should regulate the following crucial issues: the selection procedures of all theatre employees, not only the actors; the turnover of the artists, especially of young artists, throughout the country; procedures in the case of an actor refusing a role and measures for dealing with lack of commitment among actors.

It was concluded that the Law on Theatres should take into account the regional character of Croatia and that it should be harmonized with the Law on Labour. ■

EA

Re-designing your newspaper? Why not discard the section on culture?

After nine years of publication, the weekly cultural supplement of *Večernji list*—the daily newspaper with the highest circulation in Croatia—has been abolished.

by *Ela AGOTIĆ* Policies for Culture Local Coordinator Croatia, Zagreb

Has the cultural supplement—*Kulturni obzor* (Cultural Horizon)—become a victim of a so-called 'new design', according to the official explanation of its (former) editor Milan Ivkošić, or is there some other issue at stake?

I. The owners and their mission: dream and dignity

First of all, it needs to be said that in December 2000 *Večernji list* was privatized. The third biggest corporate media group in Austria, Styria Medien AG (Styria Media stock corporation), established in 1869, with a staff of 2.300, an annual turnover and gross income of about 300 million (2001) and 400 million euro respectively, has bought a 98% ownership of this newspaper. This transaction, according to www.styria.com, was the fulfilment of an 'editorial-economic dream, as well as of the wish to act as a bridging media'.

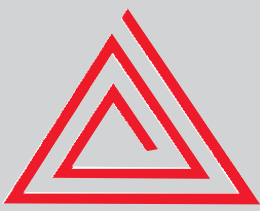
In its mission statement, Styria Media stock corporation claims that its 'articles are based on an open view of the world and on Catholicism influenced by self-confident, mature and responsible Christians.' Thanks to this philosophy, their work, their enterprises, and the media for which they are responsible, 'are characterised by a visible and careful attitude towards human dignity, that is, towards the dignity of their staff and of those who are in their care as readers, viewers, listeners or internet users, as well as of the people they write about in their media.'

II. 'New design'? Or rather, expanded TV section?

Večernji list has indeed been re-designed: its web-page tells us that 'its logo has been modified, the regional section has been enlarged, with a special focus on the city of Zagreb area, a new economy section and a daily entertainment page; the TV section has been enlarged from two to five pages (thus meeting top European standards), and already on the second page the reader can find an overview of the main topics of the day.' The new design is supposed enhance the content of *Večernji list* to meet the five following characteristics: 'independent, exclusive, full of surprises, easy-to-read and extravagant.'

III. Kulturni obzor

Every Monday (and more recently every Sunday) over the past nine years, *Kulturni obzor*, the cultural supplement of the daily paper *Večernji list*, offered five pages of articles on arts and culture, several hundred thematically different contributions, book reviews and interviews with many writers, publishers, actors and other cultural professionals.



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How to describe it? In a country such as Croatia where 47% of the population have secondary school education, and only 37,5% have basic primary, the fact that *Večernji list* was the daily newspaper with the highest national circulation, perhaps gives us an indication of the profile of its readers.

Mirko Petrić, professor of design and semiologist of Split Arts Academy, describes *Večernji list* as 'a favourite reading of Zagreb working and lower middle class and of those of them who rose up to higher positions' (Slobodna Dalmacija, 12.02.2003).

Branimir Donat, writer and free-lance journalist, author of the most poignant text to mark the 'violent premediated murder' of *Kulturni obzor*, says that 'even though it barely managed, intellectually speaking, to do justice to its time and surroundings, even though it was too conformist, while leaning on the interests of the governing party, as well as on the feeble strengths of its editorial board', the *Kulturni obzor* 'did not die of natural causes' (Novi list, 31.01.2003). In spite of its 'dominant conservative approach', in the opinion of **Velimir Viskovic**, president of *Croatian Association of Writers*, the existence of *Kulturni obzor* allowed diversity in the treatment of cultural topics (Novi list, 01.02.2003).

IV. Putting the pieces together

Does abolishing a weekly cultural supplement, on the part of the new owner Styria Medien AG, mean that culture does not make up the 'dignity' of the readers of *Večernji list*? Or does it mean that a contemporary press media design excludes culture topics *per se*? Or perhaps that top European standards in journalism have abandoned the idea of 'editorial policy' to replace the editorial board with some public opinion researchers who give the people what they want—instead of public opinion makers, who give the people what they need? Or is it simply the fact that *Kulturni obzor* was no good, that its only purpose was to offer a space for additional journalists' fees, and that it failed to fulfil its function as a space for an in-depth discussion on events and issues relevant to culture?

On the other hand, would a serious and profit-oriented enterprise—assuming that Styria Medien AG is indeed such an enterprise—decide to abolish a whole supplement without being sure of avoiding major negative effects on its profit? Probably not. Such an enterprise would firstly research its readership audience. Like any other enterprise intending to introduce a new product into the market (and a new design is a new product), it would firstly try to sound out its target group, feel its pulse, predict or even identify its reaction through tests.

Should one assume then that Styria Medien AG, as a serious profit-oriented enterprise, did its homework before re-designing its *Večernji list* product? Probably yes. Styria Medien AG has most probably done serious research into its readership audience. It has most probably engaged some opinion research agency, and has been given a pretty good idea about its readers' taste and interests. About their needs and preferences. About how many pages they would prefer in the TV section or the crime column. About whether they would like more photos or more text. And about whether they need a cultural weekly supplement or not...

Reactions from public figures¹:

Antun Vujić, Minister of Culture

The newly re-designed *Večernji list* looks as if someone has been playing with the long established trust of its readers. It was the best-selling newspaper, people knew their way around it, and they know now that they are lost. I do not know how long this state of 'not knowing one's way around' will last. As for abolishing *Kulturni obzor*, there is no need even to comment on it. It is a demonstration of how the decisions made easily by some outsiders can destroy a cultural good, without even consulting the opinion of independent journalists (Vjesnik, February 2003).

Section of cultural journalists of the Croatian Journalist Association

Abolishing *Kulturni obzor* is a direct blow to cultural identity and a serious lowering of the amount of space dedicated to information. It is a symptom that could have far-reaching effects as a potential pattern for the destruction of all values and of specificity of a cultural community. The damage of this loss will be measured not only in *kunas*. Having in mind all the possible reasons which have guided the Austrian owner, we still consider that the production of a newspaper is not the same thing as the production of any other material good. The process of increase of the initial capital should not destroy the already reached level of content and cultural standards, but it should improve them, because it is a public good of the whole community in question. If the new owners of *Večernji list* consider a cultural supplement to be an obstacle to a greater profit, then they should make this openly known, so that the Croatian cultural and wider public are aware of their new position (Novi list, 1.2.2003).

Robert Cimrak, President of the Croatian Association of Fine Arts Artists

Abolishing *Kulturni obzor* is a catastrophe! Cutting down on culture has almost become common practice in Croatia, and this is always devastating. It seems that the new owners are more interested in gossip and yellow press than in culture, and this is something which underestimates the readership too (Novi list, 31.01.2003).

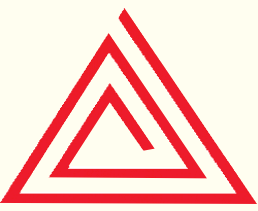
Goran Grgic, Actor

Profit alone should not be allowed to determine the policy of some newspapers. I would hope that some clauses exist according to which the newspaper's owner is obliged to preserve essential Croatian values, one of which is culture (Novi list, 31.01.2003).

Biserka Cvjetičanin, Vice-Minister of Culture

Interacting between culture and economy, this 'mercantile campaign', as the French would call it, has resulted in the elimination of one cultural supplement in our community, of one horizon of culture characterized by an outstanding diversity of approach to cultural issues. Practice in other countries shows that the extinction of a cultural magazine or a newspaper represents a huge loss, also in economic terms, and that new solutions are therefore sought: let us hope this will also be the case for *Kulturni obzor*, in the name of cultural diversity advocated by the world community (Zarez, 13.02.2003). ■

¹ Together with the above-cited quotations, these reactions are taken over from Croatian press and electronic media. Op.a.



Publications & Services

Case Study Publications 2003

The 'Force of Example' Publication Series, which was launched in November 2002 with a *Policies for Culture* publication on Local Cultural Strategy Development in Plovdiv (Bulgaria), will continue with further case studies in 2003: next on the agenda are case studies on Local Cultural Strategy Development in the cities of Timisoara and Arad (Romania) and Zagreb (Croatia) and also a study on the Technological Park Culture project in Bulgaria. These case studies will be published in the same 'Force of Example' Publication Series between May 2003 and January 2004. ♦

To order further copies of the Plovdiv publication or any other upcoming 'Force of Example' booklets please write to info@policiesforculture.org

Journals 2003

Two further issues of the *Policies for Culture* Online Journal will be published in 2003. The summer 2003 issue will focus on Local Cultural Strategy Development in South-east Europe and will feature the outcomes of past and present action projects in this field, as well as the results of the international workshop on this topic taking place in Bucharest on 9-10 May 2003. The autumn 2003 issue will be about Artists & Cultural Policy in South-east Europe. ♦

Please send your comments or contributions for the Journals to info@policiesforculture.org. Requests for subscription can be sent to the same address.

Services & Consultancy 2003

In keeping with practice in previous years, *Policies for Culture* will continue to provide its regular info services to its SEE network and interested institutions and individuals in the region and beyond. A new online info portal for SEE cultural policy resources will be launched by the end of 2003. Moreover, *Policies for Culture* will continue to disseminate its ad-hoc info bulletins. ♦

To subscribe to this info service, please write to info@policiesforculture.org

Any questions?

Policies for Culture has always aimed at making the knowledge and experience of its network, and the numerous initiatives supported in the past, available to interested groups and individuals all over Europe. If you have questions regarding your own European

or SEE cultural policy initiative or think that the *Policies for Culture* network can provide the information and assistance required please contact the programme management in Amsterdam or our local contact person in the region at the addresses given at the very end of this Journal. ♦

Small-scale funding

In order to further support the SEE interregional exchange of expertise and knowledge between completed and ongoing *Policies for Culture* action projects and lobbying initiatives in the field, the programme will provide small-scale funding for a limited number of exchange set ups between the *PfC* countries in the region. Inquiries regarding this 2003 initiative should be addressed directly to the *PfC* local coordinators in South-east Europe. ♦

Action Plan 2003

An updated and extended version of the *Policies for Culture* Action Plan 2003 is available on the programme web page at: www.policiesforculture.org

policies for culture **contact**

for more information about *Policies for Culture* please visit: www.policiesforculture.org or contact

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Disclaimer Note

We always strive to include the most up-to-date information that is available to us. We cannot be held responsible for information, which is outdated or incorrect at the time of publishing.