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Cultural policies in Europe: A Compendium of Basic Facts and Trends

2nd Compendium Authors' Meeting

Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 10–11 April 2003

Room 2

REPORT

Opening

Mr José-Maria Ballester, Director of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage of the Council of Europe, opened the meeting and welcomed participants warmly, especially representatives from the countries newly entering the *Compendium* project in 2003 (Macedonia, Monaco, Serbia-Montenegro and Slovakia; see also list of participants in annex I). He expressed his gratitude towards all collaborators and sponsors of the *Compendium* making it such a successful activity and to those who had allowed the *Compendium* meeting to become a tradition, e.g. the Ministry of Education in Finland and the Integrated Project I of the Council of Europe. Mr Ballester proposed Ms Vera Boltho to take the Chair. Participants briefly presented themselves and adopted the agenda of the meeting.

Progress Reports

Ms Vera Boltho, Head of the Cultural Policy and Action Department, reported on progress made on the *Compendium*, pointing to the very positive feedback and considerable increase in use during the last years of the *Compendium* - also within the Council of Europe. Thanks to the *Compendium*, a wealth of information collected through the Cultural Policy Reviews and other programmes was constantly being updated and put to use. A new development to take place this year was to include a monitoring function to the *Compendium* system. Monitoring, however, was not to be understood as "strict monitoring" to control whether member states complied with certain laws or conventions, but rather as "soft monitoring", i.e. enhanced reporting of policy developments including a more systematic provision of indicators and encouraging practices in priority areas such as diversity and intercultural dialogue.

Mr Andreas Wiesand added a progress report from the side of ERICarts. He underlined the importance of the electronic *Compendium* over the initial printed version. In 2002/3, many new features and functions had been added to the information system, e.g. new issues and indicators to the grid and to the comparative view (e.g. linguistic diversity, sector breakdown of government expenditure on culture) as well as a number of features that make comparisons easier (print function) and allow more interactivity (feedback to single chapters, subscribers list). Statistics revealed an enormous increase in use after the last updating and inclusion of new features. Especially new profiles drew a lot of attention, and the profiles available in original language versions had tripled their download.

According to Mr Wiesand, the success of the project was also reflected in various conference documents and presentations and inclusion of *Compendium* information in relevant journals. The information system is increasingly being used as a teaching tool by university professors (e.g. at universities in Dresden, Jyväskylä and Krakow). In May, Ms Cliche, ERICarts, was invited to present the *Compendium* at a UNESCO conference in Mexico. Researchers and practitioners in South America and in South-East Asia are considering to set up a similar electronic information system in their region. Concluding, Mr Wiesand conceived of the *Compendium* as an innovative tool in several respects: Regarding a new type of partnership and working structure among all involved, a "community of practice" to use new technologies for culture and education, regarding "interoperability" among all involved, regarding its potential for development and further sophistication as well as its possible contribution towards a possible "European Observatory of Cultural Co-operation", as it is currently under discussion at EU-level. He thanked the authors for their ongoing efforts and the Council of Europe Secretariat for the outstanding partnership in this project.

Mr Torkler, ERICarts/Medianale, presented latest user statistics and the updated website with its new features. He emphasized the need for direct communication between researchers as Internet users and the interface developers, who together shaped the appearance and functionality of the site. As before, there would be further enhancement of *Compendium* features, an enlarged visibility of the website as well as some new developments in the future.

Exchange of views

The authors engaged in a lively debate of recent and future *Compendium* developments focusing on the following issues:

- How to improve the existing *Compendium* and the co-operation with other international bodies such as EUROSTAT, especially its working group for cultural statistics (LEG group, who would come up with a new report on cultural statistics in Europe in 2003 including indicators covering 15 countries plus the accession countries);
- How to make the *Compendium* better known at university level and enhance its function as a teaching tool for universities - given that there were many university professors among the *Compendium* partners, who had already started using it in their daily practice;
- How to intensify co-operation with national governments and national statistical offices so as to ensure optimal support of the authors in their ongoing work on the country profiles;
- How to improve on the grid in such a way that it allowed to accommodate all national specificities e.g. in classifying culture and the cultural sectors, and how to improve on definitions e.g. "culture industries";
- How to improve on consumption and participation statistics including a more detailed analysis e.g. according to socio-economic variables;
- How to balance the need for more in-depth information, more indicators and more sector-related information with a view to improving on overall analytical potential and comparability with the need and desire to maintain the *Compendium* as a well structured and not too heavy information tool;
- How to include systematically more contextual information (e.g. on social, economic, technical, political governance trends) affecting culture and how to minimise the loss of contextual information gathered by authors but not included in the county profiles;
- How to enhance the *Compendium*-internal co-ordination and information flow as well as dissemination and visibility?

Ms Merkle from the Secretariat and Mr Wiesand, ERICarts, proposed a few measures to address these issues, encompassing, inter alia, a renewed information and collaboration initiative with ministries involved; intensified methodological efforts and collaboration with other international players; further refinement of the grid allowing for both flexibility and specificity; contacts with relevant training networks such as ENCATC regarding teaching issues and establishment of a newsletter for all *Compendium* partners. Ms Merkle emphasized the importance of direct exchange and feedback from the authors and thanked all participants for the open debate of the first day, to be continued at the Winstub during the evening.

Council of Europe cultural policy projects relevant for monitoring activities

The meeting was re-opened on 11 April by the Chair, who invited Ms Simone Bernhardt to present the Council of Europe activity on "Intercultural Dialogue and Conflict Prevention". This project included colloquies, ministerial conferences, drafting and adoption of a Council of Europe Declaration on the issue as well as two network initiatives ("Shared Cities" and "Peace Enclaves"). Linking this priority activity to the *Compendium* was considered not only a political necessity, but also a natural step since the online system offered accommodation space for such current issues in policy development and debate (chapter 4 of the *Compendium*). Yet, the indicators for future inclusion and eventual monitoring needed to be further defined.

The Chair then presented the recent "Transversal Studies project on Cultural Diversity", reflecting another priority theme of the Organisation that was already partly addressed by the *Compendium* system. The project covered 11 countries and had led, via policy reviews and expert visits, to a publication (Tony Bennett, "Differing Diversities"), and a Declaration on Cultural Diversity adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 2000. Lately the project concentrated on forms of diversity in everyday life, a new definition of cultural citizenship and a subsequent activity promoting diversity through support to local cultural production and creativity.

Ms Irena Guidikova presented the "Integrated Project I: Making Democratic Institutions Work", which had sponsored the *Compendium* authors' meeting. Apart from its concern with strengthening democratic procedures and institutions at many levels and sectors of intervention, the project was also interested in developing innovative, transversal working methods and in the use of New Technologies/e-content issues and consequently followed the debate on *Compendium* methodology and monitoring with great interest.

Proposals for future monitoring activities within the Compendium framework and exchange of views

Against the background of political developments as reflected in the above Council of Europe activities, Ms Merkle set out further conditions and context of the proposed monitoring initiative, referring to the paper established in this respect by ERICarts and the Secretariat. The goal was to make the *Compendium* more politically relevant, more in-depth and heavy weight, more dynamic and pro-active, turning it into a more pertinent tool for cultural policy makers. As the information system was based on regular updates, it could already be regarded as some kind of monitoring system. Yet, certain functions needed to be enhanced and systematised, e.g. the longitudinal and comparative ones. This required a set of well-thought-out indicators. According to the Secretariat, monitoring should focus on policy developments and change and include monitoring of good practices and action as well as local/regional policy perspectives within the information system. Monitoring of standard setting instruments could be included at a later stage - once these had become available. In short, the monitoring initiative should allow for tailor-made enlargement of the existing information base, better use of the data available and added political relevance without changing the existing tools and overall character of the *Compendium* more than necessary.

Mr Wiesand enlarged on this presenting the discussion paper "First Proposals for Monitoring Activities on Policy Development". He reminded participants that the idea of creating a "European Cultural Data Bank" - as it was then called - dated back to the CSCE "Helsinki Process" in the 1970's where a "Basket III" relating to cultural co-operation was developed. The *Compendium* took up this challenge when the first "Comparative View Tables" were created within the web version. Prerequisites of a monitoring system were:

- Clearly defined goals and mission for monitoring;
- Standardised questions and indicators;
- Reliable data and information to be collected on a regular basis over a certain period of time;
- Verification procedures;
- Mechanisms to channel the results to relevant policy makers.

Mr Wiesand summarised action steps resulting from the *Compendium* needs as well from the monitoring paper as follows: Continuation of the authors meetings; renewed support by the Council of Europe and Ministries (ACPs) to the authors in their updating and research work as a matter of routine; further clarification of annotations/specifications in the *Compendium Authors Guidelines* by the editors; collection of information on recently published indicators in participating countries; collection of information on newly agreed upon indicators and presentation of the results e.g. in new comparative view tables; development of a tool to systematically record changes registered in policy priorities and other agreed fields; systematic information sharing on articles, books etc. within the *Compendium* community; stress on the importance of original language versions; preparation of a new flyer, possibly also in other languages than English; adaptation of the style of the *Compendium* towards "scientific journalism" and including more examples and best practices; production of an electronic newsletter as well as of new technical features to encourage users to become interactive providers of information ("interoperability"); production of user statistics on a regular basis.

He closed by underlining the importance of transversal approaches to issues such as cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue within the *Compendium* and of being selective when adding new features and indicators. This view was shared in the general debate, where authors pointed to, inter alia:

- The need to improve on existing data and access to it and to avoid the presentation of any questionable data ("worse than no figures are bad figures"). The already existing monitoring potential could be made more explicit and the evaluative perspective of the *Compendium* strengthened.

- The fact that some governments would not like to figure in comparative tables e.g. on public cultural expenditure; whereas many users were most interested in the comparative features of the project.
- Regarding indicators, there was agreement that they should be kept simple, straightforward and transparent, based on existing statistics rather than derived from political declarations. There was also agreement to include new issues of diversity and intercultural dialogue, as such enlargement was high up on the political agenda and already supported by sponsors.
- Monitoring should be analytical, not just descriptive, nor prescriptive.
- Authors felt that the *Compendium* monitoring function could help further recognise culture within government policy making. Yet, the information system would clearly need more publicity around and support from ministries.
- The need for guidance on data and figures to be included in country profiles, for clearer definitions -ideally shared by EUROSTAT- reflecting real developments and for in-depth methodological efforts (e.g. seminar-type authors meeting in 2004) was expressed by participants.
- The question of interoperability and feedback by users was felt to be a tricky one.
- So was the question of style and complexity of data and information - possibly a hypertext approach to the *Compendium* could provide the solution.
- Authors also discussed the broad audience of the information system and agreed that the priority target group has always been and will remain cultural policy makers and the research community.

The *Compendium* editors agreed that further methodology discussion was high up on the agenda. There should not be an obsession about comparisons – which, however, were not systematically implying judgements. There was consensus about modesty as an approach to monitoring – using, inter alia, simple and transparent indicators. Yet, monitoring of trends and developments would not necessarily have to be strict as when comparing statistics along standardised frameworks; and the linking of information, including contextual information, was a must.

The afternoon session, chaired by Peter Inkei and Ritva Mitchell, provided for an exchange of views on specific subjects, indicators and activities for monitoring and their feasibility.

Legislation was identified to be a key area, allowing, on one side, for democratic discourse within countries. But there were also symptoms of “legal or regulatory pollution” observed in Europe. Reports on new laws were not systematically available, but relevant information could be compiled in each country. The important things were not only the laws themselves, but also the changes made to them. Observed over a given period, legal/regulatory instruments revealed societal change and political development. Monitoring cultural legislation would therefore already be a major challenge for the *Compendium*. At the national level, monitoring of cultural legislation could help to stress the role of and find support for the cultural sector. Peter Inkei summarised that a step-by-step approach reflecting national specificities/priorities was recommendable. A directory of existing legislation and its implementation was desirable, and a tool to systematically report on this as well as on any changes could be developed- linked to the already available information base on legal provisions.

The debate on **diversity, dialogue, participation and cohesion** was equally lively, taking as a starting point that these issues were inter-linked, deserving a wide analytical angle (e.g. not reducing diversity to the question of ethnic minorities). There was agreement about the complexity of the task and input required in terms of competencies, but due to agreements with sponsors (ECF and the Netherlands Ministry of Education), the development of relevant indicators should clearly be taken care of by the *Compendium*. The only precise indicator so far included was linguistic diversity. Further points of departure could be developed starting from point C3. - C5. of the Monitoring Paper. The editors had tried to prepare indicators for a comparative table on cultural participation, but did not come up with suitable results because of the data situation - there were hardly any comparable figures available in the existing profiles. The authors felt that EUROSTAT's work in this area was very necessary, but had not yet yielded satisfactory results nor sufficient coverage (n=15 European countries). More work, co-ordination and agreement on proper

indicators and concepts were required (example: present participation figures related to population figures or provide simple attendance figures?).

Expanding on **methodology**, Mr Hofecker presented his paper on comparison of the statistical figures available from the *Compendium* information system and the sub domains defined by EUROSTAT. The summary table revealed that coverage in some sectors was quite good (cultural heritage, libraries, books and press or cinema). A persisting problem was, however, that the figures included different items in each country. Obviously, the basic quality of figures should be assured before comparisons become feasible. It would therefore be very important to include, in each profile, together with the tables a set of footnotes specifying the data. Authors should systematically provide more sources and background information to the editors. The effort made by ERICarts in 1999 to collect more standardised figures through a questionnaire could also be reconsidered. The authors agreed that comparability was a tricky, but an important area of development since many *Compendium* users would jump directly onto chapter 6 ("Financing of culture"), following their interest in comparative facts and figures.

The meeting decided to invite short working papers analysing the *Compendium* data and its quality and come up with proposals on improvement with a view to future indicators and monitoring. Ms Čopič was nominated to review the presentation of legislation, Mr Lagerspetz of participation trends and figures, Mr Foote of social cohesion/diversity and Mr Hofecker of methodology/statistics. E-mail should permit an ongoing exchange with all *Compendium* partners and further work in thematic groups on an ad-hoc basis.

Updates, visibility, funding/sponsors/partnerships were final issues for debate. The *Compendium* updating procedure installed allowed for the insertion of news at any time, whilst one annual major update remained on the programme. Participants were reminded of the October 8th deadline for updates and new profiles in 2003, which they all agreed to. To improve on the budgetary situation of the project, the Steering Committee for Culture could encourage national funding for the overall project. Another proposal was to raise additional funds from the European Union or envisage a long-term EU-partnership on this project.

Ms Boltho and Ms Merkle who thanked the participants for a frank, intensive and demanding debate covering both the improvement of existing *Compendium* features as well as the gradual implementation of monitoring activities in 2003/4, closed the meeting at 18:00. Even though the final solution to all technical challenges had not been found in two days, the meeting ended on a positive note and the re-commitment of all in the remarkable *Compendium* community of practice.

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