Kaleidoscope: Community action programme 1996-1998 to support artistic and cultural activities with a European dimension

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The Kaleidoscope Programme was developed and devised in response to Article 128 of the Treaty of Maastricht. This Article, (later changed to Article 151 following the adoption of the Amsterdam Treaty) gave culture its own rightful place within the EU context. Cultural co-operation became an officially recognised objective of the European Union. The aim of the Kaleidoscope programme, which was agreed in 1996 for a three year period and which was later extended in 1999, was to encourage creative activities and artistic and cultural co-operation having a European dimension. The overall programme was awarded EUR 26.5 million rising to EUR 36.7 million. Over a four-year period some 518 projects benefited from Kaleidoscope funding. There were four specific objectives enshrined in the Decision establishing the Kaleidoscope programme. They were: - encouraging partnership orientated artistic activities; - supporting innovative European projects; - offering assistance to artists and cultural operators to help them improve their professional skills; - contributing to the mutual knowledge of European cultures. The Kaleidoscope programme applied to cultural networks or partnerships of cultural operators or artists from at least three Member States in the field of the performing arts, visual arts and applied arts. These objectives were then divided into five action lines intended to implement the objectives outlined above. They included actions such as supporting European cultural events; large-scale European co-operation action; the European city of culture and the European cultural month; support for studies and publicity for the various programmes. The Commission, in accordance with mandatory procedures, announced the calls for proposals in the Official Journals as well as announcing them through press releases. The selection, monitoring and dissemination procedure were applied uniformly to all of the projects receiving Kaleidoscope funding. At the end of the Kaleidoscope programme's life the European Commission asked external evaluators to examine and report on how effective the programme was in achieving its stated objectives. In preparing this task the evaluators took account of the following points: The relevance of the programme; its coherence, efficiency and its effectiveness. In terms of its relevance the authors deemed it to be entirely relevant, even though some operators of the programme regretted that it showed no real European ambition in the cultural field. In terms of efficiency and effectiveness of the programme the evaluators voiced very little criticism, finding that the results obtained were proportional to the resources committed, i.e they were effective but not commensurate with the more ambitious expectations formulated in the Decisions establishing the programme. Concerning promotional activities the evaluators expressed some concern that the Commission was providing far too little information to cultural operators. The Commission, however, begs to disagree pointing out that not only are all the programmes published in the Official Journals it has also set up the "Culture 2000" Internet site as well as cultural contact points. Since 2002 anyone requesting it can receive a free monthly newsletter. Finally, a cultural portal was created in March 2002 on the Internet to present all EU cultural related activities. On the question of monitoring the Commission's response to the evaluator's criticism that more should be done by the Commission to visit projects on the ground, is rejected. The Commission points out that, whilst it continues to monitor and assess projects, the lack of human resources makes it impossible to visit every project. Each Commission project manager, for example, is responsible for between forty and ninety projects. The evaluators point out that combining the old programmes into the Culture 2000 framework programme has helped to make the Community's contribution more effective and more visible. Combining the previously existing cultural programmes into one specific unit has helped make the exercise not only cheaper but also more effective. To conclude the cultural programmes, including the Kaleidoscope programme, were a useful springboard for the creation of the Culture 2000 programme. In spite of some shortcomings Kaleidoscope worked well. Along with the Raphael and Ariane programme Kaleidoscope represented a first, essential step towards the attainment of the objective set out in Article 151 of the Treaty.