Community action programme 1997-1998 in the fields of books and reading, ARIANE

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The Ariane 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 Ariane programme, which was agreed in 1997 for an initial two year period (after a trial period in 1996), was to encourage co-operation between the Member States in the field of books and reading and to increase the knowledge and dissemination of literary works and the history of the European people. The overall programme was awarded EUR 11.3 million. Some 767 projects were financed during this period (880 including the trial period). There were four specific objectives enshrined in the Decision establishing the Ariane programme. They were: - encouraging the dissemination of literary, dramatic or reference works; - encouraging exchanges through partnership initiatives; - encouraging high-quality translations; - supporting innovative studies and research. These objectives were then divided into six action lines intended to implement the objectives outlined above. They included actions such as: - translation grants (up to 100% of the translator's fee); - support for projects, carried out in partnership, which promoted access to books and reading; - improving knowledge of European literature; - supporting measures related to studies and publicity for the programme; - Aristeion Prizes (European literature prize and European translation prize); - the participation of third countries. 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 procedures were applied uniformly to all of the projects receiving Ariane funding. At the end of the Ariane 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 Ariane programme, were a useful springboard for the creation of the Culture 2000 programme. In spite of some shortcomings Ariane worked well. Along with the Raphael and Kaleidoscope programme Ariane represented a first, essential step towards the attainment of the objective set out in Article 151 of the Treaty.