

Culture 2000 programme: extension to 2006

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This report is based on the Second Interim Evaluation of the Culture 2000 Programme and has been carried out by an independent consultancy. The consultancy awarded the contract is “Ecotec Research and Consultancy Ltd.” In this paper, the Commission presents the consultancy’s main findings and set out its recommendations. In addition, the report sets out the Commission’s position on the evaluator’s report.

The Culture 2000 programme has been the EU’s chief cultural financing instrument since 2000 and has a total budget of EUR 236 million. The purpose of the programme is to support cultural co-operation in order to promote a cultural area common to all the people of Europe. The following three actions receive funding. They are:

Action 1: Supporting annual projects implemented by cultural operators from at least three countries. Translation projects with no partnership requirements are also supported through action 1.

Action 2: Supporting multi-annual projects covered by co-operation agreements. This involves cultural operators from at least five countries.

Action 3: Supporting and promoting special events with a European and/or international dimension.

In summary, the evaluators made the following findings:

- The programme has achieved its goals and provided an adequate mechanism for addressing both the original and current needs of cultural co-operation in Europe.
- The programme clearly addresses shortcomings in fostering trans-national co-operation in Europe as well as generating substantial *new* co-operation through strengthened links between European cultural operators.
- Those taking part in Culture 2000 have benefited from: shared experience in the cultural field at a European level; increased professionalism through enhanced management skills; improved organisation and individual capacity; and increased dialogue among cultural actors.
- The programme has led to strengthened cultural links among countries and helped raised a sense of European identity. It has also promoted the integration of the new Member States.
- Nearly two-thirds of respondents to the survey indicated that they would seek continued links with the partnerships they had formed. Further, two-thirds of respondents indicated that they would continue their activities even after the end of their project.

The evaluators’ recommendations are as follows:

- The allocation of funding available for each cultural field and actions should be presented in the annual call for proposals, in order to enhance transparency in the selection process.
- The Commission should ask all project leaders (and unsuccessful applicants) to complete a short questionnaire seeking their views on the application and selection procedure. This should allow for the adoption of “Key Performance Indicators” for each programme’s objective, against which the impact of the programme can be measured.

- The development of a “programme dissemination strategy” to promote the programme and its achievements to key stakeholders.
- The setting-up of an on-line “partner-matching” search database in order to allow cultural operators to search for potential partners and to provide links from the Culture 2000 web pages.
- Simplification of the Culture 2000 application forms.
- Providing applicants with a detailed written feedback on the application alongside an official letter stating the outcome of their application.
- Increasing the number of Technical Assistants whose job it is to check the eligibility of applications. This should shorten the procedural timescale.
- External experts should examine an application twice only. A briefing day for experts should be held before or during the application assessment week in Brussels. Experts should be retained on a multi-annual basis. Feed back from national authorities should be sought in order to discover why experts tend not to return in subsequent years. The work of each expert should be properly assessed.

In its conclusions the Commission states that it shares the overall assessment of the evaluator namely that the Programme has provided a unique contribution to cultural co-operation in Europe. It has been instrumental in enhancing the vitality of cultural exchanges in Europe and it is unlikely that any other instrument would have been more useful than this programme in terms of promoting European cultural co-operation.

The new Cultural programme (2007-2013) will be able to continue supporting cultural activities in Europe. For the new programme attention will be given to three main objectives:

- the cross-border mobility of people working in the cultural sectors;
- the cross-border circulation of works of art and cultural objects; and
- inter-cultural dialogue.

Indeed, the Commission believes that the new programme will go further than its predecessors in strengthening cultural co-operation in Europe.