

East European Reflection Group (EE RG)

Identifying Cultural Actors of Change in Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova

Culture and Change in Ukraine

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“Shto delat’? (What is to be done?) I kto vinovat’? (And who is to blame?)”
19th century Russian saying

Introduction¹

Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine have recently become direct neighbours of the European Union. Both Moldova and Ukraine have also become closer partners of the European Union through the European Neighbourhood Policy. Neighbourhood usually refers to people next-door, people we know, or could easily get to know. It implies interest, curiosity and solidarity in the other living close by. For the moment, the European Union’s “neighbourhood” is something of an abstract notion, lacking in substance. In order to avoid ending up “lost in translation”, it is necessary to question and some of the basic premises on which cultural and other forms of European cooperation are posited.

In an effort to create constructive dialogue with this little known neighbourhood, the European Cultural Foundation (ECF) and the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) are currently preparing a three-year partnership to support cultural agents of change in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. In the broad sense, this programme is to work with, and provide assistance to, initiatives and institutions that employ creative, artistic and cultural means to contribute to the process of constructive change in each of the three countries.

ECF and GMF have begun a process of reflection in order to understand the extent to which the culture sphere in each of the three countries under consideration can support change, defined here as processes and dynamics contributing to democratisation, Europeanisation and modernisation in the three countries concerned. This reflection process attempts to assess needs and will use reported realities as the basis for discussing and developing proper cultural action and eventually new cultural instruments. Several principles guide this process of reflection.

Contextualisation: it is vital to differentiate the national and local conditions from immediately observable regional similarities. Countries of the region in focus face very different challenges and are differently accessible. Recommendations for concrete measures will have to sensitively consider contextual specificities on a case-by-case basis.

Reflection-Action-Advocacy: This process will combine a reflective phase, an action-oriented phase and an advocacy phase (overlapping to some extent). The exact content and shape regarding actions and advocacy will entirely depend on the outcomes of the reflection process but will address both EU countries and the countries in focus.

Outstanding actors: This process gathers outstanding individuals, representing institutions and organisations that are playing an important role in the areas of culture and change in the region. They are invited to participate in their individual capacity and they do not claim to represent their country of origin or any public authorities.

Results: This process is result-driven. It aims to deliver tangible results, including new means and instruments in support of cross-border and trans-national cultural cooperation in and with Eastern Europe. Several tools can be imagined (for example, capacity-building or mobility programmes, placement schemes, summer schools, an Eastern Europe Fund, scholarship programmes) but the concrete outputs should be decided upon only after assessment and discussion of the concrete local needs and aspirations of local actors of change.

Partnership: This process seeks cooperation with other foundations and organisations that have working experience in the region so as to enhance the coherence, complementarity and effectiveness of the initiative. It seeks to identify and involve artistic initiatives inside the European Union with the aim to increase knowledge and interest in the artistic and cultural scenes of the Eastern European neighbourhood.

¹ European Cultural Foundation and German Marshall Fund of the United States, East European Reflection Group (EE RG): Cultural Actors of Change in Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova, Project Description.

Impact: This initiative seeks to create synergies with existing networks, programmes and policies currently in place to support cultural and other actors of change so as to bring in players from the Eastern European neighbourhood and further afield, open up debate, and raise the public awareness of the region in focus.

An initial mapping of the situation, problems and issues facing actors of the culture field has been undertaken for each of the three countries. This mapping aimed at identifying outstanding individuals who combine intellectual strength and practical activity to the benefit of positive change within the arts and culture fields, but who could impact other areas of society. This meant exploring ways that influential individuals and collectives created or significantly contributed to change. The mapping laid out the main features of the cultural policy systems in each country along with the main problems respondents considered essential to their effectiveness or ineffectiveness in underpinning processes of change in a constructive manner.

This initial mapping has been conducted using a specially developed questionnaire. It focused on the opinion of respondents concerning the prospects for actors of the culture sphere in each country to constructively support processes of change in favour of democratisation, Europeanisation and modernisation. Target persons and institutions invited to answer the questionnaire were chosen on the basis of preparatory meetings in each of the countries – in Minsk, Belarus, in March 2007; in Kiev, Ukraine, in April 2007; and in Chisinau, Moldova, in May 2007. In addition significant use was made of existing secondary source material and, in particular, the Compendium on Cultural Policies in Europe, where the country concerned participates.

The present report is a compilation of the answers received from targeted respondents, information collected at country consultation meetings and the results of secondary source research. While it cannot be considered a representative survey and analysis due to the small number of respondents and the reliance on secondary source materials, the report does take stock of all major aspects of the socio-political situation in the country under consideration that are relevant for the development of the culture sphere. The country consultation meetings were the opportunity for in-depth discussion of the condition of the culture sphere, its potential for actively supporting change and concrete measures that might be taken by the partners involved in this process to support that potential and empower it. These meetings were held in June and July 2007 and brought together influential local actors and experts and to discuss the ideas presented in the individual country reports.

The reflection process shall be completed in September by a strategic workshop for the development of a 3-year plan to support cultural actors of change. The circle of partners will be enlarged to include other potential supporters of change through culture, especially also international donors involved in cultural activities in the three countries.

The expected results of the reflection process will be

- Facilitating networking and partnership building between individuals and organisations in the region, and of countries from the target region with EU countries;
- Triggering curiosity in the Eastern European region and introducing it to the mental map of cultural operators and artists in the west;
- Devising a policy orientation on the place of cultural cooperation in the European Neighbourhood Policy;
- Launching a concrete cooperation instrument tailored to the needs analysed in the course of the reflection process;
- Preparing a publication (on-line, and possibly off-line) and a public event in the Netherlands to publicise the results of the process;
- Contributing to ECF's diversity focus through supporting cultural actors of change in Eastern Europe (integration) and exploring the contribution of the Eastern European Diaspora to multiple European citizenship (migration).

Background

With secession from the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine was established as an independent state in the true sense of the term. Unlike many successor states to the Soviet Union it managed the transition to independence without spiralling into conflict and chaos. Leonid Kravchuk was elected President of the Ukraine on December 1, 1991. His successor, Leonid Kuchma, was elected in 1994 and served for two consecutive terms, leaving office in 2004.

The issue of his succession gave rise to the Orange Revolution, which erupted in November 2004 after the second round of the presidential elections was accompanied by massive manipulations in favour of the candidate of the ruling coalition, then-serving Prime Minister, Victor Yanukovich. Large-scale protests, led by the opposition candidate Victor Yushchenko and organised by Ukrainian civil society, eventually returned democracy to this country, which until then had demonstrated increasing authoritarianism. Post-revolutionary state and society face new challenges of democratic governance and of growing socio-economic inequality. Dependency on Russia for gas and, therefore, its expectation that Ukraine will support Russia's current government, tend to make its foreign policy unpredictable and Ukrainian aspirations to join NATO and the European Union are sometimes frustrated by its vacillation.²

Ukraine has registered a relatively impressive rate of economic growth since 2000, with an annual economic growth average between 2000 and 2004 of 7.3%. Sections of oil and gas pipeline run through Ukrainian territory and it is part of an important Eurasian transport corridor. The team of reformers, led by then Prime Minister Victor Yushchenko and then First Deputy Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko that entered government in 2000, is widely credited with the reforms that brought the shadow economy under control and that led to the payment of wage and pension arrears, thereby, improving living standards. At this time, Ukraine officially declared its aspirations for full Euroatlantic integration and announced its aim to join both NATO and the European Union. This open foreign policy outlook and the improved economic prospects of Ukraine created an atmosphere of hope and motivation in society, until then relatively depressed. Energy transport infrastructure, for its part, has been a mixed blessing for the Ukrainian economy, given that a large share of such infrastructure is owned by Russian energy interests and that Ukraine was for a long time dependent on lower than market price Russian energy deliveries to stay warm in winter and to generate income. However, as its measures began to take effect, the reform-government became a threat for the political, financial and criminal interests of the Ukrainian clans, and it was soon dismissed, serving just over a year in office.

From 2000 onwards, Ukraine's governing elite demonstrated obvious authoritarian tendencies and the fundamental freedoms of Ukrainian citizens, in particular their freedoms of association, political conscience and expression, were openly violated. Ukraine's "Orange Revolution" is certainly one of the most spectacular examples of change witnessed in the post-Soviet space. It ushered in significant hope among ordinary Ukrainian citizens for renewal in the political and economic reform process and integration into the international community of nations, processes that were practically reversed under the authoritarian rule of Leonid Kuchma. Since then, significant progress has certainly been made in the area of democratic consolidation, as demonstrated by the international community's verdict on the 2006 parliamentary elections as being both free and fair. Nevertheless, since the victory of the democratic opposition and the election of President Victor Yushchenko, there has been an almost unending series of political crises (often provoked by revelations of corruption or by infighting in the Orange Coalition), significantly marring and practically bringing to a halt the reform process.

A significant, although not entirely unique, feature of the political and economic landscape in Ukraine is the position of oligarchs and the clans that surround them. These extremely successful and rich business persons are a formidable political force in Ukraine because of their immense wealth and of the company they keep. Some harbour explicitly political ambitions and use their wealth and influence to gain footholds in political decision making processes. Others see themselves as watchdogs over political elites that seem only too willing to sacrifice promises made to the electorate in order to stay in office. As business people, they have an inherent interest a favourable economic climate. This can mean that they are West and Europe leaning. But, as practise has shown, there is no guarantee on either count. As politically motivated actors, they may have other interests. They have the means to initiate and support change. But, unlike in the political sphere, there are few accountability mechanisms that apply to them. Their role and position in Ukrainian society, politics and economics has been ambivalent at best, interfering and manipulative at worst. It is not clear how, if at all, this group of individuals, with very different preferences, will develop as a constructive force for change. It remains to be seen if they will overcome the temptation to play the role of "kingmakers".

² http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/1102303.stm

It appears that absolute poverty has been decreasing (according to World Bank World Development Indicators³, GDP per capita (PPP) in 2004 was 5,491 USD⁴) and unemployment has been rather stagnant since Ukraine embarked on its programme of economic liberalisation. Nevertheless, important side effects of the transition to the market economy have been the growth of inequality between urban and rural areas, an increase in the poverty gap between the poor agricultural areas of the country and the rapidly growing big city economies and an increase in underemployment, especially in the agricultural sector. Regional inequalities, such as are obvious to observe between the largely urban and industrialised East of the country and the agricultural West, are indicative of the current socio-economic situation of the country.⁵

Ukraine is also one of the largest countries in Europe, with a land surface of 603,700 km. The Ukrainian population was 47.1 million in mid-2005 and it is estimated that 60% is under the age of 25. However, the population is both shrinking and ageing rapidly, with Ukraine demonstrating an extremely low birth rate. Approximately 30% of the population live in rural areas, with the majority living in urban areas. Ukraine is a highly diverse society, with many national minorities and religious groups living side by side within its borders and benefiting from the rights of Ukrainian citizenship. According to the census conducted in 2001, more than 130 nationality groups could be identified as residing within the borders of Ukraine, comprising nearly 10 million people or nearly 21% of the population⁶. With the exception of the dark days of World War II, relations between different cultural groups in Ukraine have traditionally been peaceful.

More recently, however, relations between its two main language groups have not. A significant part of the Ukrainian population identifies itself as ethnic Russian. An even larger proportion of Ukrainians consider Russian to be their mother tongue and did not grow up in a Ukrainian speaking environment. Centuries of russification under the Tsars and the Soviets has had a negative impact on the development of the Ukrainian language and Ukrainian language cultural production. For a long time the Ukrainian language was suppressed for being a symbol of unwanted nationalism. Hence, publishing and broadcasting in Ukrainian began to develop again only after independence. The cleavage between Russian speaking, and to an extent, Russia leaning parts of the population, and those who speak Ukrainian and consider themselves more West leaning became extremely pronounced in the run up to and in the immediate aftermath of the “Orange Revolution”. Exaggerated as they may have been, fears were expressed that the country would split up. Something of a “national reawakening” has accompanied independence and the emotive discussions of the position of Russian language in the Ukrainian public sphere, as well as the questioning of what can and cannot be considered Ukrainian, are also having an impact on the position of minority groups. The debate about the content of Ukrainian citizenship is still very much on the table and it is not always discussed in the most inclusive of manners.

The victory of the Party of Regions in the parliamentary elections in March 2006, and the nomination of Victor Yanukovich to the position of Prime Minister is both an indication of the disappointment of a large part of the population with the ongoing political instability and its disillusion with the former-opposition leadership and of the fragility of the political consensus in favour of a West-oriented liberal democratic Ukraine. The growing power that Russia’s petro-income accords the country, the Kremlin’s regular use of gas price rises for what most neighbours fear are ulterior political motives and the Russia-leaning foreign policy preference of Yanukovich and the Party of Regions only intensifies the sense of instability that surrounds the country presently.

Contemporary Cultural Policy and Trends

Sources of Cultural Policy

Ukrainian cultural policy and governmental action in the sphere of culture is guided by a number of key legislative texts, among them the Fundamentals of Legislation on the Culture of Ukraine (1992 with amendments), the Constitution of Ukraine (1996), Conceptual Guidelines of Executive Authorities Concerning the Development of

³ http://www.uis.unesco.org/profiles/EN/EDU/countryProfile_en.aspx?coe=8070

⁴ At the time of writing (August 2007), the exchange rate of the USD to the local currency (Ukrainian Hryvnia – UAH) was 1 USD = 5.11309 UAH, of the USD to the Euro was 1 USD = 0.74155 Euro and of the Euro to the UAH was 1 Euro = 6.89654 UAH (source: www.oanda.com 21 August 2007). Note that some of the economic data presented in this report is valid for years previous to 2007 and, therefore, currency equivalencies may not be completely accurate using these exchange rates.

⁵ World Bank, Poverty Report on Ukraine, 2003, Summary, p.1.

⁶ Council of Europe/ERICarts, “Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe”, 8th Edition”, 2007, Country Profile for Ukraine, p. 15.

Culture (1997), the Law on Local Self-Governance (1997), Budget Code of Ukraine (2002, decentralised financing), the Conceptual Framework of the Public Cultural Policy of Ukraine (2005) and the Presidential Decree on Top Priority Measures to enrich and Develop Culture and Spiritual Heritage of the Ukrainian Society (2005).

While no legal document states a national definition of culture, the Fundamentals of the Legislation on Culture offers a definition of cultural “values”.

“Cultural values include objects of material and spiritual culture having artistic, historical, ethnographic or scientific importance”.

As outlined by the recently published report on national cultural policy of the Council of Europe international team of experts

“... In the old Soviet Union, the definition of culture tended to be “What the Ministry of Culture does”. What the Ministry did not ‘do’, control or fund was not ‘culture’. The old Soviet legacy still manifests itself in a static, narrow and outdated official concept of culture. Government and state bodies involved in culture – by the use of their resources, action and time – define culture mainly in terms of certain forms of heritage (buildings, ‘historical’ folk culture, traditional museums, etc) and ‘high’ classical culture (i.e. ballet; theatre; opera; classical music, etc, with rigid demarcations between them). This basically 19th century perception of culture is unhelpful in a 21st century modernising European country where linkages to a wide and diverse range of social and economic activities and agendas, the nurturing of the creative industries and a knowledge economy and the embracing of new and mutating forms of cultural expression and product are essential to the cultural health of a nation.”⁷

The above mentioned documents (in particular, the Fundamentals of Legislation on the Culture of Ukraine) establish the goals of Ukrainian cultural policy as follows:

- to guarantee cultural rights and access to cultural “values”;
- to guarantee freedom of expression;
- to create conditions that enable citizens, especially young people, to participate in cultural life;
- to regenerate and develop the culture of the Ukrainian nation and the cultures of national minorities on the territory of Ukraine;
- to provide support to professional artistic activity;
- to preserve and protect cultural heritage;
- to accommodate cultural diversity;
- to create favourable conditions for the development of non-governmental and non-commercial cultural organisations;
- to support domestic (national) producers of culture;
- to popularise Ukrainian culture in the world.

Despite these many sources of cultural policy objectives, respondents to our questionnaire complain that one of the key problems for the sustainability of their action in the cultural field, whether avant garde or more traditional, is the absence of a well adapted legal environment, in other words, the lack of a “law on culture” and (certainly, noteworthy) a “law on philanthropy”. The existing legal provisions pertaining to culture are “inefficient and permanently being violated” according to the Country Profile for Ukraine within the Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe.⁸ Many respondents refer to their professional activity as being untenable in the taxation environment that currently applies to cultural production. For example, according to one respondent the legal provisions pertaining to theatre performance production are prohibitive and contradictory. The *Arabesques* theatre-studio, whose official status is that of an NGO but whose activity is openly that of a theatre company which performs, does not have the right to sell tickets. By law *Arabesques* is also taxed for touring in Ukraine. But, since it does not have its own premises, even performances in Kharkiv, where the theatre is based, is considered to be “touring activity”.

⁷ Council of Europe, Steering Committee for Culture (CDCULT), National Cultural Policy Review of Ukraine, Experts’ Report (CDCULT (2007) 15, 23 April 2007), presented at the 6th Plenary Session, Strasbourg, 9 – 11 May 2007.

⁸ Council of Europe/ERICarts, “Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe”, 8th Edition, 2007, Country Profile for Ukraine.

In relation to legislation, the report of the Council of Europe international expert team states

*“... the qualitative dimension of the implementation of legislation is really the litmus test of success for a maturing transitional state, not the number of laws passed or the areas covered. Legislation is not an end in itself but a means to an end and in the cultural sector there is no point in wasting time and raising expectations with legislation which cannot be implemented or will not be implemented ... Legislation not specifically related to the cultural sector, as cultural legislation itself, can sometimes be unintentionally negative”.*⁹

Public Priorities in the Field of Culture

Recent programmes for the implementation of the above goals (The Conceptual Framework of the Public Cultural Policy of Ukraine 2005 – 2007 and the Roadmap to the Programme for Enrichment and Development of the Cultural and Spiritual Heritage of the Ukrainian Society) lay out the following objectives:

- development of a conceptual framework for the creation of a long-term cultural policy;
- recognition of cultural development as a priority of national and local government;
- overcoming the gap between the improved socio-economic condition of the country and the poor quality of public cultural services;
- development of an effective mechanism for financing culture, prioritising the use of cultural and historical heritage as an investment resource;
- creation of a favourable legal and economic environment for the development of culture industries (formulation of favourable taxation provisions, etc);
- identification of the country's cultural resources;
- creation of a suitable cultural information environment for documenting culture;
- conservation and sustainable use of cultural heritage;
- development of new approaches to the practise of cultural management, replacing the command style and prioritising management by results;
- representation of Ukraine in the international cultural sphere, participation of Ukraine in global cultural processes and development of international cultural cooperation;
- strengthening the Ukrainian language (position, use, development);
- revival and promotion of historical and traditional cultural production (folk crafts, development of cultural tourism, etc).

The reform process undertaken by successive governments of Ukraine in the immediate aftermath of independence and again in the immediate aftermath of the Orange Revolution has prioritised the structural and administrative reform of public cultural service and provision, reflecting the broader need for a more decentralised approach to governance in all spheres of government action, and focusing largely on the fiscal conditions for the survival of a public cultural policy. Of all of the above objectives, which in their intention reflect European standards (as outlined in key texts emanating from Council of Europe cultural cooperation), the governmental programme of cultural policy implementation for 2006 puts most emphasis on the preservation and conservation of cultural heritage in Ukraine.

*“... Managing culture and arts according to a 19th century grid of categorisation is impractical and unhelpful and leads to state support and funding mechanisms encouraging conservatism and fossilisation rather than dynamic contemporary creativity. It also means that the Ministry is identified with ‘dead’ culture, historical culture and ‘classical arts’ which are appealing to increasingly smaller (and older) segments of Ukrainian society but not those on whom the future of the country and its culture depends ...”*¹⁰

This situation is reflected in the answers of the majority of respondents to the question, “what are the current priorities in cultural policy in your country?” Cultural heritage and “high art” receives more attention than any other cultural form, especially anything contemporary. According to several respondents the leading political actors in government have a very limited understanding of culture, and it appears their imagination of the content of a cultural policy is limited to the preservation of the physical and natural heritage of Ukraine.

Other respondents maintain that culture, in any form, does not constitute a priority for government or the political elites. According to one respondent, no single political party puts the development of “national culture”

⁹ Council of Europe, Steering Committee for Culture (CDCULT), National Cultural Policy Review of Ukraine, Experts' Report (CDCULT (2007) 15, 23 April 2007), presented at the 6th Plenary Session, Strasbourg, 9 – 11 May 2007.

¹⁰ Ibid.

high on their political agenda and the only cultural issue addressed in election campaigning is language (usually, the position of Russian). Political expediency rather than genuine understanding of the transformative potential of culture motivates any interest in cultural issues, in their estimation.

The declarative nature of government priorities as outlined in several official programme documents is, evidently, a cause for frustration and disillusionment among many of the respondents to our questionnaire.

Public and Private Investments in Culture

Culture is perceived by many of those active in both the state and non-governmental cultural sector as occupying the last position on the list of government priorities, especially when it comes to financing and resourcing. The state culture sector suffers extensively from the fact that it receives financing for more than subsistence activity only if money is left over in the state budget (referred to by respondents as the residual principle in financing culture) and that it is still managed using an outdated and centralised command principle. There has also been disagreement within government circles about the division of responsibilities for aspects of the implementation of culture policy. For example, and in theory, the most local level of government is mandated with the establishment of budgets for culture and their distribution, although according to the literature the decentralisation has not worked and central government remains in charge. Further, there has been disagreement of which authority should be responsible for the promotion of culture abroad (the Ministry of Culture or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). This has, in the eyes of our respondents, led to paralysis.

According to publicly available information¹¹, public expenditure on culture per capita is very low in comparison to that in other European countries. In 2005, it is estimated to have been at 0.6% of GDP. This reflects both the low level of public budget provision for culture and extremely low salaries received by employees of the culture sector, which nevertheless account for a very large share of expenditure on culture. Nevertheless, in 2005 the share of public cultural expenditure taken over by the central government grew, by approximately 27%. This flagrantly contradicts the decentralisation policy adopted by the government in the field of culture.

According to the Ukraine profile in the 2007 edition of the Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe,

“This means that there is a precarious trend of re-allocation of public funds in favour of the state budget, in spite of the fact that 98.5% of all cultural institutions and services are funded from local budgets.”¹²

There are some forms of direct and indirect support to artists provided by the state (including the subsidisation of low rents for premises, studios, workshops, etc) and some special grants for supporting artistic talents and for honouring culture actors of particular merit. For example, there is the annual presidential grant for young artists paid by the Ministry of Culture. In 2005, a total of ten artists from the fields of dramatic, musical, literary and cinematographic arts received grants in the range of 1,400 to 7,800 euros each.¹³ In addition, the National Shevchenko Prize is awarded to writers, artists and groups of artists for extraordinary achievements in their branch of culture.

The promotion of Ukrainian culture abroad is also a stated priority. However, while the decision to create so called “Ukrainian Houses” for the promotion of Ukrainian culture abroad in the style of other countries’ national cultural institutes has been taken, it has so far not been implemented. Anecdotal evidence from our consultation meetings in Kiev suggests that this is considered, by those in the contemporary and independent art sector, to be a fairly conservative approach and inadequate to the promotion of a modern Ukrainian culture abroad. Further, it is not considered to be truly representative of what is going on in the culture scene in Ukraine today, focusing as it does on a very static representation of Ukrainian culture in the form of “immovable” property. Other forms of promotion within the responsibility of the public authorities, such as the Ukrainian presence at the Frankfurt and Warsaw book fairs, have been extensively criticised both at home and abroad for being poorly prepared, badly resourced and not at all representative of their fields of expertise. Hence, in the opinion of our respondents, the

¹¹ Council of Europe/ERICarts, “Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe”, 8th Edition, 2007, Country Profile for Ukraine, p.33.

¹² Ibid, p.33.

¹³ Ibid, p. 39.

promotion of Ukrainian culture abroad is in fact rather limited and really only takes place through the personal relations that individual artists are able to establish abroad.

According to estimates published in 2006¹⁴, between 70% and 80% of the state budget allocation for culture (which in itself is very small, 1.1% of the consolidated state budget in 2005¹⁵) is spent on keeping the system ticking over (salaries and communal payments), leaving little or no public money for longer-term investment and developmental activities. It is noteworthy that in 2002 (the last year for which figures are available) there were nearly 150,000 people employed in the public cultural sector. The largest part of the remainder is dedicated to the implementation of state policy, and in particular, to the maintenance of state cultural institutions, whose infrastructure (physical buildings, architectural heritage and their system of management), nevertheless, has remained largely unreformed since the time of the Soviet Union. At the national level, state cultural institutions receive full funding, however inadequate for quality functioning (national museums, a variety of orchestras, libraries, etc.). The President is empowered with the task of giving an institution the status of “national cultural institution”.

At the local and regional levels, public institutions are chronically under-funded and cannot make ends meet, especially in rural areas, where cultural provision is less developed than in cities. A typical example is the situation of public libraries, which generate income to cover the short-fall in their running costs by renting out their premises or by cutting investment in new collections of books or technology. The example of Ukraine’s museums is also indicative. According to recent research¹⁶ and anecdotal evidence from the consultation meetings in Kiev suggest that largest part of the collections are kept in inappropriate conditions for their long-term storage despite the fact that up to 90% of the country’s collection of art is kept in storage semi-permanently because there is not enough museum space to exhibit them. Some museums have such a difficult time to make ends meet, they cannot even afford to keep their exhibition space lit. Nevertheless, as a result of unreformed legislative provisions, probably dating back to the Soviet period, any additional income that museums could earn from commercial activities would in any case be absorbed directly into the public budget and could not be used for improvements locally. Hence, there is no incentive for public institutions to consider economic activity and to research local cultural consumers’ needs or those of the tourist market, in order to develop their audiences and income generation possibilities. In addition, museum staff do not have a very developed understanding of cultural industries, even within the perspective of cultural tourism, which has recently become a priority of the Ministry. Paradoxically, though, public financial investment in culture (and especially in cultural innovation and development) continue to remain dangerously low despite the fact that the Ministry of Culture has been reported to have been returning large sums to the state budget unspent. This points to a deeper problem than one of available financial resources for culture on the part of the state. A chronic lack of capacity for implementation of public culture objectives identified seems to have overtaken the public institutions responsible.

Independent actors in the culture field (whether individual artists or independent organisations, complain that they have to function largely without support (financial or other) and cooperation from public bodies. These present themselves as surviving on scant funding from international sources. Some individual artists of renown, working in literature and the visual arts, can survive and even manage to produce in this way. Fields like the performing arts or cinema, which are time, people and resource intensive, cannot. And, a hand to mouth existence does not favour the capacity of the cultural sphere to form public opinion or influence society in any manner, let alone a positive or progressive one. They also complain that the process by which public money is allocated, distributed and spent in the culture field is highly non-transparent and that tender procedures are under-developed and subject to corruption. According to anecdotal evidence from the consultation meetings in Kiev, low-level petty corruption, including the practise of double funding for projects in the independent sector, is extremely widespread. These are, of course, very serious allegations.

Independent producers usually finance their projects using money donated by international foundations, foreign embassies and sometimes local authorities or local private sponsors. Indicative of the socio-economic condition in which independent cultural actors function is that the smallest proportion of project finance is generated by

¹⁴ Council of Europe/ERICarts, “Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe”, 8th Edition, 2007, Country Profile for Ukraine, p.39.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 32.

¹⁶ British Council Ukraine, Report on the training needs of cultural institutions and organisations in Odessa, June 2007, more information about the project in which this survey was conducted is available at: www.culturebase.net/project_detail.php?201 or from the British Council Ukraine at: www.britishcouncil.org/ukraine.htm.

the cultural activities they organise (e.g. ticket, book or CD sales). One respondent candidly referred to his own estimation of how his budget for producing culture is constructed. It is indicative that he mentions that he has to finance 43% of the cost of his own work from his own pocket. At the same time, there is something of an attitude problem among independent organisations concerning the role of public authorities, and especially the Ministry of Culture. These are seen as a kind of “cow to milk”, an organisation that exists to provide financial means and to micro-manage rather than to create a supportive environment in which cultural organisations to develop. Paradoxically, this is an attitude commonly associated with the Soviet past, but the independent cultural sector is made up largely of young people who remember only the very late Soviet period and whose education took place largely in independent Ukraine.¹⁷

In terms of the financing of culture, private sponsorship is identified as far from unproblematic. In terms of financing, foreign investment prevails (often Russian) in the fields of entertainment and show-business. For example, most FM radio stations belong to foreign companies and the production of TV-series and the distribution of films are not locally owned. These foreign (commercial) interests are not reputed to consider the development of Ukrainian cultural production and industries important. Quite often it is easier and more advantageous for private sponsors to fund large scale, even state, institutions (e.g. a theatre or a festival) than an independent cultural initiative. A few native oligarchs have positioned themselves as patrons of the arts, gifting hugely valuable collections of art-works to almost bankrupt state museums and bankrolling cultural events that the Ministry of Culture cannot afford to even consider undertaking, the best known of which is probably Victor Pinchuk, who in 2006 created the Pinchuk Art Centre (the stated aim of which is to modernise the existing art field in Ukraine) and who in 2007 is reported to be covering the cost of the Ukrainian exhibition at the Biennale in Venice. Other examples include the owner of System Capital Management, Renat Akhmetov, who is reported to be the richest man in Ukraine. According to one of our respondents he may well be investing more in absolute terms in cultural projects than Pinchuk, but Pinchuk’s public relations are more advanced, so he is better known. “oligarchs” fund everything from collecting Trepillian artefacts through Jazz Festivals to the production of Ukrainian film, but few can be said to have a strategy based on an analysis of needs of the local culture sector.

Such potential philanthropists that number more than a handful, according to locals and who undoubtedly have large sums of money to spend, could indeed play a very positive role by providing resources and drawing much needed attention to the necessity of investment in cultural development. Nevertheless, they play an ambiguous role. Clearly a number of ethical debates are raised by the involvement of such actors in cultural philanthropy. Motivation and accountability come to the fore in discussions of the validity of their active involvement. To the extent that the state claims not to be “in a position to say no” and independent actors are simply not consulted, the Oligarchs are de facto implied in the determination of public policy and gain even deeper footholds in the political decision making sphere (whether formalized or not). Many actors in the culture field feel very uncomfortable with what appears to be the unchallenged ability of the very rich to determine public policy. The evaluation of the Council of Europe’s expert team is that it will be essential in the future to

“ ... regulate healthily and transparently the nature of any relationship between government and private sector partners ... the importance of effective and transparent private and corporate investments in culture in Ukraine within an overarching state policy framework cannot be exaggerated.”¹⁸

At another level of the economic ladder, locally implanted small and medium size commercial concerns have not demonstrated significant interest in supporting cultural activities. This is most likely due to the fact that they receive no special consideration or benefit in doing so. The proposed legal provisions surrounding tax breaks for philanthropy are reported to have been vetoed in Parliament. A culture of philanthropy (as historically associated with the development of the arts and culture in the United States and some parts of Western Europe) has yet to develop in Ukraine. Those commercial interests that do undertake sponsoring are most often those established with foreign investment or having foreign management (banks, insurance companies, etc) and do so in order to gain some form of positive advertising effect. Hence, they tend to focus on sponsoring mass entertainment events in the fields of pop-culture and sport rather than contemporary cultural innovation and experimentation.

¹⁷ British Council Ukraine, Report on the training needs of cultural institutions and organisations in Odessa, June 2007, more information about the project in which this survey was conducted is available at: www.culturebase.net/project_detail.php?201 or from the British Council Ukraine at: www.britishcouncil.org/ukraine.htm.

¹⁸ Council of Europe, Steering Committee for Culture (CDCULT), National Cultural Policy Review of Ukraine, Experts’ Report (CDCULT (2007) 15, 23 April 2007), presented at the 6th Plenary Session, Strasbourg, 9 – 11 May 2007.

Respondents report a relatively important role for international actors in financing the culture field in Ukraine. The presence and activities of a variety of foreign cultural institutes (for example, the British Council, French Institute, Polish Institute, Goethe Institute), embassies and foreign artists from a variety of fields were specifically mentioned as relevant to the development of the field of culture. As mentioned above, independent actors report that they rely quite heavily on foreign and international funding, whether it is available within the country or by applying to bodies based outside the country. However, the programmes of several larger international bodies such as the culture programme of the International Renaissance Foundation or the Swiss Cultural Programme, have recently been closed down, with funding for cooperation projects being discontinued, or are in the process of being discontinued. Those that are present and remain active are largely concerned with the promotion of their specific national culture and, in particular, languages. Cooperation projects and exchanges are financed, but support for indigenous culture is reported as being something of a by-product of such support programmes rather than a specific and pre-planned objective.

The fact that cultural management does not exist as a recognised profession or sphere of professional activity, even if many individuals are engaged professionally as cultural managers, some of them occupying positions of authority in the cultural sphere and having influence on the formation of public opinion, further demonstrates what seems to be a prevailing attitude of short-term survivalism in relation to investment in the cultural sphere. Re-building the roof of a museum is prioritised over re-training its managerial staff to be able to cater for the reported increasing demand for high quality cultural products, as important as the securing of a roof may be for the protection of a museum's collection. This is also demonstrated in the absence of dedicated full time state educational provision in cultural management corresponding to international standards, even if there are some courses organised by independent actors.¹⁹

According to our respondents, a similar situation is observable in the areas of cultural journalism and criticism. Very few culture specific journals exist, because in and of themselves they are not commercially viable. Those that survive their first three or four editions do so as a result of long term support of international sponsors. A concrete example mentioned by one respondent to our questionnaire is *Krytyka* (<http://www.krytyka.kiev.ua>), a culture specific journal that was founded by and continues to exist with the support of Harvard University. The most influential critical resource is *Telekritika* (<http://www.telekritika.kiev.ua> and paper magazine). It is oriented mainly towards critical reflection on TV-products (and generally media-sphere), but it also sometimes covers questions of cultural policy. It also organizes chat-conferences with art and cultural actors (mostly authors of literature). This creates an important channel of communication between such cultural actors and the public. Young, up and coming culture professionals who do manage to find an education they consider relevant do not find opportunities to work in their chosen profession. Emigration can represent a solution for the individual, but the brain-drain it creates can be catastrophic for fields that are by nature innovative and can lead to total entropy and stagnation.

It can also be argued that the lack of a longer term investment vision is at the root of the general lack of relevant quantitative and qualitative research into the culture sphere in Ukraine. Respondents note that, in general, culture is not a priority for local researchers. Few cultural organisations and institutions engage in data collection concerning consumer preferences, despite the obvious potential benefits of audience development activities, although some private research groupings try to include culture related questions in their public opinion surveys.²⁰

A recent cooperation project between three international partners which supported local research into the book market in Ukraine offers further insight into why this might be the case. The Ukrainian book project (financed by the International Renaissance Foundation, the Fund for Central and East European Book Project (Amsterdam) and the MATRA program of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs) undertook sociological research into public reading habits and preferences (<http://www.irf.kiev.ua/en/ini/bookproject/news/?doc:int=2722>.) It showed considerable growth in book consumption on the part of Ukrainian readers. Paradoxically, publishers in Ukraine were critical of the research, deeming it “irrelevant”. Some local non-governmental organisations, including several that engaged in our survey (notably, The Centre for Democracy through Culture) are actively in trying to address this structural weakness, but support from the political level seems to be lacking.

¹⁹ http://www.soviart.com.ua/main_menu_eng.html.

²⁰ For example, R&B Group – Research and Branding (www.rb.com.ua), Omnibus Project (public opinion survey concerning politics and culture in Ukraine), Press Release concerning the 3rd phase (January – February 2007).

Relations between Public Authorities and Independent Culture Actors

While formally, all categories of actors (public institutions, private actors, business, culture producers, culture managers, international bodies) are active to some extent in the cultural sphere, respondents unanimously report that they act in isolation from one another. This is obviously a matter of frustration, as all concerned are considered to be missing an essential opportunity to improve the outreach and condition of culture in Ukraine.

As mentioned above, independent actors in the culture sphere complain that they do not receive attention and support from responsible public bodies. This extends beyond their complaints that they do not receive financial support. Respondents basically agree that there is “no cooperation” of relevance to the development of the field between state bodies and independent culture producers and some even go as far as stating that the attitude of the public authorities is “quite aggressive”. Some respondents report that government bodies behave in a more and more monopolistic manner towards the field of culture, which is a very serious allegation indeed if one considers the break with the authoritarian past that the Orange Revolution was meant to be. Decision making power is concentrated more or less exclusively in the hands of government (whichever the level) and lacks transparency. Our respondents present a situation in which relations between state institutions and the independent cultural sector function in one direction. Independent culture players are portrayed as having responsibilities but no rights and state institutions as having rights but no responsibilities. The relationship is limited to financial transactions (payment of taxes or rents, etc).

They also claim they are not consulted on matters of importance to their professional survival and development, such as legal reform, and are not involved in relevant developmental activities undertaken by the authorities (such as forums on cultural issues). In their opinion, key cultural players are not invited to participate as experts or advisors and the representatives of public institutions responsible for culture do not even know who the key actors in the culture field are.

The general absence of coordination and cooperation among similarly interested or motivated actors is a considerable problem. Similarly motivated actors refers to different kinds of independent actors (individual artists, non-governmental organisations) as well as governmental experts or functionaries and international or foreign organisations active in the culture field. Despite the setting up of the National Board for Cultural Affairs and its involvement in the drafting of the “Roadmap to the Programme for Enrichment and Development of Culture and Spiritual Heritage of the Ukrainian Society” with the Presidential Secretariat, this body has only advisory status in relation to the development of policy and legislation in the cultural field. In addition, some members of the independent sector feel excluded from decision making and debates of relevance to their existence and development as cultural producers precisely because they have little or no access to participating in the work of such a board. It seems there are issues of legitimacy and leadership on the side of the public authorities. On the part of the independent sector there seems to be resigned passivity and little motivation to take the initiative. Hence, there tends to be little communication and each side spends a lot of time and energy criticising the other.

The Public Response

Paradoxically, despite the complicated conditions outlined above, the culture sector in Ukraine is also faced with a number of important opportunities. It has been possible to witness a flourishing of independent cultural activity recently. According to our respondents, there seems to be growing demand for contemporary and alternative culture products of high quality, something that the embryonic cultural industries do not yet have the capacity to deliver, even if they are committed to doing so as their capacity grows. According to our respondents, it has become increasingly possible to differentiate between the large majority of the Ukrainian public, who if interested in culture at all, are consumers of mass entertainment and pop-culture, and a small, but growing, elite of young culture consumers who are interested in more “intellectual” or “high-brow” products, such as art-movies, post-modern literature, contemporary theatre and complicated forms of electronic music (for example, noise, IDM, academic electronic projects).

Performances of such contemporary art forms, indigenous and foreign, draw larger and larger audiences (for example, the 2006 edition [only the second ever] of the “Details of Sound” electronic music festival in 2006, gathered 800 people on two successive nights, 300 people attended the public reading of “Mystery” the new novel by Yuriy Andrukhovych, 800 people attended the premiere of the latest performance of the “Arabesques” theatre-studio). At the same time, this growing interest in innovative cultural forms has not been accompanied by

financial benefits for the artists involved in innovative artistic production. However, the willingness of the Ukrainian cultural consumer to pay for cultural products remains limited even though the economic welfare of the Ukrainian public has improved since the 1990s. Indicatively, according to a recent opinion poll, in answer to the question “What do you lack in order to satisfy your individual cultural needs?”, 48% of respondents answered, “means”.²¹

The further development of sub-cultural diversity in the culture market in Ukraine is a stated aim of some of our respondents and more broadly of the independent sector as a whole, although they complain that they have difficulty to actually deliver innovation and cultural products of a high quality that could also be marketed abroad to foreign audiences. Nevertheless, the independent culture sector has plenty of capacity for supporting local community development, something that in the long run can have significant benefits for modernisation and democratisation of the broader society. Finally, there seems to be a lot of openness and willingness for international cooperation and exchange, especially among younger, Western leaning, cultural producers and managers, who are both eager to learn new approaches to their profession and to contribute with their particular brand of experience and perspective to the development of cultural concepts at European level.²²

And, despite the critical approach of the non-state sector towards the somewhat monolithic focus of the state sector on the physical and architectural heritage, this does mean that Ukraine has a well established tradition and practise of preserving both the tangible and intangible aspects of its history, something that will serve it well in the development of cultural industries once a strategy for cultural tourism has been adopted.

Main problems of the cultural field

According to the majority of respondents to our questionnaire and other background information concerning the situation and status of culture in Ukraine, state policy objectives are considered largely declarative, without effective implementation. In fact, the responses to our questionnaire point to something of a crisis in public cultural provision.

The never-ending spiral of political crisis and instability that Ukraine has witnessed, even since the Orange Revolution, has had a significant impact on the development of the field of culture. There have been elections in Ukraine ever year since 2004 and elections will again be held in September 2007. No matter how well meaning, successive governments practically never get the chance to implement the much needed reforms tabled for the sector as they cannot retain decision making power for long enough. This instability has been negative for the functioning of the parliament (preparation of legislation) and of the government (implementation of legislation). The media focus too much on the details of what is happening in politics and not enough on crucial public issues. Radical reform of the state cultural institutions is considered urgent.

A lack of political will for change and reform is presented as the basic underlying cause of some of the very obvious problems of the state culture sector identified by our respondents, including the following:

- A state culture policy that is experienced by the independent culture sector as exclusive and oppressive;
- The apparent inability and unwillingness of the state culture sector to engage in reflexive reform;
- An under-developed legal environment for the development of culture;
- A financial environment lacking in transparency and dysfunctional state budgeting and resourcing for culture;
- An under-researched culture market and an inability of the existing infrastructure to function effectively under the conditions of the market;
- Absence and inadequacy of professional education for the culture sector;
- Outdated and un-implemented legislation that favours only the maintenance of state culture institutions;
- A punitive fiscal policy;
- An apparent unwillingness of state and independent sectors to cooperate with each other;

²¹ R&B Group – Research and Branding (www.rb.com.ua), Omnibus Project (public opinion survey concerning politics and culture in Ukraine), Press Release concerning the 3rd phase (January – February 2007), p. 8.

²² SWOT Analysis conducted by the Development Centre “Democracy through Culture” in preparation of the 2007 Ukraine Profile for the Council of Europe/ERICarts, “Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe”, 8th Edition, 2007.

- Brain-drain of the most talented young artists to Russia and other countries where they various forms of support (financial, arts residencies, access to an art market, training, etc) with which they can begin their careers.

Our respondents clearly believe that the low level of capacity of the independent culture sector to produce, develop and innovate is a direct result of the conditions described.

To summarise, the Council of Europe international expert team considers the cultural field's main problems in the following terms

*“ ... as part of a wider transition process, Ukraine is in general currently suffering from a syndrome of ‘semi-reforms’ and ‘half-changes’. (...) Past practices and ways of working relevant to a ‘command economy’ often still remain and dominate yet the context of Ukraine’s needs have changed radically...”*²³

The Content of Contemporary Culture - Themes, Issues, Trends

Culture as a marker of identity

Discussions of the role and function of culture for society, such as that at the basis of our enquiry, are intimately mixed up with considerations of the definition of culture in a particular context. The extent to which culture of any particular kind is considered as a marker of identity and the importance accorded to the issue of identity in society can profile some cultural debates as important for the overall society. Often these debates are most visible at times of instability and political change. Recent developments in Ukraine have pushed the “identity debate” to the fore of the public sphere. The culture sector has had to get to grips with issues so raised and has had to formulate its response, something that our partners consider as being “work in progress”.

As mentioned the Ukrainian language holds something of an ambivalent position in the culture sphere. On the one hand, public policy states its revival and further development as one of its main policy objectives. On the other hand, Ukrainian language culture producers complain that they do not receive sufficient support or attention. According to some respondents, programmes and measures in place to develop the use of the Ukrainian language are old-fashioned and conservative. In addition, the position of the Ukrainian in relation to the Russian language has been problematised in the political sphere, becoming something of a political tool in the battles being waged by the various camps in Ukraine for the hearts and minds of the voters. Our partners consider the ambivalent position of the Ukrainian language to be a cause for rather weak articulation of what they call the “national idea”²⁴

Anecdotal evidence from the consultation meetings in Kiev, also suggests that many intellectuals active in the independent cultural sphere are preoccupied with the “identity question”. Several prominent business persons and political figures are known to have taken a particular interest in acquiring artefacts of Trepilian culture, the ancient original inhabitants what today is Ukraine. Visits to galleries in Kiev suggests that Christian religious themes are popular among contemporary visual artists, at least.²⁵ The most prominent and best maintained public heritage sites in Kiev are also significantly dominated by Orthodox Christian art. In this relation, the status and activity of national and other minorities and their cultures in Ukraine is an important indicator. While legislation has been put in place to recognise both the existence of minorities and their cultural rights (including the ratification by Ukraine of international conventions on minority rights protection) the problematisation of the position of ethnic Russians and non-Ukrainian speakers in relation to who can or cannot be considered a Ukrainian, has created animosities towards vociferous minorities. These are emotive issues, raising questions about identity and belonging that go to the heart of how to define Ukrainian culture in the context of ongoing nation-state building. The baggage that this nation building project carries with it (Soviet occupation, World War II collaboration with Nazi Germany, the legacy of authoritarianism) will clearly have to be addressed actively in the public (and political) sphere before the more practical issues of daily interaction between people with different cultural appartenances can be solved and if an inclusive, modern Ukrainian citizenship is to be built.

²³ Council of Europe, Steering Committee for Culture (CDCULT), National Cultural Policy Review of Ukraine, Experts’ Report (CDCULT (2007) 15, 23 April 2007), presented at the 6th Plenary Session, Strasbourg, 9 – 11 May 2007.

²⁴ R&B Group – Research and Branding (www.rb.com.ua), Omnibus Project (public opinion survey concerning politics and culture in Ukraine), Press Release concerning the 3rd phase (January – February 2007), p. 8-9.

²⁵ For example, the *SOVIART* collection, more information available at: http://www.soviart.com.ua/main_menu_eng.html.

Europe

A further, and not unrelated development, is the clear tendency of our partners, in our understanding quite representative of the independent culture sector in Ukraine, to be Western or Europe leaning. To the extent that this is a widespread attitude among members of the cultural community, be they artists themselves or managers, there is at least an elite basis on which construct momentum for change, understood as democratisation, Europeanization and modernisation of the cultural sphere itself and of the broader society. While the level of esteem that independent culture actors seem to hold for “European values” and Europeanness might be somewhat exaggerated or naïve, given that the rest of Europe may not feel the same way or have much interest in them, it is nevertheless a sign of their curiosity and openness for dialogue and collective action in both directions: towards change in Ukraine, but also towards change in the rest of Europe. There are two ways in which this influences the content of their art. In the first place they see Europe as the “rightful home” of Ukraine and in their explorations of Ukrainian identity issues, Europe and European values are a recurrent theme. Secondly, Ukrainian independent cultural actors try to follow “European” cultural trends. According to the Council of Europe’s international expert team, this is not always easy for Ukrainian cultural actors, particularly as a result of their limited mobility to the European Union because of very strict visa regime regulations imposed and because of the general lack of knowledge of Ukraine on the part of other Europeans.

*“... Ukraine is less plugged-in to European cultural networks, debates, policy development and experience-sharing than it should be. Knowledge and awareness of Ukraine in the rest of Europe is still at a relatively low level. More needs to be done to maximise opportunity and to increase the level of professional contact”.*²⁶

The brain-drain that the Ukrainian cultural sector is currently experiencing to Russia and other countries is also certainly one of the reasons for this.

Changing aesthetics

Fledgling interest in the field of contemporary and more modern and experimental forms of art is emerging in Ukraine. Several independent galleries in Kiev and other large towns are promoting contemporary art, especially visual arts, through a variety of promotional and educational activities. They have limited outreach but the quality of their work is appreciated by their small but growing audiences.²⁷ An important development has been the interest of several very rich and famous figures of Ukrainian high society in contemporary art. Probably due to its strong public relations strategy, the Pinchuk Art Centre (whose stated aim is to modernise the art field in Ukraine and which has a tended to focus on contemporary art produced outside Ukraine) has received the most attention. It is estimated that up to 100,000 visitors have visited the Centre since September 2006. According to one of our partners, this represents approximately five times the number of visits received by the National Art Museum in an average year. Both the space and exhibition projects offered by the Pinchuk Art Centre are impressive and its ability to involve stars from abroad in its activities (for example, Elton John showed his collection of contemporary photography in June 2007) makes it attractive for young upwardly mobile Ukrainians.

But, such an initiative could also act as a focal point for young local artists, culture producers and managers to network their interest in experimentation, beyond the specific material or educational benefits they may derive from being associated to the centre and a strong support mechanism for the emergence of a viable contemporary art sector. For the moment, though, the Pinchuk Art Centre leaves the impression of being something of a publicity stunt, mimicking cultural trends in other countries where the penetration of a taste for experimental art and patronage thereof have developed over decades. So, while it has the potential to become something of a trend setter, there is no guarantee it will be anything but the expensive hobby of one high profile businessman.

Other developments

There has been a revival of interest in the artistic production from the early Soviet period, much of which is still today often unthinkingly considered as “Russian” art. Several key artists of the early Soviet avant garde originally

²⁶ Council of Europe, Steering Committee for Culture (CDCULT), National Cultural Policy Review of Ukraine, Experts’ Report (CDCULT (2007) 15, 23 April 2007), presented at the 6th Plenary Session, Strasbourg, 9 – 11 May 2007.

²⁷ For example, Gallery SOVIART (http://www.soviart.com.ua/main_menu_eng.html) and the Karas gallery (http://www.iplv.ca/history/karas/gallery/cv_e.htm). Both have premises in a trendy part of downtown Kiev (Andriyivsky uzviz).

from came Ukraine, even if in order to study under relevant masters they left for Moscow or elsewhere. It is noteworthy that few of the artistic treasures they produced can be seen in Ukraine itself. They remained, for the most part, the property of the inheritor state of the Soviet Union, that being Russia. The sculptor Archipenko is a good example. The Ukrainian national museum recently acquired its first Archipenko sculpture thanks to a very wealthy Ukrainian business man who gifted it to the state and the largest collection of original Archipenko pieces is currently exhibited at the Tel Aviv Museum in Israel. Several prominent cultural and political figures consider it something of an injustice that such works of art that were authored by Ukrainian born artists during the Soviet period are today referred to as Russian art and are actively trying to rehabilitate those artists as Ukrainian, claiming that art as part and parcel of Ukrainian national heritage. But, this is something of a problematic debate. Archipenko became a citizen of the United States and lived their for a good part of his life. That certainly had some influence on his work and in the opinion of some he could also be considered to have been an US artist. It is similarly difficult to classify other artists of the time. One example that springs to mind is Malevich, who studied in Russia and lived in Belarus, and was part of the official art establishment in the early years of the USSR.

Culture and Change in Ukraine

The Orange Revolution was certainly the most spectacular demonstration of the Ukrainian people's belief in the necessity for their country to change. Our respondents describe the Orange Revolution as a cultural revolution, as a victory for a political culture of democratic values rather than the victory of a candidate or a party political position. The independent culture sector is viewed as having acted as one of the "schools for democracy" of a whole generation of talented young Ukrainians. These musicians, authors and artists developed unfettered by censorship and fear, something strongly reflected in their artistic creation. They were the first to experience international exchange through study abroad, contacts with the Ukrainian Diaspora and publishing, performing and touring outside Ukraine. They were, hence, the most important bearers of democratic impulses and messages to the wider Ukrainian society in the 15 years since independence, and especially in the years of increasing authoritarianism that immediately preceded the Orange Revolution.

In fact, in the opinion of our respondents, it was these actors, rather than political forces or individual politicians, who inspired what later came to be known as the Orange Revolution, which they experienced as a broad based social movement of people who stood for their democratic rights and rejected violence, thereby realizing their cultural and civic potential. They used creativity to voice their opposition to the direction their country was developing in. While the political crisis provoked mass street protests, other forms of resistance and opposition began long before and have continued long after the highly mediated revolution. An example is the "Christmas Together" initiative, in which young people from Kharkiv travelled to Western Ukraine, where religious traditions were maintained even during the Soviet period, to celebrate Christmas together. This was undertaken by a group surrounding the "Arabesque" theatre studio and the Kharkiv Literature Museum and continued with several further exchanges of young people from the Western Ukraine to their colleagues in Kharkiv and vice versa.

Unfortunately, this role as "propagandists" of democracy that the independent culture sector claims to have played cannot be substantiated by reliable sociological research. In fact, our respondents point to the fact that the reputation of the research field suffered significantly as a result of the manipulations of the authoritarian period and that the general public have difficulty to believe the results of research quoted in the media or by political actors. But, our respondents provide some anecdotal evidence from the Orange Revolution for the role they claim to have played in the medium term civic education of Ukrainian society. For example, the music played during the protest activities of the two camps (Orange and Blue) was markedly different. It is also noteworthy that the Ukrainian public reacted surprisingly critically to the grammar mistakes that the leadership of the Blue Camp (in particular, Yanukovich) made in their published documents and in broadcasted speeches, demonstrating the importance that the public give to the level of education of political leaders and the way they consider it to be part and parcel of being a "cultured" person.

Beyond their specific role in the Orange Revolution, independent cultural actors see themselves as having an important role to play in the sensitisation and education of citizens to democratic values and an open society. In this sense, they refuse the often implicit acceptance of the idea that culture should be produced simply for culture's sake, an attitude common among more traditional or conservative strands in the culture sector.

According to our respondents, it is only independent culture actors, such as artists, musicians and writers, that have the power to form societal opinion in the contemporary Ukrainian situation. Cultural organizations are fundamental for the education of citizens, as they promote social change by raising important social issues, by

providing a space and a platform for debate and through the development of the critical and reflective capacities of individuals and groups. In relation to the formation of public opinion, our respondents stress the importance of differentiating between popularity and authority or relevance. Pop stars are more and more often used by political parties to publicise and endorse their election campaigns and to attract potential voters to listen to their message, especially young people. But, many of those who are considered to have authority in the public sphere are leaders in the independent culture sphere. These may not be so widely well known or even popular, but they have something specific, often radical, to say about society and they do so through their cultural production and because their audiences tend to be made up of active and reflexive citizens. One respondent goes as far as to describe their influence as “ideological” because of their distinctive civic position and message.

A further task for cultural organisations in the opinion of our respondents, rather specific to the Ukrainian context, is to support the identity formation of Ukrainians. On the one hand and as mentioned several times, Ukraine as a state and Ukrainians as citizens are grappling with what it means to be Ukrainian. The continuing political instability of the post-revolutionary period has in part been the result of the ongoing struggle for the legitimate mandate to define what being Ukrainian should look like. Cultural organisations provide space for sensitive and emotional issues of that nature to be discussed, debated, explored in a safe environment, without fear of the consequences of any escalation of conflict and from a variety of angles, without necessarily approaching such issues head on. By contrast, the political sphere has difficulty to guarantee that freedom of expression will not be subjugated to some other expediency or fundamental interest. The media has a tendency to sensationalise such emotive issues, especially if they are commercial and have a profit motive. Public service broadcasting is weak in Ukraine.

Cultural organisations are also seen as having the possibility to present the face of Ukrainian culture to the outside world. They do so in a multiplicity of ways through low-level people to people contacts, that are usually not mediated or influenced by political objectives. This is important in a context where the definition of what can be considered “Ukrainian” is still contested. State representations of culture risk exclusiveness to the extent that state cultural policy is a matter of public priorities established by political majorities and that they are not very adept at representing diversity. As such, our respondents consider the independent culture sector as “carrying” the spirit of the revolution in the post-revolutionary setting.

The cultural production of independent cultural producers or art formations (groups of individual artists cooperating in projects or other ways) takes a variety of forms, depending on the specific genre or local conditions, ranging from regular cultural events of different kinds taking place in a specific geographical space to media strategies (press releases, appearances) and to the personal appearances of artists (readings, performances, concerts). The most active promotion of the independent cultural sphere takes place, however, through the internet, more specifically through culture “blogs”. According to our respondents the “blogosphere” has replaced the *Samizdat* culture that was essential to dissidence and underpinned the development of movements in favour of change in the Soviet Union in 1970s and 1980s. The Blogosphere has become the locus of critical discourse in the culture and other spheres. Today only a few regular paper journals are being published in the field of cultural criticism and these are also published online (*Krytyka* [<http://krytyka.kiev.ua>] and *Telekritika* [<http://www.telekritika.kiev.ua/>] were mentioned above), something that our respondents consider a weakness.

Examples of websites of importance include www.maidan.org and www.sumno.com. *Maidan* appeared before the Orange Revolution as an independent source of information of different kinds. To begin with it was a space for announcing political/public/cultural events and flash-mobs. It developed as the revolution progressed to include calls for blood donors and financial help for concrete persons and activities. It was one of the most important sources of information and instruments of public reaction during the revolution. It even had a “preventative” role, encouraging calm participation and open debate. People voluntarily worked as local reporters. The “forum” and discussion component is a very important aspect. *Sumno* is more oriented towards literature and culture issues. The quality of its journalism is rather amateur, but their volunteer bloggers are very active in announcing and covering different events and it is an effective source of cultural information. Internet communities and cross-posting have become important instruments for spreading information. Some of the more influential communities are: andrukhovych, anthropologist, anthropology, anticopyright, chomsky_ua, copy_left_right, copyright, cyber_soc, dead_rooster, feminism_ua, interesniy_kiev, kinopereklad, literatura_ua, pomylka, ru_translator, socio_texts, sociolog, translate_ua, ua_books, ua_etymology, ua_freebook, ua_google, ua_human_rights, ua_mova, ua_music, ua_muzeum, ua_philosophy, ua_politeconomy, ukr_culture, ukrainky, za_lib_ru, ukr_culture, ukr_lit.

The blogosphere is also a very effective instrument for studying public opinion. The independent sector makes significant use of it in their projects, because while it is not representative sociological research concerning the opinions and tastes of the society it provides anecdotal evidence of the penetration of cultural trends and the broad strokes of a social portrait (indeed, raising issues that it would be essential to research sociologically).

Further, there are some communities that are directly oriented to reflection on the political situation of the country. According to our respondents, one of the most interesting projects is <http://vsi-nashi.livejournal.com> (an allusion to the *Nasha Ukraina* political block. *Nasha Ukraina* means “Our Ukraine” and *Vsi Nashi* means “All Our People”), which appeared after the Orange Revolution. The project became so popular that political actors made mention of it during their public appearances. At the height of its popularity, the initiators of this community published a hard copy book entitled *Vsi Nashi*. Other projects included the registration of their own publishing house called “Letter and Cipher”, the publishing of the “Anthology of Ukrainian *Samvydav*” (a collection of texts from the web-site under the same name. *Samvydav* is the Ukrainian word for *Samizdat*. Here, however, it is not meant in its historical sense as the dissident movement of the 1970s and 1980s, but only as self-published poetry or fiction) and “Eight Women’s Stories” (a collection of the blogs of the most popular female Ukrainian blogosphere authors).

It is worth mentioning that the initiators of this political blog project were also at the root of the all-Ukrainian flash-mob movement called “Orange Band”, creating the momentum for ordinary people to wear and publicly display orange in the streets in protest against the suppression of free media in the run up to the 2004 elections. They were an informal grouping of Ukrainian young people giving expression to civic protest and had nothing to do with the top-political managers and public relations technologists that were often associated with the Orange Revolution. Given the weakness of critical public discourse on political and cultural issues in Ukraine, the Blogosphere has an important role to play in the further democratisation of the country, through the creation of critical debate among wider sections of the general public than those reached by other forms of communication in the public sphere.

The Presence and Role of International Actors

The presence and role of international actors in the culture field has gone from strength to strength over the 15 years since independence, as has the involvement of Ukraine in international processes of cultural cooperation. Quite unsurprisingly, this is identified by our respondents as a generally positive development. It is widely acknowledged in the culture field that a good part of Ukrainian cultural production since independence would not have been possible if it was not for the foreign financing that was available during the 1990s. Nevertheless, the approach taken and some of the outcomes of international action in Ukraine are not immune to criticism. According to our respondents, cooperation between Ukrainian and international culture actors is largely the result of private contacts between individual artists or is initiated by foreign foundations or organizations, making it something of a “closed shop”. Many foreign and international programmes that were active in Ukraine in the culture field are, today, in the process of scaling down or withdrawal. Since systematic and profound reform of the public culture sector, and especially its financing, has not been achieved, this represents a significant challenge to independent forms of artistic production, which to date have largely relied on outside funding for survival.

According to our respondents, public institutions are not particularly actively involved in cooperation with international actors inside Ukraine, although Ukrainian governmental experts and functionaries have been implicitly involved in international processes of cultural cooperation, such as the activities of the Council of Europe, some of which are developed explicitly with the aim of introducing better governance into the public cultural sector²⁸ and the priorities of international institutions, organisations and foundations active inside or in relation to culture in Ukraine have often focused on improving the management of the culture sector. In addition, and as mentioned above, there are some pilot projects and examples of good practise in the cultural field that do involve international actors, independent culture actors from the non-governmental sector and representatives of the authorities. This seeming discrepancy in perception may be an indication of the “exclusion” that members of the independent sector complain they experience from activities initiated by government with international institutions.

Presenting foreign cultural artefacts has also been a priority of foreign institutions present in Ukraine and is considered by our respondents to also be important for improving the general level of education and culture of

²⁸ www.coe.int/t/e/cultural_co-operation/culture/policies/kyiv/.

the public. Nevertheless, our respondents point to the fact that a higher number of co-productions, promoting both local and foreign culture, would be positive for the development of the local cultural market.

Finally, our respondents point to the fact that one of the key results for the culture field of the international presence has been the education of a small but, nevertheless, influential, circle of young and open minded cultural managers. These had the opportunity to participate in training seminars and workshops at home as well as to gain work experience through internships at home and abroad with the support of international organisations. The Kiev Centre for Contemporary Art is credited with having provided the most relevant and effective support, especially to contemporary artists and formations. It was founded in 1999 at the initiative of a the Soros Foundation as part of the wider effort develop cultural institutions in Central and Eastern Europe. The Centre was one of the only places where Ukrainian young people wishing to become professional cultural managers could gain experience in modern and relevant cultural management practise. It also organised courses and educational activities for cultural actors from different branches, among them a scholarship programme. Among the approximately 30 persons who were involved as staff in different capacities and functions since the centre began activity, today all still work in the culture sphere, most of them in management positions. It is noteworthy that only a small proportion had any professional experience before working at the CCA and all found employment in a related branch after. According CCA evaluations of its own activity, almost all young contemporary artists somehow considered “up and coming” in Ukraine have at one time or another benefited from support from the CCA. Until 2005, the Centre received institutional funding from the International Renaissance Foundation, even if the funding received was reduced each year.²⁹ Today it is thoroughly independent and must compete with other independent organisations in the cultural field for project and other kinds of funding, a fact that it and other independent organisations face with some trepidation, given the limits of both the local and international funding scene.

Even if these cultural managers and the international institutions that supported their emergence as a group have not been able to significantly influence the “system” yet, they have brought to the Ukrainian cultural scene a clear understanding of the need for change. During the time that these organisations were active in the cultural field, they acted as forums for debate and for the formulation of new ideas and approaches to the development of the field, thereby, acting as a basic support mechanism for those in the sector that were committed to change.

Perspectives and Opportunities for Change through Culture in Ukraine

Measures

The active and effective engagement of the cultural sphere with transformation processes underway in Ukraine is impeded by several chronic and ongoing problems. These can be grouped in two main categories, as follows

Conditions

- the lack of financial and other resources, especially for the institutionalisation of the independent culture sector, including the disengagement of several important funders from Ukraine and cultural activity;
- political instability, including untimely changes of responsibility within the public authorities;
- the seeming lack of interest of international actors in development of local (as in, indigenous) cultural production and capacity – traditionally programmes focused on promotion of foreign culture in Ukraine with marginal spill over effects for the development of the local culture sector;
- the politicisation of a few “culture issues” (especially those that have something to do with the consolidation of Ukrainian national identity such as the positions of the Ukrainian and Russian languages) and their opportunistic instrumentalisation in the political sphere;
- the problematic legislative environment surrounding the activity of the independent culture sector (lack of relevant and adapted legislation and contradictory and outdated legislation that penalises cultural activity);
- the problematic position of the Ukrainian commercial sector vis a vis the cultural sphere, especially of so-called oligarchs who consider themselves patrons of culture, but who often use their wealth for not entirely altruistic or ethical purposes (political influence, prestige) without any requirement of

²⁹ Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA), Information Documents (History of the CCA Team and Funding 1999 – 2006), available on request from the Centre for Contemporary (<http://www.cca.kiev.ua/newsite/en/>).

accountability, leading to some very problematic outcomes (replacement of public authorities as implementers of cultural policy, determination of public sector priorities in return for providing budgets);

- the tendency of both the public and independent cultural sectors towards non-transparent and clientelistic relationships with some but not other partners;
- the tacit acceptance in society of low level / petty corruption adversely affecting the legitimacy of organisations and authorities in each others' eyes and those of the public, as well as the level of trust of international actors.

Capacity

- the limited financial and human resources of the public authorities responsible for culture and their generally traditional and unreformed approach to their role and mandate, requiring significant reform and modernisation;
- the absence of co-operation and transparent communication between state culture sector, the independent cultural sector and commercial cultural sector in strategising the role of cultural action within the reform process;
- the marginal status and treatment of “contemporary” or “innovative” cultural forms in comparison to that of so-called high art and culture (in society, by government agencies, etc);
- the lack of sustainability of cultural action of the non-governmental sector, linked to wider problems of sustainability of the third sector in Ukraine and the region;
- the tendency of the independent culture sector to retreat into “splendid isolation” and anti-state rhetoric due to its dissatisfaction and frustration with the lack of reform in the public sector;
- the general tendency in the independent sector towards non-transparency and competition rather than cooperation and information sharing in favour of mutual advocacy.

This author was surprised at the fact that our survey and the consultation meetings revealed a rather limited number and spectrum of recommendations for what should be done to address the barriers that are currently preventing the cultural field from taking a more proactive role in processes of contemporary transformation in Ukraine. This said, it is also plausible that the lack of imagination concerning the future that this demonstrates is a result of the condition in which the culture sector finds itself. Nevertheless, it was possible to infer several directions in which measures could be taken based on the responses to the questionnaires received and the consultation meetings conducted, as follows

1/ Respondents clearly feel that it is urgent to address the crisis in the public cultural sector. That would require a broad based cultural strategy development process involving all sectors and international partners. This would provide the basis for a general overhaul of the legislative and administrative measures governing the making and implementation of cultural policy. Using the good experiences of a variety of pilot activities, the strategy could provide significant support to local development through culture. This would enhance cooperation, develop a more open attitude on the part of the government to cooperation with the non-governmental sector and would promote power sharing in relation to policy making. International actors could underpin this process by providing more substantial financial, moral and expertise support to both governmental and non-governmental actors and to the development of joint projects and training programmes for cultural actors of a variety of kinds.

2/ As much as these local actors have successfully developed discrete cooperation projects and networking on an ad hoc basis, their attempts to develop more strategic advocacy platforms have so far not been very successful. This clearly limits their outreach and their effectiveness in promoting change, most notably in their own sector, vis a vis public authorities. This seems, however, to be one of the more widespread weaknesses of the post Orange Revolution civic sector and cannot be considered a problem of the independent culture sector exclusively. The indigenous cultural community needs to overcome divisions and develop its advocacy potential towards both government and commercial sector and to enhance its own capacity to initiate and direct change locally. A further open question concerning partnerships for change relates to the ambiguous position of oligarchs in the culture sphere discussed in some detail above. It remains to be seen if a “culture of philanthropy” will win out over a “culture of public relations”.

3/ Respondents refer to the creation of “cultural corridors of exchange” in Europe, in the same vein as projects being developed by energy and transport sectors, as a means of facilitating capacity building and knowledge exchange between Ukrainian cultural actors and their counterparts in other European countries. This would require the lifting of the currently very restrictive travel conditions for Ukrainians to the European Union.

4/ Change can also be promoted through the development of long-term sustainable cultural action on the local level. In the experience of our respondents, this kind of activity is the hardest to establish and sustain. Though several such initiatives do exist in Ukraine, our respondents find their number to be rather limited considering the size of the country. *Arabesques* in Kharkiv (www.arabesky.org.ua), *Dzyga* in Lviv (www.dzyga.com.ua), *Artvertep* in Dnipropetrovsk (www.artvertep.dp.ua), *Totem* in Kherson (www.terra-futura.com) are named as initiatives that have not only survived, but have established themselves as authoritative in the independent culture sphere. The activities of such initiatives are significant because they develop qualitative change in local communities, creating new cultural markets, developing and shaping the tastes of culture consumers, promoting civic educational messages, “living” cultural freedom and, thereby, promoting democratic values and forming public opinion. They have undertaken a variety of activities in the local cultural context, bringing young people, artists and general public together. These include the establishment of galleries, art-café and clubs, artistic residencies, bookstores, internet-resources, including online information provision and shopping. These cultural loci are also inhabited by artists of all kinds and host a variety of performances, from jazz to rock music, from theatre to comedy. In addition, to these cultural services, such initiatives develop educational activities including “art-educative events”, seminars, folk and contemporary art festivals.

5/ Change could also be a cooperation project between different sectors involved in the cultural field. There are a few noteworthy examples of good practise of partnerships between non-governmental and governmental bodies active in the field of culture, underpinned by Ukrainian participation in larger scale cultural cooperation at the European level. One such project, which has links to the “Creating Cultural Capital” project of the Council of Europe, is called “Innovative Model of Local Development Based on the Efficient Use of Cultural Resources”, designed and implemented by the Centre for “Democracy through Culture”. This project was supported by the Parliamentary Committee on Culture and Spiritual Heritage, the Ministry of Culture and Arts, the Ministry of the Economy and European Integration and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The result of this project was that the local communities involved around Ukraine developed and approved conceptual frameworks for their local cultural policies, with the participation of local councils that declared culture a key component of local development. The follow-up project to this pilot, called *Model 21* (www.model21.org.ua) is again implemented by the Centre for “Democracy through Culture” and is financed by the Swiss Cultural Programme in South-East Europe and Ukraine for the period 2006 to 2008. Its aim is to build from the experience in those local communities, by establishing networks of “cultural transformers” (defined as active individuals from a variety of sectors that are motivated to change the situation through cultural or creative resources) as a first step in the process of creating cultural development agencies on the local level.³⁰

6/ International success of Ukrainian cultural production (subject to becoming more commonplace) can provide an important impetus to culture and its capacity to influence public opinion. Such success provides important resources (money, contacts, influence, recognition) to the independent cultural sector and its actors. These resources could then be used to develop innovative grassroots activities, that may well not lead to profound change in cultural policy or that may well not influence in a significant manner the general situation of culture in Ukraine, but which could create important (often educational) experiences for participants and capacity in the culture sector, thereby making the culture landscape more vivid. The popularisation of Ukrainian cultural production abroad and in international settings is, therefore, essential. An important example can be found in the field of literature. One of the most popular authors in Ukraine today, Yuriy Andrukhovych, has created a lot of interest in contemporary Ukrainian writing as a result of his individual relationship with Polish and German publishers (among others, Andrzej Stasiuk and *Czarne* and *Subrkamp* Verlag, respectively) and his active role in the discussion of the development of literature at a variety of international forums and conferences. As a result of this kind of activity and promotion, many young Ukrainian authors have been translated in Poland and Germany and other European countries. A strong counter example is provided by the state cultural bodies. With each successive year, the Ukrainian exhibition at the Frankfurt Book Fair receives more and more criticism. The possibility that Ukraine will become a “guest country” at the Frankfurt Book Fair, which was discussed quite actively after the Orange Revolution, has become rather unlikely because of the passive position of the government functionaries responsible for publishing. At the same time, they do not consider involving independent actors and initiatives (like, for example, the organizers of the largest publishing forum in Ukraine that takes place in Lviv).

³⁰ Council of Europe/ERICarts, “Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe”, 8th Edition, 2007, Country Profile for Ukraine. pp. 37-38.

Perspectives and Opportunities

The partners involved in this reflection process clearly identify their action as a contribution to the promotion of democratisation, Europeanization and modernisation. But, they suffer the frustration of not being able to engage in that activity as effectively as they might if they were part of a consolidated cultural policy development and implementation process. The monopolistic attitude of the public authorities as concerns who can legitimately be involved in policy making and their concomitant incapacity to “get on with it” are certainly important reasons for this frustration. At the same time, the independent sector must take stock of its own responsibility for its current situation. Overcoming the “bad practices” of the past has to be an imperative and includes developing a strategic understanding of needs, an analysis of the alliances that will serve the purposes of advocacy and honest and transparent relationships with funders and the public sector. For change through culture to be a viable project in Ukraine, the culture sector itself needs to take a radical new look at itself. A healthy dose of distance from social roles would certainly help all concerned. Such a process of self-reflection would help Ukraine’s cultural sector consolidate and overcome the vagaries of the political and economic instability caused by the prolonged transition it is experiencing.

The initiative for such a process of self-reflection has to come from inside the cultural community itself and has to be accepted as necessary and important by all concerned – experience from developmental activities in the civic sector demonstrates that ownership creates better chances of sustainability. But, most importantly of all, one or several parties have to take the initiative to bring together the partners concerned and open a discussion about the reforms that need to take place. This is often the role of the governmental authorities responsible for culture. The recent report of the Council of Europe’s international expert team on the national cultural policy of Ukraine says

*“ ... Our (...) overarching recommendation is that the Ministry of Culture with the other bodies officially responsible for culture should launch an open, structured and forward-looking consultation campaign and process. This should involve not only all cultural professionals but also representative samples of the public (i.e. the consumers) and should set to identify the key questions that are of critical and practical importance to cultural development in Ukraine ... ”*³¹

In its estimation the Ministry of Culture is both mandated and best placed to kick off a broad based consultation process on the development of a modern and inclusive cultural policy, given that cultural policy development is habitually the domain of public authorities. As can be read from the considerations outlined in this report, our partners in the independent sector are more than somewhat sceptical about the capacity and political will of the public authorities to include them in any such process. The independent sector could also be the initiating partner, but our consultation meetings revealed that there are also capacity and political will issues on that part of the cultural community. In particular, the independent sector is significantly fragmented, hardly shares information and spends a lot of time and energy competing rather than cooperating. However, cooperation is essential for the effective influence of public bodies, because legitimacy comes with the critical mass of consensus and cooperation among like minded actors is required. Candid as this may sound, our partners nevertheless are more inclined to trust actors in the independent sector than the public authorities and, therefore, consider the initiation of the necessary debate by the independent sector to be the more realistic approach, although they also acknowledge that to be successful will be difficult.

The complicated condition of the development of national cultural policy notwithstanding, it is noteworthy that in Ukraine sustained activity by the cultural community at the local level has proven its effectiveness for changing the quality of life and the condition of the community by creating opportunities for social interaction, leisure and entertainment, at the same time as widening the educational horizons of citizens, in environments where commercial offers are either missing or, even more often, too expensive to take advantage of. Further, in the local context, art and culture are extremely powerful channels for developing democratic values and the openness of the society to change and reform. Direct political messages and frontal approaches to civic education have proven to be less effective, understandably given the sensitivities of the post-totalitarian society that is Ukraine. The authoritarianism of the period that immediately preceded the Orange Revolution and the political instability of the post-revolutionary period have made ordinary Ukrainians rather suspicious of anything which is openly political.

³¹ Council of Europe, Steering Committee for Culture (CDCULT), National Cultural Policy Review of Ukraine, Experts’ Report (CDCULT (2007) 15, 23 April 2007), presented at the 6th Plenary Session, Strasbourg, 9 – 11 May 2007.

Developmental processes aiming at the modernisation of national and local cultural policies as well as individual strategies of independent cultural actors should take this into account, as should international actors. Support for the development of grass-roots movements for change of and through the cultural sector will be an important factor in the stabilisation of Ukraine's ongoing transition. Considering the difficult resourcing conditions that the independent culture sector is faced with, the effective development of a community based approach will be difficult if financial and moral support are not available from external sources for small scale projects at local level and for the institutionalisation of the non-state cultural sector. The hand to mouth existence of a good number of the initiatives that are committed to the enhancement of the role of culture in processes of change is considered by our partners to be one of the main barriers preventing this role being fulfilled. International cooperation, in a variety of forms, has also proved itself as an effective forum for the exchange of ideas and the development of new projects, both of which favour the emergence of a long term consensus on reform and modernisation of the culture sector. If until now some categories of actors have been favoured for support by international actors, such as journalists, business people and students, then international institutions should consider ways in which artists and other actors in the culture sector could be supported to realise their projects for change.

This said, it seems to be wholly within the reach of the indigenous cultural community to move beyond the current impasse it experiences with some effort.

*“... the main issue for Ukraine is not so much about this or that political direction the country might take, but more about the management of modernisation”.*³²

This report has been compiled on the basis of information collected by questionnaire, secondary source research and consultation meetings with leading figures from the independent culture sector conducted in Kiev, Ukraine in June 2007. The Rapporteur Generale prepared a draft report using the information contained in the questionnaires received from a limited number of respondents working actively in different branches of the culture sector as well as publicly available material written in English and Russian. The ECF/GMF EE RG team travelled to Kiev, Ukraine to meet a cross-section of relevant actors from Ukraine to build a more in-depth picture of the situation of the culture sector and its potential as an agent of change. Based on the consultation meetings, the draft report was expanded and refined.

The present document is the final result of the situation assessment undertaken. Its preparation forms part of a wider process to document the situation and potential of the culture sectors in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine with a view of understanding how an international partnership such as that between ECF and GMF can contribute to supporting the contribution of the cultural sphere to transformation processes, in particular processes of Europeanization, modernization and democratization, in those countries and the region of Eastern Europe more broadly. This country report will be included in a synthesis report outlining the common trends in the situations of the culture sector in the three countries and strategic approaches for the international community to underpin the efforts of cultural actors of change in the region.

The ECF/GMF team would like to thank all those who have contributed to the development of the Eastern European Reflection Group process and the preparation of these reports, not least those cultural actors of change who have contributed with their motivation, time and commitment to the Europeanization, modernization and democratization of their respective countries.

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