

8th Plenary Session of the Steering Committee for Culture

Strasbourg, 14 May 2009, 10:00 to 11:30

Room G1 of the Agora, 1 quai Jacoutot

Item B.4. of the draft agenda:

Recent developments at national level – short reports by CDCULT members

I. Slovenia

1. Focus on Roma people:

Roma travelers are seen as represents of cultural pluralism. Therefore the Slovenian government wants to raise awareness of the Roma. Key terms within this approach are education and integration. From 25-26 May, Slovenia took part in a Seminar within the Council of Europe on Education of Roma Children in Europe.

2. Intercultural Dialogue, Heritage and Education:

The White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue was translated into Slovenian language and introduced to the Slovenian parliament. Slovenia put its focus on education in cultural heritage, to create a better understanding of culture. Within this approach, the Second European Heritage Forum will take place on 23 September 2009 in Ljubljana, Slovenia. The theme of the forum will be "heritage, creativity and innovation" as a contribution to the 2009 European Year of Creativity and Innovation. The Ljubljana Process concerning south-eastern cultural heritage, in co-operation with the CoE, the European Commission and south-eastern European countries will hold an international conference that will be finalized in November. Special attention will be paid on children's rights.

3. Contribution to the Council of Europe's 60th anniversary:

Slovenia assured to take an active part in celebrating the 60th anniversary of the CoE in the framework of its Chairmanship of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers. Slovenia has taken part in several exhibitions in Strasbourg, CoE Palais - building. From 18 May 2009 and for a duration of four weeks, there was an exhibition of photographs on National parks to raise awareness of natural heritage. In June there will be an exhibit on the rights of children. Another exhibition on the achievements of the Roma culture will begin on 28 September for a duration of two weeks. The latter will take place in the context of integration and raising awareness of Roma people within European societies.

II. Norway

1. Intercultural Dialogue: The White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue was presented in the Norwegian parliament.

2. Norway established a national strategy towards digitalization.

3. The development of four cultural fields - stage theatre, music, museum and architecture - were the center of interest. The last two projects end this summer with a design contest on museum architecture: There will be an exhibition of the three winners of the architectural design contest for the new Munch Museum, including the collections of the Stenersen Museum at Bjørvika (Oslo). The Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs agreed to initiate an international design contest to build a joint museum facility for the National museum of art, architecture and design at Vestbanen in Oslo. The announcement of the winners is tentatively March 2010.

4. In 2009 Norway celebrated the 150th anniversary of Knut Hamsun, the famous author, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1920.

5. 2008 was the Norwegian Year of Diversity, celebrated by media, politics and civil society. The main results will be presented in autumn.

6. In co-operation with the CoE, Norway established in 2008 the European Wergeland Centre and opened it in February 2009 to carry out research and provide in-service training for teachers and teacher trainers on education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship.

The inauguration of the Wergeland Centre, thematically concerning "Building Bridges: Education for Intercultural Understanding, Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship, from Policy to Practice", took place in Oslo on 28-29 May 2009, where national as well as international experts and authorities participated.

III. Germany

1. The White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue was introduced to the Bundesländer.
2. Germany also worked on the improvement of a film policy, to follow up the European Convention for the Protection of the Audiovisual Heritage, which came into force on 1 January 2008. Therefore the Convention has succeeded as a compulsory legal deposit of cinematographic works. A focus was put on the support of small producers.
3. The European Digital Library project was followed. Within this context Germany also joined the UNESCO World Digital Library project, which was just initiated.
4. Another issue is the strengthening of German dialects in different regions in the context of lingual diversity.
5. Concerning the financial crisis the German parliament adopted a 4.3 billion medium-term financial package for supporting public infrastructure (schools, libraries, museums), which was seen as the political will of supporting socio-cultural elements during the crisis.

IV. Russia

1. Since the Russian governmental system has faced an overall reform and reorganization, cultural governance has also been restructured. Therefore the federal agencies for culture and cinema became duties of the Ministry of Culture. The federal issues concerning cultural heritage also became the field of expertise of the Ministry of Culture.
2. The Year of Russia and France will be set up next year reciprocally and will be celebrated as the 'Year of France and Russia'. Information is available from the Institute of Cultural Affairs.
3. The Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation in co-operation with the CoE aims to sign a programme to strengthen cultural diversity and dialogue.

V. France

1. Like Slovenia, France is focusing on the integration of the Roma. The date for the next conference concerning this issue is set for November.
2. Other important issues concerning French cultural policies are the enhancement of heritage and the digital library project. The connection between culture and internet access is seen as a hot topic nowadays in cultural policy. Furthermore architecture is seen as a keyword via sustainable development.
3. The Year of France and Russia (already mentioned by M. Klimenko) is restated by France.
4. Three ministry events took place:
 - On 13 May, set out to combat piracy in the sense of illegal downloading. Especially in support of the disc-industry, a law on this topic was discussed. Declared to shorten the timeframe in releasing films / DVDs in demand, to combat unfair competition. Also, discussed a wide range of educational consequences from sending warnings to those who download illegally to suspension of internet descriptions.
 - Concerning cultural heritage, France focuses on the restoration of historical monuments such as Versailles or various cathedrals. This also is seen as a good opportunity to create new jobs.
 - In addition, France is discussing free access to culture for young people under the age of 26. This should make culture more available to its young citizens.

VI. Poland

1. From 4 - 5 June a reflection on the 80s and 90s solidarity heritage will take place. In an open discussion, two representatives of divided Europe will talk about 1889 including the perspective of the time before and the impact of democratic shifts afterwards, inspiring reflections on the solidarity movement and Polish resistance. On 5 June there will also be a concert and a dinner in Krakow.
2. "Shaping Policies for the Cinema of Tomorrow" was the theme of the Council of Europe Film Policy Forum that took place in Krakow, Poland, from 11 to 13 September 2008. It dealt with questions on the latest developments in cinematographic policies.

VII. Finland

1. Within active policy reflections there was a strategy until 2020, in which the Ministry of Culture and Education has planned the ministry working strategy. Concerning the question 'what cultural policy is for', principles were highlighted.
2. A knowledgebase was created and enlarged. This instrument permits the measuring of the economic impact on cultural policy as well as the impact of culture and cultural policy on the economy.
3. A stimulus package was given by the government to support culture (cinema, theatre e.g.) during the economic crisis. This shows the importance of culture on the political agenda, since this package is the third largest in Europe.
4. As in France, Finland is also making a recent focus on creating new jobs for the restoration of cultural heritage.

VII. Iceland

1. Iceland has not participated in the Steering Committee for Culture for the past three years. The state faced a financial crisis in October and in May a political one.
2. Elections just took place the week before the committee.
3. From 27-29 May a CoE Ministry Conference took place in Iceland. The first CoE Conference of Ministers responsible for Media and New Communication Services took place in Reykjavik.
4. Also mentioned the importance of Iceland's participation in the Eurovision Song Contest which took place in 2009 in Russia .

VIII. Austria

There is an anti-corruption programme for festivals, to allow people to have an equal chance to receive tickets.

A debate in June will take place concerning stolen goods during the Nazi period. Also there will be a discussion on the social status of Austrian artists.

The ministers have set a list of priorities, which led to changes in cultural policy concerning focus setting. E.g. the government gave € 81 M for the restoration of buildings and museums, € 20 M were given to support the film industry.

The European Capital of Culture link runs very well for Linz and is totally accepted by the citizens. So the museums register a high number of visitors.

IX. Greece

1. Since May 2008, Greece is in charge of the presidency of the Ministers of Culture in South-Eastern Europe. Within the CoE, ten countries have joined this organization. Greece developed an action plan to include 14 diverse projects focused on cultural heritage and the integration of minority groups supported by the European Commission. Goals are to enhance the co-operation in regions and to create within them, sustainable development.
2. Twice now round tables focused on culture and cultural policy took place in Athens. Intercultural pilot programmes set in these regions were highlighted.
3. In October there will be a meeting of experts on marine archeology.
4. A professional network is working on the translation of books to enhance connections and flexibility.
5. The ratification of the UNESCO convention set up two new services.

X. Croatia

1. Croatia highlights the success of the BAKU Conference and the will to continue in this process.
2. Concerning the regional co-operation, Croatia states that the Greek chairmanship shows great progress since all plans were achieved. The headquarters was set up in Italy.
3. Croatia prepares an audiovisual law.
4. Three UNESCO seminars were held:
The last in April 2009 on cultural and natural heritage, the second in September 2008 on underwater heritage and the third on diversity.
5. A theatre for and by young people was supported by the Croatian Heritage Foundation and followed by a festival for young people involved in theatre. A seminar for the heads of theatre (drama) groups active outside Croatia follows this year.
6. The Anna-Lindh Foundation is mentioned to be open to new countries of the Mediterranean.

7. Three museums were opened: focused on archeology in southeast Croatia, on archeology in Narona in the southern part of Croatia and on Roman glassworks.

XI. Belgium

1. Belgium will take over the Chair of the EU Council in July 2010. Main issues will be Combating poverty and minority exclusion. These issues are stated as not only having a cultural benefit.
2. Belgium offers co-operation concerning this with the CoE.

XII. Bosnia and Herzegovina

1. From 8-9 May there was begun a new strategy concerning cultural policy, which is considered the biggest change in ten years at the state level.
2. The UNESCO Convention focusing on topics such as diversity, underwater heritage, landscape and religious heritage is highlighted.

XIII. Italy

1. Italy has a new Minister of Tourism and Culture.
2. The earthquake in the Abruzzi region caused heavy damage to Italian culture. Monuments of historical importance as well as parts of the cultural infrastructure were destroyed. Italy asks for help rebuilding schools, theatres etc.

XIV. Ukraine

1. The Ukrainian ministers prepared an international program 2008-2013. The focus is set on the support of national cultural products, including e.g. cultural heritage and cinema.
2. An new focus in the Ukrainian cultural policy is set on safeguarding the heritage of the Soviet period.
3. Ukraine mentions generally, that culture is not yet established within the states policies as being important for sustainability as it should be.
4. Specially highlighted is the Intercultural Cities project, in which the Ukrainian city Melitopol takes part. The big attractiveness of this project also for sponsors is highlighted. It is stated that in the Ukraine 130 different ethnic groups are living together without having conflicts based on ethnic differences. For the huge number of different groups the term minorities is not even common.
5. Also mentioned is the work on the White Paper of Intercultural Dialogue, the importance of cultural tourism, and therefore heritage.