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COMMISSION REPORT TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

Report on the implementation of the Community programmes Kaleidoscope, Ariane and Raphael

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report is a response to the requirement imposed on the Commission in Article 10 of Decision No 2228/97/EC[1] (hereinafter, the "Raphael Decision") to submit to the European Parliament, the Council and the Committee of the Regions a report assessing, both qualitatively and quantitatively, the implementation and achievements of the Raphael programme. In the interests of coherence and transparency, and also in order to have access to additional information material for the preparation of a new culture programme for the years after 2006, the Commission felt it made sense to include in this evaluation exercise the Kaleidoscope[2] and Ariane[3] programmes, which are of the same generation as the Raphael programme and for which no ex-post evaluation was provided in the Decisions establishing them.

This report is based on the results of the ex-post evaluation of the Kaleidoscope, Ariane and Raphael programmes (hereinafter, "the old programmes"), which was conducted by the company GMV Conseil in the course of 2003.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION

2.1. Presentation of the old programmes

In 1993 the entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty signalled the Member States' resolve to "mark a new stage in the process of European integration". This resolve was expressed in particular in the establishment of European citizenship and the extension of Community competence to new fields, including culture.

The new Article 128 of the Treaty (which became Article 151 after the adoption of the Amsterdam Treaty) thus gave culture its own rightful place, and from then on cultural cooperation became an officially recognised objective of Community action.

According to this Article, the main objectives of Community action in the field of culture are:

-       to contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore;

-       to encourage knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European peoples, conservation of European cultural heritage and contemporary artistic and literary creation, including in the audiovisual sector;

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[1]   Decision No 2228/97/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 October 1997 establishing a Community action programme in the field of cultural heritage (the Raphael programme). OJ L 305, 8.11.1997, p. 31.

[2]   Decision No 719/96/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 March 1996 establishing a programme to support artistic and cultural activities having a European dimension (Kaleidoscope) (hereinafter, the "Kaleidoscope Decision"). OJ L 99, 20.4.1996, p. 20.

[3]   Decision No 2085/97/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 October 1996 establishing a programme of support, including translation, in the field of books and reading (Ariane) (hereinafter, the "Ariane Decision"). OJ L 291, 24.10.1997, p. 26.

-       to foster cooperation between Member States, as well as with third countries and international organisations.

To contribute towards the implementation of the new powers conferred on the European Community in the field of culture (Article 151 of the Treaty, ex Article 128), the Council, in codecision with the European Parliament and after consulting the Committee of the Regions, adopted a series of incentive measures. Between 1996 and 1999 these new powers gave rise to three cultural programmes: Kaleidoscope (1996-1999), intended to encourage creative activities and artistic and cultural cooperation having a European dimension; Ariane (1997-1999), intended to provide support in the field of books and reading, including translation; and Raphael (1997-2000[4]), intended to support and supplement, through cooperation, the action taken by the Member States in the field of cultural heritage of European importance.

This Communication relates to these three old programmes, or "first generation" programmes, which were replaced by the Culture 2000 programme[5] with effect from 1 January 2000.

2.1.1.   The Kaleidoscope programme

The Kaleidoscope programme was adopted in 1996 by the European Parliament and the Council for a period of three years, and was extended in 1999.

The original budget was ECU 26.5 million, rising to ECU 36.7 million when the programme was extended. 518 projects were financed during these 4 years.

Kaleidoscope was the first Community programme in the cultural field based on Article 151 of the Treaty establishing the European Communities (ex Article 128).

The aim of the programme was to encourage artistic and cultural creation in Europe by means of cooperation and to promote dissemination of culture in Europe. Thus, it sought to support projects with a European dimension, i.e. projects carried out in partnership by bodies from at least three countries participating in the programme.

There were four specific objectives:

–   encouragement of artistic activities organised in partnership,

–   support for innovative European projects,

–   assistance in the improvement of the professional skills of artists and other cultural operators,

-       contribution to the mutual knowledge of European cultures.

It applied to cultural networks or partnerships of cultural operators or artists from at least three Member States in the fields of the performing arts, visual arts and applied arts.

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[4]   In 2000, the programme was replaced by the Culture 2000 programme.
[5]   Decision No 508/2000/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 February 2000 establishing a Culture 2000 programme (OJ L 63, 10.3.200, p. 1).

The programme was divided into 5 actions :

–   Support for events and cultural projects carried out in partnerships or through networks

–   Large-scale European cooperation actions

–   Involvement of third countries

–   European city of culture and European cultural month

–   Specific measures (related studies and publicity for the programme).

2.1.2.   The Ariane programme

The Ariane programme was adopted in 1997 by the European Parliament and the Council for a period of two years, after a trial period in 1996.

The budget was ECU 11.3 million. 767 projects were financed during these 2 years (880 if we include the trial period).

The aim of the programme was to encourage cooperation between Member States in the field of books and reading and to increase the knowledge and dissemination of literary works and the history of the European peoples.

There were four specific objectives:

–   encouragement for the dissemination of literary or dramatic works and reference works,

–   encouragement for exchanges of experience and partnership initiatives,

–   encouragement of high-quality translations,

–   support for innovative study and research in these fields.

The programme was divided into six actions :

–   Translation grants (up to 100% of the translator's fee)

–   Support for cooperation projects carried out in partnership which aim to improve the promotion of, and access by the citizen to, books and reading

–   Improvement of the skills of professionals working towards the knowledge and dissemination of European literature

–   Support measures (related studies and publicity for the programme)

–   Aristeion Prizes (European literature prize and European translation prize)

–   Participation by third countries.

2.1.3.   The Raphael programme

The Raphael programme was adopted in 1997 by the European Parliament and the Council for a period of four years (1997 – 2000). In 2000 it was replaced by the Culture 2000 programme.

The overall budget was ECU 30 million. 222[6] projects were financed between 1997 and 1999, as well as 18 "European heritage laboratories" deemed to be exemplary.

The "European heritage laboratories" related to technically complex operations on monuments or sites of exceptional interest.

The aim of the programme was to encourage cooperation to contribute to the protection, conservation and development of the European cultural heritage and to improve public awareness of the cultural heritage and public access to this heritage.

There were six specific objectives:

–   encouragement for the conservation and restoration of the cultural heritage,

–   encouragement for exchanges of experience and know-how in the preservation of the cultural heritage,

–   improvement of public access to the cultural heritage and improvement of public key participation in safeguarding the cultural heritage,

–   encouragement for technical cooperation in preserving traditional cultural heritage trades and techniques,

–   having account taken of the heritage dimension in all Community programmes,

–   encouragement for cooperation with third countries and international organisations.

The programme was divided into four actions :

–   Conservation, safeguarding and development of the European cultural heritage through European cooperation

–   Cooperation for the exchange of experience and the development of techniques applied to heritage (innovation and new technologies, mobility and the training of professionals, exchanges of experience and information)

–   Public access to, participation in and awareness of the cultural heritage

–   Cooperation with third countries and international organisations.

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[6]   224 projects were selected, but 2 were abandoned by the organisers.

2.2. The procedures

2.2.1. The information procedure

The Decisions (including their Annexes) and the calls for proposals were published in the Official Journal of the European Communities. The programmes were also announced in press releases.

All the cultural operators who requested information were notified individually, by mail, of the publication of the calls for proposals. The cultural services of the Member States also disseminated the information.

2.2.2. The selection procedure

The selection procedure was the same for each programme.

There was first a preselection process in which the Commission's programme managers examined all project applications submitted, verifying that they complied with the conditions specified in the Annex to the Decision and reproduced in the calls for proposals.

The final selection was then made from among the preselected projects, based on the opinions of a group of experts nominated by the Member States and convened by the Commission. The names of the experts were not communicated to the applicants (it was arranged that they would not be revealed until after the selection process was completed).

The list of projects selected was then submitted to the programme management committee. Once approved, the list of projects selected for the current year was published in the form of a press release.

Only in a very few cases were selected projects abandoned by their organiser.

2.2.3. The monitoring procedure

The usual monitoring procedure for European programmes was applied. Documentation was checked systematically and, exceptionally, certain checks were also carried out by financial auditors at project organisers' premises at the request of the Commission services. The auditors consulted for the purposes of this evaluation mentioned just a few cases in which the expenditure eligibility periods had been exceeded.

2.2.4. The dissemination procedure

There was no results dissemination procedure as such, nor was one provided for in the programme budgets. However, beneficiaries were under an obligation to mention the support provided by the European Commission.

3. THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION

3.1. The specifications for the evaluation

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture launched a call for proposals for the ex-post evaluation of the old programmes (DG EAC/59/01). The contractor selected was the French company GMV Conseil. The evaluation was conducted in the course of 2003. The final report was approved in October 2003.

Under the terms of the specifications, the purpose of the evaluation was to evaluate, analyse, draw conclusions from and make recommendations regarding the three "first generation" cultural programmes Kaleidoscope, Ariane and Raphael, in order to determine their overall effectiveness and the extent to which these incentive measures had significantly contributed to achieving the objectives laid down in the relevant Decisions and to draw useful lessons for the day-to-day management of the Culture 2000 programme and for planning the EU's cultural action beyond the expiry of this programme.

3.2. The methodology used

The evaluation was based on :

– an analysis of the documentation (paper documents and computer files),

– an analysis of the replies given by a sample of project organisers or co-organisers, by experts or cultural decision-makers (government departments, administrations, etc), and by European Commission programme managers, in the course of face-to-face or telephone interviews (qualitative phase).

– an analysis of the responses of cultural operators (successful applicants, rejected applicants and non-applicants) in an e-mailed self-administered questionnaire (quantitative phase).

The merit of this method of analysis is that it gives a say to the cultural decision-makers and to Europe's cultural operators, whether or not they applied for project funding under the programmes. The evaluator thus sought to ensure that cultural operators who had been refused a grant or had not even applied also had their say.

In practice, however, it very soon became apparent that it was impossible for the evaluator to recreate the total population of funded project promoters and thus build a cast-iron base for extrapolating the responses given by the sample, since so much time had elapsed since some of these projects had been carried out. Also, with the passage of time the project promoters did not necessarily remember all the aspects of their projects. Finally, as the evaluator recognised, there is a risk that despite all the precautions taken certain project promoters may have got their opinions concerning the old programmes mixed up with those concerning the Culture 2000 programme.

Because of these drawbacks the analysis is bound to remain limited on certain points, notably as regards the implementation of the projects, their efficiency and their effectiveness.

Accordingly, and in view of the fact that the evaluator's experience is more in the field of evaluation than in the field of culture, the European Commission has subjected the evaluator's conclusions and recommendations to a cautious and detailed analysis.

3.3. The results of the external evaluation

3.3.1. The relevance of the old programmes

The analysis looked at the relevance of the programmes in relation to the Commission's general objectives and the cultural operators' needs and expectations.

In relation to the Commission's general objectives (cultural quality and economic relevance), the evaluator concludes that the old programmes were entirely relevant.

In relation to the needs and expectations of European cultural operators, however, the evaluator is not quite so certain about the relevance of the programmes. While the operators who received funding felt that the programmes corresponded well to their needs (support for networks and partnerships), it is impossible to conclude that all cultural operators in Europe felt like this, since no systematic survey of the needs and expectations of the target audience was carried out before the programmes were drafted. In addition, even the cultural operators who received funding regretted that the old programmes showed no real European ambition in the cultural field.

3.3.2. The coherence of the old programmes

According to the evaluator, a good level of coherence was maintained between the different texts and documents. The various objectives laid down in the official texts were respected. It should merely be noted that, for obvious practical reasons, priority was given to those which were easiest to verify (the involvement of partners from three countries). Support for networks and partnerships thus became a major objective from the outset.

The programmes had three simultaneous objectives: to encourage cultural quality, to encourage creativity and to achieve a certain economic impact. The evaluator noted that these objectives, while not of course contradictory, could sometimes be difficult to combine satisfactorily.

3.3.3. Efficiency and effectiveness of the old programmes

On these points the evaluator voiced very little criticism, finding that the results obtained were proportional to the resources committed, i.e. they were effective but not commensurate with the more ambitious expectations formulated in the Decisions establishing the programmes.

Individual countries tend to finance national or bilateral operations, therefore the programme clearly provided a European added value since it supported multilateral European partnerships (i.e. involving at least three countries).

Some partnerships in fact remained purely formal, decisions being taken by the project leader alone and the other members of the network simply being informed of them by e-mail.

The evaluator considers that the old programmes could have been more effective if administrative matters had not required so much time and effort and if more resources had been available to help with disseminating the project results.

3.3.4. Results and impacts

In their replies, the organisers chiefly mentioned the networks, the impact of which is difficult to measure. Other, more concrete impacts and spin-offs were also mentioned (events, reports, new techniques, books translated, etc).

The programmes had and still have (even more so) very low visibility, even among cultural operators, in principle the group most directly concerned. People do not remember the results of the projects.

As regards immediate results, the projects did not lead to the creation of any permanent jobs. However, certain individuals were able to find stable jobs elsewhere thanks to the experience and know-how they acquired through involvement in projects.

The chief impact of the programmes, five years on, is the fact that they enabled networks to be created or strengthened, and that cultural operators now regard European networks or partnerships as a positive thing.

4. THE EXTERNAL EVALUATOR'S MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE COMMISSION'S REACTIONS

4.1. Continue and extend the action

The European Union's action in the field of culture through support programmes such as Kaleidoscope, Ariane and Raphael is useful and should be continued. It should even be extended. The budgets for such action should be increased and more should be done to make the future programme(s) and results more visible.

The Commission takes note of this recommendation and will take due account of it in its proposal for a Decision establishing the cultural programme which will need to replace the Culture 2000 programme (which itself replaced the old programmes) from 1 January 2007. The Commission will pay particular attention to the need to enhance the visibility of the programme, both in choosing the types of action which it will support and in reinforcing the obligation on project promoters to make prominent mention of the Community support received.

4.2. Identify the cultural operators better

According to the evaluator, in order to guarantee maximum relevance it is necessary to identify the European cultural operators to be targeted by the programme(s), for example by having access to a database, which should be as exhaustive and up-to-date as possible, by organising a communication campaign about the programme(s), and by seeking to define and characterise the target population.

The Commission agrees that in order to improve its contribution it needs to establish a close dialogue with cultural operators in general and with those awarded Community support in particular. This is why it organised the Forum on Cultural Cooperation in Europe in November 2001, and why it has also organised, notably on the Internet, an extensive consultation of all the parties interested in the preparation of a new cultural cooperation programme.

The Commission would also emphasise that it now has a computer database of all the project organisers involved in the Culture 2000 programme, which superseded the old programmes. In addition, the computer program SYMMETRY, which should be put into service in 2004[7], will allow the Commission not only to improve communication with cultural operators but also to identify the target population more accurately.

4.3. Simplify the procedures

This is a constant wish of all participants in European programmes. The evaluator feels, however, that it is particularly important in the cultural field, where operators are often "allergic to paperwork".

According to the evaluator it would be better to introduce, in the context of a plan setting out medium-term objectives, a simplified form for the preselection stage, and to base the final selection both on the documentation submitted and on an oral presentation. The names of the experts, designated on their own personal merits for their recognised expertise in the field of culture, should be known. These experts should take their responsibilities seriously and should abstain from the voting if called upon to defend before the committee a project whose promoter they know. This solution would be more likely to encourage creativity and would provide more motivation for cultural operators.

The Commission would stress that the project selection and monitoring procedures applied are designed to preserve equity between cultural operators, to ensure transparency in decision-making, notably by informing the European Parliament and the management committee charged with assisting the Commission in implementing the programme(s), and to guarantee the rigour necessary for the proper use of public funds.

In this respect, the Commission would point out that it is obliged to ensure compliance with Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities[8], and with Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2342/2002 of 23 December 2002 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities[9].

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[7]   **SY**stem for the **M**anagement and **M**onitoring of **E**ducation, **TR**aining, **Y**outh (system for the management and monitoring of education, training, youth and culture programmes and other programmes run by the Education and Culture DG). SYMMETRY is an integrated information and programme management system intended, in the near future, for the Education and Culture DG, the National Agencies, the Technical Assistance Offices and the Executive Agency. The system will offer all the features necessary for the players involved in all aspects of management of the programmes and not only in project management, which means it will enable them to prepare work plans, manage budgets and create reports appropriate to the different user profiles (Education and Culture DG, National Agencies, Executive Agency). In particular, the new system will allow the programmes to be monitored both at centralised and decentralised levels and applications to be submitted online; it will also serve as a communication basis between the European cultural operators with a shared interest in actions offering a European added value.

[8]   OJ L 248, 16.9.2002.

[9]   OJ L 357, 31.12.2002.

4.4.   Promote the programme

According to the evaluator, the Commission provides far too little information to cultural operators. Moreover, these operators need to have the quality of their work recognised. Finally, the evaluator observes that a support programme financed by the European Union should ideally help to improve Europe's image with the general public, which would in turn be a means of promoting public access to culture.

The Commission agrees that a comprehensive communication and dissemination strategy is essential in order to ensure the participation of the largest possible number of cultural operators, to recognise the quality of their work and to boost Europe's image in the eyes of the public.

It considers, however, that the information deficit identified by the evaluator in the implementation of the Culture 2000 programme, which superseded the old programmes, has largely been overcome, since information concerning this programme is available from a number of sources, such as the Official Journal of the European Communities, the "Culture 2000" Internet site and the Cultural Contact Points. The Commission's administrators have also given presentations concerning the programme at a wide number of events, and the public can call a Commission freephone number if they want answers to any questions.

In addition, since 2002 anyone who requests it can receive a free monthly newsletter about the programme.

Finally, a culture portal was created in March 2002 on the Internet to present all the European institutions' culture-related activities.

The evaluator also proposes that a specific budget be allocated within the culture programme to promotional activities. Without wishing to reject the proposal out of hand, the Commission nevertheless wonders how sound it might be, insofar as any allocation of funds to promotional activities would simply come out of the funds available for Community action in the field of culture, which, as the evaluator agrees, are already limited.

4.5.   Monitor the culture programme

According to the evaluator, the dissatisfactions expressed by cultural operators reveal a need for deep and regular dialogue with the Commission. Such dialogue would help to inform interested parties, encourage "good" applications, convey the Commission's intentions, help project promoters to frame their projects in the desired way, defend them, monitor them and then take stock of the outcomes, and finally to build on the results and highlight the contribution made by Europe.

Moreover, the evaluator feels that the Commission's programme managers should undertake visits in order to monitor projects on the ground and should familiarise themselves not only with the dossiers but also with the players.

On the first point, the European Commission would mention that there are Cultural Contact Points (CCP) in all the countries participating in the Culture 2000 programme.

These CCPs are responsible for:

– promoting the programme,

– facilitating access to the programme for, and encouraging participation in its activities by, as many professionals and operators in the cultural field as possible, by means of an effective dissemination of information;

– providing an efficient link with the various institutions providing aid to the cultural sector in the Member States, thus contributing to the complementarity of measures taken under the Culture 2000 programme and national support measures;

– providing information and contact at the appropriate level between operators participating in the Culture 2000 programme and those participating in other Community programmes open to cultural operators.

In addition, as already mentioned at points 4.2 and 4.4, the Commission has deepened the dialogue on its Community action by organising a Forum on Cultural Cooperation in Europe in November 2001, and by organising a consultation exercise on the Internet. Finally, the Commission is in regular contact with the cultural operators participating in its programmes and has given presentations outlining its cultural activities at numerous events.

On the second point, the Commission would point out that its programme managers do on occasion undertake missions to monitor projects on the ground. However, the Commission does not have sufficient human resources to monitor all projects on the ground, each manager being responsible for between 40 and 90 projects.

4.6. Combine the programmes into one

According to the evaluator, the concentration of resources resulting from the combining of the old programmes into the Culture 2000 framework programme has helped to make the Community's contribution more effective and more visible.

This benefit for the visibility and image of the Union's action in the field of culture (it is easier, cheaper and more effective to make a "concentrated" information effort), combined with easier management, argues in favour of combining all the programmes into one.

Moreover, the evaluator welcomes the fact that this opens up possibilities for supporting multicultural projects (the horizontal approach of Culture 2000), so long as it does not eclipse support for the very specific actions which cultural operators wish to conserve (the vertical approach).

5. THE COMMISSION'S CONCLUSIONS

The evaluator emphasises that, all in all, the old programmes seem to have worked well. He notes that certain weaknesses or shortcomings found (e.g. the excessively narrow aspect of certain themes and the absence of continuity in the themes selected) were, in the view of the operators, a sort of test for the subsequent programmes (Culture 2000). The old programmes were therefore a useful stage in building up the Union's role in the field of culture. Combining them within the Culture 2000 programme also helped to make the Community's contribution more effective and more visible.

The Commission shares the evaluator's view that the programme has made a positive contribution to cultural cooperation in Europe (development of partnerships, creation of networks, etc.). It concludes, therefore, that these programmes represented a first, essential step towards the attainment of the objectives set out in Article 151 of the Treaty. It also considers that the contribution made by the old programmes has been bolstered by the Culture 2000 framework programme[10]. Moreover, it believes that Community support for cultural cooperation activities in Europe should be continued and that adequate resources should be made available for this purpose.

More generally, the Commission considers it necessary to develop a clear cultural strategy on which to base its action. The EU needs to have a cultural action programme which fits within a well defined policy framework. Such a programme, which would complement EU policies and actions in other fields, increase the number of real partnerships, thus bolstering trans-European cultural cooperation, and guarantee the permanence of the European cultural added value thus created, is the strongest argument for adequate resources to be made available and for new partnership models to be developed.

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[10]   On this subject, see the Commission report on the implementation of the Culture 2000 programme for the years 2000 and 2001.