



**The Council of Europe's Cultural Policy Review Programme –
background, methodology, outlook**

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- Background, methodology, outlook -**

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- 1. Background and methodology of the Review Programme**

The Council of Europe launched a European programme for the evaluation of national cultural policies in June 1985. This programme was proposed to interested member states, based on a model previously used by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for the study of national education policies.¹

The main components retained, based on the OECD model included:

- drafting of a national report by the country under review that provides the official view of the national authorities on the issue under examination, either in a comprehensive or sectoral perspective;
- visits by an independent group of experts -acting in their own individual capacity- to the country under review to hold hearings and interviews, visit institutions and collect supplementary documentary information, followed by the drafting of an experts' report, taking into consideration the national report and their own experiences;
- publication of the two reports and holding of a "conclusions and findings" meeting at the Council of Europe, in the presence of the respective Minister of Culture at the occasion of a plenary session of the Steering Committee for Culture of the Organisation, followed by a national debate in the country reviewed to further widen the debate and prepare for follow-up at national level.

The benefits of the review programme for member states were seen in the awareness raising and information gathering on the objectives and practices of cultural policies in individual countries, with a view to their enhancement by analysing successes and failures of the measures implemented and to identifying innovations. This helped individual countries in their reform efforts -including through subsequent assistance activities best suited to their country's needs- and contributed to developing evaluation methodology as such.

¹ See also Robert Wangermee "Evaluation of National Cultural Policies – Guidelines for the preparation of national reports", 1992 (DECS-Cult/CP (93)3)

The Council of Europe provided, through the Review Programme, not only assistance to its member states, but also developed knowledge and tools for truly international comparison of cultural policies, fulfilling its mandate in cultural co-operation through individually adapted assistance activities enhancing governance, in the spirit of its core values and priorities.

2. Achievements and developments of the Cultural Policy Reviews

Since 1985, twenty-eight Cultural Policy Reviews have been carried out by the Organization², two of which took place before the fall of the Berlin wall and the others following this event, in the framework of the efforts by the new democracies at modernising their cultural governance systems and practices.

Obviously, the “second generation” of reviews is different in methodology in so far as a classical review of a new system still under construction was not considered useful, whilst more strategically oriented reports were required to address problems encountered during the transition period and of medium-term development.

Beyond a doubt, the programme has contributed to overall reform and modernisation of the cultural sector in all Review cases. However, no systematic and detailed evaluation of the Reviews’ impact was ever carried out by the co-coordinators of the programme. This is most likely linked to the fact that the programme’s outcome was all too obvious, for example in the field of cultural legislation, where many of the new democracies updated their existing regulations in the process of, or following the Review.

The pertinence of the programme is also reflected by the creation of a complementary technical assistance programme between 1998-2003 (MOSAIC) that was made possible by the Dutch Government through a substantial voluntary contribution and supported by many other Council of Europe member states. This programme provided targeted capacity building activities (expertise, training workshops, manuals, co-operation schemes) for the Council’s new member states.

Also, sectoral and transversal Reviews were carried out as of 1998³ to generate in-depth knowledge and understanding of specific cultural policy areas and to build up a comparative view permitting identification, and possibly, transfer of useful practices.

Given the extended time period of the Review programme and, the methodological difficulties of comparisons which were encountered, the Compendium cultural policy information and monitoring system was initiated in 1997 with a trial version of five country profiles including the core cultural policy areas as covered in previous Reviews.

The system has met with great success and its scope has enlarged steadily over the years to become a unique, comprehensive and permanently updated information source on European cultural policy, including profiles from 42 Council of Europe member states.

² Albania (2000), Armenia (2003), Austria (1993), Azerbaijan (2002), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2002), Bulgaria (1997), Croatia (1998), Cyprus (2004), Estonia (1997), Finland (1994), France (1988), Georgia (2002), Italy (1995), Latvia (1998), Lithuania (1997), “The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” (2003), Malta (2002), Moldova (2001), Montenegro (2004), the Netherlands (1994), Portugal (1998), Romania (1999), Russian Federation (1996), Serbia (2003), Slovak Republic (2003), Slovenia (1996), Sweden (1990), Ukraine (2007) - the date in brackets refers to the publication of the review results. A Turkish Review is ongoing (2009-11), a Review of Malta’s cultural policy strategy was carried out in 2010 and a focused Review of the Russian Federation starts in 2011. In May 2011, the Governments of Azerbaijan and Moldova expressed their interest in undergoing another cultural policy review exercise.

³ National institutions in transition (1998-1999), National book policy reviews (1998-2000 and 2000-2003), Cultural policy and cultural diversity (2001-2003), Review of national film policies (2009).

Whilst Compendium profiles were initially inspired by the common themes dealt with by the Review programme (e.g. historical background, administrative system, financing, legislation, cultural practices and participation, cultural heritage, etc.), they have never aspired to replace the Cultural Policies as such. Rather, the Compendium offers a lighter, more flexible, steady update of the national cultural policy situation and has, in several cases preceded an individual Review exercise, providing a pertinent information base to build on during the Review process.⁴

The success of the Council of Europe's National Cultural Policy Reviews is also reflected in the take-up of the programme by other sectors of the Organisation, such as the Youth Directorate that offers Youth Policy Reviews to member states.

On the international level, the Cultural Policy Reviews inspired many exercises and methodologies including those by UNESCO, which was looking into the feasibility of creating a similar programme. Recently, a Vietnamese National Cultural Policy review was carried out in which renowned European experts participated, including the previous coordinator of the Council's Review Programme. In addition, some African cultural policy initiatives consider the application of the Review methodology in the framework of their efforts at building national policy capacity when following up on the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and the Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. The methodology of the National Cultural Policy Reviews might indeed be a useful tool for monitoring the UNESCO Convention and in the preparation of state party reports every four years.⁵

3. A revised methodology for enhanced impact and information flow

Though the Cultural Policy Reviews have proven useful to member states and especially with a view to reform efforts undertaken in specific policy sectors, the co-coordinators at the Council of Europe are continually looking for further improvement of the programme. This is linked to the evolution of policies over the years including a new generation of cultural policy thinking due to the diversification of stakeholders and issues. Whilst methodological grids are flexible to accommodate new policy issues and actors as they appear, efforts are now mainly geared at optimising the programme's fit with other existing cultural policy initiatives, such as online information and monitoring systems and sectoral and transversal Reviews, to build a comprehensive cultural governance observatory function, and to ensure the Review's follow-up and impact at national level.

Regarding the latter aim, proposals were made at expert meetings to formally add a follow-up reporting procedure to the Review methodology. It would specifically study the implementation -or lack of- the recommendations made by the national and experts' reports.

3.a. Follow-up

The new methodology thus conceived requires that a particular country, when filing its application for review and consequently joining the programme, agrees to report back to the Council of Europe and its Steering Committee for Culture on progress made two years after a Review exercise has

⁴ The contents of the Compendium are divided into nine main chapters (for a detailed grid indicating sub-chapters, please see appendix 1):

- Historical perspective: cultural policies and instruments
- Competence, decision-making and administration
- General objectives and principles of cultural policy
- Current issues in cultural policy development and debate
- Main legal provisions in the cultural field
- Financing of culture
- Cultural institutions and new partnerships
- Support to creativity and participation
- Sources and links

⁵ E.g. national reports to be prepared according to a specific grid of diversity indicators, expert review panels, public debates with civil society, etc.).

been finalised. In doing so, the cultural policy information and monitoring system, Compendium will be used to gather the information in the framework of annual updates to the country profiles.

An additional section will thus be added to the Compendium grid and an independent database maintained from which an instant overview of follow-up to the Review recommendations can be obtained. Every three years, a brief monitoring report will be established using the Compendium systems' special features that will be developed in this respect.

If there is no or only little follow-up to the Review recommendations, the Council of Europe will offer the country in question assistance in analysing the reasons for this and in defining an adequate approach to address eventual problems that might prevent the implementation of Review recommendations.

The expectation is to enhance the impact of the programme to make the most benefit from the resources invested, both on the side of the member state and the Organisation, and to intensify the information flow between member states and the Council's information systems consequently adding value to these. Lastly, the follow-up reporting will allow for an objective evaluation of the impact of the National Cultural Policy Review Programme.

The Policy Review cycle for countries that wish to engage in this process is a matter for consideration at national level within each country. It should be noted that many of the earlier Reviews of this programme are out-of-date and do not reflect the realities and current experiences of cultural policymaking and implementation. The programme therefore should encourage follow-up and even the re-writing of existing National Cultural Policy Reviews for countries that have already completed the exercise as well as new exercises for those countries that have not yet undertaken a National Review as outlined in this document. A newly conceived National Policy Review might place emphasis on different issues than an earlier Review, benefiting from a combination of national and external expertise. This updating might use a specific feature offered by the Compendium for follow-up reports, or a more comprehensive process that is more closely linked to the methodology of the Reviews.

3.b. Review categories and choice

Countries might wish to engage in two different kinds of Review exercises:

- Sectoral Policy Reviews to address specific issues of concern and to conceive policy measures to address these adequately;
- Comprehensive Cultural Policy Reviews that examine the entirety of the policy making and of the cultural field (see Compendium grid in appendix 1 for reference) whilst not excluding the possibility of selecting 1-3 "focus issues" of primary interest or urgency, which would be dealt with in the report in more detail and on which the experts' report would specifically dwell.

Both categories of Review should include a policy plan for action, ideally with a time-schedule and a scenario on where the government would like to see the country under review in 5 years time.

In choosing one of these types of exercises, countries will consider the resources they will have to invest in the Review process, as well as the possibilities offered by other policy and capacity building programmes of the Directorate of Culture, Cultural and Natural Heritage (e.g. Compendium, HEREIN, Kyiv Initiative, RPSEE programme, Intercultural Cities, etc.). The Council of Europe programme coordinators are available to give additional advice as required.

3.c. *Practical steps and resource implications*

Upon application by an interested member state to participate in the Review programme and its agreement to the general rules as set out in this document, followed by the Council of Europe's agreement, a first meeting shall take place between the national coordinators and the Council of Europe coordinators to define the scope, possible focus, time-frame, any specific conditions and the overall working methods of the envisaged exercise.

It has proven useful on the side of member states to set up a working party responsible for the drafting of the national report. In most Review cases, these working parties were composed of national cultural policy experts from research institutions, universities or arms-length-bodies related to the Ministry of Culture as well as of Ministerial staff. This group -or a member of it- is then entrusted with the gathering of information and the provisional drafting of the report. The work may extend over a period of 12 or more months, depending on the availability of preliminary key documentation (e.g. Compendium country profile).

At a later stage, and upon a favourable opinion of the independent experts' group (see below) on satisfactory progress on the national report as well as its approval by the political authority of the country, the document is translated into the two working languages of the Council of Europe and published for the purposes of the Plenary Session of the Organisation's Steering Committee for Culture (CDCULT), where it is first presented, usually by the Minister of Culture and his/her research team.

During the drafting process of the national report, the Council of Europe sets up a group of four to five independent cultural policy specialists to serve on the expert's group and prepare an expert's report in consultation with the Council of Europe Secretariat and, the national working party for the exchange of documentation. This work is inspired by the provisional version of the national report made available by the national coordinator as well as by the expert's research work – particularly strengthened by two site visits to the country under Review.

The country visits allow for multiple meetings and interviews with cultural politicians, administrators, cultural actors and creators, civil society representatives, etc. Of the two visits, one is usually concentrated on the capital city of the country reviewed and the second on some rural areas outside the capital, so as to provide as varied and complete a picture of the cultural landscape of the Review country as possible.

As regards the timeframe of a Cultural Policy Review, rather short exercises have been observed as well as more lengthy processes, when political circumstances required a prolongation of the activity. Overall, a period of two years seems optimal, from the agreement on the Review, to the delivery and presentation of the reports.

As far as the resource implications of a Cultural Policy Review, the following tasks and subsequent expenditures that cannot be priced in exact detail occur for the partners involved:

Review Country

- Drafting and publication of the National Report
 - coordination of national workshop group
 - gathering of information and commissioning of report
 - translation of the report into one official language of the Council of Europe
 - publication in the form of a pre-report for the CDCULT meeting (200 copies)
 - publication of the final report layout in two (one?) language(s) of the Council of Europe.
- Collaboration in the preparation of the Experts' Report
 - contacts and meetings with the Council of Europe and the experts

- preparation of the programmes for experts' visits including meetings with authorities, cultural researchers, leaders and protagonists in cultural life and civil society representatives
- documentary support for experts as required
- hospitality for the experts and travel inside the country (about two weeks of contacts and possibly additional meetings for discussion as required)
- translation during meetings.
- Presentation of the Review at the CDCULT and follow-up to the Review at national level
 - travel and subsistence of the national team including the Minister's travel to the CDCULT meeting in Strasbourg for presentation and discussion of the national and experts' report
 - subsequent organisation of a press conference to present the Review findings at national level and stimulate a larger debate on cultural policy involving relevant actors
 - follow-up action as agreed with political stakeholders at national level (and possibly, the Council of Europe)
 - reporting on follow-up action / implementation of Review recommendations in the framework of the annual update of Compendium country profiles using the Compendium systems' specific features for this.

Council of Europe

- General coordination of Review exercise
 - Contacts and documentation as required for the Review exercise
 - Travel and subsistence costs of Secretariat member(s) for initial visit to national authorities
 - Any other coordination costs as required.
- Preparation, drafting and publication of the Experts' Report
 - coordination of experts' group
 - fee for gathering of information and commissioning of report to rapporteur or to several members of the group
 - translation of the experts' report in the two official languages of the Council of Europe
 - publication in the form of pre-reports for the CDCULT meeting (200 copies)
 - publication of the final report in two languages of the Council of Europe
 - travel of experts to the country under Review (twice)
 - travel of experts and subsistence costs for two to three working and editorial meetings of the experts' group
 - travel of Secretariat member(s) to the country under review to accompany experts during visits
 - any other travel of Secretariat member(s) for coordination purposes.
- Experts' participation in the presentation of the Review at the CDCULT Plenary
 - Experts' travel and accommodation to the CDCULT meeting in Strasbourg for presentation and discussion of the national and experts' report.
- Specific follow-up as agreed and in the framework of the Council of Europe's work programme in the cultural field
 - possible technical assistance / capacity building follow-up activity
 - travel and subsistence of rapporteur / experts and the Secretariat to participate at the press conference or other national launch event as requested by review country
 - follow-up in the framework of the Compendium system and maintenance of specific features to monitor implementation of Review recommendations (Council of Europe support to the system)

4. The Review Programme in the Council of Europe's cultural governance observatory function

In the cultural sector, the Council of Europe's overall mandate translates into an effort at enhancing cultural governance all across Europe in a human rights driven perspective. Given the number of sophisticated information and monitoring tools and bodies and Review exercises of the Organisation, a special effort was made as of 2008 to bring these assets more closely together and develop an explicit cultural governance observatory function ("CultureWatchEurope") at the Directorate of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage.

This implies, inter alia, the creation of a joint access platform for the Compendium cultural policy information and monitoring system, the HEREIN cultural heritage information system and the European Audiovisual Observatory. Increased synergy is created between the National Cultural Policy Review Programme and the Compendium cultural policy information and monitoring system to ensure follow-up of the Reviews, based on the most recent technology available, thus fulfilling the potential of a Review exercise in a longer term perspective. Such synergy also upgrades the Compendium system with richer content at national level or concerning specific policy sectors and assigns it an important political role. Finally, studying the follow-up given to Review recommendations allows the Organisation to better determine the overall impact of its Cultural Policy Review programme and adapt it in the light of the findings.

"CultureWatchEurope" is built in part around the Council's Review Programme as a key component and provides an integrated framework for future national and sectoral cultural policy review exercises. This framework ranges from the analysis of policies and standards to their contextualisation in a comparative perspective, to specific tailor-made assistance and capacity building activities as requested by member states and finally, awareness raising regarding successful as well as more difficult practices and trends.

As a reliable "watchdog" for democracy, human rights and the rule of law also in the cultural sector and as a highly specialised forum for information and data exchange on culture as well as for encounters⁶ between policy makers at national, regional and local level and the sector, civil society and the private sector, the Council of Europe is well placed to face contemporary cultural challenges in an inclusive, progressive and political manner.

⁶ Annual CultureWatchEurope conferences such as "Culture and Development 20 Years after the Fall of Communism", Cracow, 2009; "Culture and the Policies of Change", Brussels 2010.

Appendix : The “Compendium” - an Overview

The Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe is a web-based permanently updated information and monitoring system on cultural policies, instruments, debates and trends, in Europe. The Compendium was initiated by the Council of Europe as a joint venture with the European Institute for Comparative Cultural Research (ERICarts) in 1998. It is realised in partnership with a *community of practice* of independent cultural policy researchers, NGOs and national governments.

Structure of the country profile:

- 1. Historical perspective: cultural policies and instruments**

- 2. General objectives and principles of cultural policy**
 - 2.1 Main features of the current cultural policy model
 - 2.2 National definition of culture
 - 2.3 Cultural policy objectives

- 3. Competence, decision-making and administration**
 - 3.1 Organisational structure (organigram)
 - 3.2 Overall description of the system
 - 3.3 Inter-ministerial or intergovernmental co-operation
 - 3.4 International cultural co-operation
 - 3.4.1 Overview of main structures and trends
 - 3.4.2 Public actors and cultural diplomacy
 - 3.4.3 European / international actors and programmes
 - 3.4.4 Direct professional co-operation
 - 3.4.5 Cross-border intercultural dialogue and co-operation
 - 3.4.6 Other relevant issues

- 4. Current issues in cultural policy development and debate**
 - 4.1 Main cultural policy issues and priorities
 - 4.2 Specific policy issues and recent debates
 - 4.2.1 Conceptual issues of policies for the arts
 - 4.2.2 Heritage issues and policies
 - 4.2.3 Cultural/creative industries: policies and programmes
 - 4.2.4 Cultural diversity and inclusion policies
 - 4.2.5 Language issues and policies
 - 4.2.6 Media pluralism and content diversity
 - 4.2.7 Intercultural dialogue: actors, strategies, programmes
 - 4.2.8 Social cohesion and cultural policies
 - 4.2.9 Employment policies for the cultural sector
 - 4.2.10 Gender equality and cultural policies
 - 4.2.11 New technologies and digitalisation in the arts and culture
 - 4.3 Other relevant issues and debates

- 5. Main legal provisions in the cultural field**
 - 5.1 General legislation
 - 5.1.1 Constitution
 - 5.1.2 Division of jurisdiction
 - 5.1.3 Allocation of public funds
 - 5.1.4 Social security frameworks
 - 5.1.5 Tax laws
 - 5.1.6 Labour laws
 - 5.1.7 Copyright provisions
 - 5.1.8 Data protection laws
 - 5.1.9 Language laws
 - 5.1.10 Other areas of general legislation

- 5.2 Legislation on culture
- 5.3 Sector specific legislation
 - 5.3.1 Visual and applied arts
 - 5.3.2 Performing arts and music
 - 5.3.3 Cultural heritage
 - 5.3.4 Literature and libraries
 - 5.3.5 Architecture and spatial planning
 - 5.3.6 Film, video and photography
 - 5.3.7 Mass media
 - 5.3.8 Other areas of culture specific legislation

- 6. Financing of culture**
 - 6.1 Short overview
 - 6.2 Public cultural expenditure
 - 6.2.1 Aggregated indicators
 - 6.2.2 Public cultural expenditure broken down by level of government
 - 6.2.3 Sector breakdown
 - 6.3 Trends and indicators for private cultural financing

- 7. Public institutions in cultural infrastructure**
 - 7.1 Cultural infrastructure: tendencies & strategies
 - 7.2 Basic data about selected public institutions in the cultural sector
 - 7.3 Status and partnerships of public cultural institutions

- 8. Promoting creativity and participation**
 - 8.1 Support to artists and other creative workers
 - 8.1.1 Overview of strategies, programmes and direct or indirect forms of support
 - 8.1.2 Special artists funds
 - 8.1.3 Grants, awards, scholarships
 - 8.1.4 Support to professional artists associations or unions
 - 8.2 Cultural consumption and participation
 - 8.2.1 Trends and figures
 - 8.2.2 Policies and programmes
 - 8.3 Arts and cultural education
 - 8.3.1 Institutional overview
 - 8.3.2 Arts in schools
 - 8.3.3 Intercultural education
 - 8.3.4 Higher arts education and professional training
 - 8.3.5 Basic out-of-school arts and cultural education (music schools, heritage etc.)
 - 8.4 Amateur arts, cultural associations and civil initiatives
 - 8.4.1 Amateur arts and folk culture
 - 8.4.2 Cultural houses and community cultural clubs
 - 8.4.3 Associations of citizens, advocacy groups, NGOs, and advisory panels

- 9. Sources and Links**
 - 9.1 Key documents on cultural policy
 - 9.2 Key organisations and portals