



**Cultural development policies  
in member states**

**Cultural Policy in Bulgaria**

Report of a European panel of Examiners  
by Charles LANDRY

COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL CO-OPERATION

EUROPEAN PROGRAMME  
OF NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY REVIEWS

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**CULTURAL POLICY  
IN BULGARIA**

Report of a European panel of Examiners

by

**Charles LANDRY**

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## **SCHEDULE OF THE EXAMINERS' ACTIVITIES**

**18 April 1996**

Preliminary meetings by the President, Rapporteur and Programme Adviser with authors of National Report and Ministry officials in Sofia

**22 - 28 June 1996**

First visit by Panel of Examiners: Sofia, Bâta, Assenovgrad, Panagivrishte, Koprivshtitsa, Plovdiv

**2 - 9 November 1996**

Second visit by Panel of Examiners: Sofia, Nesebar, Burgas Pazardjik, Stara Zagora

**9 - 10 December 1996**

Meeting of Panel of Examiners in Paris

**17 - 18 January 1997**

Meeting of Panel of Examiners in Paris

**15 April 1997**

Debate at Culture Committee, Strasbourg

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## **Bulgaria's Cultural Policy in Transition:**

### **From the Art of the State to the State of the Art**

#### **Executive summary**

Bulgaria like all countries in transition suffers from the after affects of Soviet- style socialism. This historical legacy has had profound impacts on the mindset of cultural policy makers and artists alike who have come out of an era where the function of culture was defined in a quite different political, economic and social context and where state control was paramount. It has left Bulgaria with an extensive cultural infrastructure that with declining funds, an unstable political and economic environment is unsustainable in the longer term.

Whilst expectations from the transition have not as yet been fully met many positive initiatives have taken place across the cultural spectrum. These have, however, not changed the essential nature of the system whose problems reach well beyond the realm of culture. As such the report has relevance for all countries in transition.

In spite of the changes at the heart of Bulgarian cultural policy there is as yet no vision for Bulgarian culture and cultural life. Creating such a vision for Bulgarian culture cannot happen in isolation, it needs to be shared by parliament, government and the whole society and its execution led by the Ministry of Culture. It should be developed as part of an open debate, involving all stakeholders and within that the role of the Ministry of Culture needs to change from that of gatekeeper to gateopener, from that of controller of resources to enabler and facilitator of opportunities.

Changing the mindset is thus perhaps the most important process that needs to occur, yet at the same time it is the most difficult as ways of working and thinking are entrenched. It might only fully occur after intense training, changing some personnel, devolving power, responsibility and resources to new forces and crucially by experiencing and absorbing a new way of more participative decision making and acting.

The argument for investment in culture needs to be reframed in 21st century terms with an interlocking set of value and aesthetically driven, educational, social and economic arguments to show the relevance of culture to Bulgaria's future well being. This can only occur through an extensive national debate to spell out, to as wide an audience as possible, the marked break cultural policy seeks to achieve in the post-communist period .

The expert group agree with the main principles of Bulgarian cultural policy which have been described as de-etatisation, decentralisation and

democracy within a context of efficient, effective and economic management. However, we doubt that in practice these aims have been sufficiently implemented.

Many of the problems that the cultural sector faces are outside of its control - in particular staffing levels and the political difficulties of reducing these. Nevertheless Bulgaria needs to assess the costs and benefits of culture and expected outcomes based on political, economic and social judgements and thus to ask itself some hard questions about what cultural provision it needs or can afford.

The main worry of the expert group concerns the fate of the national centres, which had initially been set up as arm's length organisations in 1991. Their re-incorporation into the Ministry, whatever the argument on the Bulgarian side, in 1996 is so symbolic that it threatens the credibility of the whole decentralisation process on which Bulgaria's cultural policy is hinged.

Of particular importance is the serious skills gap and a new culture of public management needs to be developed. The skills currently required from cultural managers, such as management, strategic planning, marketing and entrepreneurial skills, were not only not needed under the former totalitarian regime they were not encouraged - yet they are needed now. The issue of inadequate management emerges again and again in the national report as a major blockage, but there is as yet no substantial resourcing or consistent programme to address this shortcoming.

#### The structure of the report

These points and many others are addressed in the report which has five sections. The first explores the historical legacy and its affects on current practice and expectations.

The second proposes a framework for rethinking cultural policy focusing on the role of democracy and civil society in engendering commitment, energy and ownership for the tasks ahead. It spells out the difficulties and opportunities of developing culture within a market economy and suggests that a much more imaginative and creative approach can be developed to the law, regulation and intervention. Similarly it argues that funding can be more creatively applied.

The third section focuses on the strategic dilemmas that cultural policy makers all over Europe face, including those concerned with policy implementation such as centralised and decentralised approaches or how subsidy mechanism can best relate to the market. Other dilemmas noted suggest ways of balancing prestige and more community oriented initiatives or how heritage and contemporary culture can simultaneously be fostered.

The fourth section centres on the international context for cultural development as a means of outlining the margins of manoeuvre of Bulgaria's emerging cultural policy. This bigger context brings with it new threats and opportunities, but an understanding of these international dynamics also helps bring about a healthy realism and more focused set of expectations about what is achievable, what the true nature of the competition is and where Bulgaria can play its strong niche cards.

In the final section the threads are drawn together through a summary of conclusions and recommendations and a new approach to cultural policy is proposed.

Whilst there are a host of recommendations throughout concerning many sectors the expert group has focused on three overarching recommendations, which they believe will create the pre-condition for Bulgarian cultural life to develop fruitfully in the future. The first is for the Ministry of Culture to start a national debate on culture, linked to a moratorium agreed by the government to ensure that cultural funding is maintained at current levels, inflation proofed, so that the debate can occur within a stable financial environment.

Over the coming years there will have to be cuts in infrastructure and many cultural workers are likely to become unemployed. How this might occur and who these decisions will fall on cannot simply be made by the Ministry of Culture on its own. Such difficult decisions need to be discussed with all stakeholders so that a measure of agreement about priorities can be established, discussed and to some extent jointly owned. It is envisioned that such a debate will take three years to complete and begin to implement its conclusions.

The second is to focus on the reinvention of the chitalishta as a key anchor both for cultural development and the encouragement of civil society.

The third theme is for Bulgaria to actively stay in touch with European best practice.

The expert group invites the Council of Europe to assist in the process of moving these recommendations forward through the means within its powers, such as technical assistance, training or helping to structure bi-lateral and multi-lateral agreements; by promoting co-operation at the supranational level such as within the Balkan area or amongst countries who have experienced similar problems of transition as well as the rest of Europe.

Focusing on these themes does not mean other policy strands cannot be pursued at the same time only to highlight, in the view of the expert group, the key priorities.

## Section One; Setting the Stage:

### The background research

The purpose of this expert evaluation report is to comment in a helpful way on the extensive document produced by Bulgarian experts on their emerging cultural policy. The national report was composed by a team brought together by the Institute of Culturology under the direction of Dr. Lazar Koprianov, who laboured under demanding conditions to produce a document that allowed the expert group to understand the dynamics of Bulgarian cultural life. Many of these difficulties concerned finding meaningful comparative data, given the enormous changes, such as in the value of the local currency - the leva - as well as teasing out what policy was, has become and is likely to be. This was no mean task and we can only compliment the authors on their efforts.

The Bulgarian national report will be a valuable document both for Bulgarian audiences as well as those from abroad, as for the first time an overview has been produced that gives a comprehensive picture of the state of Bulgarian cultural life and policy taking into account the changes since the transition. As such it gives the reader a sense of the pre-1989 period as well as its subsequent evolution. It stands also as a benchmark document that can be revisited in the years to come to make comparisons and to monitor and evaluate change.

We especially thank the then current Minister of Culture Ivan Marazov, the former Minister Georgi Kostov and Deputy Minister Georgi Konstantinov, under whose responsibility the evaluation was conducted as well as Anna Sendova, the head of the international affairs department within the Ministry of Culture for organising, with her colleagues, our at times complicated and arduous programme. Appendix 1 provides a list of the 228 people who took part in discussions.

The following account contains the summary views of a group of experts, coming from countries with different cultural policy backgrounds including: Naima Balic from Croatia, Irmeli Niemi from Finland - the chairwoman of our group, Cornelia Dümcke from Germany, Peter Schreiber from the Netherlands and Charles Landry - the rapporteur from the United Kingdom. Our team was led by Vera Boltho, the head of the Cultural Policy and Action Division of the Council of Europe. It is based on a series of structured visits; numerous visits to museums, cultural heritage sites, exhibitions and performances; previous experiences of experts in Bulgaria; written documentation and a substantial set of conversations with Bulgarians involved in culture in a variety of ways; as politicians, policy makers artists, administrators, commercial operators and researchers.

The evaluation and writing up took place between June 1996 and the end of January 1997 and the team undertook two week long study tours, the

first in June 1996 and the second in November 1996. As our work moved towards its conclusion in January 1997 Bulgaria found itself in a period of great upheaval with protests in the streets demanding new elections due to the worsening economic situation, which had seen the leva devaluing against the US\$ almost on a daily basis. This in turn meant that the Bulgarian national report itself was only in draft form.

Whilst many of the interviews took place in Sofia, as ministry officials and key national institutions are based there the expert group also moved further afield. The group briefly visited Plovdiv and later stayed at the Santo Kirko Creativity Centre run by the International Academy of Architecture. We had more extended stays in Assenovgrad; Panagyurishte; a small village Buta, where we witnessed folklore traditions at their best, the Batskovo monastery and the historic town of Koprivshtitsa, which are part of the Sredna Gora and Valley of the Roses region. We visited Kazanlak, Nesebar both world heritage sites as well as Burgas, Bulgaria's main industrial centre and sea port.

In so doing we criss crossed wide swathes of the Bulgarian landscape - saw mountains, dramatic valleys, endless plains and the sea. We went through human settlements of all sizes - some beautiful, some ugly, some more historic, others pre-fabricated according to the Soviet style; we saw declining factories, arid agricultural landscapes which have largely remained uncultivated since the changes; degraded industrial sites and peaceful shepherds tending their sheep; countless vineyards often next to garbage dumps, but also vibrant street markets and urban bustle. We ate and drank in grander places and more ordinary ones too, we explored a bit of night life.

We began to appreciate that Bulgaria's living culture and cultural heritage has its own unique qualities and richness stretching back centuries. Yet in spite of the enthusiasm and commitment we witnessed - as in some folklore performances, a pop concert organised to protest against the mafia or an arts gallery sponsored by a local businessman we saw elements of decay in cultural life. Few bookshops but many bookstalls in streets, and heard many bookshops had been closed; hardly any cinemas, although in the past there had been thousands; theatres that were working under par and rarely performing; crumbling museum buildings and even some museums that had to be closed due to energy shortages; orchestras performing in dilapidated buildings; libraries whose book stock had remained unchanged for over 5 years as had museums exhibits and little contemporary art outside of Sofia.

We came to recognise that the chitalishta (the unique Bulgarian multi-purpose cultural institution, whose origin stemmed from the Bulgarian national revival period in the 19th century) had and still today play a significant role in Bulgarian cultural life and in the Bulgarian imagination. The chitalishta represent a nation-wide network of accessible institutions with flexible programming that can respond to local

need. But even they at times had to rent out areas for video game arcades or other commercial activities in order to balance their books.

Yet even so, of course, we only got a glimpse or snapshot of Bulgaria and its cultural life, but hope nevertheless to have grasped some of its key features and essentials.

#### Our approach

This Bulgarian report is, in part, differently conceived from some of the previous evaluation reports undertaken by the Council of Europe. This is in response to a number of factors.

- There has been a re-evaluation within the Council as to how future evaluation exercises should be undertaken given an assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the initial tranche of reports;
- The expert group felt that the situation for culture in Bulgaria is under such stress that some overarching recommendations need to be made;
- As a consequence the group drew the conclusion that the way cultural policy was conceived in Bulgaria both in terms of scope and method was worthy of re-assessment from first principles;
- A slight handicap was that we worked in response to drafts of the Bulgarian national report which was only finalised after the completion of our evaluation.
- It seeks to draw a wide canvas highlighting general strategic dilemmas in cultural policy making and the international context of cultural development in the hope that it will prove useful reading for other countries in transition.

Thus the report has perhaps a less discursive tone than others. It does not contain chapters on art forms, instead it analyses the cultural landscape and identifies common themes that cut across sectors and makes sector specific comments along the way. A series of snapshots on the particular sectors and key policy lines deriving from the national report are boxed out separately.

It draws heavily on the national report in reaching its conclusions. It takes as given that the national report has been read and only refers to their statistics, the details of laws or emerging policy within the various sectors when making a specific point. It invites readers to refer back to the national report should they require detailed evidence.

It attempts to focus on issues, gaps or differences in approach where the view of the 'outsiders' might enrich future Bulgarian cultural policy development.



There is, clearly, no inevitable 'truth' as to what cultural policy in a given country should be. It is ultimately up to decision makers and the artistic community in Bulgaria itself to find solutions that are appropriate to their needs. This will depend on the current political, economic and social context and how this has been shaped by Bulgaria's particular history. As a result each country's cultural policy will have unique and distinctive features. Nevertheless underlying the cultural policies of most European countries there are principles, and at present those dominating are the encouragement of diversity or the arm's length principle and although they may be implemented in distinct ways, there remains a great deal of similarity between them. Importantly though given the increased globalisation of the world, which implies an increased co-existence of different cultures, all European countries are needing to reassess their cultural policy as a whole.

#### Working definitions

Culture is a slippery beast, the more you define it the more it eludes you. We define culture in a narrower sense, not anthropologically, where it refers to the whole way of life of a people. In the context of this report, we mean the 'arts' which includes: music, dance, drama, folk art, creative writing, architecture and allied fields, painting, sculpture, photography, graphic and craft arts, industrial design, costume and fashion design, motion pictures, television, radio, tape and sound recording; the arts related to the presentation, performance, execution and exhibition of such arts and the study and application of the arts to the human environment.

Thus it includes cultural heritage and contemporary forms. In terms of education we are only concerned with that aspect related to art as noted above; in terms of science those activities related to techniques directly related to the arts such as in conservation. We address its economic and social impacts, such as the links between arts, heritage and tourism or economic development and equally the aesthetics of urban and spatial design, including dimensions such as street furniture or public art. Some of these areas are not directly part of the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture, but we feel justified in this approach because the Minister himself sees his role in this broader context.

By policy we mean the steering mechanisms - the set of rules, measures and mechanisms that are directed towards the achievement of goals in cultural development. We see the first step of policy starting with political debate that leads to the setting of broad objectives within the constraints of possibilities; following therefrom strategy is derived, which takes into account the margins of manoeuvre within a particular context; this in turn highlights priorities which are implemented by structures, methods of procedure and rules. The results of this process are then monitored, evaluated and if necessary redirected. Thus policy does not happen in a vacuum it is based on judgements about need, aspirations and power.

#### **Bulgaria: Key facts    The historical context**

Bulgaria was founded in 865, for large periods of its history it was occupied by the Byzantians and Turks. Firstly in 1018 for 168 years and secondly from 1396 for 482 years. Whilst the Bulgarian national revival began in the 18th century it was only from 1878 to 1944 that Bulgaria developed within in the mainstream of European culture. It is within this period that Bulgaria began to establish a modern institutional cultural system. This period was cut short by the imposition of a communist system for 45 years. Thus Bulgaria has a relatively short period of independence and democracy to draw on.

#### **The demographic context**

Bulgaria has a population of 8.5 million of which 7.2 million are Bulgarians, 800,000 Turkish and 313,000 Romanians. The birth rate is decreasing and it has one of highest proportions of inhabitants over 60 years old in Europe (21%). This is in part due to the emigration of young people and ethnic returnees to Turkey amounting to ca. 300,000 over the last few years, partly as a response to a forced policy of assimilation in the latter period of communism. As a consequence the population has declined. There are 7.3 million orthodox Christians and 1.1 million Muslims. Sofia, the capital, has a population of 1.1 million and there are 8 other cities with over a 100,000 inhabitants. 67.2% of the country is urbanised.

Bulgaria has 9 regions, which are administrative entities appointed by government whose function is to oversee that municipalities act according government guidelines. Therefore they have no democratic political function or a role in culture. There are 279 municipal authorities.

#### **The political context**

The 1991 constitution provides the legal basis for parliamentary pluralist democracy. Article 23 establishes the commitments of the state to the cultural sphere as follows: 'The state shall establish conditions for the free development of science, education and the arts and assist them. It shall also be concerned with preserving the national historic and cultural heritage'. The constitution guarantees the freedom of speech and the mass media. Article 23(1) states: 'Everyone has the right to express their opinion and to disseminate it in writing or orally, through sounds, images, or by any other means'. Article 40(1) reads: 'The press and other mass information media shall be free and not subject to censorship.'

There have been 3 elections since the changes in 1989 and currently the Bulgarian Socialist Party is the dominant force, although the recently elected president, who has limited powers, is from the centre-right. Since 1989 there have been 6 ministers of culture, each with a particular interest depending on their background such as music or cultural heritage.

#### **The economic context**

Between 1990 and 1995 GDP has declined to 86.6% of the 1990 figure. GDP per capita is \$1276, as compared to \$2298 in Turkey; \$7169 in Greece and \$22678 in Austria. Inflation has at times been rampant ranging from 473% per annum in 1990 to 32.9% in 1995 and nearly 330% in 1996. As a consequence the exchange rate with the \$ is around 1/100 of what it was in 1990, with drastic implications for Bulgaria's terms of trade and a steadily increasing deficit. There has been a recent partial collapse of the banking system, so that the instalment of a currency board is in sight, removing strategic economic control out of the hands of government. Whilst nominal income has increased 19 fold since 1990 in real terms it has decreased by nearly half to 50.7%. As privatisation has been slow these factors have severely downgraded the assets that the state could sell.

Nearly 25% of the population is officially unemployed. As a consequence consumption patterns have focused on the essentials such as food, clothing and housing with little disposable income left for cultural activities. Household expenditure on culture since 1990 has decreased from 4.6% to 2.7%, this is compared to 5.6% in Greece; 9% in Germany, 7.5% in France and 9.7% in the United Kingdom. Bulgaria has less ownership of TV's, radios and other communications means compared to the European average. Economic stratification has widened with the poorest 20% of the population generating 5.7% of income. Student numbers have decreased by 16% since 1990, both due to the declining birth rate, early school leavers partly conditioned by diminishing levels of state funding for education. Low level of pay for teachers and academics has caused a brain drain to other sectors within the economy and abroad.

## The historical context of Bulgaria's current cultural policy development

### The legacy of the past

The problems Bulgaria currently faces in developing its cultural policy stem largely from its communist legacy, whose historic features whilst common to other ex-communist regimes have perhaps remained more dominant than other countries within the former Soviet orbit. Its key attributes were:

- The over-riding dominance of the communist party, which stood above the state, and whose ideology determined state cultural policy and its implementation. The state was consequently seen as the 'great' and only provider.
- A comprehensive nationalisation of cultural institutions and the prohibition of private cultural initiative. Whilst towards the latter period of the Socialist regime there was some softening the essential character of a centrally managed system for culture remained effectively intact. As a consequence under the former regime there were no private theatres, TV or radio stations or publishing houses. As a consequence a supply situation was created without looking at demand. Furthermore as there was a so-called 'absence of unemployment' everybody had to be employed. This meant that staffing numbers in all organisations, including cultural ones, were inflated.
- The subjugation, therefore, of cultural initiatives towards broader ideological goals and the curtailment of true freedom of expression.
- Central planning of cultural activities from the top downwards in terms of the planning of infrastructure, activities and resourcing. Independent decision making was partly directly circumscribed or by self-censorship.
- The lack of any notion of a budget in conventional terms, if activities were politically desired resources were made available.
- Culture was organised from the schools upwards and including the workplace. Some companies even had cultural plans. In effect factories were one of the main sponsors of culture.
- The establishment of a comprehensive built infrastructure covering the whole of the country including theatres, museums, youth cultural centres and the massive expansion and re-orientation of the chitalishta.
- These developments led to an ambivalence. On the one hand peoples' choices were largely controlled, on the other hand the

decision to provide equality of access encouraged cheap prices for theatres, film and so on. There was, for example, a network of cultural animators, who organised cultural activities as a means of bringing culture to the people. They decided what performances groups of workers or school children would go to. This had positive aspects as it ensured wide access, yet it also meant people did not autonomously develop a real curiosity. There was an over-estimation as to how the collective consumption of culture would generate a self-sustaining interest. Indeed many found ways of avoiding these prescriptive cultural offers, and became what is known as 'dead souls', people who did not attend performances, but were counted in the statistics. Partially empty theatres were thus counted as full, raising serious question marks about all historic statistics.

As the national report notes: 'Visitor indicators were padded out with sales of tickets to students or conscripts. Normally entire performances would be bought en-bloc and almost nobody turned up. Such accounting tricks are not performed post 1989 because neither the military nor schools can afford to buy performances or concerts even at the lowest of prices'.

- The above resulted in the establishment of a uniform perspective on culture whereby issues of diversity, multiple identity or 'multi-culturality' found practically no scope to be explored, nor was there an engagement with modern art movements. Many argue that the political leadership had a limited view of cultural expression especially as over time a specific form of realism - socialist realism - came to dominate reducing especially in the visual arts the thematic range.
- A conscious detachment in large part from West European and many world cultural currents and a focus on cultural relations with other communist countries. However, fruitful relations were set up with countries like Japan, India and other Asian states. Nevertheless most Western culture was referred to as 'Ersatz or fake' culture implying that it was essentially bad. International cultural policy with non-communist states was less based on dialogue and the exploration of mutually beneficial opportunities and more on the idea of showing off the best the country had to offer and more 'to lavish fame on the fatherland'. Within the sphere of international cultural relations the Russian market played a crucial role both as supplier and importer of cultural product. However, within specific areas Bulgaria was an active exporter of cultural talent such as for orchestra musicians playing in East Germany.
- Importantly the artist had a privileged place in society, when they acted within established rules. A favoured few, chosen by the party, acted as ambassadors for culture and enjoyed particular privileges such as travel abroad. Given the significant role of culture in society

there was a well developed structure for formal, professional and vocational education in the arts and music, and those that moved into a career had guaranteed often lifelong employment. This may account for the relative lack of dissidents over a long period as in some sense there was no need to be dissident.

- Bulgaria clearly carries a strong historical burden as it has been practically always under an empire. After the 'Turkish yoke' there was a relatively short period of national revival in which the chitalishta played a central role before turning back full circle to subjugation under communism. For this reason Ur-Bulgarianism is of such importance as a means of remembering a past when Bulgaria was truly free. Nevertheless it needs to be recognised that Bulgarian culture is part of the Slavic orbit and that as such it missed out on developments in other European cultural regions and key moments of Western culture such as the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods. The national revival movement tried to re-establish those lost links through its drive westwards, before communism moved Bulgaria back into the Slavic orbit.

The Bulgarian cultural world under communism, especially the official one, thus largely had a self-referential, hermetic quality, reinforcing and reproducing itself within known boundaries, which restricted and hampered self-awareness and critical faculties.

#### The effect on mindset

This historical context has shaped all those concerned with culture both at an administrative and policy making level as well as those directly producing cultural product. The most important effect has been on the mindset of those involved in culture. Even though, throughout the regime and particularly towards its latter stages there were significant artistic figures, who stood in opposition and understood how in principle cultural activities could be run along different lines.

It is important to stress that not everyone was taken in. Not every cultural activity or product was levelled towards a pre-ordained norm. Within their own networks and private lives Bulgarian artists did not conduct merely a drab and humourless life. Many artists developed their own unique forms of sophisticated response to the regime, although largely under subterfuge and often under the disguise of irony, wit and humour, which expressed itself perhaps most cogently in caricature, jokes or story telling. So in many cases artists led a kind of double life. Much of the cultural energy in Bulgaria today draws on this peculiar history.

The essential features of this mindset are:

- An expectation that decision making is hierarchically structured and comes from the centre - the Ministry of Culture - downwards.

Responsibility for development, planning and ensuing rules and regulations comes from the centre.

'We still do not realise that we are now allowed to contact foreign museums directly without referring upwards' Museums official Burgas

- A recognition that positions and jobs were secure, provided one found a way of accommodating the regime.
- Self-reliance, responsibility and initiative has not been encouraged. In a sense there was no other responsibility beyond that which was decreed from above and so there was an absence of civic responsibility beyond that circumscribed by the party.
- A lack of focus on the needs of the user.
- Misinformation about the West and thus a picture was built up of the West that was in many ways 'fake' and illusory - both positively and negatively. Subsequently many have found the real experience of the West as a consequence somewhat disappointing.
- A concern that artistic independence is threatened through engagement with the market and that their artwork will be 'contaminated' as increasingly multi-national companies require artistic talent to sell product through media such as film, TV, music and publishing as well as advertising and design.

During a discussion on the need for artists to consider the new economic realities: 'I'm not the one to talk about money, it is a humiliation for me. It is the role of the state.' Artist Assenovgrad

- The notion of managing, as distinct from administering, implying as it does, for example, ideas of self-directed, purposeful action did not exist. Thus the concept of harnessing resources and managing them efficiently is not an acquired skill or a priority.

#### Consequences for the transition

After the changes in 1989 and once the transition to democracy and a market economy was agreed the attributes of this mindset and the manner by which cultural affairs had been centrally organised created substantial difficulties for those working in the cultural field:

At the cultural policy level these difficulties include:

- There is still appears to be an attitude that the ambit of concerns of the Ministry of Culture represent culture as a whole, in spite of the development of commercial, independent and voluntary cultural activities.

- In spite of the avowed move towards decentralisation and de-etatisation there is a tendency for policy makers, for example, within the Ministry of Culture still to wish to control affairs from the centre.
- Budgetary procedures remain largely structured according to pre-1989 rules. For example most grant levels are based on numbers of staff employed rather than the quality of product or range of output.
- Liberalising the conditions within which the subsidised cultural sector operates has remained inordinately slow and surrounded by obstacles. For example, getting a dedicated bank account for a subsidised theatre continues to be difficult and at times impossible as does reusing resources for the theatre from income generating activities.
- Resources are administered and not managed. An administratively driven approach is determined by what resources an organisation has and simply executes pre-ordained requirements. A management oriented approach by contrast focuses on where an organisation wishes to go and how it will achieve these aims. It thus has a focus on policy and strategic planning and in turn this has implications for training or human resource management, marketing and related issues.
- There was subsequently a lack of experience in the management of resources and how to think in these terms as previously the state has been the 'great provider'.
- Cultural affairs were essentially producer driven and there was no focus on the needs and desires of clients, users or audiences. As a consequence the skills of marketing are largely under or undeveloped.
- As foreign contacts were limited there is at times an over-expectation of what the West, in particular, can contribute to the development and stabilisation of Bulgaria's cultural life.

#### The broader effects of Bulgaria's recent isolation

Importantly the detachment from mainstream Europe and the relative isolation of Bulgaria has had additional more subtle effects, which condition both how Bulgaria sees the outside world and its possibilities and in turn how the outside sees Bulgaria.

As there no autonomous consumer behaviour in the past there is a desire to embrace wholeheartedly many of the good and the bad products of the West. Everything that was forbidden in the past - trashy magazines, pop music or American films - are now attractive. And that in turn has caused

### The transition and the development of Bulgarian culture

Key effects of the transition after 1989 according to the national report have been:

- A liberation in principle of artistic creativity and cultural life.
- A growing diversity of cultural aspirations and needs through greater contact with Europe and the world and greater access to the modern commercial cultural industries.
- A revived focus on the traditional aspects of Bulgarian cultural life such as folklore and religion, as well as attempts to maintain Bulgarian national culture through legislative means.
- Some structural reforms such as in publishing or film.
- A decline in cultural consumption of the high arts and reduced activity by key cultural institutions such as theatres or museums through a chronic shortage of funds. An increasing attraction to American popular culture, especially amongst the young.
- Destabilisation and crisis conditions within most traditional subsidised, cultural institutions which is sapping morale, demotivating and curtailing creativity.
- The increasing dissonance between theoretical freedom of expression and the dire consequences of the economic realities.
- Inadequate resources and legislative levers to protect cultural heritage from destruction and theft.
- Inadequate management skills at every level to manage the transition.

a reaction from official institutions. So reactions and counter-reactions oscillate between extremes.

Also as one interviewee noted 'Bulgaria is a country that dreams, it lives on the myths of its past' and given Bulgaria's somewhat tortured history its approach to its own 'Bulgarianness' at times comes across as defensive. At the same time there is an urgent sense of wanting to become part of Europe, which has effectively come to mean Western Europe and especially the institutions of the European Union and Council of Europe. Largely this is driven by the prospect of resources. Yet this threatens 'to throw the baby out with the bathwater' by failing to capitalise on those aspects of the traditional relationships with the East and South, especially Turkey, that might have been positive and that may in the longer term have equally as much to offer. Here we need to bear in mind that in many ways Bulgaria has more in common with the East simply through the historic accident of where the Cyrillic script travelled to. In that sense the script is also something that divides Bulgaria from large parts of Europe yet also links it with others.

There is also a perception that Europe is waiting to welcome Bulgaria unconditionally which is unrealistic, because Western Europe is pre-occupied with its own agendas and priorities. Thus as it faces towards the



former communist countries of the East it has an array of choices to make with its own limited resources - and often those choices are geared towards countries who appear to have developed most speedily to liberal democracy.

The 40 years of isolation have had further insidious effects by cutting off Bulgaria from international trends and standards in art. Whilst it is not for outsiders to be too judgmental, yet in comparison with mainstream European trends, notwithstanding - notable exceptions especially in classical music - the visual arts, theatre, pop music, jewellery making, industrial art or architecture have some headway to make in terms of creativity and sophistication. Many Bulgarians have simply not had the opportunity to make comparisons.

The problem lies not at the level of formal technique or technology used, but is rather more a reflection of the lack of open debate over decades that in turn feeds back into the communicative capacity of any work of art. This affects the themes chosen, their depth of expression and how cultural issues affect other areas of public life such as economic development or tourism. Thus core notions within cultural policy such as the contribution creativity and innovation might play in cultural life have been interpreted in more narrow terms.

As one interviewee crisply noted; 'We simply have no sense of what is strong and weak - we need to be aware that many Bulgarian art forms are simply not up to a world stage'. Or as one academic specialist noted: 'Most of us don't look at culture in the same way that you do in the West, so it is difficult to communicate'.

Taste is ultimately a question of subjective opinion and attitudes are often embedded so they cannot change over night. Yet if cultural exchanges are to be mutually rewarding issues of quality, common standards, common language and common assumptions inevitably come into play. Thus mutual expectations are generated and framed by a joint understanding of these deeper seated dynamics.

This kind of argument clearly raises contentious and sensitive issues, which may from an internally focused Bulgarian point of view look completely different - it is their culture of which they naturally proud. Given culture's role in defining identity, which is being re-explored, Bulgarian priorities are more important than those of other Europeans. So for Bulgarians folklore, the chitalischta or the displays in museums have an importance that do not necessarily relate to Europe wide concerns.

Nevertheless the concept of tradition may appear to outsiders still too rigid and backwards looking without a focus on how that tradition can be reinterpreted in 21st century terms - and this is a key role of cultural policy. To take a current example, 'Riverdance' one of the most popular musicals of the 1990's has re-invigorated and re-interpreted classical Irish step dancing to such an extent that it has not only developed new forms, but also increased the popularity of its traditional counterpart.

In sum, the long isolation has separated Bulgaria and the integration of Bulgarian art and culture into the mainstream of Europe has not yet occurred after 7 years of transition, especially when that transition has arguably been haphazardly managed. These developments have caused disappointment and as a consequence a defensive attitude towards the possibilities of the transition. These factors both self-imposed in terms of mindset and externally created by the way the Ministry and legal system operates has caused immense frustration especially for those who held such high expectations from the transition. This highlights simply that Europe is not one, homogenous cultural family with developments happening at a similar pace.

#### The failure of expectations

At the macro-level the failure of expectations on the Bulgarian side included:

- There still exists a democratic deficit whereby freedom of difference and the acceptance of different opinions is taken for granted. At times there is a sense that democratic procedures are viewed as somewhat akin to 'anarchy'. The concept of rights associated with responsibilities is as yet under-developed, as is crucially the understanding that democracy cannot only be invented by law, but through the development of civil society. There is, for example, a lack of priority in encouraging NGO's within the cultural sector, which in turn would engender a more urgent debate and action on radical de-centralisation.

At the same time the new forces, embodied in organisations such as the Cyril and Methodius or Soros Foundations, had fervent hopes of getting a firm grip on the transformation process and being able to align it to contemporary European trends. Yet as one student interviewee succinctly, yet sadly noted, 'we are the lost generation, for us it is a pure struggle, it is only the next generation that will benefit'.

- The capacity to express oneself freely. 'We are free in principle, but not independent' as someone noted. Whilst within the press a plethora on new newspapers have opened public debate, this is less true for the electronic media, where a range of regulations, guidelines and simple favouritism still privileges state controlled media. This includes the conditions upon which licenses or frequencies are distributed, or how advertising from state owned companies still buttresses state owned media.
- A firmly held hope that the landscape of cultural provision would broadly stay in tact and survive and a belief that the state's role, interests and power would diminish whilst financial resources would not. In fact, finances have reduced dramatically and many

cultural activities have been curtailed and the end of intervention by the state has not occurred to the degree hoped for. A mass of regulations hinders subsidised cultural organisations working autonomously including the capacity to control their finances. Bureaucratic procedures circumscribe the scope for action, such as when museums seek to generate their own products for sale like replicas or postcards. New initiative is curtailed, for example, by the structure of grant payments, which still occurs largely according to staff levels. This limits the possibilities of investing resources in new product.

- The hope that privatisation and functional decentralisation would take place. One important step was initiated in 1991 when arms length national centres for various art forms were set up. However, in 1996 that decision was rescinded and the centres were brought back into the direct ambit of the Ministry.
- The anticipation that the world would welcome Bulgaria with open, receptive arms once the changes had been initiated and the assumption that the outside world would recognise the unique contribution of Bulgarian culture to the development of the 'European family of cultures'.

As a result there is a growing frustration at a number of levels - materially, in terms of confidence and psychologically. It exists both on the part of recipients of subsidies, many of whom would wish to operate according to principled market economy conditions as well as the Ministry, which in part through its own actions is exacerbating the situation, yet is becoming impatient with the growing financial pressures it operates under.

#### **Bright sparks on the horizon**

It is easy to list imperfections and to pontificate, as an outsider, about the need for change when one does not directly experience the conditions under which attempts to change are occurring. Furthermore the experts need to recognise that not all is necessarily rosy on their own side of the fence.

It is for this reason that any criticism needs to be tempered by an appreciation of the positive initiatives and developments that have occurred. Some examples, chosen from different areas, flesh out to some extent the picture, they include at random:

- Theatre festivals such as the Ecofest in Sliven have been organised highlighting the link between the arts and the environment. Independent theatre groups, such as La Strada have been founded whose repertoire has broadened well beyond the classical tradition.
- Folklore festivals, such as that in Koprivshitsa, have increased the range of participants indicating a revived interest in the folk arts.

- Arts education has been maintained at a high level in spite of the financial difficulties under which such education operates.
- Some chitalishta have rethought their role and functions to create informal learning centres relevant to specific local needs.
- A new generation of artists has emerged with particular impact in fields like literature, where new writers are emerging who are reinventing the idea of the Bulgarian novel and finding new forms of poetry; similar developments are occurring in theatre and theatre scenery making.
- Puppet theatre has continued to develop at a high standard with some performances gaining international recognition.
- Pop concerts have been organised to protest about the lack of democracy and control of key levers of the economy by the mafia.
- A number of private galleries have managed to combine selling traditional art works and using the profits to support young up and coming artists. In turn some entrepreneurs are sponsoring private art galleries without looking to personal profit.
- The new Bulgarian university has developed a cultural management course, whose curriculum compares favourably with those offered in the West.
- Ensemble orchestras have been set up, which operate without the need for subsidy.
- In tourist resorts such as Varna, Nesebar and Burgas older people, especially women, are maintaining and to some extent reviving crafts traditions, and selling their products as a means of generating a secondary income.
- Some heritage sites have found ways of combining contemporary art galleries and shops to support their town's cultural infrastructure.
- Individuals in the performing arts have found ways of independently connecting to international organisations and networks.
- The successful development of co-productions in film through the Euroimage initiative.
- Regional co-operation initiatives to develop tourism areas.

- A range of foundations such as Cyril and Methodius and Soros are supporting independent cultural initiatives in a diversity of fields stretching from libraries, visual arts, the performing arts to heritage interpretation and conservation.
- There are cultural workers in traditional institutions and elsewhere inventively trying to overcome the limitations of finance and structure, for example by renting out spaces and using the profits to reinvest in new product or by finding means to attract an emerging new breed of sponsors.
- The Ministry has found ways of raising substantial funds from abroad such as resources from Japan to re-equip the instruments in the music academy.
- Showing the highlights of Bulgarian culture abroad such as the Thracian gold which is currently touring in the States.
- There are cultural activists and critics who are helping to create new legislation, suggesting new types of institution or even forcing their views on to politicians as when the recent chitalishta law was changed to from a more centralised conception to one based more on local control. Thus public opinion is beginning to find a voice.

Whilst these initiatives have not emerged as part of some homogenous grouping there is to some extent an implicit congruence of ideas and approach. Those involved are not necessarily joined by age, background or profession. Many are younger people who have inevitably found it easier to adapt to change and we heard comments from young artists such as 'I am excited by the prospect of change, I feel there are no barriers for me'. Yet it was also noticeable that a high proportion were also older people, who were young in spirit, who did not fit the clichéd view of elderly people being conservative.

One poignant comment by a particularly creative and effective librarian was: 'The transition created real psychological problems for me at first, and I still have problems in constantly trying to adapt, but I know I need to, although it would be so much easier to just let things be'.

As a grouping they thus embody a generational shift in terms of mentality, values and philosophy. Their initiatives are essentially part a struggle between the old guard and an emerging new generation more in tune with the demands of a liberal democracy and market economy. Significantly the point has been reached where even the languages used by both parties are so different that there is no common ground for communication. Whilst it is difficult to assess the overall impact of these positive developments clearly with more support they could go much further.

Although progressive attitudes do not necessarily fit the age matrix generational issues were neatly summarised by a group of student leaders and an official from the ministry. Their comments include the following:

' There is one type of person who is blocked and is unlikely to change; there is another grouping, rather like us, who are willing to go towards the future. But we have difficulties we are the sacrificed generation.....we will not see the real benefits'( student leader)

'Most of those over 50 will never face reality; those between 35-50 will have to, but are unhappy and there are those under 35 who will manage....no problem, they will find their way whatever the cost'. (ministry official)

'As the Chinese saying goes....it is a curse to live in interesting times.... we are the victims of the transition to democracy..... and yet youth is the medium of the transition' (student leader)

'We are largely working against the existing, in important ways unchanged structure rather than with a structure that encourages us'.(official)

#### The next step: Setting the agenda

The legacy of the past and the response to the transition both in the cultural sector and elsewhere sharply focuses on the problems that urgently need to be addressed, they include:

- ° **The lack of a wide-ranging public debate about the future of public investment in culture amongst all interested parties.** Discussion has naturally taken place within specific sectors or the Ministry, but not jointly between politicians, professionals, academics, the commercial cultural sector and communities as to what levels of support can be achieved and afforded, given competing interests, and what therefore the appropriate level of support might be and for what purposes.
- ° **Current levels of cultural infrastructure cannot be supported in the longer term** through state or local subsidy. The experts query the need for the amount state funded theatres, opera houses or 4228 chitalishta. At present they have 'too much to die and too little to live'. In those cultural industries sectors such as film or publishing the dramatic consequences of state withdrawal have become apparent negatively in the case of film and positively in the case of publishing.
- ° **Endemic over-staffing is part of the communist legacy, but current legal frameworks do not allow state subsidised cultural institutions to tackle these problems effectively.** Clearly this represents a social problem of major proportions and to some extent cultural institutions are acting as proxies for the social affairs department by keeping many people employed - if in fact under-employed.

- **Traditional expertise is proving inadequate to the task of running culture within a market economy** particularly those working at the ministry, within local authorities or academic institutions. This creates a major training challenge as officials need to learn about strategic and financial planning, marketing approaches to the development of cultural initiatives and policy evaluation based on different criteria than political expediency and perhaps more concerned with issues such as quality or output performance.
- **A lack of leadership by the Ministry of Culture, which has the power and capacity to change the rules of the game** and is still the pivotal cultural institution. It has expressed some general priorities to decentralise and de-etatise, but has continually changing priorities in terms of the cultural sectors. Since 1989 there have been 6 ministers of culture, whose priorities have differed. As someone acerbically noted: 'Yesterday we got a new minister and today we have a new policy'. As a consequence the notion of what cultural policy might be rests on perpetually shifting sands.
- **Decentralisation the key tenet of the Ministry's current policy often appears like disengagement** and thus comes across as confused. Whilst laudable in intent its effects come across as 'passing the buck', as when say theatres are passed over the local authorities control in the knowledge that they have no or inadequate resources to maintain them. They rather than the state then in turn come across as the villain of the piece should an institution be closed.
- **An atmosphere of crisis has stultified new artistic development.** Older communist ideas of what constitutes art have been rejected, but because of the crisis conditions new forms have been slow to emerge. Furthermore persistent cut backs at least in real terms has sapped morale and led to a crisis mentality. Importantly when cutbacks occur they tend to happen equally across the board on the basis of the 'lawnmower principle' rather than on the basis either of a plan to cut some facilities completely in order to secure the survival of the rest or on the basis of agreed quality criteria.
- **The lack of speed in moving towards a market economy** has meant that the arts market is insufficiently developed and the role of intermediaries such as dealers, producers or impresarios remains in its infancy. Cultural policy has not focused on these issues.
- **The linkages between culture and other sectors of the economy such as small business and tourism have not been made** in a structured way. There are, for example academic programmes on culture and on tourism, but none on cultural tourism. The Ministry of Culture has not made a concerted effort to understand the needs of the tourism industry and that industry in turn has not taken on board

that the health of Bulgaria's cultural heritage and living culture relates to their own success.

There is still thus a tendency to see arts and culture as isolated from economic, social and political development.

- On the other hand core precepts such as accessibility to cultural resources and education which were central to the former regime's activities will be increasingly difficult to maintain through a number of factors including reduced funding, spiralling prices due to inflation and insufficient resources for exhibitions, shows and the like. Even within education hard choices will need to be made, such as will trained musicians actually be able to get a job in the new circumstances.
- Connected to the above is the brain drain, especially of the most gifted, many who feel there are no jobs, progress or future for themselves in Bulgaria. As a consequence there is the danger that Bulgaria becomes a training ground for people who make their careers elsewhere and essentially receives no benefits it only accrues costs.

In other ex-communist countries the development of civil society has ironically been a key factor in creating a reverse brain drain by getting émigrés to return in spite of lower pay. Yet their challenge has been to be part of the creation of a new society. By contrast Christo one of Bulgaria's most famous artist, is not even known as Bulgarian and nor does he want to be identified as such.

#### The crisis beyond culture

The issues raised here go far beyond merely the concerns of the cultural sector and relate to how far the transition as a whole has been managed. The cultural sector does not stand as an autonomous island detached from other economic, social and political forces. And it is taking these other developments into account that forces us to reach a preliminary conclusion that the scenario for the cultural sector, especially the subsidised one looks very bleak. As a consequence Bulgaria's cultural policy makers face a stark choice either to watch by as the cultural sector slides inexorably into a painful, continuous decline with associated ructions or to reinvent the landscape within cultural policy occurs by setting the pre-conditions for culture to re-emerge strengthened.

The reality of the Bulgarian situation is:

- Political instability, an underdeveloped civil society and a fundamental lack of political reform
- A substantially delayed process of moving to the market economy, with privatisation only now beginning to take effect. World Bank



economic reports suggests that these delays have cost the state up to 40% of the expected value of sales.

- Rampant inflation and continued decline in production.
- A partial collapse of the banking system.
- Increased impoverishment of large segments of the population and a decline in real disposable income.
- Continued unresolved problems of restitution.
- Worries about corruption reaching even to the highest levels.

As a consequence the IMF and World Bank are withholding international loans until fundamental economic reforms have been initiated and are demanding the establishment of a currency board, which effectively takes control of Bulgaria's economic levers out of the local hands.

In the context of these difficulties culture inevitably takes a back seat. It is very difficult to argue for cultural investment when basic conditions for survival are so threatened. What is more important the survival of a theatre or getting bread on the table or creating jobs? Thus the context for supporting culture is far worse than for other sectors even ones such as in investment in science research where the tangible benefits are more visible. Particularly as those sectors now largely subsidised such as theatre or opera, given that publishing and film have been largely privatised, are seen as spending rather than income generating sectors. The argument for cultural investment therefore needs to become far more sophisticated and focused on how it can contribute to solving Bulgaria's ills. With declining funding for culture in Western Europe since the late 1980's cultural policy makers there have faced similar dilemmas and as a consequence they have needed to recast their arguments for cultural investment too.

The crisis is thus so deep that it cannot be simply dealt with by a series of strategic initiatives, such as the aim to decentralise, worthy as these may be. What is therefore striking is that there is no national debate on the future of the cultural sector.

### The objectives of Bulgarian cultural policy

The broad objectives of cultural policy, as defined by the National Report are to:

- Recognise and encourage the autonomy of culture both in terms of expression and institutional structure.
- Preserve Bulgarian national cultural identity and guarding it against 'foreign socio-cultural models'(sic )
- Promote artistic creativity by creating the conditions for traditional as well as innovative culture.
- Enhancing the living conditions of artists.
- Pursuing an active policy of international cultural relations.

The means by which this is to be achieved is by:

- Creating favourable conditions to preserve, enrich and develop the cultural environment in all its forms.
- Satisfying the cultural needs of different social strata through collaboration of all kinds of cultural organisations and by popularising, promoting and passing on cultural values to the next generation.
- Encouraging cultural enterprise of all kinds.
- Providing the legislative and regulatory framework for cultural activities to operate within a market economy. This includes changes in taxation and the funding system as well as allowing the establishment of joint stock companies.
- Encouraging the setting up of foundations for independent support of culture.
- Supporting 'socially significant and artistic and cultural initiatives'.
- 'Rendering assistance and effective aid to the Bulgarian orthodox church'.
- Improving cultural management.
- Decentralising control of culture.
- Increasing the financial and management autonomy of subsidised cultural institutions.

### How is cultural policy implemented?

- Cultural policy is implemented ultimately through the National Assembly in parliament and executed by a Council of Ministers through the Ministry of Culture. At the local level there is self-determination.
- The Ministry of Culture determines the principles, methods and strategy of national cultural policy; advocates and disburses its budget proposals in agreement with the Council of Ministers
- The Ministry drafts legislation and rules of procedure and carries out the monitoring and implementation of copyright laws. It assists and supervises the activity of non-profit organisations and monitors, through research and the gathering of statistics, the state of culture. It assists in the development of international cultural co-operation and organises personnel and management training in the cultural sector.
- It is headed a minister who is aided by 2 deputies and a chief secretary and there is a collegium of the ministry which acts in a consultative manner and is made up of senior staff and external advisors.
- A major vehicle to develop and implement cultural policy are a series of specialist national centres concerned with theatre; music and dance; film; chitalishta, libraries and amateur art; copyright; museums, galleries and visual arts and for monuments of culture.
- The objectives of each centre is similar to support, stimulate, fund and monitor activities within their sphere of competence. The means vary according sector. For example, the book centre administers a Book Promotion programme which supports the translation into and from Bulgarian as well as financially supporting the publication of less commercial yet important texts.
- There are 8 national cultural institutions such as the National Library, National Museum of History, the National Opera and Ballet all based in Sofia which are under direct control of the Ministry.

### The key problems highlighted in the national report include:

- Delays in the passage of relevant legislation due to the tight schedule of the National Assembly largely as a consequence of the lack of priority given to cultural matters.
- Insufficient co-ordination between the bodies implementing cultural policy on a national and local level, especially in the context of desired de-centralisation.
- Lack of trained staff to operate within a market oriented economy.
- Lack of information communication between actors involved in cultural decision making.
- Large financial restrictions imposed on municipal budgets.
- A lack of trained staff capable of dealing with the new conditions, including the increased responsibility for local administrators for devolved cultural institutions.
- Poor co-ordination with central state bodies responsible for culture.
- Salaries for cultural administrators are 20% below the national average.

## Section Two: A framework for rethinking cultural policy

### Key issues : An Introduction

The broader context outlined in Part 1 of this report indicates that the development of culture is unsustainable under present conditions. This conclusion is not overtly reached or explicitly stated in the Bulgarian national report, yet the objective political, economic and social facts lead to this verdict. It is an assessment that formed an undercurrent of many of our discussions with artists, policy makers in the cultural field and outside observers.

The expert group concur with the underlying policy objectives to democratise, decentralise, and to 'de-etatisise' cultural institutions, objectives which are in line with European trends. However, we believe that in practice substantial movement in this direction still needs to occur.

We recognise that budgets are extremely limited and that in combination with legal restrictions there is little room for manoeuvre to deal with issues such as overstaffing or over supply of theatres. In this context the development of comparative statistics takes on an important role as a tool for policy making as they will show how other countries address operate in the field of culture.

As a consequence the position of culture within Bulgaria and how it might develop has to be re-assessed from first principles and argued for in new ways. Whereas in the former communist period there was a clear sense of what culture was, however limited, what its function in society should be and how it should be administered there is now a vacuum. Indeed as someone noted: 'Culture is now the last item on our agenda'. Reinforcing our view that the potential role of culture and cultural policy is insufficiently being addressed.

Given that one of the main objectives of the transition is to link Bulgaria into the mainstream of Europe this raises 3 fundamental questions about the development of democracy, the nature of the market economy and the definition of culture itself. If there is a clear understanding on these three issues the prospects for culture might be enhanced.

## Democracy and the role of civil society

### Rights and responsibilities

Bulgarians are told they are beginning to live in a democratic society, yet their day to day experience is more akin to anarchy. This is not because democracy is in any sense a faulty concept, but because it is under-developed in Bulgaria. It is anchored in authority through the notion of cross linked rights and responsibilities. Its core is freedom of human rights, associational life, the delegation of responsibilities to the lowest possible levels and the creation of change through debate.

### Lack of authority

The transition period ironically has led to a lack of authority where rights are at times under-developed and responsibilities not taken. There are currently 3 competing centres of power - formal state power, unofficial power expressed through informal structures and networks such as the 'mafia' and the power created through the development of civil society. Ideally a strong civil society, guaranteed through the state, would provide the anchor for development. Yet in Bulgaria, it seems, civil society is not sufficiently advanced, although in the period between 1991-1993 there were significant breakthroughs, which have retrenched since then.

The state, by contrast, formally still has overwhelming powers, but in reality in many areas in the economy especially the informal one it is largely marginal. Yet its administrative culture with its habit to control and to stake a special role for itself remains often to the detriment of development including in the cultural sector. The concept of enabling management is not apparent. The 'mafia' although not an explicit and cohesive force has become a powerful undercover authority in its own right which is dangerous and appears to be gaining power in any area where profit or commercial advantage exists. None of the sides currently has the upper hand and it is the battle between these competing forces that is creating confusion and lack of clarity.

### Democracy and cultural development

What have these deep structural issues got to do with culture and cultural development? They are central, because they set the parameters and habits of mind within which power and authority is executed and particularly how democratic processes operate on the day to day level.

Yet the Ministry and other state departments often confuse, for instance, their legislative and framework setting role with one of execution and control and thus on occasion set themselves up in competition to non-public organisations in the cultural field.

State owned publishing houses still have privileges in that plant, machinery and premises are supplied by the state at no cost; state

controlled TV and radio licensing authorities put commercial operators at a disadvantage by granting frequencies or signal power that makes it difficult to operate profitably; state owned companies as a consequence privilege state owned media when disbursing advertising budgets. As a consequence legislation and economics work to strengthen state structures at the expense of commercial operators.

There are other examples of this type where the state authorities act in seemingly arbitrary ways. For instance, Bulgaria has a copyright law based on European standards, yet we heard that state radio and TV do not pay royalties, precisely when it is state authorities who should be presenting themselves as examples of best practice. For private radio and TV operators and even the general public this undermines the credibility of the state and law itself.

#### The role of the Ministry of Culture

The primary role of the Ministry should be to provide the legislative context and framework within which culture can develop. This means creating core legislation such as the copyright law that allow cultural activities to develop within explicit rules and importantly applying, adapting or interpreting existing general laws, such as those on associations or private companies, so that they are relevant to the cultural sector. Thus once a general law exists allowing the setting up of companies there is no need for a specific theatre version of that law. This should obviate the need for specific cultural laws of which there only need to be a few such as on the details of heritage protection. That aside the role of the Ministry is to suggest rules, guidelines or measures and through its policies and programmes to encourage directions for activities that do not have the status of law yet derive from general purpose laws which can direct cultural development, but which are more flexible and subject to change as needs require. There is currently a tendency to produce a law on every specific detail which has created a massive legal backlog with approximately 1200 laws in all areas needing to be processed that could take up to 10 years to overcome.

The Ministry should not be a direct producer of culture itself, but the **encourager, enabler, facilitator, protector and advocate for culture, whose activities and products are carried out by others.** Its role is thus not to 'create culture'. This avoids possible contradictions as the role of partners is specifically defined. So its role is not to make money out of culture, but through mechanisms such as license fees and the like to generate general resources that are redistributed along policy guidelines. This is essentially a description of the arm's length principle. That aside the Minister of Culture should also be the 'conscience' of the government looking at any field, which relates to culture. By creating links of this kind the budget of the Ministry could indirectly expand dramatically.

The Ministry, however, does not operate in this way. The most pertinent example is its relationship to the national art form centres, of which there

To indicate the dangers of over-emphasising laws and the confusions and lack of clarity this can sometimes create we quote from the Reading Rooms/Chitalischta Act 1996. Transitional and Concluding Provisions paragraph 7 reads:

The Local Taxes and Levies Act as re-enacted in Izvestia No. 104 of 1952 and amended in No. 10 of 1952 and amended and amplified in No. 12 of 1954 and No. 104 of 1954 and No. 91 of 1957 and No. 13 of 1958 and No. 57 of 1959 and No. 89 of 1959 and No. 21 of 1960 and No. 91 of 1960 and in Dwrjaven vestnik No. 85 of 1963 and No. 1 of 1965 and No. 52 of 1965 and No. 53 of 1973 and No. 87 of 1974 and No. 21 of 1975 and No. 102 of 1977 and No. 88 of 1978 and No. 36 of 1979 and No. 99 of 1981 and No. 55 of 1984 and No. 73 of 1987 and No. 33 and 97 of 1988 and No. 21 and No. 30 of 1990 and No. of 1991 and No. 59 of 1993 and 40 of 1995 and No. 14 of 1996 and ruling No. 3 of 1996 of the constitutional court amended in Dwrjaven vestnik No. 20 of 1996 and No. 37 and No. 58 of 1996 and ruling No. 9 of the constitutional court shall hereby be amplified as follows: - 7.1 in Article 6.m thereof shall be added the passage "and Reading Rooms" to be at the end thereof; 7.2. in Article 41.a.1. thereof shall be added the passage "41.a.1.v. donations to Reading Rooms."

are 8 covering all areas from monument protection, museums and galleries to theatres, books, music and libraries. The centres were indeed set up as independent organisations in 1991, at a time when the current minister was vice-minister. The power of policy implementation was delegated to them with overall policy set by the Ministry; it was one of the most forward looking initiatives taken by the Ministry. Yet in the summer of 1996 all bar the national centre for film were re-incorporated within the Ministry, because they 'did not have budgetary experience'. Thus the centres are claimed to be independent, but in reality are not, both because the advisory boards are nominated by the Ministry and because they have no budgetary freedom. The national centres both determine the legislative context within which they operate, but also determine who should get funding, creating the possibility whereby people could be deciding on their own grants. They thus help develop policy, but also control most of the levers to implement it, creating a possible conflict of function and interest and undermining the notion of accountability. When the centres were independent there was a healthy power play between the Ministry, which looked at overall strategy and political issues and the centres which advocated for and promoted the different art forms.

That overarching problem aside, there have been 7 ministers since the changes in 1989 leading to a lack of consistency in approach and policy. Furthermore the minister to whom we reported was presidential candidate in the autumn of 1996 effectively engendering a crisis of decision making for 4 months.

These circumstances have caused the Ministry to lose authority within the cultural community, its image has worsened and it is perceived in many quarters as representing the 'old guard'. It has not yet addressed its internal training, reskilling and management development agenda, in spite of the fact that many talented, committed and enthusiastic individuals operate within it. The fundamental shift in approach both to its own role, method of working and assessment of skills to run a modern ministry has not yet sufficiently been made. We recognise that it is easy to comment in this way

and difficult carry such major changes out, nevertheless only if such a shift occurs will it be possible for the ministry to work effectively.

There are thus 2 central agendas. The first relates to the enhancement of internal skills, the second to a shift in mindset about how the ministry should operate. Only once these are coherently addressed can issues already raised, such as working more cross departmentally, such as with tourism, economic development or education, or creating partnerships to harness the potential of culture, be fully worked through.

#### The strategic role of arts education

An important link for the Ministry of Culture is with education. One of the major positive legacies from the former regime was its well developed infrastructure for arts education. In spite of financial difficulties this has to a large extent been maintained and ensures that pupils learn fine arts and music from the first to ninth grade for two hours per week. In addition extra-curricular opportunities are provided from dance, folklore, children's theatre to music making, providing important opportunities for leisure time activity. Currently arts education falls under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture and thus its linkage to the Ministry of Education, which appears to be good, and even trade and economic development, which appears very undeveloped, is key as all are concerned with the skills base of Bulgarians

Education provides the core for any subsequent cultural activity and provides the basis for entering the labour market and any ladders of opportunity that may emerge. All arts organisations benefit from this whether operating in the commercial or non-commercial sphere. Art education is thus a public or merit good that cannot solely operate on market principles. Indeed instead it might argued that mechanisms should be developed for commercial organisations that benefit from the state's investment in education to assist in furthering arts education. This might be through tax credits.

#### Municipalities and regions

There is no doubt that the role of municipalities in cultural affairs needs to grow in the future. This is in accordance with the ministry's objective to decentralise and democratise and is based on the principle of subsidiarity whereby decision making is taken to its lowest possible level of effectiveness. In the context of encouraging civil society their role is crucial.

The Bulgarian government has stated its commitment to the strengthening of local government, yet despite some positive achievements in providing a legal framework for its development the division of competencies between deconcentrated state agencies, regions and municipalities remains ambiguous and in practice often creates confusion. Furthermore decentralisation of responsibilities to



municipalities is not matched by a capacity to finance delegated responsibilities ranging from infrastructure, such as housing, roads and public transport, to economic development and social affairs, such as education, culture and health care.

In addition central government maintains firm control over the activities of local authorities. Financial management, budgeting, revenue generation and expenditures are still usually centrally controlled. A law on local authority finance is only due to be prepared for 1998. Furthermore an indication of the relative weight of central government vis-a-vis local authorities can be seen in the number now working in newly deconcentrated state agencies - 36,000, against 20,000 working in local government. Indeed the former often without clear legal basis interfere in the activities of local government staff.

In this context, for example, the laudable attempts to reach agreement with municipalities to co-fund theatres on a basis of 50% state, 30% municipalities and 20% earned income seem hollow, when municipalities do not have the financial power or the capacity to raise finance to fill their side of the bargain.

Yet in spite of these problems municipalities are already beginning to set up associations to lobby and pursue joint interests. In particular these include tourism development and marketing initiatives of direct relevance to cultural tourism. There is no regional tier of government in any true sense, and thus associational work between municipalities increases in importance. The regional tier is represented by a regional governor appointed by the Council of Ministers. However the Ministry for Regional Development and Construction also plays a key role in drafting legislation and playing a central government counterpart for local authorities. Importantly, though, the governor supervises the legality of decisions of municipalities and can indeed suspend the implementation of council acts.

From a cultural policy perspective a regional dimension is important to develop strategic policy, to maximise resources, to avoid duplication and to consider the hierarchy of needs that may be necessary in a region. So for example, within a region perhaps only one place should afford a comprehensive library, or a full fledged theatre company or orchestra, rather than each providing their own small entity without sufficient critical mass.

#### Civil society and partnership

The disparate web of civil society organisations and individuals that aside from their role as potential users of culture play a crucial role in helping to develop and comment on cultural policy. This has occurred already very positively as when public debate and media attention organised by such critics was able to change the law on chitalishta so that it reflected more closely the needs of a democratic society. Furthermore many civil

organisations may themselves be culturally oriented and their activities are thus an integral part of the cultural spectrum.

Importantly a strong civil society can change peoples' sense of their own empowerment. This in turn gives citizens something to strive for and has been shown to be significant in other post-communist countries in helping to reverse the brain drain by attracting cultural figures to return. Lack of democracy can thus itself be a cause of brain drain.

This notion of partnership, the sharing of power and the creation of a level playing field between different institutions is an undeveloped idea in Bulgaria - yet even in the West there is much headway to be made in this sphere. It is for this reason that the pivotal significance of civil society is being argued for here and with renewed and increasing vigour in the West. In the West the context is different, but the core underlying questions to be addressed remain the same for all countries. In the West it has two parallel strands. The first concerns ameliorating the overweening power of business through the development within business of corporate and civic responsibility and a focus within business on the public good. The second the recognition that state and public institutions need to become more enabling and more entrepreneurial. The 'invisible glue or web' that is seen to hold society together is in empowered individuals who make up civil society, who keep the powers of the state in check and provide a buffer against the growth of unchecked informal power.

Thus the challenge to civil society comes not only from the state, but also unofficial power structures. We heard and, of course, there is no proof, that the way licensing agreements were granted lacked transparency; or that the right to handle the advertising budgets of key multinationals in Bulgaria was open to dishonesty. More insidiously and worrying we heard how any activity that involved commercial gain put honest operators at a disadvantage. The prime example remains the illegal copying of tapes, CD's and videos, which both undercut prices and whose producers do not pay royalties. As a result even some of the most successful Bulgarian pop stars cannot live on their royalties. These illegal production facilities are controlled by 'mafia' type figures who are not averse to using violence and the threat of violence to maintain their position. Who they are is known apparently, but they remain untouched. Their operations have far reaching effects, because it means that no true cultural industry markets can develop. Honest producers cannot generate capital for re-investment both in equipment and to pay artists advances; the development of real distribution networks is stunted and artists find it difficult to survive.

Matters of civil society can centrally determine the development of cultural activities in Bulgaria yet have not received the explicit recognition they deserve in policy terms from the Ministry of Culture. Unless the underlying democratic fundamentals are addressed, whatever energy or will there is to do cultural activities will be constrained. In the longer term it is more cost-effective to spend or even divert resources and time on

questions of democracy and ensuring legal principles are held to than to traditional funding operations.

#### Subsidy patterns in culture

- The proportion of expenditure spent on culture within the national budget is 1.37%.
- Expenditure on culture within the consolidated state budget since 1990 has increased 10 fold, but declined in real terms by 1995 by 80%
- \* The Ministry of Culture's budget, which does not include expenditure on TV or radio, has increased 5 fold since 1991, but declined in real terms to 58% .
- Average earned income for cultural institutions has remained largely static between 1988 and 1993 - at 3.5%, although specific institutions such as theatres have increased their share substantially.
- The proportion of expenditure between the state and municipalities has not changed significantly since 1989 moving from 70% state and 30% municipalities to 64% state and 36% municipalities in 1995.
- Within the Ministry funding is apportioned as follows in 1995, figures in brackets refer to 1991:
  - 18% on theatres ( 20.3% ) ;
  - 11.8% on opera ( 12.3% ) ;
  - 15.8% on educational establishments (14.4%)
  - 6.6% on orchestras (5.5%)
  - 4.69% on film (7.37%)
  - 3.3% on international activity (2.6%).
- Within some sectors such as opera the state provides nearly all funds - 98%, whereas in others such as theatres it represents 56% and museums it only 33%, local authorities taking up the bulk of the rest.
- 93.3% of the Ministry's funds are spent on current expenses of which salaries represent the greatest proportion, for example 76% in opera, 68% in theatre and 59% in education. Funds allocated for capital investment are 6.4% 1-2% of funds are allocated to projects as distinct from existing institutions.
- Privatisation has occurred mainly with the cultural industries such as film production facilities and the publishing industry.
- There has as not been any development to transform publicly funded cultural institutions into trusts or foundations.

## Culture in a market economy

### Introduction

The cultural sector in Bulgaria now confronts an emerging market economy bringing to the fore an array of difficulties. Yet it is crucial that policy makers and artists understand the dynamics of this evolving market system for two principle reasons. First to assess how the adoption of market mechanisms might help or hinder the development of culture. Second to assist policy makers in defining appropriate interventions to ensure that the value and values of those cultural activities that cannot and in no sense aim to survive in a 'free' market are encouraged, supported and maintained. These range from the need to support arts education, to preserve and develop cultural heritage - be it buildings or traditional art forms like folklore, or to foster experimental art.

### Too simple an understanding of market

Many Bulgarians have a too simplistic understanding of the concept of the free market as a 'free for all'. Yet it is precisely, because of these potential weaknesses of 'pure' markets that markets are never as free as they seem. In the West the tendency to monopoly constrains competition, especially in cultural areas such as the press, radio and TV and the state plays the role of referee in arbitrating on market distortion or failure and in helping to provide a level playing field through anti-trust laws and the like. In other areas true markets cannot exist, such as with public or merit goods like training and the state intervenes to ensure services are provided. In yet other instances the state establishes priorities, which the market does not see in the same way and thus uses tax incentives or disincentives to steer the market in directions it wishes to, like low rates of Vat for culture, or fixed book pricing.

There are other forms of controlling the free flow of the market through traditional city and regional planning, such as the control of uncoordinated signage that creates a form of visual pollution or noise controls for discotheques. This is an area that Bulgarian cultural policy has paid too little attention. All are aimed at curtailing excesses of market behaviour for the common good.

The idea of the market economy in the Western sense was often misunderstood: 'Everything, goes in a market, you can do what you want', noted one administrator; 'capitalism is anarchy', noted another; 'the big boys always win', one cultural critic.

Thus markets are directed, steered, guided or encouraged. Key laws set the framework for markets to operate in the first place, but beyond these limited number of laws the rest is more concerned with fine tuning. These fine tuning mechanisms all represent slightly different strategies requiring their own particular form of intervention, mechanism and policy. What is appropriate in any given case depends on severity of need, public policy

priorities and assessment of what will be most effective in achieving specific aims.

#### **Culture: Towards a broader definition**

We noted in our discussions with the Ministry, other policy makers and cultural critics how narrow their view was of the cultural sector and cultural markets. First, it seemed only to include the subsidised sector without reference to commercial activities; second it seems to exclude popular culture and this was often referred to as 'fake' culture and third, a number of areas such as urban design including architecture, street furniture and the like and industrial design seem to play no part in their remit.

These blind spots have a number of serious consequences. Subsidised, voluntary and commercial cultural activities form a seamless, interactive web. It is simply impossible to segment off a particular section of culture and to regard this as immune from relationships with the rest of the field. For example, people working in theatre may later work in commercial television and their activities within the subsidised theatre area may have been their training ground. Classical musicians working in an orchestra may play as part of a backing group for a commercial pop musician. A visual artist may produce graphic arts for an advertising company. An amateur crafts person may find a way of earning a living by setting up a handicrafts workshop.

Alternatively developments in commercial media such as publishing, radio or television often determine whether subsidised or amateur individuals or organisations will have the opportunity to publicise their work. Thus the health, condition and dynamics of the commercially developing cultural industries should be of utmost importance to the Ministry of Culture. The Ministry should be concerned with every aspect of culture and knowledgeable about it. This does not mean it will intervene in every sphere, but rather that through the powers available to it will seek to maximise the potential of the cultural field as a whole. In some instances it might mean ensuring that the tourism department is aware of cultural heritage issues, which it might be in their power to positively effect. In other instances it could be that the Ministry of Trade is the most important interlocutor, such as with issues concerned with the use of orchestras to help in a foreign trade drive or with attempting to reduce import duties on musical equipment, which is apparently stifling the development of a domestic recording industry. Equally the interior ministry or police may be the most important partner in seeking to control the effects of piracy, which is a form of cancer that is inhibiting the capacity for artists to survive.

For these kind of reasons it is essential that the Ministry and other funders understand how the cultural industry markets are developing, as it is only with such a detailed understanding that the Ministry is able to judge what its own policy should be.

### The blindspot about popular culture

As far as popular culture is concerned it is crucial that the Ministry and indeed the cultural critics in Bulgaria accept that there is not a cohesive category of arts called 'high arts' that are somehow inevitably good and need subsidising, with another category called 'low arts' or popular culture being seen as bad or fake and commercial. There may be bad high arts and good low arts. Both inter-relate and indeed in some instances the health and vibrancy of Bulgarian culture may express itself through popular culture. The rise of British popular culture on to the world scene in the 1960's (The Beatles or David Hockney or the fashion designer Mary Quant) was inextricably linked to the quality of British arts educational establishments and was based on understanding of classic arts. Over the years much of their work has passed on to the mainstream and have become classics appreciated by every level of society.

Furthermore what is folklore if not popular culture from a former period. Why has thus historical popular culture reached the pantheon of the 'arts' whereas contemporary popular culture is deemed to be 'fake'. Indeed the national report calls this 'ersatz culture' which it says threatens 'to drown Bulgaria in a sea of mediocrity'. This is not to say that every pop song, variety show or radio programme is in and of itself good, but rather to note that the arbitrary distinction between 'old' = good and contemporary = bad is not an approach that will lead to a cultural policy that is in touch with its people.

It is crucial that the activities of the Ministry and other cultural policy makers have relevance to youth and emerging lifestyle patterns. As the most recent sociological surveys of youth in Bulgaria show their cultural preferences differ from those of the older generation, yet in a decade or two it will be these people who are running ministries or key institutions and businesses. Unsurprisingly with the first flush of freedom they have taken to American culture like a duck to water. Yet over time as the novelty fades there may be opportunities for new Bulgarian popular culture to emerge more related to its own historical roots as is already beginning to happen in pop music. That development can be helped by a positive attitude from the Ministry towards popular culture. At the same time we realise that the power of American media companies is immense and so able to begin to dominate the Bulgarian market, yet another reason why the Ministry and those involved in culture need a good understanding of the dynamics of the commercial cultural industries so it can adjust cultural policy accordingly.

### Old and new culture

We also appreciate that in this transitional period it is more the historical manifestations of Bulgarian culture that appear at first sight relevant to re-establishing Bulgarian identity. But culture is a living thing, both a reflection on life as it unfolds, but also a creator of that life. So heritage and

contemporary culture are equally important. Yet even so we saw, relatively speaking, little encouragement of the contemporary arts or help in establishing an arts market although in the future they will become an important part of Bulgaria's heritage. Indeed if there is no collecting of contemporary art now in Bulgaria's national galleries there will in future be a gap. Or put another way today's innovation could become tomorrow's classic. In spite of financial pressure on the Ministry and the need to deal with the backlog of problems concerned with heritage a primary role remains the need to foster creativity and innovation. The support of innovation in say the visual arts or crafts may over time help the development of a wide array of industries from furniture making to fashion to household goods.

#### Culture and the quality of urban life

Finally the policy makers including those in the ministry give little or no detailed consideration to the aesthetics of the urban environment. Culture is also about quality of life and that is seen in great measure in the urban landscape - the street furniture, art in public places, architecture, the interior design of public buildings and public places like cafes and industrial design in general. One reason for this omission may be again, that these products are generated within the commercial sphere. Yet it is in our every day environment, rather than only special places called museums or galleries, that we experience living culture. Here the Ministry could also have a role as encourager, enabler and advocate. One could conceive of awards or competitions for street furniture, interior design or even park design. One could conceive of bursaries to artists to work with business on improving the aesthetic qualities of day to day products, perhaps in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade. Yet these myriad possibilities will only emerge if the Ministry feels more relaxed about the links between commercial and non-commercial culture.

#### Arts and cultural industry organisations acting in an entrepreneurial way

There are two aspects to this issue. The first is the development of subsidised organisations into more market oriented ones. The second is development of avowedly market oriented organisations themselves.

Many subsidised organisations would wish to use market mechanisms when they assist in the achievement of their artistic aims, such as selling postcards for profits that are then recycled for artistic goals. Yet there is a plethora of obstacles that inhibits subsidised cultural organisations from becoming more efficient and thus being able to compete with commercial organisations. They include lack of budgetary independence and thus the capacity to invest in things like postcards or replicas; being hampered by labour legislation that does not allow appropriate staffing levels to be put in place; the effects of labour legislation on opening hours, so that many museums, although we noted exceptions in Burgas, are closed on Sunday when people are in principle free to visit.

These obstacles have insidious effects as they limit experimentation, curtail the use of imagination and lock organisations into impotence. In addition they reinforce within the existing structures the maintenance of an old guard of managers and administrators, who can get away with not developing solutions to their problems.

As far as commercial organisations are concerned, in spite of their difficulties, such as receiving unfair license conditions as compared to state run organisations, in many ways they have substantial advantages from which the Ministry and subsidised organisations could learn. Perhaps their primary advantage is that they are free to address popular taste. Second their product development is not constrained by the need to over-employ staff.

In broad swathes of the cultural field commercial organisations are increasingly playing a key if not determining role in cultural development, such as in publishing, radio, music production, events organising and the development of graphics. How they might relate to the creation and implementation of cultural policy is thus of over-riding importance.

#### The public as consumer

There has been a maelstrom of change with regard to the idea of the consumer. In the former period it was possible to ignore, in some sense, the autonomous value of consumer behaviour as it was producer driven. Now consumer taste or user need can be expressed by people voting with their feet. This freedom of consumers to choose (bearing in mind that lack of income can mean there is no real choice) shifts the focus of cultural producers away from merely a concern with production to marketing.

Marketing is understood as more than solely selling or promotion. It should infuse the structure of an organisation and help to inflect decisions from conception of an idea onwards constantly addressing questions such as how activities will be received by audiences, who is being targeted within a cultural programme or what is the best means of reaching target groups. Marketing also concerns how organisations present themselves to funders and supporters, such as in the business sector, as a means of advocating their case.

As a consequence a new relationship is set up with to the public, whereby to some extent producers priorities are changed. It gives more power to users, but does not by definition lead to lower quality. A study for the Ministry of Cultural Affairs in Sweden, for example, showed that when library books were chosen by the general public rather than professional librarians the quality of book chosen, judged by external criteria, was no less.

There is currently within both the Ministry and funded cultural organisations a serious lack of understanding of the concept and



techniques of marketing and market research. Given the increasingly power of the users there is need both to redirect resources away from production towards marketing and to acquire appropriate skills to do so.

#### Cultural activities cannot avoid the market

Thus in a market economy every cultural activity unavoidably has some relation to the market. Perhaps most importantly at a macro level the health of the overall economy determines the extent to which subsidies can be afforded and the capacity of individuals to generate income to consume culture. Additionally given free consumer choice all cultural activities compete for consumers' time focusing attention on the need to provide products and services that consumers want.

As noted large parts of the cultural economy work within market principles and constraints. This means that they operate within a competitive environment and can only survive if there is or they can create a market for their products.

#### Veering between extremes

The lack of appreciation and understanding of the market in general and cultural markets in particular and the means the state has at its disposal to help markets work well, means Bulgarians have so far been disappointed with what the market offers. The state, instead, has so far largely veered between either total control in some sectors and total lack of control in others. Applying shock therapy in some sectors and retaining control in others. The consequences have been abrupt and unstable.

In the cultural sector concerned both tendencies are visible, whether this was part of a conscious overall cultural policy is in doubt. The Ministry of Culture and other government departments responsible for aspects of culture have not analysed and assessed how the market or lack of a market within each sector and in each part of the production chain, from production to marketing to audience development, is effecting its progress. A consequence of the lack of understanding within the Ministry as to how cultural markets work is that **the policy toolkit used is extremely limited.**

#### Film and the market

In film and cinema the first strategy - shock therapy - has in essence been applied, the withdrawal of the state from most film production. In addition because of the rise of video cinemas have closed at an alarming rate. The overall effect has been collapse of the system. Yet the objective condition of Bulgarian film making, given the international context of film making and the dynamics of film production means that Bulgarian film can only survive as a merit good. Was there an idea in the minds of policy makers that, because film is also an industrial sector it would somehow survive? Or did it imply that in cultural policy terms film was somehow less important, even though it is part of new media that are

increasingly significant? Was there an alternative? Could the ideas by the national film centre to impose levies on videos such as in the French system been implemented to mitigate the effects of state withdrawal?

#### Publishing and the market

Publishing is in an intermediate position as the economics of publishing differ from those in film. Entry costs are lower and the actual production processes relatively simpler. Here the state has partly withdrawn, it has sold publishing houses and at the same a quite vibrant publishing sector has emerged. Indeed the National Book Centre has developed some innovative schemes such as the Book Support Programme, which co-finances publications in 3 areas: Contemporary Bulgarian writing and Bulgarian heritage; Bulgaria 'humanitarian' and reference works; and translations. Yet whilst the book production system is reasonably stable the marketing, distribution and retailing side is weak and in partial collapse. Book shops have closed and have been replaced by street stalls providing a very partial range of books, there are few stable distribution companies and hardly any that provide a comprehensive service. The national Book Centre has identified these key weaknesses, yet there is no evidence that the Ministry of Culture (or the department of trade for that matter) has yet been able to solve this problem that is well within its means. There are many short and medium term ways of assisting the book market to strengthen itself, such as for a time limited period providing rent support to those who open bookshops; to subsidising distribution companies to carry a wider range of stock; to providing specialist delivery services to libraries; to assisting in the purchase of vehicles for distribution; to adapting unemployment schemes towards the aims of the book sector by supporting salaries.

'If you to buy a newspaper on a daily basis, this is impossible, because it adds up to more than the average monthly salary' Librarian Panagyurishte

#### Music and the market

In music the situation is varied. The structure of classical music and its live performance - its orchestras, opera houses and educational infrastructure - remain largely subsidised as in the former regime, although with a decrease in real terms. The production of tapes on the other hand have seamlessly been handed over to the private sector, with the difficulty and consequences of piracy noted above. Popular music does not even fall within the ambit of the Ministry's concerns and its development is left to market forces. The national music centre, the Ministry's music arm, has not considered the relationship between classical, folk and popular music and how support mechanisms or dedicated tax interventions in one sphere might assist the development of another. So if, for example, the piracy problem were to be addressed with vigour, this might create tax revenues generated through popular music say through tape levies that might, should it become policy, be recycled to support folk, classical or even popular music itself.

### Theatre, museums, cultural heritage and the market

In most other sectors by contrast, such as theatre, museums and cultural heritage the opposite position was taken. The theatre infrastructure, for instance, remains largely intact within its old form and structure. Theatres have not been closed and as a consequence increasing resources are used to bolster an unsustainable theatre system, although partial shock therapy might release resources to generate more product. The slogan 'contents not containers' sums up a possible policy direction for the Ministry. This means considering how fewer resources might be used for sustaining buildings - containers - and more to produce product - content. Yet whilst the Ministry is making attempts to provide more resources for projects as distinct from the maintenance and upkeep of existing theatres this still only represents between 1% and 2% of the overall theatre budget.

What is the reason and argument for the relative protection of the theatre sector or classical music? Is it more important than film or publishing and writing? It may well be justified, but the national report and our discussions with policy makers gives us no clue why there are safeguarded 'cultural reservations' and what the policy objectives underlying the decisions were.

Some sectors such as museums or cultural heritage remain sacrosanct and totally divorced from market forces and exclusively within the ambit of central and local state authority. Is this inevitable? Are there other ways of conceiving how museums could be run or cultural heritage managed? Is every museum throughout the country of equal value? Is there not a scale of significance for museums too? Some are of national importance, others regional and others local or even sub-local. Are all equally worthy of keeping up? Could some be handed over to voluntary associations to ensure their survival? Could some even be regarded as not significant enough and worthy of closure? Is all cultural heritage the responsibility of the state? Does all cultural heritage need to be owned by the state, in many countries a larger proportion is owned and cared for, under strict guidelines, by private individuals. Could some heritage facilities, therefore, be run by private individuals or along the lines of trust or foundation structures and handed over to private associations or civil society organisations? These type of ideas do not hand over heritage simply to the market, but they bring in new actors, perhaps with more experience of dealing with the positive and negative aspects of the market, who through their collective actions could sustain Bulgarian heritage on behalf of all Bulgarians. In that sense they bring in an idea of market in that it might be a more effective way of running heritage. We were not aware that this kind of discussion is taking place.

### Folklore and handicrafts and the market

Folklore and handicrafts are largely viewed as activities and products to be kept and defended in some 'original' or 'pure' form. Any contact with the

idea of market thus is in danger of contaminating them. Whilst it is important to keep in touch with and maintain the sources of culture as expressed through folklore, nevertheless folklore and handicrafts need to develop their own contemporary forms if tradition is to stay alive - see the example of Riverdance based on Irish folk dancing noted above. Much of folklore activity does not need a market, because the best of folklore is usually voluntary and amateur with no intent of spreading beyond the locality within which it is based. It is alive, because it reflects simply the desire to perform for individual enjoyment and if there is an audience so be it. Yet as everywhere there are troupes of excellence, which can be seen as marketable products and indeed are used as part of Bulgarian cultural foreign policy, and in that sense participate in a form of international market.

The situation for handicrafts is different. Most of the handicrafts we saw, which clearly embody elements of folklore, were imitations of old formats in textiles, wood and jewellery, and there was little development of new styles. Yet within the crafts field there is massive potential both for the creation of new products from household goods to clothing for domestic and tourist markets. Tourists, especially those on repeat visits to Bulgaria, will want something new, innovative or distinctive. At the same time the crafts could be a new employment sector or provide secondary incomes. The Ministry has not yet considered the broader potential of crafts as both an artistic sector in its own right and as an economic sector. The development of policy along these lines implies links to other government departments concerned with local development and tourism in order to create SME's (small and medium sized enterprises) and develop entrepreneurship. In the longer run this might help develop associated industries such as fashion, indeed the expert group came across young fashion designers who had no means of finding an outlet for their products.

Crucially and this applies especially to the visual arts, there is an undeveloped art market. One aspect which might develop the art market, and remains under-explored is the link to business not merely as possible sponsors, but also as purchasers of art works for offices or for private use. Here fiscal means could be most effective in generating an art market, which in turn indirectly supports the artist. Currently any form of sponsorship comes out of taxable income and thus any gift or purchase has no tax exemption. A sponsorship exemption could at a stroke potentially double existing resources for the arts, thus support arts and release pressures on the state to provide subsidy.

In summary the current policy toolkit is too restricted, based as it is largely on the giving of grants rather than the development of mechanisms fiscal and otherwise that might through indirect means support the development of culture. Importantly given the state of the Bulgarian cultural economy many of the actions that the Ministry might help finance, are different from those that would be supported in Western Europe. For

example, book distribution systems are developed in the West, whereas they are not in Bulgaria, or arts management training courses are provided as part of normal educational provision, whereas they are not in Bulgaria or arts marketing organisations are quite developed, but not yet in Bulgaria. This implies that the Ministry needs to begin to think of the creative use of money and the creative use of intervention a point we come to in the section on the mechanics of implementation.

## The Mechanics of Implementation

Cultural policy, as noted, starts with political debate leading to the setting of broad objectives; following therefrom strategy and priorities are derived which are implemented by regulation and the allocation of resources. As one interviewee noted it is the 'law and the leva' that determines the effectiveness of cultural policy. Yet both the law and the leva are used in quite unsophisticated ways.

The toolkit available to the ministry is fourfold: A few laws; a wide range of regulations to act as steering devices for cultural policy development; financial resources and human resources within the ministry and associated agencies, which represent the skills and know how. In particular the latter in themselves are a useful substitute for money, if well developed, as they can help the cultural system work more efficiently and effectively.

### The creative use of law and intervention

Any law relating to culture should draw wherever possible on the constitution and the civic code thus obviating the need for specific cultural laws. Thus we are not sure what the specific content of the proposed cultural law is likely to be. As the constitution guarantees freedom of speech and free association there should be no need for a law on censorship. The plethora of emerging law is leading to great complications. For example, three laws relate to the registration of non-profits. The law on persons and families, the trade law for commercial organisations and the non-profit law based on a decree of 1991, whereas in principle one law on the establishment of legal persons should cover all eventualities.

The focus of the Ministry's work should be on the development of regulation that lies below the status of law. The main argument being that one does not need to go back to parliament with its lengthy procedures and that regulations can be changed more quickly should the need arise. The law is in essence an inflexible instrument. We realise the reasons for the desire to create 'law' given the lack of authority in the country and thus the scepticism as to whether regulations or guidelines are enforceable, which is why we stress the need for developing civil society structures. But laws and especially petty legislation can clutter up the system. Equally making laws that cannot be enforced or which take too long to generate is not worth the effort. For example, before a law on sponsorship is finally put on the statute books it should be possible to develop a sponsorship code proposing the rights and responsibilities of both sponsor and artist so neither makes too excessive demands on the other. Equally it should be simple to establish contracts that allow museums to produce postcards.

This highlights the need to create a cascading set of regulatory mechanisms with varying degrees of enforceability and power. At the apex would stand constitutional rights, with a bearing on culture, below that a limited

number of culturally specific laws, such as on heritage protection; and below that a series of regulations, measures, guidelines, policies and programmes. Within these latter mechanisms the Ministry can effectively guide policy and create substantial impact. For example, a policy to support one class of organisations or activities over another shapes development as does the establishment of a programme of support, such as in training arts managers.

Within that range of mechanisms for intervention the Ministry needs to set priorities, which were not apparent to us. Thus a judgement needs to be made as to whether a sponsorship law is more important than say one on cultural NGO's or even whether the objectives of those proposed laws cannot be reached by other means.

Secondly, in terms of enforceability the Ministry should decide whether it is itself the most appropriate body to carry the details of regulation. Thus, the copyright law may perhaps be better enforced through a possibly independent copyright enforcement agency with an associated inspectorate. Cultural heritage protection may be overseen by a similar type of organisation.

The central notion behind this mode of operation is to devolve authority wherever possible on the principle of subsidiarity, which means to locate decision making at the lowest level where it can be effective. The original idea behind the setting up of the national centres as independent policy implementation agencies on behalf of the Ministry was in accord with this principle. The reversal of the centres back into the Ministry was the opposite.

Yet if the Ministry were to understand that it could liberate itself by taking on board the arm's length principle it would be far freer to focus more effectively on its core business, that of providing the framework within which culture operates. Currently the Ministry machine is clogged up with responsibilities and activities that would be better contracted out or handed over.

Naturally this process means giving up power, but the long term objective is to deliver more than could be achieved by centralised means. But if the Ministry decentralises is also has to decentralise how money is disbursed and significantly not having sufficient resources is not a reason for being late with decentralisation.

Nevertheless there are some areas where the decentralisation process is inappropriate. For example, technical formats or specifications for library operations are best uniform; the collation of common statistics to agreed formula equally so, as is output control by the Ministry of those organisations it funds to ensure its investment is well spent and according to agreed expectations. The same applies to its own policy which should be monitored and evaluated in consultation with funded partners.

## The creative use of money in the arts

The objective of the section is both to acquaint policy makers with new funding practice and to highlight the need to think inventively, flexibly and laterally about how financial resources can be used. It highlights some of the more commercially oriented ways in which arts funding in Bulgaria could be rethought. We realise that most of these ideas have come about in more developed market economies and rely on a more stable financial system that as yet does not exist in Bulgaria. Nevertheless, many of the ideas are in principle workable within the Bulgarian context.

### Only focusing on grants

The current arts funding system in Bulgaria predominantly revolves around the grant relationship handed out according to a range of criteria which meet the funders core objectives. Yet there are a range of other grant types which are not used by the Ministry to direct policy. It is important to maximise the impact of grants as other sources of income such as sponsorship are unlikely ever to reach expectations. In Britain for example, only 6% of resources are raised through sponsorship, in the Netherlands 3%, in Germany 3% and in Finland 1.4%. Grant types include:

The revenue grant is usually for clients who have a long term and established relationship with the Ministry. Their proliferation can create barriers to entry for newcomers and inhibit development of new ideas. The project grant is given for a specific purpose such as a performance, a one off tour, an exhibition or investment in an arts training unit. As a large proportion of project grants, which account for 1-2% of theatre funding for example, go to the existing pool of clients recipients are often hidden revenue clients and renewal of the client base is not occurring. Programme funding are funds to encourage the development of a specific objective of the funder. It is a focused way of targeting a specific problem and in the West is increasingly used by funders to intervene in the 'arts market'. Notable exceptions aside, like the book promotion programme, this is not widely used by the Ministry. The giving of grants on the basis of competitions, as an award or prize is an increasingly popular way all over Europe of encouraging activity. The Ministry has not explored this mechanism sufficiently. In conclusion we note that a vast majority of existing funding goes to a regular tranche of institutional clients.

The shift in funding patterns elsewhere towards competitions, awards, prizes, programme and contract funding is an attempt to find ways of rewarding success be it artistically or financially. A future challenge for the Ministry would be to reward organisations by, for example, holding back a percentage of a grant, when appropriate, depending on whether certain agreed targets and criteria have been met.

In Bulgaria the concentration of funding is almost exclusively at the production end rather than on projects concerned with audience



generation or marketing related initiatives. Refocusing towards spending on audience development would be significant for Bulgaria not only because issues of access would be addressed, but by helping to expand audiences income generation possibilities are created.

The capital needs of revenue clients in Bulgaria, say in theatre, is so severe that given existing resources the physical infrastructure is likely to further decay in the foreseeable future. This might mean that the Ministry will have to consider some radical solutions, ranging from forcing revenue clients to share buildings to maximise their use, to encouraging the merger of companies, to handing over buildings to theatres and the like to dispose of how they see fit or even to liquidate some of these declining assets in order to recycle resources back into arts economy.

Whilst grant funding can be used more creatively to achieve policy objectives there is little multiplier effect. The grant system does not challenge recipients to use money effectively. Yet by the late 20th century numerous devices and mechanisms have been developed that could be more powerful than grant aid as they make the effect of money go further, either because actually no money changes hands or because it circulates numerous times within the arts economy.

#### Funding and the cultural economy

The central dilemma for arts funding institutions, such as the Ministry of Culture, is that through tradition and legal constraints they operate according to certain norms, whereas all their clients operate in a 'sea of capitalism' with all their financing structures. As arts funding institutions in Bulgaria will need to help change the balance between earned and unearned income they need to encourage their grant recipients to be more entrepreneurial, to develop trading and retailing arms in order to keep up the spread of their support. Thus the Ministry itself will have to be more entrepreneurial in the way it develops financial devices to promote this change.

One key concept in assessing the efficacy of funding is leverage. As all funders receive far more applications than they can accommodate, this means rejecting numerous projects or giving less than was asked for, which funds permitting they might have otherwise supported. Therefore a funders' pool of resources needs increasingly to be seen in terms of its leverage capacity, that is how much impact it creates. Resources in this sense crucially mean more than just money. It includes, for example, the (already paid for) skills they may have in-house to establish links with and influence other government departments, who in turn might generate new funds for arts organisations. It includes the specialist advice within a funding body that might enable a client to market themselves better and thereby generate more earned income. It includes the training programmes they might run to help clients run themselves more efficiently.

### Beyond the grant

There was little discussion in Bulgaria of alternative approaches to funding the arts. We summarise some examples briefly.

The **guarantee** which can come in two forms. The first the 'guarantee against loss' system, which is a guarantee to give a grant, up to a certain limit, to pay for any loss incurred on a project. The second a guarantee given by the Ministry or even a bank. As most Bulgarian arts organisations have no tradable assets it is currently difficult to consider bank guarantees. However, there are instances, for example in the handicrafts field where sales of products might only occur in the tourist season, where the Ministry might guarantee to a bank a certain amount until the craftsman has been able to sell their product, the same might apply to a recording that the Ministry wishes a company to produce, but which may take time for a revenue stream to develop.

**Loans** would allow arts organisations that feel they can make a commercial success from certain activities to raise additional resources. In principle an organisation could get a grant for a certain specific set of activities and loans for others, such as developing a café, a publishing project or a touring performance on which they believe they will get a reasonable return. There are, of course, risks involved in this approach. The question then arises whether a greater loan is more effective and/or more risky than a smaller grant.

**Franchise funding** which is a fixed term agreement, usually 2/3 years, to supply a specific service such as arts management training. It is an example of 'contract culture' in operation, which allows the funder to assess a need and through a bidding process find appropriate partners and renew them if appropriate.

A no cost way of helping to raise money is the 'stamp of approval' or 'imprimatur' that funding bodies can hand out, because of reputation. The Ministry could in principle bestow a quality mark or credibility rating. This in itself has value and traditionally has been used by funders to enable clients to raise monies from other sources such as business.

Although **equity investment and stakeholding** is under-developed in Bulgaria it is nevertheless useful to mention the possibility. The advantage from the point of view of the funder is that an equity stake in a project is the equivalent of a grant, which creates a return if a profit is made. From the point of view of the recipient it is not debt and benefits only have to be paid if profits are made. It is noticeable that equity relationships in Britain exist most frequently in the area of new media. This is in response to the more overtly commercial environment film and video people operate in and their need, given the high entry costs, to work in partnership with investors.

**With vouchers** a funder or similar body would identify a service such as management training, marketing advice, recording studio time, use of production facilities or awareness training that it believes to be useful for its client base. The funder then negotiates with a range of accredited providers (and sometimes negotiates a bulk discount) who deliver the service in exchange for presenting a voucher. Vouchers are handed out either in addition to revenue or project grants or instead of them.

**Group buying** is a means by which a funder or consortium of arts organisations negotiates large discounts on behalf of its client base using its buying power and the power of being a funder. Various examples exist including the buying of bulk advertising space, cheaper printing rates, computer purchases, recording time, equipment purchase and so on as well as negotiating preferential terms from banks. Throughout this section the concept of tradable return has been implied.

The '**product in lieu**' system takes this to its extreme, it is nearly like a grant in reverse or the returnable grant. A crafts person or artist receives a grant in return they give the funder or a designated arts charity some products - a picture, or sculpture. These are collected and sold, for example, at an annual auction with receipts ploughed back for further funding.

The concept of challenge funding first developed in the United States is interesting. Variations exist, one of the main involves a funder such as the Ministry matching any private sponsorship an arts organisation may receive with an equivalent amount up to a certain limit. Another example is that an arts organisation receives growth in subsidy based on the growth of its audience. The core idea is to present a challenge to an organisation to act in a certain way.

Tax incentives are a very effective way of directing resources to specific purposes. Common examples include levies on blank video or record tapes that might be recycled into developing film or record production. Equally providing privileges to sponsors is a form of incentive as our tax rebates to encourage the refurbishment of heritage sites.

The idea to create endowment funds has gained currency in Western Europe, whereby a group of funders provides an arts organisation with a pool of money that is invested by the organisation, which develops its cultural programme through the interest earned rather than asking for further subsidies on an annual basis. Given the current state of play of the economy in Bulgaria this idea may be premature.

Cross-subsidisation is a means through which a funder encourages an arts organisation to set up profitable elements within its structure which are then ploughed back into unprofitable activities. To some extent this is already happening by default in Bulgaria as when chitalishta rent out spaces for cafes and the like. However, the Ministry might consciously seek ways of encouraging such development even further.

#### Who benefits from alternative funding?

By dividing the artsworld into four categories we can assess where different types of funding relationship might be appropriate.

1. The first might be an educational project with little scope for any monetary return - here traditional funding criteria could well be appropriate.
2. This concerns the mass of funded organisations and activities generating cultural product for audiences that pay in some form - theatres, cinemas, film organisations, museums, craft shops, publishing ventures etc. Within this group there exist numerous bodies whose primary financial relationships is with the Ministry. Their aspirations are circumscribed by the amount of money the funding system can make available to them. Some have aspirations or development plans that go much further - they might wish to open a profit making shop whose profits are ploughed back into cultural product. Here ideas of loan or guarantees are appropriate.
3. Commercial cultural industry companies or other arts funding organisations who currently have no relationship with the Ministry, but who in principle could. Numerous commercial art galleries, independent event producers or craft and film projects show and produce work that in effect does not distinguish itself from work supported by the arts funding system. Yet they are often sympathetic to the kind of objectives the arts funding world espouses. They would with encouragement undertake and promote projects, that could meet the Ministry's policy criteria, and indeed may be more equipped to do so than existing funded organisations. To take some examples at random, some, though clearly not all, commercially operated bookshops would stock innovative, 'unpopular' literature if an element of risk sharing existed, equally so would commercial art galleries, cinemas or theatres.
4. Naturally there are also a mass of cultural industry outfits who have no interest at all in furthering the challenging, difficult or innovative, to which these ideas are not relevant. They produce goods whose sole purpose is to make profit by whatever means available.

Funders also need to support the cultural economy and see themselves as development agencies. The words imply being deft, agile, responsive yet proactive and flexible, being enablers and catalysts. This means helping to generate more cultural products (craft objects, pictures, performances etc.) that are bought, sold, consumed and viewed and thereby support employment and other arts infrastructures. Bulgaria's arts funding bodies need to view arts organisations like developing companies that need access to resources. It implies viewing them as businesses, with business development needs, but businesses of a certain type. Businesses with a wider range of criteria in judging product development (e.g. emphasis on innovation) and as a consequence needing different criteria to judge effectiveness, success or failure and the kinds of rate of return that are appropriate.

#### The Bulgarian Cultural Investment Agency

Many of the ideas and approaches outlined above can in principle happen within any arts funding body. However, an alternative approach is to consider hiving off these more entrepreneurial approaches into a Bulgarian Cultural Investment Agency, which is an elaboration of the idea of a National Fund for Culture proposed, but which was seen as operating under the Ministry of Culture. Such an agency might help avoid the kind of dilemmas Bulgarian arts funders may see in the approaches outlined above.

The idea would be to create a pool of monies deriving from a range of sources, such as the Ministry, foundations, business sponsors or individuals. This would be used for loans and equity investment in order to provide working capital specifically targeted at cultural organisations and more especially the key individuals working in them.

It would act as a quasi bank and seek to follow normal banking criteria in assessing applications, but it would take a more open minded view of the kind of projects it might support. These may include ones concerned with innovation where the risk factor might be higher. This would be reflected in the conditions that investors would provide resources. Individual donors might seek returns on a full commercial basis, the resources from the Ministry may be on preferential, softer terms and monies from foundations even more so. This would affect the degrees of risk carried by each participant. For example, the individual may receive a return of twice the level of the Ministry, and foundations even less. Equally to ameliorate risk individuals may come in on a last in/first out basis in contrast the Ministry or foundation who may come in on a first in/last out basis. However it would operate in a businesslike way.

The project as conceived would also be a revolving fund, by recirculating money. The stringency of the operation - the interest rates it would charge - would determine the degree of circulation and recirculation. The more 'sympathetic' it is the more top ups it would require from time to time

from say the Ministry or foundations. How this precisely is decided would determine the extent to which the BCIA is seen as veering towards patronage or sponsorship or how far it is perceived as a 'real' bank.

The range of projects supported would carry varying degrees of risk and how ever much the agency makes or loses it is likely to circulate money more than the traditional grant. The cost benefits of such an operation should be re-assessed in detail. We are aware that the Ministry is a long way from considering many of these proposals directly many could be taken up by associated agencies. Yet in the longer term these approaches will have to be addressed if resources are to be maximised and thus should form one part of the national debate on the future of the cultural sector.

'We have learnt that lack of ideas is worse than lack of funding' Artist in Sofia

## Snapshots of the cultural sector

As background we summarise key facts, policy directions and legislative issues about the various cultural sectors garnered from the Bulgarian National Report. For more detail information reference should be made to that report.

### Cultural heritage

Cultural heritage in Bulgaria is governed by three categories of law. The first concerns the preservation of cultural heritage; the second laws relating to territorial and urban development and the third laws relating to the preservation of the natural environment.

Whilst Bulgaria has a comprehensive and logically consistent regulatory basis the system of rules and regulations has become largely obsolete in the context of rapidly changing conditions. For example, the three regulatory mechanisms do not relate and are not integrated; the concept of the conservation object does not correspond to the new notions of cultural heritage, such as industrial heritage, cultural landscapes or whole urban areas. It stipulates excessive centralisation of functions without clarifying the role of local government. There is an inadequate role for the not-for-profit sector in conservation. The expanding market of conservation contractors is largely uncontrolled, creating problems of professionalism and the danger of corruption. Crucially the system lacks effective material incentives for involving owners, users and the community at large which could raise additional resources. Although a tax rebate of 20% exists for those conserving cultural heritage.

The share of funds within the consolidated state budget for conservation decreased from 15.8% in 1988 to 3% in 1995. Within municipalities the decrease was from 24.\*% to 4% over the same period. In real terms as compared to 15 years ago funds have decreased by a 100. The total number of listed monuments is 39402 including roughly 10000 tombs and settlement mounds.

The Ministry of Culture oversees cultural heritage preservation in collaboration with the National Council for the Preservation of Monuments of Culture, a consultative body; the National Centre for Immovable Monuments of Culture which co-ordinates and supervises state policy; and the National Institute for the Monuments of Culture which executes and manages policy. That aside there are some specialised agencies within local authorities and a number of private conservation contractors. Bulgaria is an active member of international governmental organisations concerned with cultural heritage including UNESCO, ICCROM, the World Heritage Committee and the Committee of Cultural Heritage of the Council of Europe and has ratified all international conventions.

The Law on Cultural Heritage currently being drafted seeks to address the identified weaknesses in the preservation system including decentralising state agencies; creating new sources of funding through a national heritage fund garnered through tax exemptions; introducing financial incentives and methods of controlling conservation contractors; providing a role for the not-for-profit sector in conservation; incorporating heritage issues as an indispensable part of urban and regional planning at all levels. Finally the heritage organisations are seeking to lobby other departments about the importance of cultural heritage to cultural tourism.

### Theatre - snapshot

Since 1989 leading members of theatre sector have been trying to give theatres real autonomy and control over their finances; to develop new subsidy mechanisms to which give more resources are given for projects rather than staff and maintenance; to apply competitive principles in the financing of theatre projects; active involvement of municipalities in the financing of theatres; creating theatres with different legal forms such as state, municipal, private or co-operative; to establish a network of receiving houses (what the national report calls open stages).

There are now 77 theatre formations in Bulgaria of which 55 are dramatic and 22 puppet theatres. 25 are based in Sofia, including national theatre Ivan Vazov. 10 of these are small private troupes which have no permanent base. Since 1986 overall numbers have grown from 56, although tickets sold have declined by 60% as of 1994. However, the low point was reached in 1993 since when tickets sold have increased by 11% from that base. The Ministry of Culture supports 54 theatres, which are the most important in that they represent 87% of seats and representing 80% of tickets sold.

The relative share of state subsidies has declined from 86% in 1991 to 69.3% in 1995. Tickets sales represent 14.1% and other sources of income 16.6%.

Whilst the number of actors within state theatres has declined by 23% from 1994 to 1995, due in part to finding alternative sources of employment because of low salaries, that of technical staff has increased by 40%! Whereas in Western Europe actors can find alternative income in film, television, radio and advertising this is less possible in Bulgaria either, because those other artistic institutions have their own high staff levels, little new is produced and in the case of the advertising industry the sector is under-developed.

A law on theatre is scheduled to be submitted for legislation in early 1997, in order to encourage the funding of projects rather than existing theatre set ups and buildings, it has 3 main themes:

- To decentralise management and financing. Agreements with 11 drama and 1 puppet theatre have been made, whereby municipalities and the state jointly agree to co-finance theatres. Initially the scheme foresees the state supplying 50% of the subsidy, the municipality 30% and earned income 20%. The long term plan is to hand over to municipalities with the state focusing its funding on specific projects, tours and festivals.
- To provide funding for touring theatres (called open stages). Currently 4 drama and 1 puppet theatre are eligible for such funding.
- To subsidise individual theatre projects on a competitive basis from whichever source they might come, with priority given to experimental and non-profit making ventures. This has already been initiated and represented 1.1% of Ministry funding in 1994, but went up to 1.9% in 1995.

Finally a private foundation Idea for Theatre was set up in 1991 whose aim is to facilitate contact between Bulgarian and foreign theatres. So far it has funded around 100 projects, the most important of which was international festival called Ecofest in Sliven under the aegis of the EU's Kaleidoscope project.

#### Chitalischta and amateur arts

The development of amateur arts were originally linked to the creation of the network of chitalischta, which developed during the national revival period and which were seen as the cornerstone of Bulgarian cultural development. There are 4228 chitalischta, of which 546 are in urban and 3682 in rural areas, they employ 21266 people who act as organisers and animators. Chitalischta receive 14.1% of total arts funding and 37.1% of municipal arts spending. They are multi-purpose institutions usually housing a library (3727) and in the past cinemas as well - in 1985 1676 had cinema screens, in 1994 only 42. They normally have additional areas for amateur arts, teaching and performance. The proportion of spending on amateur arts in chitalischta is 14.2%.

Within the socialist period trade unions and schools played a major role in amateur arts, which after 1989 declined dramatically leaving chitalischta as the main promoters. Since 1989 there has been revival in amateur arts as witnessed, for example, by the increased number of participants to national folklore fairs.

The new law on chitalischta passed in 1996 defines chitalischta explicitly as self-governing cultural and educational institutions, who have been given gratis possession of their premises. They pay no taxes on core activities.

#### Publishing - a snapshot

In 1988 there were 27 state publishing houses and over 100 institutional ones. Historically access to books facilitated by centralised distribution and low pricing, however content largely governed by ideological criteria.

The abolition of the state monopoly opened up the market. Since then a number of state publishing houses have been privatised, whilst the majority of these still exist they operate as independent business units and do not receive state support, but use state owned facilities.

At the same time private publishing houses, mostly small, have mushroomed - from 180 in 1991 to 980 in 1995, who produce 68.6% of titles and 69.3% of print-runs. The flourishing of publishing is largely to do with the low investment needed to get into the market and cumulative unsatisfied reader demand.

The number of titles published is now 135% of the figures for 1988, although print runs have declined. Foreign translations, especially of fiction, and reference titles have substantially increased. Translations account for 33% of titles but nearly 50% of print runs, with English translations accounting for 64.6%, French 9.6% and German 8.4%.

A key area for concern is book distribution. There are now 28 state and 132 private distributors - a significant amount for a country the size of Bulgaria. Equally the number of bookshops have declined, partly because of the restitution of property and in their place are a mass of street stalls.

The distribution and retail side of book publishing will only coherently develop once sale margins are increased. In the West these amount up to 50% of sale price, whereas it is substantially lower in Bulgaria. This has the effect of focusing sales on popular high turnover titles.

The Ministry through the book centre supports the 'Book Support programme' which co-finances publications in 3 areas: Contemporary Bulgarian writing and Bulgarian heritage; Bulgaria 'humanitarian' and reference works; and translations. In 1995 119 publications were supported, coming from 36 state publishers and 35 private publishers. The main areas for intervention suggested are: Greater marketing initiatives such as targeted distribution support, the reduction of import duties on paper, reducing VAT on books.



## Museums

Museums policy is developed under the auspices of the National Centre for Museums, Galleries and Visual Arts. Its role is to identify priorities of state policy, control the management of museums and galleries within the state system; to fund museums projects and 'to study, conserve and popularise' moveable monuments of culture. It is assisted by a National Expert Council on Museum Work and a National Expert Council on Visual Arts. Its objectives are to guarantee independence and the right to association and to provide project funding within a unitary statutory framework.

There are state, municipal and since 1995 private museums, although even private museums are subject to state controls. The network comprises 3 national museums (the National Museum of History, the National Art Gallery, the National Gallery for Foreign Art); 18 state owned museums and galleries, 12 departmental state museums and 193 municipal museums. There are about 400 other museum collections within schools, chitalishta or other public organisations and 54 private galleries of which 24 are in Sofia. Staffing levels overall have remained largely constant, with the number of guides decreasing and a slight increase in specialists.

Staffing costs account for nearly 95% of expenditure with little left for exhibitions or special projects. All types of museum and galleries - public or private - are eligible for project support from the National Centre.

From 1991 to 1995 attendances have increased by 25% - from 3,2 million to 4,3 million visitors - in part through active collaboration with the educational and tourist sectors.

Key problems noted by the National Report include:

- A contradiction between the statutorily defined status of independence of state and municipally owned museums and the actual restriction on their independence by other statutory acts; a contradiction between the ownership by the state of museum artefacts and their management by municipalities that are supposedly autonomous.
- The co-ordination of the museum network is primarily hierarchical and there is no interaction and exchange between museum institutes themselves.
- International exchange and exhibition activity are the monopoly of the National Centre, a limitation that the National Centre recognises.
- The outdated funding structure based on staff levels, which limits the National Centre in pursuing its goals.
- Lack of technology to monitor and catalogue materials.
- The bad condition of museums often housed in inappropriate buildings.
- The rise in theft, illicit exporting and forgeries.

The Centre sees its key task as developing a coherent and consistent strategy oriented towards retraining staff towards new forms of information management and marketing; greater international exchange and the establishment of new courses specifically targeted at museums. In this way the Centre believes Bulgarian museum work will be able to be integrated more fully into the European museums system.

### Music and dance

Bulgaria has an extensive array of musical groupings. There are 15 symphony and philharmonic orchestras, of which 8 are national (and 7 provincially funded); there are 7 opera houses, a national ballet studio, a national choir and 2 folk ensembles all of which are centrally funded. There are many other ensembles supported by municipalities and some operating privately or on an amateur basis or within music schools. Between 1991 and 1995 subsidies have in real terms decreased by 45%. 75% of expenditure goes on salaries and only 10-15% for productions. The National Centre for Music and Dance in 1995 supported 25 projects under the new project financing scheme. 6 were for musical ensembles and 19 for festivals, competitions, special productions and education. Over the last period practically no resources have gone into building maintenance.

Visitor number have decreased particularly in opera since 1991 from 350,000 to 254,000, whereas attendances for concerts has increased from 253,000 to 291,000, in large part due to cheaper prices.

The National Centres objective is to continue the process of decentralisation and to give autonomy to music formations; to pursue mixed state and municipal funding; to encourage competition for funding for music and dance and to increase levels of project funding.

### Libraries

In 1994 there were 8166 libraries, including public, school, specialist and academic libraries of which 3727 housed in chitalishta. This dropped from 9800 in 1985. Many are very small, 41% have below 4000 titles and 31% between 4000 and 10000. 70% of library income comes from municipalities.

Since 1985 there has been a drop in readers and lending in large part due to the lack of new acquisitions. Bulgarian literature acquisitions have dropped by two thirds since 1989 and foreign literature if available is largely donated. Libraries have hardly any new technology for library management. The Open Society Fund is the main sponsor of technology, technical literature and librarian training.

The main priorities identified in the national report are:

To proactively seek ways of interconnecting libraries into a national system, a first step is the development, started in 1992, of an Automated National Libraries Information Network (NABIM).

To strengthen and develop local library services into cultural centres offering a wide range of educational and artistic activities, with single purpose libraries only in larger human settlements.

To introduce modern information management systems and extensive library training programmes.

To lobby for a national library fund.

## Radio

Until 1989 there was 1 national radio station and 5 regional stations, by 1995 there were 4 national radio programmes and 47 private ones. Most private radio stations have limited frequencies of around 8km and are thus at a severe disadvantage compared to the state owned national stations.

Private stations rely almost exclusively on a diet of popular music, with around 10% of information. However Klasic FM, which transmits on the Radio Free Europe frequency covers 70% of the country.

## Television

Despite the changes in 1989 and restructuring Bulgarian National Television with its two channels retains a virtual monopoly. Although BNT is under the administrative control of the Television, Radio and Bulgarian Telegraph Agency (BTA) Parliamentary Committee it remains an arm of the state and is the country's most powerful media organisation. For most Bulgarian viewers it remains the only source of information and entertainment

Given BTA's power key appointments to BNT are highly politicised, reflecting political instability in the country there have been many director-generals, which has further exacerbated organisational cohesion.

BNT is financed both by the state and advertising. It does not fall under the purview of the Ministry of Culture and its funding is the equivalent of 65% of the Ministry of Culture's total funding.

Independent television is slowly emerging, but given the low power of transmitters granted to them their range is largely confined to cities and their outskirts. In addition a number of cable stations reach 15% of viewers and 25% in the capital.

The Council of Ministers Post and Telecommunications Committee grants frequencies and thus has the power to control the development of independent networks.

The legal framework for the electronic media has been subject to heated debate, and although the Radio and Television Bill received passage through parliament in September it was subject to a successful high court challenge, the main areas of contention were:

- Article 3. foresees 'establishing control over news and notifications emitted by radio and television stations' by 'competent instruments' without defining such instruments and article 25.2 imposes restrictions on the right of journalists to express opinions in commentaries against freedoms guaranteed within the constitution.
- The make-up of the National Radio and Television Council will tend to reproduce the parliamentary majority and thus a party will control electronic media. Furthermore it has the right to close down radio and television stations, although according to the constitution only a court of law has this right.
- Regulations on financing go against the constitutional article that all forms of ownership be treated equally within the law, thus state TV should be able to receive state funding and the right to receive advertising revenues. This reinforces the state TV's virtual monopoly and guarantees that it receives the major part of advertising and sponsorship revenue. Furthermore independent radio licenses are only for a 8 km radius and too short to recoup investment.

The priorities that the national report focuses on are therefore to ensure 'decentralisation of electronic media, supporting media freedom and the society's right to be informed' as well as reaching a stable balance between state and independent media'.

## Film

Prior to 1989 films produced were ideologically driven either overtly or through self-censorship.

A state distribution system created an artificial market for indigenous films by purchasing all product, albeit at a loss to the exchequer.

This uneconomical market structure inflated film production and led to a massive over-capacity that could not be sustained after the changes. Shortly after the changes up to 90% of staff in the film industry were unemployed.

With establishment of a National Film Centre in 1991 as a conduit for state film policy state monopoly on film making destroyed and key production facilities privatised. Key objective of the centre is to inject market principles into film-making whilst finding means to support indigenous product mainly through the development of co-production deals.

As a consequence the number of film companies has increased from 5 to 29 in 1995. None of these producers own production facilities and none is financially strong enough to generate resources to invest from one film to the next. At the same time the technology and condition in the former state production facilities is declining. Production has reduced from 21 feature films in 1985 to 5 in 1994 and 7 in 1995, all of which were co-produced with foreign partners; science and documentary films have decreased from 204 to 22 over the same period; and cartoons from 40 to 9. The most important co-partners are the French CNC and Eurimages. The attempt to get Bulgarian National Television to allocate budget quotas for Bulgarian films has met with resistance, although the 1996 Electronic Media provides for such quotas.

The state owned distributor was wound up in 1994 and there are now many private distributors. On the other hand cinemas are still largely state owned with only around 5% in the private sector. Cinemas have declined dramatically from 3268 in 1988 to 156 in 1995, up from a low of 114 in 1994. This is paralleled by a decrease in visits per capita to the cinema from over 10 per year in 1987 to 1.44 in 1995. This is due both decreased disposable income and the increase in television ownership and videos.

The origin of releases expresses most clearly the change in consumption patterns. Whereas in 1986 nearly 100 first releases came from the former Soviet Union this had decreased to 6 in 1994, whilst US first releases that were 7 in 1986 had risen to 123 in 1994 representing 85% of all releases. Bulgarian firsts were 13.5% in 1986, which by 1994 had gone to 3.47%.

Since 1991 subsidies have in real terms decreased by 66%, and the percentage proportion the Ministry gives to film has also declined as compared to other sectors.

### **International Co-operation**

Bulgaria has co-operation agreements with 50 countries most of these were concluded 30 years ago. 18 agreements have been signed since 1989 mostly with former Soviet Union republics. These are broad non-prescriptive frameworks.

The priority is to develop co-operation with Europe and in particular other Balkan states. Bulgaria has 8 cultural institutes abroad, all of which are in Europe. Berlin, Bratislava, Budapest,, Moscow, Prague, Rome, Vienna and Warsaw. These are financed by the exchequer and on average cost \$200,000 per year. Some have shops or teach Bulgarian and so add to their finance. 3 are owned - Vienna, Budapest and Rome. Their objective is to organise cultural events, colloquia and conferences, as well as providing reading rooms, a library and language courses.

As an example of the policy's impact in 1995 Bulgaria sent 535 people abroad of which, 481 went to cultural events, 32 to seminars and 21 to post graduate studies. In 1996 the figures were 585, of which 543 went to cultural events, 14 to seminars and 28 to post graduate studies.

Officially in 1995 55 people came to Bulgaria. 32 to cultural events, 21 to seminars and 2 to post graduate studies. In 1996 175 people came to Bulgaria of which 148 came to cultural events, 24 to seminars and 4 to post graduate studies.

Since 1991 the proportion of the budget spent on international co-operation has increased from 2.6% to 3.3%.

### Section Three: Strategic Dilemmas of Cultural Policy: Where does Bulgaria stand?

Policy is a reflection of choices made between a range of options, which rarely satisfy all contingencies. It is context driven, based on particular circumstantial needs and political judgement. As a consequence all policy deals with alternatives that are seldom clear cut and thus try to resolve dilemmas. It is role of policy to try to balance these potential conflicts in the best way possible.

In cultural policy there are a series of intractable strategic dilemmas that all European countries face, although increasingly a series of principles have evolved as current best practice. These include a focus on opportunity, access and equity issues, regarding cultural diversity - interculturalism - as an asset and fostering excellence. But once one gets beyond these general statements of faith policy choices can become more contentious. What is appropriate will depend on the objectives the policy is seeking to achieve. In the Bulgarian context where is the balance of resources and effort to be put between the following dilemmas all of which a developed cultural policy in one way or another would need to address.

We regard the discussion of these dilemmas, which to our knowledge have not been discussed in this way, as providing the core of the proposed national debate on the future of culture.

#### Policy implementation dilemmas

##### Centralisation versus decentralisation

The key principles of Bulgarian cultural policy have been described as de-etatisation, decentralisation and democracy within a context of efficient, effective and economic management. This means that the central drive of policy is to devolve both power and economic control. We noted that this is laudable aim, but are concerned that habits of mind, actual practice and political will are deflecting the Ministry and associated agencies from their proclaimed course. In essence we believe that if the decentralisation process proceeds it will harness energy, commitment, imagination and self-reliance on the part of the cultural sector, that in the long run will make it more efficient, effective and culturally rich.

Furthermore we believe that in time the Ministry should slim down its responsibilities and contract out wherever possible activities, which are better handled by outsiders. However, within the basic drive to decentralisation that is noticeable within European cultural policy making, it is useful to note that the relative emphasis on centralisation or decentralisation can internally shift over time and in particular circumstances. It is important to assess in each instance what process - a decentralising or centralising one - best serves democratic principles and effectiveness most productively. So, for example, a new subsidy programme say to encourage arts marketing or the

refurbishment of cultural buildings or a public arts policy may in its launch phase be run from a central point to be later handed over to another suitable organisation that in the initial phase might not exist. The task of the Ministry in this instance would be to encourage the setting up of a successor body.

Nevertheless there are instances when centralisation of certain activities is most appropriate and where the free flow of the market or devolution might create problems. These include the setting of guidelines, procedures and technical standards in areas such as preservation or technology. Additionally it is usually better that inspectorates, collecting agencies or umbrella bodies, such as for monitoring for performance output or gathering royalties or the encouragement of film abroad are operated through a central system.

Key question for the national debate: What are the specific areas where centralisation or decentralisation are most appropriate?

#### Public versus private

The three core questions on public versus private are: who should initiate ideas and projects; who should implement them and what the ownership structure should be. In terms of the first in principle good ideas or projects can come from any source, and we make no judgement as to which source is better. A Ministry, for example, because of its overview position, its access to expertise and long term involvement in an issue may develop a greater strategic insight. Alternatively it can be closed and wedded to old, tried and tested approaches, be too bureaucratic in structure that new ideas have little scope to emerge and too departmentally oriented so that no lateral ideas evolve. However, what is clear from the analysis of successful organisations, cities and regions, is that a creative milieu is crucial in encouraging innovative ideas and solutions - this has not been the case so far for the Ministry.

As far as implementing is concerned it is increasingly becoming clear on a world basis that public institutions work best when they act as enablers, facilitators and encouragers. The culture of public institutions is not one of entrepreneurship, flexibility and risk taking and probably quite rightly so - that is not their strength. Different organisational structures with different priorities are better suited. On that basis the priority should be to devolve and to allow public bodies their rightful role as strategic planners.

Ownership is the third dimension, and the key question is whether ownership is necessary for the Ministry to implement its policy. Does it make any difference if a cultural institution is owned by the state, a foundation or private body. Probably yes. First, ownership is a burden and responsibility, in addition the state is subject to the whims of political process that can politicise institutions unnecessarily and more than they would otherwise be. Ownership by foundations or trusts is important to explore, because by their statutes they guarantee the public interest, lack of exploitation and the threat of take-over. They derive in essence from civil society on whose behalf ownership is held in trusteeship. In many European countries

cultural institutions are owned in this way. This is not to say that some key institutions should not be owned by public bodies, such as national institutions only to highlight that other ownership options exist. Furthermore a public body can still achieve its objectives without ownership. Lastly, the fact that private organisations own cultural facilities does not mean they can not play a part in the development of policy. Crucially the Ministry can through its grants regime, something it hardly does currently, direct the activities of private organisations towards its policy goals.

Key question for the national debate: By what means can private activity be encouraged to strengthen the cultural development of Bulgaria?

#### Subsidy versus the market

All market systems have either overt or covert mechanisms for support, such as state subsidised education which provides the platform for people to enter the market for jobs in the first place. This is, because public or merit goods, such as education and indeed many cultural activities, will not be provided by the market unless there are incentives to do so. The judgement must always be whether a public institution is better placed to use tax payers money to achieve objectives than the market on its own. In general the task of public bodies is to provide the context within which markets work fairly and efficiently and to address market failure. Thus the focus for policy is to understand where the market is defective and to assess what actions they can undertake that act most catalytically to generate the most impact. As noted in the book area intervention on the distribution and marketing side is of greatest priority to create most benefit for the book industry and authors. There is also the other aspect that existing legal hurdles hinder the market from developing.

In addition an assessment should be made between whether the mechanism or technology itself is defective, such as record distribution or the way it is operated. For example, in under-developed markets like Bulgaria, although the tendency exists in the rest of Europe as well, there is a particular focus on best sellers to the disadvantage of more adventurous products. Here it is not the market mechanism that is at 'fault', but the nature of the product sold. In this instance cultural policy can decide that there are reasons to support particular product ranges by making it worthwhile, through subsidy, for the market mechanism to take a product on.

Key question for the national debate: What are the means by which subsidy can most effectively and catalytically ensure that merit good aspects of culture can be safeguarded?

#### Cultural development dilemmas

Elite/Prestige/Flagship/'Big' v. Community oriented/Local/'Small'

What should the focus of cultural policy be? Building opera houses or supporting them generously or refurbishing chitalischta? Subsidising high profile arts exhibitions or an arts programme to help drug takers overcome



their habit? In West European countries, for example, the climate of intense competition especially amongst cities has led to a tendency to support prestige arts events and organisations, with a focus on 'high' art forms both through the funding and the construction of new facilities. Often these policies, in particular when combined with the reduction of public subsidy for more community oriented and smaller arts organisations, have led to disaffection and even to some antagonism towards the prestige venues. However, although the movement for socially oriented arts programmes waned in the 1980's the recent debates on community rebuilding especially in the context of urban renewal has refocused attention on more locally based arts programmes.

If prestige projects are to be pursued it is therefore important to gain broad public support for developments through consultation and other means of involving local citizens.

In Bulgaria it is unclear what the current policy seeks to achieve. Is it a balance through the simultaneous support of the locally based chitalischta on the one hand and flagship institutions in the capital Sofia on the other? In our view in the particular context and difficulties in which Bulgaria stands today supporting the chitalischta might be the priority. Although it may not appear glamorous we believe in the longer term it will create greater impact than a simple focus on a few prestige initiatives. Chitalischta can play a vital role both in reinventing civil society and providing, relatively cheaply a comprehensive base throughout the country for cultural activities. This could also address a perceived gap in encouraging locally based arts projects. Such a priority has implications for the rest of Bulgaria's cultural infrastructure and clearly would lead hard decisions elsewhere.

Such a view inevitably brings in the role of national cultural institutions which form the apex of cultural life within a given cultural form representing the highest centres of excellence. They absorb most resources. Their role should be to stand as aspirational benchmarks for others to emulate. Within any art form there may also be regional or local centres of excellence. Their function is to develop quality and thus provide criteria against which others can measure themselves. Their performance should be critically assessed by peer review and open public debate and the Ministry should be able to make demands on them for the extra support their national status gives them. Such national status accrues privileges, but also responsibilities, which may in some instances be withdrawn if standards are not met. This implies that national institutions need to be put under competitive pressure to maintain their status; they do not have that status by right and thus should be evaluated on a 5 yearly cycle.

Key question for national debate: Can additional support for chitalischta at the same time guarantee that national institutions thrive?

## Minorities and mainstream

The isolation from mainstream European thinking has led to a lack of appreciation of debates around issues such as cultural diversity, pluralism and the rights of cultural minorities. In the context of increased mass movements of people across countries and cultures these inevitably have risen sharply up political agendas. We appreciate given Bulgaria's history and the trauma of the 'Turkish yoke' that the issue of minorities is in danger of becoming a taboo subject.

The issue of minorities is relevant in two ways. First minorities are producers and audiences for culture and second they are a subject for cultural policy. In terms of the first minorities represent nearly 20% of the population and unsurprisingly have a relatively cohesive and rich cultural life with its own dynamics operating somewhat separately from mainstream 'Bulgarian' culture. At the same time it is evident particularly within popular culture, both its folklore and contemporary versions how influences have merged to produce a unique hybrid Bulgarian culture. In popular music especially and in the Southern areas abutting Greece and Turkey we noticed how new musicals forms were developing incorporating these traditions and those of gypsies with Bulgarian music to produce unusual configurations. Aside of these 'natural' or 'market' developments there did not appear to be specific attention paid to minorities in terms of cultural policy. There is no programme, for example, to promote gypsy or Turkish music. Indeed the notion of minorities is not recognised there are only ethnic groups.

We are in no position to make a firm judgement on this area, save to say that a number of interviewees noted that minorities were a forgotten, to some extent invisible group, where issues of inequality and limited access to resources abounds. What is clear is that in the future, with increasing mass movements of people world-wide, the issue of national diversity and multi-culturality will have to be accepted as a fact of life and thus that there are no pure Bulgarians.

Key question for the national debate: Is a focus on minorities an important priority for Bulgaria's developing cultural policy?

### The Arts versus the Artist

By focusing on the role of the artist we encounter one of the key dilemmas for cultural policy. Do they have a special role in society that justifies special treatment? Is their function more important than that of doctors, scientists or engineers? Should the Ministry of Culture support artists or art?

Whilst it is true that the Ministry should concern itself with the health and viability of the arts sector as a whole, including the position of artists, is not its primary role to support the development of art and the encouragement of increasing standards of quality within the arts? Is not

the goal of policy better art and the coincidental means of achieving this the artist? This is not to denigrate the artist, but to take away the focus of policy from the artist towards the arts. The artist clearly plays a number of roles in society and their activities have a number of impacts in economic, educational and social terms. Of particular importance in the context of transition should be their capacity to explain, explore, clarify, interpret and elucidate the effects of transition on Bulgarian life.

If this shift is not made the Ministry will find itself in difficulties in justifying why artists as distinct from other members of society should warrant special treatment. It does not mean that the actions of the Ministry will not in indirect ways help support artists. It puts the onus on artists to justify their position in terms of what they produce rather than simply because they are artists. This may be difficult for artists to accept as they have often seen themselves as a special category given the tenuousness of their existence. However, is it fair that when there are no jobs in other professions they are encouraged to retrain whereas when an artist has no work there is no similar pressure.

If this interpretation is taken on board it has broad ranging effects. For example, it raises questions about some of the historic privileges organisations such as the artist unions have had. Essentially a system had been set up to support artists in collusion with the state as distinct from developing art. Unions now receive funds from members' subscriptions, donations and subsidies from the Ministry of Culture. This creates a situation whereby unions, who should in principle be independent of the state in order to argue for changes also receive resources from the state thus jeopardising their independent position. Furthermore unions also receive resources from their own economic activities (receipts from rents, publishing and recreation facilities), which have been handed over to them by the state, thus giving unions significant advantages over newer civil society organisations in the arts that might wish to set up. Increasingly less artists in the various spheres have chosen to remain or become members of existing unions now that it is not an obligation, and when one analyses the age structure of union membership one can see they are ageing dramatically with hardly any younger members.

In essence the unions are taking on three roles that should be separate. In normal circumstances it would be the government that is responsible for pension arrangements; the unions for ensuring that artists rights as workers are protected and lobbied for; and professional associations for promoting a particular art form.

Key questions for the national debate: Is there any justification for the artist to be regarded as a special case? Can the historic role of the unions be justified in a democratic market oriented economy?

### 'Spin Offs' v Artistic Content

In reframing the argument for the arts and their relevance to broader objectives such as tourism and economic development there is a danger that the spin-offs of cultural policy - economic, environmental or image issues - become more important than the focus on the originality, innovativeness or quality of cultural production. A - 'What's good for business is good for culture' attitude may prevail to limit the scope for cultural producers to perform their essential and traditional function of criticising the status quo.

In the Bulgarian context the situation is as yet so far from this scenario as hardly any links have been to other sectors, that the argument goes the other way. The focus of attention in Bulgaria remains still the undiluted, 'pure' artistic product, amidst worries that any connection to the market will sully the artistic product. The artistic world needs to experience that confrontation with the market is not inevitably a threat, although dangers clearly exist. Inevitably it will be necessary to create partnerships and alliances with people and organisations whose primary concern is not culture. Indeed at this moment it is vital for the cultural sector, led by some high profile initiatives by the Ministry, to engage with as many partners as possible. A pre-condition to make such discussions or negotiations to be credible is some form of study that provides evidence for the economic and social importance and impact of cultural investment.

Key question for the national debate: How can joint collaboration with organisations whose priorities are not culture lead to mutually beneficial projects?

### Past/Heritage/Nostalgia v Future/Modernity/Experiment

Cultural policies must certainly celebrate the history of a country, and the roots and shared identities of the people who live and work there. Such celebration, however, must not degenerate into 'museumisation', and the recreation of history that ultimately might be seen as 'fake'. It is equally important that investment into the achievements of a culture's past are balanced by encouragement and support for experimental, avant-garde, innovative critical cultural activities, and with the exploration, for example, of the possible links between the arts and the new media and technologically advanced industries. Any culture must be a living culture and the role of cultural policy is to ensure that it remains so.

The speed of change in Bulgaria inevitably means cultural heritage takes on a priority and meaning that is different from that experienced in more developed countries. Whilst the cultural policy may state that its current emphasis is more heritage maintenance it should be made clear that this is a time dated objective.

Key question for the national debate: What is the balance between investing in heritage and investing in experimentation?

## Media in culture

It is noticeable that in cultural policies in most European countries the 'pre-electronic' arts, such as theatre, and 'contemporary' media are often still not adequately integrated or connections between the two are not made. Broadly speaking two kinds of issue can be identified. The first concerns the media as arts and media in the arts and the second the media as a means of communicating and distributing the arts.

In terms of the former in some countries the cultural dimension of media policy are given lower priority and lower status such as film policy whose funding as an overall percentage of the Ministry's budget has declined; secondly where policies for both do exist they tend to co-exist in relative isolation, as seen in the Bulgarian case where TV and radio are not part of the Ministry of Culture's remit.

Often policies for 'pre-electronic' arts tend to be the responsibility of Ministries of Culture or at the local level departments of culture or leisure, whereas media policy at the national or local level falls within departments concerned with economic development. This failure of integration means that many positive synergies are under-exploited. These include arts/media cross-overs; or in the educational sphere linkages, for example, between the visual arts and industrial design or widening audiences for the live arts through interaction with the new media.

In the context of the emerging knowledge economy based on the development of information technology there is now a vital new development, presaged in the early 20th century by the motion picture industry and in the mid-20th century by television and popular music: the next generation of innovative activities will come out of the synergy between cultural and technological innovation. Modern music, modern art now depend on a fusion of artistic and technological creativity, in a way that has never before been seen. The new generation of multimedia, embedded in CD-Roms and soon in multi-access terminals, embody previously discrete forms of communication - text, pictures, music - in a single technology, instantly available.

At the same time the media are the most important means of distributing arts and cultural products. For these reasons it is essential that the ministries of culture, education and trade consider media as well as arts and establish the institutional synergies necessary, with other agencies and ministries, that are crucial to assessing possibilities.

Key question for the national debate: How can the Ministry of Culture both help develop media in the arts and ensure that transmission of arts and culture through the media is adequate?

## Contents and containers: Activities versus buildings

It is sometimes argued that in cultural policy a choice must be made between 'ephemeral' programmes of events and activities - such as cultural animation or festivals - and investments in 'permanent' facilities such as concert halls or arts centres. Such a juxtaposition can be quite artificial. Seemingly ephemeral events like festivals, if coherently organised and regularly repeated can become permanent features of place's cultural infrastructure, and can offer benefits, for example, in terms of image or support for local cultural production - which go well beyond the immediate opportunities for public enjoyment of the arts they offer. The 'ephemeral - permanent dichotomy, however, can be perhaps be useful to focus policy makers' minds on the problem of the costs of the upkeep and maintenance of 'permanent' cultural facilities which are often so high that they absorb most of the resources available. A successful festival that may happen in the streets is just as much infrastructure as a building.

Importantly the vibrancy of culture is provided by the activities, products and performances through making culture day to day. Culture only has a meaning if it constantly recreates its content. Buildings are the key means to show these activities. The relative proportions spent on containers - physical infrastructure - as distinct from contents is disproportionate, all over Europe with buildings eating up increasing resources simply to be there. At the same time, whilst obviously a basic stock of performance and exhibition venues are necessary, artistic events are taking place in non-traditional venues including the streets, or art exhibitions in empty offices or multi-purpose structures. Yet resources used for building maintenance take away from investing in artistic product.

In Bulgaria the key problem is that too many resources are focused on 'containers' - buildings - and too few on 'content' - artistic product. Policy makers need to make hard choices with their limited resources, how much infrastructure can it afford to maintain whilst at the same supporting what is the core of their mission to encourage the creation of quality art.

Related to the above is the question of how many resources are spent on soft infrastructure - the activities such as strategic planning, management and marketing skills - that make it possible for cultural organisations and their buildings to function in the first place. They range from the activities that get a given project to the audience ranging from the development of marketing consortia to the setting up of agency or distribution networks to training courses. Bulgaria, as other post-Communist countries has a recognised weakness in most of these areas and a priority of policy should be to address these areas.

Key question for the national debate: Can the built infrastructure be maintained at existing levels whilst creating a priority to develop the cultural activities within buildings?

### Institutions versus projects

Related to the above is whether permanent institutions or independent projects should be prioritised. Clearly in a number of instances such as with heritage sites or national institutions the institutional base is of over-riding importance. Furthermore it is possible to support particular projects within institutions, but what is more significant is the degree to which projects with no institutional base merit subsidy. By reducing institutional funding the range of projects supported can increase dramatically and importantly many of the new initiatives are likely to develop initially, at least, as groups of like minded people who may rent space for a performance or exhibition. Equally many projects are one off initiatives with no after life and no desire to create a permanent institutional base. On balance it can be argued that time dated, circumscribed projects, such as festivals, contribute more to creating a vibrant cultural life than a focus on a limited number of permanent organisations.

Key question for the national debate: What proportion of the cultural budget should be given to one off projects?

### The generation gap

The sociological surveys of cultural participation and leisure time use indicate starkly how, particularly after 1989, patterns of consumption between the generations are diverging. Younger people are turning increasingly to the commercial cultural industries - videos, discos and popular music - for their entertainment. Whilst the old structure to encourage participation guaranteed cheap access to facilities, such as theatres or museums - a new infrastructure is emerging which the Ministry of Culture needs to address by finding bridges to stay in touch with the preferences of the new audiences.

This might mean, for example, rather than setting up new youth centres finding ways of developing programmes and projects that cross generational boundaries such as with musicals. Alternatively it might mean encouraging the reinvention of the rich traditions in textiles towards contemporary forms, which could in turn create a stimulus for the development of a nascent fashion industry. These textile traditions were largely ossified within the communist period yet have great potential.

Key question for the national debate: What programmes can cultural institutions develop that more specifically address the interests of the young?

### Local v international

Should the local dimension of cultural policy be emphasised or the more high profile international one? This has two aspects. Firstly, it is argued, for instance, that cultural policies should actively defend the uniqueness of the 'local' against the homogeneity and sameness which internationalisation can bring about, such as all pervading pop music which the national report refers to as 'ersatz culture' or 'fake culture'. This is a defensive posture. It is more constructive to argue that the uniqueness of local products, practices and identities should form the basis upon which internationalisation strategies

should be built. If the local culture is strong and vibrant it is likely to defend itself against non-Bulgarian product. Importantly if international trends in culture are not recognised there is a danger that the youth audiences are lost.

A good example of this is, for example, the promotion of a 'Glasgow Style' of design and fashion in the late 1980s, which was a way of projecting the city abroad. In a number of areas this is possible for Bulgaria especially music. It could be envisaged that over time of hybridisation of Bulgarian and Americanised music could be developed that might bridge the local and international divide. To some extent this implies trusting that the population will find ways of absorbing international cultural trends for its own purposes.

The second aspect concerns whether Bulgarian cultural policy should promote local initiatives against internationally oriented ones. Here judgement and fine balance is necessary especially given limited resources. On the one hand one function of cultural policy is to enable national institutions to operate on the highest international level, yet at the same time the expert group has put its flag to the mast of local cultural development through the encouragement of chitalishta in a 21st century form.

Key question for the national debate: What kinds of programmes or initiatives exist or could be developed that bridge the local/international gap? Are the dual objectives of supporting national institutions and chitalishta possible?

### Economic Development Dilemmas

#### A crisis beyond the control of the cultural sector

The economic fate and prospects of the cultural sector in Bulgaria are largely determined by factors outside the control of the Ministry, artistic institutions and artists. It depends on the extent to which the governing classes, both political and economic, can grapple with the requirements of the transition by providing a legislative framework and raft of incentives for entrepreneurship to develop in Bulgaria. Furthermore Bulgaria's market size and level of economic development puts constraints on what is possible to achieve. Nevertheless within these limitations it is possible to create priorities which are able to assist Bulgarian cultural development to move forward.

Key question for the national debate: To what extent is it possible to improve the economic basis of cultural institutions in spite of rampant inflation, political instability and an under-developed economy?

#### Consumption v Production

Once the argument has been accepted that cultural sector has economic dimensions the need arises to develop policies that balance the twin objectives of stimulating cultural consumption - and the consumer service industries associated with it such as tourism - and the local cultural production infrastructure. Or put another way the encouragement of participation and audiences or investment in generating sellable products. As the notion of the market did not exist in the former Bulgaria with its



producer focused policy, the concentration on consumption, users and clients is now essential in order to make the production infrastructure more viable. This concerns not only the kind of not-for-profits, such as theatre or opera, that the Ministry supports, but also thinking about the possibility of helping micro-businesses, such as in handicrafts or design, to develop markets for their product.

The operating context for establishing a market economy in culture in those parts of culture where it is possible, (in some areas such as heritage it is more difficult) is not favourable. This is both because of legal constraints and the lack of linkage between the Ministry and departments such as trade or tourism. It means that the Ministry needs to co-operate with other departments which can help increase consumption of culture. It might mean that the Ministry encourages projects within the hospitality industry and retailing, a strong departure from current policy and practice.

This choice has implications for the types policy programmes created and training policies adopted, and we are not aware of any training policies that the Ministry is encouraging geared to enhancing the marketing capacity of organisations.

Although these kinds of initiative might appear initially peripheral to cultural producers in Bulgaria as the tourism economy develops, and thus helps the overall economy it can in principle involve the creation of highly skilled jobs in high value added sectors such as design in its various forms, music or broadcasting.

**Key question for the national debate: What are the most effective means of enhancing the marketing skills of cultural organisations?**

#### **Developing local entrepreneurship or importing cultural products**

Any tradition of entrepreneurship that may have existed in Bulgaria, has largely been lost in the communist period. Yet such entrepreneurship is essential for Bulgaria to succeed in developing a market economy. As a consequence there is an undeveloped structure of micro businesses and small to medium sized enterprises (Sme's). If these were to exist, in the cultural sector such as in crafts related areas, the competition between companies would be a key source of generating creativity and innovation and testing these products within a market.

Importing cultural products, from crafts to theatre performances can act as a means of stimulus in terms of ideas, styles and execution as well as keeping Bulgaria in touch with international trends, yet at the same it does not directly support the development of the local economy.

**Key question for the national debate: How can the creativity of artists and creators be harnessed with entrepreneurship?**

## Place Marketing Dilemmas

### Reality v Hype

The imperative to sell positive images to enhance regeneration prospects in Bulgaria can mean suppressing bad news on poverty, social unrest, dereliction and other negative issues. As the poor contrast their own situation with the usually positive portrait projected to the international media the differences are apparent. This can further alienate or make cynical those groups that the regeneration process has not helped, but wishes to reach in the longer term.

This dilemma can also have a manifestation in the promotion of 'heritage' images and other unifying themes which act as artificial images of 'community' in the midst of growing social polarisation and tensions. For example, the appeal to 'community' that is behind the notion of some mythical past alludes to social balance, but in reality excludes many groups.

Along with landscape and natural heritage one of the most powerful marketing devices for countries is their culture and how their culture is thus projected is of vital importance. What is to be marketed becomes then a strategic question as expectations need to match reality. Is it only the heritage, such as monasteries?. Does that reflect Bulgaria overall when the visitor arrives. Is it also the multicultural diversity including the Turkish and gypsy heritage? Perhaps that would be Bulgaria's unique selling point. Is it the night life of Sofia, Burgas or Kazanlak? Is it the culture of cooking? How honest are the marketers going to be and might not honesty be the most interesting and best strategy in the long run.

Key question for the national debate: What is the image that should be projected of Bulgaria - a heritage image or contemporary one?

### A focus on visitors or residents

Policies chiefly aimed at attracting visitors (be they 'cultural tourists' as in places like Veliko Tarnovo or Sofia, or 'business tourists' as in Plovdiv), and at making the city more attractive to residents, are rarely consciously integrated. Projects need to be developed that ensure that tourism projects and increasing the quality of life for citizens are part of the same strategy. A good example of this is Glasgow where environmental improvements often urban design initiatives with a cultural dimension such as their lighting strategy, which benefited all citizens were, in the course of the 1980s, also the basis for the city's new tourist appeal.

Interventions such as anti litter drives, signposting improvements, and better policing, street lighting, late night public transport, carpark safety and so on are arguably needed in every place to enhance attractiveness for both residents and visitors. In this sense cultural policy can not be disentangled from policy in other areas. Indeed many cultural institutions fail, because the areas surrounding them are degraded, frightening or unpleasant, so investment in

the external environment can achieve a number of things simultaneously including being an indirect investment in the health of a cultural venue.

Key question for the national debate: What are the exemplary initiatives that combine both a tourist focus with one that enhances the quality of life for local people?

### Spatial Dilemmas

#### City or Country

Bulgaria is a highly urbanised country, yet its main towns do not hold as high a proportion of the population as compared to most West European countries. At the same time Sofia attracts a disproportionate amount of resources, as do most national capitals, because national institutions are usually based there. Yet in spite of the legacy of centralism the communist focus on equal access has meant that the local infrastructure, especially physical is well developed such as chitalishta. Yet will that be able to be maintained in the new era, when responsibilities are being handed over to municipalities, who have no resources and insufficient money raising powers - the law on municipal financing is only due to be addressed in 1998. Countries with a lively culture usually have competing centres both large and small, rather like a form of internal competition, where different environments create diverse local cultures and strengths in different fields.

Key question for the national debate: What is the balance of resources that should be focused on key centres as against development in small towns and rural areas?

#### City Centre v Periphery

Policies focusing almost exclusively on city centre based developments predominantly aimed at tourists and higher income groups have in some cases alienated from civic life residents of deprived outer estates and inner city areas who may find the centre's cultural provision very difficult to access - psychologically, physically and economically.

These tensions are evident in a number of cities such as Sofia where the relative cultural renaissance of the city centre coexists with continuing deprivation in the peripheral outer estates, even though cultural provision under the communist regime more perhaps than in the West considered the needs of outlying areas. The local cultural life of suburban areas is becoming an increasing priority in European cities, witness for example the Council of Europe's own programme on 'Culture and Neighbourhoods', as one key role of cultural activities in these areas is to support social cohesion, counteract the effects of social exclusion as well as simply giving people something to do. The expert group was not aware of any policy or initiative in this regard.

Key question for national debate: What initiatives can be undertaken to enhance culture in neighbourhoods and how can institutions based in city centres contribute to the cultural life of suburbs?

## Section Four: The international context for cultural development

### Introduction

This section outlines in broad sweep the international environment within which cultural policy operates and the specific problems raised are of relevance to all countries in transition and even more developed countries too. Thus there is a wealth of international experience for Bulgarian policy makers to draw on as they consider the issues in our proposed national debate. It has an economic inflection, not because we believe everything is about money, but because it also helps to focus policy makers attention on the non-monetary purposes and values for supporting cultural activity.

The new larger and different international context within which Bulgaria operates shape the margins of manoeuvre of Bulgaria's emerging cultural policy. This bigger context brings with it new threats and opportunities, but an understanding of these international dynamics also helps bring about a healthy realism and more focused set of expectations about what is achievable, what the true nature of the competition is and where Bulgaria can play a strong niche card - and in terms of niches Bulgaria truly has many opportunities. The focus on niches serves to concentrate the mind on what Bulgaria can be good at and is good at and where it is unique. This includes music where it is already seen as part of the 'world music' phenomenon, as people have become increasingly jaded with a surfeit of pop. Aspects of heritage like the Rila monastery or Kazanlak and even handicrafts if they are more encouraged. The chitalishta even although local in intent have something to offer outsiders. Bulgaria has culture to offer the world and much of this may come from the unique mixture of cultures within Bulgaria, such as the haunting yet vibrant mixtures of pop music we heard in Burgas which combine Greek, Turkish, gypsy and Bulgarian traditions. How ever much we heard how unified Bulgaria was as a cultural entity the expert group still came away feeling there was great diversity - between regions, ethnic groups, between mountain and sea folk and city and country. And it is this richness that is Bulgaria's asset.

In framing its cultural policy within international horizons does not mean that Bulgaria should gain its sole inspiration from abroad, what in the end the outside world appreciates is what is endogenous. Nevertheless through the enormous impact of the media Bulgaria is much more in tune with international trends in culture and furthermore individuals have possibilities to travel and to judge their own cultural performance with outside countries.

### Reframing the arguments for culture in 21st century terms

As Bulgaria is seeking to realign and reintegrate itself within a broader Europe, it is important for Bulgaria's cultural policy to be framed within an understanding of the forces, largely, economic and political which are

shaping that policy's potential and possibilities. In addition Bulgarian cultural policy makers need to be alert to newer debates as to how precisely cultural activities foster and relate to enhancing quality of life, personal and collective well being and wealth creation. Experience elsewhere in Europe over the last decade, where cultural budgets have equally been under pressure and in real terms have reduced, suggests that the arguments for investment in arts and culture need to be restated in more 'modern' terms. Given competing pressures on public funds everywhere it simply cannot be assumed that investment in cultural activities is in some sense a 'right' - that arts for arts sake in and of itself is good - without making a renewed case in 21st century terms. Some of the traditional arguments for culture, such as its educational value, are likely to remain, but how are they argued for or expressed might change. At the same time new arguments will be able to strengthen the overall case.

Within this reframing it is important to focus on what the unique contribution of the not-for-profit and subsidised sector is, which cannot be provided for by private initiative.

#### **The need for evidence of the impact of cultural investment**

In this period of transition the creative and imaginative potential of cultural activities might help in finding solutions to problems in other spheres. This means that one aspect of the Ministry of Culture's strategy to 'sell' its cultural policy is to provide the evidence of culture's wide-ranging impacts - from tourism, to economic development, to enhancing the quality of life, to creating identity and possibly social cohesion. In this sense one role of the Ministry, or preferably agencies to which it delegates the task, is to advocate and document the particular importance of culture across a number of spheres. This in turn implies showing how cultural activities do not take place within an isolated island called arts and culture, but that there are linkages to other areas of decision making such as tourism, economic development or social affairs.

Furthermore it means that the Ministry, local authorities and other arts agencies need to establish links and working relationships with other departments and sectors. We recognise that such cross-departmental working and partnership approaches to project management is currently difficult, but on the basis of experience elsewhere such an effort is worthwhile given the possible, positive outcomes. It may, for example, mean that the cultural budget is enhanced through contributions from other budget areas, because a joint project may be mutually beneficial, such as youth, social affairs or economic development.

This approach can make headway in helping to counteract arguments that understandably Bulgaria has powerful other priorities to address that might weaken the case for investment in culture. Yet, a number of considerations should be borne in mind. First solving a number of problems, such as the disaffection of youth or even reducing offending behaviour can be helped by cultural activities in a cheap and flexible way; second in the context of the sheer scale of problems to be addressed the cultural budget still remains relatively minor.

#### Globalisation and the position of Bulgaria

Within the socialist period Bulgaria's cultural policy took little account of globalisation and how this might affect its artistic communities on the ground. It had its own hermetic world with a more limited global view with different criteria, guidelines and values - and many of these values were positive and may be under threat in a market economy. This meant that a wide range of broader questions and issues or the international dynamics of the global cultural industries were not seen as relevant - to a large extent artists were shielded from it. Now that Bulgaria has taken the road towards a market economy this luxury is no longer possible, because those economic dynamics reveal both the limitations and possibilities of investing in culture and the constraints within which cultural initiatives can take place.

In all industrialised societies the cultural sector, including emerging areas such as multimedia, is both part of the more general manufacturing and production sector, and yet crucially slightly apart from it. Yet the cultural sector has certain defining qualities which are both particular and peculiar to it. Formulating strategic cultural policy, therefore, should involve an understanding of culture's key economic dynamics and characteristics. The cultural field as distinct from areas such as agriculture, mining or public services, has importantly a number of distinctive features and makes wide-ranging contributions which have historically and still do justify subsidy, which is why cultural activities cannot be solely assessed from an economic point of view.

#### 'Hard' and 'soft' arguments for culture

Thus the purposes and potential impacts of cultural policy should be made more explicit to give an underlying justification why certain policy lines are being taken. We highlight the 4 waves of argument in support of the arts which have been made in Western Europe, all are important and form part of a comprehensive argument for the arts. These could be discussed within the national debate to take the Bulgarian report further, to show the decisive break Bulgaria wishes to make from the use of culture as a tool for control and propaganda.

- Culture for culture's sake

Cultural activities have a crucial symbolic role in helping understanding and in making apparent and visible the dramatic

changes in Bulgaria. This highlights the symbolic value of cultural activities showing how it deals with symbols, narratives, meanings, values, image and aesthetics. Cultural production, in other words, has implications which go well beyond crude economic calculations, yet it is increasingly recognised that precisely these 'softer' factors are of substantial direct and indirect economic importance in terms of, say, city marketing.

The move towards a homogenised global monoculture has continued to increase. Cultural activities and products are of great importance in establishing and maintaining collective identities - whether at a local, regional or national level. High streets in different cities and in different countries have begun to look more and more similar, as each city begins to contain internationally familiar shop fronts. The sense of identity created by local and national culture becomes increasingly important as a mechanism for maintaining local distinctiveness and a sense of place. The process of deliberately sustaining local identity forms a recognisable and increasing trend in the cultural policy of European countries.

Related to the above is the desire to maintain built heritage as a means of physically anchoring historical identity and roots, as is the desire to maintain folk traditions, as a means of creating some form of stability, in a world where change can seem too fast. The key issue is how this emphasis on protecting the past can be married with a recognition of the emerging contemporary cultures especially those of the young. Crucially the idea of heritage maintenance itself needs to be re-configured in such a way that it remains relevant to 21st century needs and the aspirations and requirements of different age groups. This is a matter of how heritage is interpreted.

- **Educational value**

The educational value of the arts is largely focused on its contribution to the development of the individual and the changes that it can inspire. The role that cultural activities play in the development of self-expression, in the uses of the imagination, in the creation of self-confidence; the capacity to work collaboratively; to develop responsibility and even the generation of a civil society remain as pertinent today as ever.

- **Economic impact**

As the value of subsidising the arts has been challenged a major plank of the advocacy case for the arts has been to calculate its economic importance and impact both directly and indirectly. Since the first studies were undertaken in the United States in the 1970's over 200 studies assessing economic impact have been undertaken by cities, regions and even nations. Cultural activities also represent jobs and can create jobs when the cultural sector is flourishing and indeed the inclusive sector called the cultural industries including

arts and media are now said to be the fourth largest industry in the world and growing. Indeed the music industry is Britain's third largest export industry. This is especially so, because of the rise of multi-media, which is based on an artistic core combined with computing power. In the context of post-communist countries, with their tendency for over-employment in the arts the jobs argument is often hard to make, yet the argument concerning turnover is indisputable. The positive indirect effects on tourism are difficult to query and as Bulgaria begins to focus more on product development the value of artists and designers will become more significant thus affecting economic development. Thus one task for policy makers is to begin to assemble this argument.

#### • Social impact

The awareness that much arts has been focused on more elite audiences led in the late 1960's to the encouragement of arts in the community as a means of harnessing the creativity and potential of people normally excluded from arts activity. Thus the social impact argument is largely concerned with changes that the arts can engender in the wider society. For example, how involvement in arts activities can empower people, learn responsibility and delegate it, and how as a consequence organisational capacity can be developed. That in turn can foster community development skills that are applicable and transferable to broader non-arts areas. In this way the arts can help create community leadership and entrepreneurship.

Increasing evidence from elsewhere in Europe shows that the arts are a flexible, cheap and effective way in assisting to achieve the aims of social policy, such as in helping reduce offending behaviour by involving disaffected youth in creating their own dramas or assisting them in setting up a band. Arts programmes have helped individuals and communities to develop the organisational skills to help themselves. The arts can help support independence as in the many arts programmes with people with mental or physical health problems. The examples and opportunities are endless. Therefore the Ministry should consider commissioning some form of economic and social impact study of culture to be used as an advocacy tool.

The justifications for cultural policy outlined above should frame one part of the *raison d'être* and focus for Bulgaria's cultural policy report.

#### International economic forces and trends in culture

The international economic forces impacting on cultural development define the scope, possible impacts of what a Bulgarian cultural policy can achieve. There are a number of international trends within the cultural economy which will determine the scope and type of intervention



necessary and possible within Bulgaria, the nature of any appropriate strategies and the niches it can find for itself. These include:

#### **Creativity as an all-pervasive asset**

Creativity is associated with those with arts training, although it is not only the preserve of artists. However, the recognition that creativity is a valuable asset, not only for the large multi-national cultural industry conglomerates, but also for many other companies whose work may not be obviously culturally related means that artists are increasingly playing, and will need for their own survival, new roles in the commercial sector. In principle this could provide many opportunities, but the artistic community will have to come to terms with the fact that this is their new operating environment. They might do this either by adapting their artistic skills to commercial activity, such as in graphic design or advertising or as artists being brought into unconventional settings such as within the construction industry or even retailing.

Creating an understanding of these dynamics is one important role that the Ministry of Culture could play.

#### **From print to multi-media**

There is a paradigmatic shift from written communications to audio-visual communication, linked to developments in telecoms, computing, multimedia and Internet initiatives. The key issue here is how communication about the arts will in future develop. It will provide opportunities for people who have trained in film and information related areas. It is predicted that this development will open up massive new markets and the creation of new synergies between people with artistic training and those with technological and software expertise. This potential means that Bulgarian cultural policy cannot avoid addressing developments in the newer media. It may be useful for the Ministry to engineer links and open dialogue with the scientific community, especially the well respected Bulgarian computer community, to undertake pilot projects of mutual benefit, and we are surprised that not more effort has been put in this direction.

#### **The Artist as a Multi Media Phenomenon**

Creative artists often work across different cultural fields. A musician, for example, may perform at a live orchestral concert at one moment, then as a recording studio musician in record production and later as a musician involved in a film score. A graphic artist may produce advertising copy, then pictures for individual sale acting in this sense as a 'pure' artist, and then produce covers for records or film publicity. Some people call the need to work for different clients in different ways - the world of portfolio working.

The creative products themselves are now also not confined to one medium. Most are cross-media products: the book of the play, the film of

the book, the record of the film, and so on. Underpinning this convergence and cross-media recycling is the way the cultural industries themselves are being linked to and shaped by the development of the communication, computing and 'knowledge' industries. It is increasingly frequent for creative people to work in teams across disciplines and move between them, as has traditionally happened between, for example, between actors in the theatre, radio and television. In multi-media and popular music some of the more interesting cross-over formats are being explored.

This means that discussion of cultural policy in Bulgaria cannot be solely framed in terms of traditional artistic forms such as theatre or music without taking into account linkages between old and new sectors.

#### Increasing monopolisation within cultural industry conglomerates

Within these changes there is an increasing internationalisation and monopolisation of cultural industry companies, especially those concentrating on reproducible goods, such as videos, as well as software and hardware development.

It has been argued that in 10 years there will only be 5 or 6 major players in the cultural industries in the world. These conglomerates are multi media not single media, and are usually said to include Time/Warner (records, publishing, cable, film); Sony (Columbia, CBS); Bertelsmann; Berlusconi; Hachette, Polygram, EMI and News Corporation. They cover print, the audio-visual media and music, and some are even getting into live performance, such as musicals and through their involvement in print media with the visual arts.

In the major cultural industries - for example, music, - the middle range players are often finding it difficult to compete internationally. There is a tendency, therefore, for a scenario to unfold of a few big companies and many small, who can only capture clearly defined niches. However, because of the rapid changes and technological developments in this area it is increasingly difficult to prophesy which companies will eventually emerge as winners and which will fall by the wayside.

But even below this level of strategic world operators different sectors of cultural activity such as arts auctioneering, theatre musical production or agenting tend to be centred in particular places, especially London and New York, which has the effect of pulling talent towards them.

Bulgaria has no companies operating at this international scale and its small company formation in the cultural industries, such as in music is still in its infancy, nevertheless there are niches to be developed where Bulgaria can play to its strengths.

### The use of English as the international communication medium

One result of the globalisation of cultural production, distribution and consumption has been the increasing adoption of English as the international communication medium. This means that language learning becomes a priority. We realise, of course, that most languages, however, small still have world famous authors and it is because of the tendency to use English for simplicity's sake that the protection and promotion of minority languages is such an essential part of cultural policy. Especially as only in a very few areas does another language serve as the accepted international tongue.

Clearly this creates problems for Bulgaria as it means only a few areas of culture are truly internationalisable or exportable such as music. Thus language bound products are more difficult to export. In principle the Bulgarian visual arts would be exportable, but its reputation is still low. And where there are famous Bulgarians such as Christo or Elias Canetti, the outside world is not aware that they are Bulgarian. To some extent the same applies to publishing since as yet there is no raft of Bulgarian authors who are well known abroad.

Even Japan has found it difficult to produce mainstream entertainment software, such as films, TV programmes or pop music, until very recently due in large part to these problems of language. Only with the advent of computer games, which have little or no speech in them, have the Japanese been able to create universal cultural icons.

Thus a major priority for cultural policy is translation and perhaps a more well funded translation fund should be considered, than that which National Book Centre already supports.

### The international nature of cultural consumption

As the ownership of production and distribution facilities have become concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer international companies so have strategies to reach cultural consumers. This has resulted in the development of global cultural marketing strategies and the creation of universally recognisable icons. The sudden surge of interest in Batman, for example, when the film was released, was deliberately engineered as a world-wide phenomenon. Similarly, Mario and Luigi are as familiar to children in the UK as they are to children in Germany, Australia or Japan and possibly even Bulgaria.

Given Bulgaria's financial resources this makes it particularly difficult to compete on an international scale in every cultural sector and therefore Bulgaria needs to concentrate on specific niches, where it has a chance to compete. We come back to the potential of Bulgarian music and singers, who already operate on a number of international circuits such as related to 'world music'.

This internationalisation highlights the need for countries and regions within them to maintain local cultural production.

#### The central importance of rapid product innovation

All consumer industries are concerned with product innovation, but only in the cultural area is rapid product innovation a central condition of existence. The number of individual product lines that a cultural industry - a multimedia product, a publishing house or a record company, for instance - produces has to be much higher than that produced by any other kind of manufacturing industry. This is because it is in the nature of contemporary cultural products to have a comparatively rapid turnover from theatre to design. This constant innovation, of course, creates problems for the producers which is why there is the continuous search for brands which it is hoped could become sure fire winners, in order to reduce the need to rethink each product afresh. The small size of the Bulgarian market automatically puts it at a disadvantage, although the Balkan region provides opportunities.

#### The added value of the 'brand'

Profitability within cultural industries is thus kept up through multi media recycling, syndication and franchising. This highlights the value of brand names, genres, characters, and consequently the importance of copyright and intellectual property. In short, we are witnessing the transition of the creative industries into a copyright industry. This is a means of reducing origination costs. The key value lies in a brand, such as Mickey Mouse and other Disney brands, which make any follow sales easier. In this context Bulgaria has problems as it yet has no internationally recognised cultural icons and furthermore the cost of creating these is very large.

#### The superstar syndrome

The 'superstar' and 'blockbuster' is increasing in importance and as a consequent there is a decrease in the range of available choices. As the marketing and distribution parts of the production chain take on an increasing proportion of costs and profits, it is increasingly only cost effective to put the whole of this machinery into gear for major products, and in this sense again the 'star' is effectively a brand, that is geared to world markets. This means entry costs for new creative products become much greater than Bulgaria can possibly afford, and cultural products are targeted at the Bulgarian market, whose size is insufficient to make them pay for themselves. This can lead to a decline in innovation, research and development.

Nevertheless in certain areas such as opera Bulgaria has its own world stars and means should be found to create resources that can be reinvested into new Bulgarian products. This implies creating a climate where Bulgarians feel proud to be Bulgarian.

## *The endless recycling of cultural products*

In the last twenty years the growth in distribution channels has meant that many cultural products continue to be available long after they would have previously been expected to disappear. In Britain and the USA, for example, there are whole cable channels dedicated to showing programmes from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. These include 'I Love Lucy', Bilko, the Disney classics or Mash, whose value is that they are a brand. Even smaller countries can create internationally travelling brands such as Tintin from Belgium, the Smurfs from the Netherlands.

Importantly these re-runs are cheap, and much cheaper than they could be produced in Bulgaria, as they have already recouped their origination costs long ago and thus they are either dumped on new channels or emerging markets. Additionally this process means that, in effect, anybody producing a new comedy show on television or a comic character is not just competing for attention with their contemporaries, but is also competing against the best or most popular of all previous comedy shows.

The eventual outcome of this process is hard to predict, but may well point to an increasing divergence between vibrant and unpredictable local cultures and an increasingly recycled global culture. It may well lead to most people speaking two separate cultural 'languages'.

### *From the one-off original artwork to the endlessly reproducible*

There have been two major shifts in cultural production in the twentieth century. One shift can be broadly characterised as a process towards small scale industrialisation. During the earlier period of this century there was a move from one off hand crafted cultural artefacts to small batch production. This can be clearly be seen in areas like fashion, furniture design and pottery.

In recent years there has been another important shift, which can be categorised by infinite reproducibility and mass production, including videos, records and computer games. There is a marked shift in the economic production of these goods. In both previous periods most of the cost was in production. With infinitely reproducible cultural goods the actual cost of reproduction of each item is negligible and marketing extremely important. So the major part of the expense of producing a CD occurs at the research and development stage (composing and preparing the material) and subsequently the marketing stage, with production costs negligible. This process occurs both at the level of hardware and software development. In terms of hardware the R&D costs are so large that only a few global players can compete. National and regional players may be able to compete within niches while leaving the overall development of the format to global players.

At Bulgaria's level of economic development it is unlikely that it can be competitive and could become increasingly reliant in new media areas on cultural products made elsewhere

## From Production to Marketing

As production costs have relatively decreased - a typical cultural product may have taken up 60% of costs 30 years ago in many areas this is down to 20% - and there has been a tendency to increase the proportion of expenditure on marketing both in traditional arts forms such as theatre and the newer media. This is because of the increased competition in global markets. For example, in publishing it was traditional that around 40% of costs was spent on the marketing and distribution function, this has now risen to over 60%. Over half of the overall budget of recent blockbuster films ranging from Batman to True Lies is devoted to marketing, whereas it might have been 20% 30 years ago.

Therefore the relative proportion of staff employed in cultural activities in Bulgaria will need to dramatically shift from people concerned with producing towards people with experience and confidence in marketing and management.

## Consuming culture at home or in public places

All of these cultural products are increasingly targeted to people in their home and the enhanced capacity of people to buy audio-visual equipment for home use has led to home based consumption culture and leisure patterns, making culture an individual rather than a collective, public experience. In the West, however, a reaction is occurring, which may in time happen in Bulgaria too. This means that public events, such as open air concerts, need to consider the emerging lifestyle patterns of various population groups and especially of youth and not consider these in a judgmental way.

## Culture and tourism

With the decline in manufacturing and the industrial base in many European countries including Bulgaria, service industries are seen as key drivers of the economy. Thus tourism and more specifically cultural tourism is a key asset. Indeed cultural tourism is one of the fastest growing economic sectors. Initially most countries that are involving themselves in cultural tourism start with promoting heritage, however as their strategies become more developed promoting contemporary arts emerges as a priority. In Bulgaria the tourism department largely uses cultural heritage to promote the country, yet there is no systematic or structured discussion mechanism or strategy formulating forum or linkage with the Ministry of Culture.

Given that cultural assets are the selling points for Bulgaria, it is surprising that developing hotel schools is not a priority or developing comprehensive mechanisms or cross financing incentives, such as dedicated tourism taxes that are ploughed back into cultural development. However, isolated schemes do exist as in Koprivshtitsa.

## Conclusion

All these trends have implications for both economic and cultural policy and the legitimate and effective roles the public sector can play in them. However, these trends are only tendencies. Their progress is not inevitable, and their outcomes are uncertain. As all countries need innovation and creativity to survive, this can in principle provide a focus for Bulgaria's future cultural prospects. Even though there are limitations in the Bulgarian cultural market as a population of 8 million people is too small for production costs in most spheres to be recouped domestically and for artistic products to become viable. This is especially true for film and the new media. This relatively narrow audience base and economic weakness of individual consumers exacerbates this problem.

## Section Five: Drawing the threads together: Conclusions and Recommendations

To assess the cultural policy and dynamics of culture within a whole country is difficult at the best of times, even more so when the country in question is in such flux. In the first part of this concluding section we summarise our main conclusions and observations, then briefly summarise priorities that any review of cultural policy should take on board before leading to our recommendations.

### Three key conclusions

- Changing the mindset

Bulgaria's historical context has shaped all those concerned with culture both at an administrative and policy making level as well as those directly involved in creating culture. The most important effect has been on the mindset of those involved in culture. Changing that mindset is perhaps the most important process that needs to occur, yet at the same time it is the most difficult as ways of working and thinking are entrenched. It might only fully occur after intense training, changing some personnel, devolving power, responsibility and resources to new forces and crucially by experiencing and absorbing a new way of more participative decision making and acting. As someone noted 'changing the mindset is worth a \$million of subsidy'. The Ministry could show its intent by developing an imaginative use of regulation. The current approach to law is punitive. Rather than having an approach that states 'everything is forbidden unless it is permitted' an approach should be adopted that says 'everything is permitted unless it is specifically not allowed'.

- Where is the vision for Bulgarian culture?

At the heart of Bulgarian cultural policy should be a vision for Bulgarian culture and cultural life. This was not apparent from our discussions. Creating that vision for Bulgarian culture cannot happen in isolation, it needs to be shared by parliament, government and the whole society and its execution led by the Ministry of Culture. It should be developed as part of an open debate, involving all stakeholders, which after framing a vision makes an assessment of the various roles for different parties. It needs to reflect the principles underlying the overall policy, which in itself should be developed as part of an open process.

Given the report's concern for de-centralisation and delegation the role of the Ministry needs to change from that of gatekeeper to gateopener, from that of controller of resources to enabler and facilitator of opportunities.



Vision statements are not only about potential, but also about overcoming obstacles. As such it needs to address some hard questions, such as how many theatres (or art galleries) does Bulgaria want or need, how much Bulgaria can afford and what the aspirations for the retained infrastructure are. Given the implications of such decisions a vision needs to specify how the transitional period can be managed and how existing staff can be retrained.

- **The need for justification of Bulgaria's cultural policy**

Apart from a valid preoccupation with efforts to maintain Bulgarian national identity the current Bulgarian policy report gives scant justification or a rationale of why and how the state should be involved in cultural affairs and what the purpose and aims could be. It is assumed a priori that cultural investment is a public good without spelling out the reasons. In the post war period within Europe a substantial body of work has been gathered to make the case for culture. At various points differing objectives of cultural policy have been highlighted, for example their educational role or from the 1970's onwards their role in community empowerment and more recently their economic and social importance. Although the emphasis of these arguments has gone in various waves, with at differing moments a particular argument gaining weight, their importance lies in how they fit together in overall terms. Rehearsing these claims afresh is an important element of any national debate to spell out, to as wide an audience as possible, the marked break cultural policy seeks to achieve in the post-communist period .

### **Other key points**

- **Delegation as a new style of management**

The expert group agree with the main principles of Bulgarian cultural policy which have been described to us as **de-etatisation, decentralisation and democracy within a context of efficient, effective and economic management**. This implies style of management based on trust and delegation. However, we doubt that in practice these aims have been sufficiently implemented. Subsidy patterns and mechanisms in actuality still predominantly reflect the approach of the former regime. Whilst we recognise that the intent to change is there, evidence on the ground suggests that hard decisions, for example, to curtail the funding of certain institutions to liberate resources for non-institutional projects have not been made. The task is therefore to devolve wherever possible and not to do what others can do better. For example a copyright agency should be arm's length from the Ministry, especially since the Ministry even has difficulties in opening independent bank accounts for its own programmes. This is based on the principle of 'do less better'.

- **Towards a new cultural landscape**

The current structure of Bulgarian cultural support cannot be maintained and justified over the longer term. In comparison to wider European experience the cost structures in most fields are untenable and unable to provide the pre-conditions for sustained cultural activity to take place. This does not mean cultural intervention should be abandoned, but that it can only be effective and justifiable if a series of radical organisational changes occur over a time-tabled period - which is why a moratorium to ensure the current level of funding is proposed to allow for a national debate. Behind this debate lies the objective of changing the cultural landscape. Future intervention in turn will only be supported if the arguments for culture are recast in 21st century terms within a context of an efficiently operating cultural scene.

- **How much excellence can Bulgaria afford?**

Bulgaria needs to assess the costs and benefits of culture and expected outcomes based on political, economic and social judgements and thus to ask itself some hard questions. For example, does it need or can it afford the number of opera houses and theatres or whether institutions should exist when there are likely to be no jobs at the end. Dealing with questions in this way is sometimes referred to as 'tough love', whereby some things are cut to save and develop the rest.

- **Culture does not operate separately from economic and social issues**

Many of the problems that the cultural sector faces are outside of its control - in particular staffing levels and the political difficulties of reducing these. Here the Ministry of Culture has a role in clarifying with political decision makers in other spheres, whether its role is also concerned with social affairs and if so that it should in reality receive additional resources for playing that role. Effectively maintaining such staffing levels reduces social affairs costs, if these people were to go onto the unemployed register. The consequence of these structural dilemmas is that a vicious cycle has occurred where the core costs of staffing and building maintenance take up so many resources that little or nothing is left over for producing and the generation of new cultural activities.

- **Is Bulgaria ready for the arm's length principle?**

The main worry of the expert group concerns the fate of the national centres, which had initially been set up as arm's length organisations in 1991. Their re-incorporation into the Ministry, whatever the argument on the Bulgarian side, in 1996 is so symbolic that it threatens the credibility of the whole decentralisation process

on which Bulgaria's cultural policy is hinged. Against that one decision all other comments fade into insignificance.

◦ **From bureaucracy to management**

There is a serious skills gap and a new culture of public management needs to be developed. The skills currently required from cultural managers, such as strategic planning, marketing and entrepreneurial skills, were not only not needed under the totalitarian regime they were not encouraged - yet they are needed now. The issue of inadequate management emerges again and again in the national report as a major blockage, but the expert group heard of no substantial resourcing or consistent programme to address this shortcoming.

◦ We concur with the following conclusions made in the draft final version of the national report which state that:

*'policy as being merely concerned with the day to day maintenance of the cultural infrastructure and with no funds being invested in cultural policy'.*

Importantly the report also highlights the need for a national debate on the problems and possibilities of investment in culture, *'an instrument that continues to be ignored'.*

*'non-institutional forms of culture are still largely ignored .....and funding needs to be diversified and to be focused more on non-established institutions; that the role of municipalities needs to be strengthened; that the state needs to disengage itself by further privatisation, the closing of some institutions and joint ventures; We recognise, however, that the first attempts in this direction are being made through project competitions organised by the national centres.*

*'the priority funding of existing institutions leads to a blocking of innovation....among creative artists. Conversely the greater the share of funds given to competing artistic projects, the bigger the chance of invigorating cultural life and motivating civil society among creative artists'.*

*'there is insufficient co-ordination between the bodies implementing cultural policy on a national and local level, especially in the context of desired de-centralisation'.*

*'a lack of trained staff exist to operate within a market oriented economy'.*

*'there is a lack of information communication between actors involved in cultural decision making'.*

*'a lack of trained staff capable of dealing with the new conditions in municipalities, including the increased responsibility for local administrators for devolved cultural institutions'.*

*'poor co-ordination with central state bodies responsible for culture'.*

## A new approach to cultural policy: A checklist

Throughout this report the Bulgarian cultural scene is analysed, assessed and on that basis a number of suggestions are made. If they were to be taken on board the nature of Bulgarian cultural policy would change as would its priorities and new opportunities would be created. We summarise briefly the most important. They include the need to:

- Move from the idea that the Ministry of Culture and state agencies are creators and controllers of culture to enablers, facilitators and supporters.
- Accept that the development of civil society, rather than merely the development of laws is perhaps the key way a vibrant cultural life can emerge. Cultural development is linked to the development of human rights. Hierarchical decision making structures still predominate and there is thus little understanding of the personal growth, motivational and capacity building benefits of the development of civil society.
- Make policy publicly explicit, written down, widely disseminated and discussed rather than policy being implicit and only known by those directly involved. There should thus be a focus on transparency.
- Recognise that the primary function of the Ministry of Culture is to create an arts policy not an artists policy; thus its role is not give artists a salary, but to encourage the production of good art. The economic position of artists, as of all people in Bulgaria, is the concern of the department of economic affairs.
- Understand that the Ministry's role is to stimulate and support the market rather than to run it. It should only intervene when it has to. On the other hand the Ministry needs to understand the problems of all cultural sectors at times persuading departments, such as trade to act, and to advocate the cultural mission of all cultural industries, such as by proposing quotas. In this way the Ministry would change its outlook from subsidy thinking to investment thinking.
- Advocate the use of more imaginative forms of intervention, grant giving and the raising of resources, such as lobbying for dedicated taxes for culture, such as hotel taxes. Therefore to think about how intervention and grant giving itself can be conducted creatively rather than merely following old patterns.
- Consider the setting up of a Bulgarian Cultural Investment Agency an elaboration of the idea of a National Fund for Culture proposed by the Ministry. This would pool monies deriving from a range of sources, such as the Ministry, foundations, business sponsors or

individuals to be used for loans and equity investment in order to provide working capital specifically targeted at cultural organisations and more especially the key individuals working in them. It would act as a quasi bank.

- Discern the difference between the notion of managing, as distinct from administering, implying as it does, ideas of self-directed, purposeful action as distinct from simply executing a given set of tasks.
- Espouse a user oriented approach, which requires a fundamental shift of focus away from concerns of production to those of the audience and marketing. This means, for example, that exhibitions are not made for curators but for the people.
- Adopt a wider definition of what culture is, including high and popular culture; commercial, subsidised and amateur, as well as issues such as urban design and industrial arts.
- Explore the new linkages that are occurring between traditional arts and the emerging new media.
- Begin to develop a frame of mind to look not solely at individual cultural institutions but the cultural landscape as a whole.
- Generate urgently an internal reskilling and training programme and support arts management training elsewhere.
- Appraise how a forceful local and regional dimension to cultural policy making can be set in place by, for example, seeking means to overcome the financial constraints under which municipalities operate.
- Start to review the extent to which cultural pluralism and intercultural understanding might be or become a problem in Bulgaria.
- Develop urgently a series of structured and sustained cross departmental working arrangements, such as with tourism, social affairs and economic development, so that new lines of policy such as on cultural tourism can become more effective. The cultural sector does not operate as an island on its own and can only solve problems such as unemployment in concert with other ministries
- Examine the ways and means by which traditional artistic skills can be recycled for the new economy through a reskilling policy and programme.

- Consider commissioning some form of economic and social impact study of culture to be used as an advocacy tool. Such a report would only have credibility if the cultural sector has brought its own house in order. This should be seen as part of a strategy to reinvent the arguments for culture in 21st century terms.
- Reassess the criteria by which funding is granted to be more concerned with quality than quantity.
- Review the results of the current international cultural policy to ensure that benefits of travel and contacts are spread throughout the country and reassess the focus of expenditure patterns.
- Address the emerging generation gap by taking the needs of the young seriously and developing policy programmes accordingly.
- Overcome the mental block about popular culture, to seek to explore what merits it has and so to appreciate that it is not all 'fake' or 'ersatz culture', bearing in mind that the folk arts now so admired were themselves at one time popular culture.
- Create a balance between fostering heritage and contemporary culture.
- Take on board the need for policy to focus more on the development of contents of art than containers - their buildings.
- Rethink the potential of folklore and handicrafts both as vibrant arts forms, but also as possible economic sectors.
- Focus stringently and with commitment on dissemination starting with this evaluation report as a means of generating and sustaining a national debate on culture.

## Recommendations

Throughout this report recommendations are made and above proposals are made as to how to cultural policy directions could be rethought. In conclusion we have three overarching recommendations, they are:

- To provide a context, initiated by the Ministry of Culture, to start a **national debate on culture**, linked to a **moratorium** agreed by the government to ensure that cultural funding is maintained at current levels, inflation proofed, so that the debate can occur within a stable financial environment.
- To focus on the **reinvention of the chitalischta** as a key anchor both for cultural development and the development of civil society.
- To assess the **progress of its cultural policy through comparison** with other countries to ensure that wherever possible best practice models are adopted, including the Balkans, other countries within the former Eastern bloc and the rest of Europe.

Focusing on these three themes does not mean other policy strands cannot be pursued at the same time only to highlight the key priorities in the view of the expert group.

### 1. Towards a national debate on the role of culture

Over the coming years there will have to be cuts in infrastructure and the many cultural workers are likely to become unemployed. How this might occur and who these decisions will fall on cannot simply be made by the Ministry of Culture on its own. Such difficult decisions need to be discussed with all stakeholders so that a measure of agreement about priorities can be established, discussed and to some extent jointly owned. It is envisioned that such a debate will take three years to complete and begin to implement its conclusions.

The central drive of this report is that the case for cultural investment needs to be re-made as part of a vision of what sort of country Bulgaria wants to be in the 21st century. This can most effectively occur through the development of a public, national debate covered by the media, involving all stakeholders - focused on transparency and underpinned by the notion of developing civil society.

It needs to begin with a realistic understanding of the context within which Bulgarian cultural activities operate in a national and international context. Its core themes are the strategic dilemmas outlined in section 3.

The debate should occur at 3 levels:

- Within government, especially the Ministry of Culture, the departments of trade, industry, tourism, education and social affairs;

parliament and at the general political level including political parties.

- Amongst professionals working in culture, both subsidised and commercial and within associated institutions with a concern for culture such as foundations, training institutions and cultural associations.
- Amongst the general public, civil society, consumers and amateur participants.

Although in the longer term that debate should be a joint exercise, given the current state of play, the priority in the short term should be for the different segments to work and clarify needs, aspirations and possibilities and then later merge their discussions.

Such a debate needs to be underpinned by principles, these include:

- **Transparency needs to be understood as an asset**

Open, honest debate may be tortuous, difficult and acerbic yet in the longer term it helps establish realism about possibilities, expectations and aspirations. At the same time it acts as a learning ground for the development of civil society. Conclusions reached are far more likely to be 'owned' by those directly affected. The problem of a lack of transparency is not only an issue within the cultural sector.

- **Freedom of speech and initiative.**

Related to the above a focus on encouraging initiative and freedom of speech will assist in harnessing the ideas, commitment and human resources of those involved in cultural activities.

- **Acceptance of the arm's length principle**

Government and the Ministry of Culture do not define what culture is and how it operates. Their role is as enabler, facilitator and gateopener. The Ministry only in exceptional circumstances should be directly involved. It seeks to strengthen cultural facilities and activities through protection, such as with monuments; by standard setting, as with cultural heritage guidelines; as stimulator, as with identified gaps in the market such as in book distribution and here its role may be to liaise with departments like trade and industry; supporter through grants with as few strings attached as appropriate.

- **A concern with the health of the cultural sector broadly defined**

Subsidised cultural facilities and activities form an integrated whole with the commercial cultural industries such as film, music, TV and radio - and



the health of one relates to the health of others. However, the role for example of the Ministry will differ according to context.

#### A moratorium

As a national debate is likely to be a long term and at times difficult, yet ultimately positive, process the expert group propose that the Bulgarian government place a moratorium on cultural funding guaranteeing that the present budget, inflation proofed, remains at its present level. This will allow a fruitful debate to develop that it is not threatened by cuts. It will thus enable the key stakeholders to discuss their problems and possibilities in a more stable operating environment.

## 2. Chitalishta: Back to the Future

Chitalishta are placed at the centre of a possible vision for Bulgarian cultural policy, because they are a comprehensive largely democratic form of institution, spread throughout the country. Whilst the current number - 4228 - might be far too large their role in most communities could be pivotal. They could be the anchor for the reinvention of the new civil society as well as a centre for the development of local culture, which is a pre-requisite for national culture to develop and flourish.

The chitalishta have a significance to Bulgarians that it is difficult for outsiders to assess. The symbolic significance of chitalishta to Bulgarian self-understanding and cultural development is immense. Chitalishta were historically an important vehicle in generating Bulgarian nationhood and self-confidence as well as the Bulgarian language as it emerged from Turkish domination in the 19th century. As we move towards the 21st century they could play a similar role again.

However, in a period of transition the role of every institution even those most cherished need to be reassessed. The key question, therefore, is what should a chitalishta look like in the 21st century or put another way if chitalishta were to be invented today what would they be like. If chitalishta are to remain centrally relevant to Bulgaria they need to reassess programming, technology and purposes. This is especially crucial if they are to be important to young people and currently they have difficulty in maintaining their momentum and relevance to the young. Whilst it is not only the young who use the chitalishta it is they who will provide the future audience.

Chitalishta could have a central role as modern multi-purpose arts and informal education centres rather like a community college, particularly if they embrace the new media. The possible variations for local chitalishta are endless. A role in more rural areas might be as the local cinema, another role as community centre or as place where local bands might rehearse or perform or as the central point for local training. In more central locations they might emphasise more their role as a traditional arts centre, because educational provision or cinemas are usually more

wide-spread in urban areas. Overall their number may need to be reduced to ensure that those remaining are effective and here the role of regional alliances may be significant where say 5 or 10 chitalischta join together to create economies of scale.

The implication of this proposal is that subsidy patterns are directed towards chitalischta, because they represent a common basis for Bulgarian self-identity and renewal.

### **3. Remaining in touch with European best practice**

Bulgaria is again part of the larger community of European countries and the exchange of ideas and experience will be important in ensuring that cultural policy develops along the best possible lines. This means encouraging interchange with experiences that are relevant to Bulgaria's specific situation. Therefore the international co-operation agreements with the Balkans, other countries of the former East, who share a similar legacy and the rest of Europe will take on an increasingly important role.

**LIST**  
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(June 1996)

**I. Central and local administration:**

**--- Ministry of Culture:**

1. Prof. Dr. Ivan Marazov, Minister of culture
2. Georgi Nakov, chief secretary of the ministry
3. Georgi Konstantinov, deputy minister
4. Ivan Bogdanov, deputy minister
5. Georgi Stoyanov, deputy minister
6. Anna Sendova, director of the international cultural co-operation
7. Kristina Miovska, head of the Legal division
8. Polka Alexandrova, head of the Normative division
9. Militsa Traykova, head of the Financial directorate
10. Maria Karazlateva, architect, Institute for cultural monuments

**- the team having written the National Report:**

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15. Rositsa Arkova, senior research associate
16. Tatiana Petrova, specialist
17. Luchezar Kunchev, specialist

**- National centre for regional cultural policy, *chitalishta* and amateur creativity:**

18. Chavdar Mazhdrakov, director
19. Ventsislav Yovev, head of the Regional cultural policy division
20. Dimitar Naumov, chief expert in the Regional cultural policy division
21. Zhechka Sivodocheva, secretary of the chitalishte, village of Bâta
22. Silvia Hubenova, secretary of the chitalishte, Assenovgrad

**--- The Parliament:**

23. Ivo Atanassov, head of the Cultural Committee
24. Prof. Todor Ivanov Zhivkov, deputy, member of the Cultural Committee

**--- Municipalities:**

25. Petko Tsarev, governor of the Plovdiv region
26. Emil Stoitsov, head of the cultural division, Plovdiv regional government
27. Bozhidar Malinov, mayor of Assenovgrad; culture makers and administrators from Assenovgrad
28. Dr. Yovko Chervenkov, deputy mayor of Assenovgrad
29. Teodor Peev, chief specialist, municipality of Assenovgrad
30. Marko Mechev, mayor of Panagurishte; culture makers and administrators from Panagurishte
31. Spaska Tasseva, deputy mayor of Panagurishte

32. Margarita Grozdanova, head of the Cultural directorate, Municipality of Panagurishte
33. Rashko Hristov, mayor Koprivshtitsa
34. Svetoslav Georgiev, secretary of the municipality of Koprivshtitsa
35. Ana Kamenarova, president of the Municipal Council and director of the Municipal school, Koprivshtitsa

## II. State cultural institutions:

### --- Film makers:

36. Dimiter Dereliev, director of the National film centre
37. Maya Niagolova, chief expert in the National film centre
38. Irina Kanusheva, chief expert in the National film centre
39. Kalina Wagenstein, chief expert in the National film centre
40. Antoineta Borissova, head of the Film Producing department
41. Violeta Stamenova, head of the Film Distribution department
42. Karine Yanakieva, Film Distribution department

### --- Theatre makers:

43. Yavor Koynakov, National centre for theatre
44. Mitko Todorov, director of the Bulgarian army's theatre, president of the Bulgarian association for theatre
45. Assen Shopov, director of Plovdiv drama theatre
46. Gergina Deyanova, deputy director of Pazardjik drama theatre
47. Stanislav Kurtev, director of Panagurishte drama theatre

### --- Art schools:

48. Liliana Dimitrova, head of the Art Schools division, Ministry of culture
49. Rumén Djurov, chief specialist in the Art Schools division
50. Lalka Missova, expert in the Art Schools division
51. Venelin Valkanov, expert in the Art Schools division
52. Gergina Toncheva, director of the National lycee for ancient languages and cultures
53. Velichka Velianova, director of the National educational complex on culture with Italian language lycee
54. Dimiter Kassabov, director of the Secondary school for applied arts
55. Milka Miteva, director of the Secondary music school
56. Elena Bolcheva, director of the Secondary school for polygraphy and photography
57. Svetla Chakarova, deputy director of the Secondary school for fine arts
58. Maria Dimitrova, deputy derector of the State choregraphic school
59. Mr. Kuyumdjiev, music school, Plovdiv

### --- Book publishing:

60. Boyko Lambovski, director of the National book centre
61. Dimiter Bardarski, chief expert in the National book centre
62. Vesela Liutskanova, writer and private publisher
63. Dimiter Pavlov, director of *Zemizdat Publishers*

### --- Libraries:

64. Vera Gancheva, director of the National library *Sts. Cyril and Methodius*
65. Antoineta Ginina, head of the Libraries division, Ministry of Culture

**--- Museums and Art galleries:**

66. Peter Balabanov, director of the National centre for museums, art galleries and fine arts
67. Rumen Gasharov, expert in the National centre for museums, art galleries and fine arts
68. Irina Mutafchieva, expert in National centre for museums, art galleries and fine arts
69. Ginka Tivcheva, expert in National centre for museums, art galleries and fine arts
70. Dimiter Pironkov, expert
71. Margarita Vaklinova, director of the Archaeological institute & museum
72. Ruzha Marinska, director of the National Art Gallery
73. Nikolai Markov, deputy director of the National history museum, Sofia
74. Iskra Shipeva, director of the Public Museum, Koprivshtitsa
75. Georgi Abdulov, director of the Public museum, Panagjurishte
76. Hristo Bassamakov, director of History museum, Assenovgrad
77. Dimiter Kovachev, curator at the Paleontological museum, Assenovgrad
78. Matei Mateev, director of the House-Museum of Zlatiu Boyadjiev, Plovdiv

**--- Music makers:**

79. Yavor Dimitrov, director of the National centre for music and dance
80. Vesselin Emanuilov, chief expert in the National centre for music and dance
81. Valentina Ilieva, chief expert in the National centre for music and dance
82. Kiril Lambov, chief expert in the National centre for music and dance
83. Rosalia Tasseva, chief expert in the National centre for music and dance
84. Elena Kuteva, Director of *Filip Kutev* artistic ensemble
85. Rumen Neykov, director of the Opera house of Stara Zagora
86. Ivan Giurov, deputy director of the Opera house of Sofia
87. Bedros Papazian, executive director of Sofia Philharmonic orchestra
88. Kalina Bogoeva, director of the *Arabesque Ballet*
89. Atanas Cholakov, State ensemble for traditional music and dance, Pazardjik
90. Ivan Kochev, choreographer of the State ensemble for traditional music and dance, Pazardjik
91. Georgi Koev, director of the Symphonic orchestra, Pazardjik

**III. Artistic associations and foundations:**

92. Nikolai Yordanov, chief secretary of the Foundation „Idea for theatre“, member of the Union of Bulgarian artists
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95. Kiril Svetlov, head of the Culture makers' club, Assenovgrad
96. Dimiter Nemkin, secretary of the Culture makers' club, Assenovgrad

**LIST**  
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19. Boris Danailov, research associate
20. Tatiana Petrova, specialist
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**--- Ministries:**

22. Tsveta Kamenova, head of the Regional development directorate in the Ministry of territorial development and construction
23. Elena Giurova, chief expert in the Regional development directorate in the Ministry of territorial development and construction
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25. Yvonne Yordanova, expert for CE, Ministry of education
26. Elka Andreeva, chief of the General education sector at the Ministry of Education

**--- The Parliament**

27. Prof. Todor Ivanov Zhivkov, deputy, member of the parliamentary cultural committee

### --- Municipalities:

28. Angel Ahrianov, deputy mayor of Sofia
29. Nikolai Gatsev, head of the Municipal commission for culture and education in Sofia
30. Liubomor Damianov, head of the Cultural and spiritual sphere division, Municipality of Sofia
31. Ioan Kostadinov, Mayor of Burgas
32. Mariora Dimitrova, expert, Municipality of Burgas
33. Marusia Liubcheva, Deputy Mayor in charge of the education, culture and religious matters
34. Tsonia Drazheva, in charge of the museums' administration, Burgas
35. Zlatin Chaushev, deputy mayor of Nesebar

### II. Universities:

36. Lidia Varbanova, head of curricula in cultural management at the New Bulgarian University
37. Prof. L. Filipov, University for national and world economy

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42. Svetla Ivanova, programme director in the Open Society foundation
43. Georgi Genchev, director of the SOROS art centre
44. Krassimira Teneva, co-ordinator in the SOROS art centre
45. Valentin Mitev, executive director of the Foundation for development of the civic society
46. Dimiter Grozdanov, chief secretary of the Union of Bulgarian Artists
47. Gancho Savov, president of the Union of Bulgarian translators
48. Stefan Iliev, president of the Union of Bulgarian actors
49. Simeon Beshkov, chief secretary of the Union of popular *chitalishta*
50. Ivan Teodosiev, foundation for Amateur art and folklore
51. Agripina Voynova, society of the choreographers working with children
52. Petko Delibeev, Association for Bulgarian and Balkan cultural traditions „Folk fair“
53. Ivan Ilchev, coordinator for Bulgaria of the Project for ethnic relations, Princeton, USA
54. Galina Markova, president of the National association for social work
55. Desislava Borisova, Youth alliance for development
56. Valery Dimitrov, member of *Dimcho Debelianov* literary association
57. Trayan Kolev, *History, Ethnos and Culture* Students' association
58. Velko Ivanov, vice-president of the National students' council
59. Boris Petrakiev, president of the National students' confederacy
60. Samuil Markov, president of the Organisation of students in economics
61. Vesela Vasileva, chief secretary of the KMD
62. Angelina Chorbadijska, assistant on the Europe's Youth programme

63. Ilian Ivanov, vice-president of the ELFA (European association of law students)
64. Ani Ruseva, *Apollonia* foundation
65. Mihail Tachev, executive director of the *Sts. Cyril & Methodius* foundation
66. Ivan Kalachev, Head of the Association of the painters in Burgas
67. Uliana Foteva, Secretary of the Club of culture makers, Burgas

#### IV. Bulgarian Academy of sciences:

68. Prof. T. Djidjev, Institute for folklore
69. Irena Bokova, senior research associate at the Institute for folklore
70. Peter Dobrev, leader of a scientific team for cultural economy at the Economics institute of Bulgarian academy of sciences

#### V. State cultural institutions:

71. G. Vachev, ingeneer, executive director of the Balkanton state company
72. Penka Sedlarska, director of Burgas Public Gallery
73. Pavel Papazov, head of the „Restoration - Burgas“ Ltd.
74. Ivan Giulmezov, regional co-ordinator on the restoration of cultural heritage
75. Kostadinka Hrusanova, director of „Yavorov“ museum - Burgas
76. Ivan Karayotov, in charge of the archaeological exhibition at the Museum for History - Burgas
77. Dimitrina Smilova, in charge of the exhibition in natural history at the Museum for History - Burgas
78. Rumiana Urumova, in charge of the ethnographical exhibition at the Museum for History - Burgas
79. Radka Handjieva, head of the Modern History Dept. in the Museum for History - Burgas
80. Tsveta Raychevska, expert in the Modern History Dept. in the Museum for History - Burgas
81. Iuliana Nenova, Director of the *Pancho Vladigerov* music school
82. Stefan Chapkanov, chief choreographer of the *Strandja* ensemble
83. Ivaylo Krinchev, Director of the Opera of Burgas
84. Rosen Gruev, Director of the Philharmonic orchestra of Burgas
85. Assia Borodjieva, in charge of the cultural calendar and the cultural institutions of Burgas
86. Maria Stavreva, in charge of the *chitalishta* of Burgas
87. Mihail Sabev, director of *Adriana Budevaska* theatre, Burgas
88. Elena Gicheva, deputy director of the Puppet theatre - Burgas

#### VI. Private cultural institutions:

89. Darin Kambov, proprietor of the *KRIDA ART* gallery, Sofia
90. Mrs. Kambova, *Crida art* gallery, Sofia
91. Emil Minev, manager of the *Cosmic voices* choir
92. Stefan Boyadjiev, owner of *Rumiana* Gallery, Burgas
93. Kliment Atanasov, *Ka* Gallery, Burgas
94. Nina Atanasova, restorator in *Ka* Gallery, Burgas
95. Rumen Benchev, president of the *RIVA SOUND* company
96. Toncho Rusev, *MEGA MUSIC* company
97. Lilcho Katsarov, president of *Silvia Music* company
98. Dimitrina & Georgi Kostadinov, *Ivan Alexander* art gallery, Nesebar



## **VII. Sponsors and advertising agencies:**

99. Alexander Vaklinov, executive director of the MAG agency
100. Lidia Bouneva, head of the Advertising sector of the National Insurance Institute
101. Emil Benatov, expert in license law
102. Mirela Miteva, in charge of the marketing and advertising in *KREZ* agency
103. Ivan Genov, private advertising agency, Nessebar
104. = = = *Eva Buga* advertising agency, Burgas

## **VIII. Mass Media:**

### **- state and municipal:**

105. Sonia Angelova, programme director of *Christo Botev* national radio
106. Maria Atanasova, journalist, *Burgas dnes* newspaper
107. Radka Baleva, editor, Municipal radio-centre of Burgas

### **- private:**

108. Marinov, programme director of the New television, Sofia
109. Konstantin Markov, director of radio *Tangra*, Sofia
110. Kiril Bachvarov, journalist in the *Glarus* radio, Burgas
111. Radoslava Georgieva, journalist in *Burgas dnes i utre* newspaper, Burgas
112. Krasimira Dimitrova - journalist, Burgas
113. Nikolai Tashev, programme director of *MAYA* radio, Burgas
114. Branimir Petrov, executive director of *Yuzhen briag* radio, Burgas
115. Maria Dimitrova, programme director of *Glarus* radio, Burgas
116. Donka Bachvarova, programme director of *SKAT TV*, Burgas
117. Mariana Pramatarova, reporter in *TV MIX*, Burgas
118. Nina Sarafova, reporter *TV RN*, Burgas
119. Donka Miteva, *Burgas dnes i utre* newspaper
120. Antoineta Buyuklieva, reporter in *Cherno more yug* newspaper, Burgas
121. Two representatives of the *GATO* cable radio, Burgas
122. Maxim Momchilov, the *Slanchev Briag* newspaper

## **IX. Free lancers:**

123. Mihail Belchev, poet, singer, director
124. Petia Buyuklieva, pop singer
125. Margarita Hranova, pop singer
126. RITON pop duo
127. Vassil Petrov, pop and jazz singer
128. Dony and Momchil, pop singers
129. Veselin Marinov, pop singer
130. Boris Chakarov, composer and arranger
131. Yavor Dimitrov, composer and pianist
132. Stoyan Tsanev, painter from Burgas

## APPENDIX 1

### **REPORT ON THE DEBATE ON CULTURAL POLICY IN BULGARIA**

CULTURE COMMITTEE, 15 APRIL 1997

The Chairwoman of the Culture Committee, Mrs Anna Niewiadomska, opened the session devoted to cultural policy review in Bulgaria and welcomed the Bulgarian Minister of Culture, Mr Emil Tabakov, and his delegation.

In his opening address, Mr Tabakov spoke of Bulgaria's tortuous road through a difficult period of transition: this was the period covered by the National Report. The changes had not necessarily reached the cultural field yet; and although his predecessors had managed to diminish the grip of dogma, and to create new institutions in the cultural field as well as increasing contacts with other countries, there was as yet no strategy as regarded cultural policy, nor had there been any debate on issues such as improving cultural infrastructure, allocating funds, and decentralisation. The Examiners' report gave clear indications as to the priorities to be addressed for future development. The Minister felt that it had therefore been both an honour and a useful exercise for Bulgaria to take part in the Programme of cultural policy reviews, and took this opportunity to thank all those involved in the exercise, both from the Council of Europe and in Bulgaria.

The Chairwoman of the panel of Examiners, Mrs Irmeli Niemi, introduced her colleagues: Mr Charles Landry, who had acted as Rapporteur, Mrs Naima Bali, Mrs Cornelia Dümcke, and Mr Peter Schreiber, and thanked their Bulgarian hosts, in particular Mrs Anna Sendova and the Institute of Culturology in Sofia, for providing the Examiners with the National Report and for organising their visits: these had been the key to their understanding of the values and interests at stake in Bulgaria in the cultural field and beyond.

Mr Charles Landry noted that the approach in the case of Bulgaria had been slightly different to that used for previous reviews. The idea had been to produce a "tool kit" or "how to" manual which would look at the cultural landscape as a whole rather than focusing on art forms, in the hope that this would also be useful to other countries, especially to those in transition. In particular, the sections on policy dilemmas and on the international context<sup>1</sup> could be relevant for policy makers in other countries, as could exploration of issues such as the creative use of legislation and funding. Mr Landry explained that a number of Recommendations had been made throughout the report; these were also expressed in the form of a checklist. There were however three overarching recommendations: the need for a national debate on culture, the need to focus on the reinvention of the chitalishta<sup>2</sup>, and the importance of remaining in touch with European best practice.

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<sup>1</sup> "Section Three: Strategic Dilemmas of Cultural Policy: Where does Bulgaria stand?" and "Section Four: The international context for cultural development" in the report of the European panel of examiners.

<sup>2</sup> The "reading clubs", an impressive network of cultural centres, established as from the middle of the 19th century, when Bulgaria recovered independence, to reinforce national culture.

Following this introduction, the Culture Committee participants were invited to discuss some of the questions set out in a document prepared by the Examiners and entitled *Issues for the debate* (CC-Cult (97) 6 C). At the request of the Chairwoman of the Committee, these discussions were directed by Mrs Irmeli Niemi.

The first issue to be addressed was that of centralisation or decentralisation. This has always been a key question in the programme of cultural policy reviews, and, on this occasion, it provoked a series of lively and varied interventions by Culture Committee delegations. Some speakers noted the inherent advantages of decentralisation: if applied properly, it ensured subsidiarity, and fostered a wealth of cultural activity at local and regional levels; moreover it could help to improve awareness of needs in the cultural sector as well as access to culture for disenfranchised sections of society.

These aspects were underlined by the Bulgarian delegation, which felt that the importance of decentralisation lay not merely in the question of funding, but in its links with the democratisation of culture and cultural life, and with civil society in general. As regarded cultural heritage for example, it was necessary to find a balance between central responsibility and local initiative: the State should naturally retain functions such as identification, inspection, and funding, but other functions, such as raising public awareness of local heritage, were clearly to be devolved to local authorities.

Other delegations also noted the need to define what should be dealt with at central level, pointing out that there were different interpretations of the term "decentralisation", which should not be confused with the term "deconcentration", and that these differences were often linked to the history and political structure of the countries concerned. Consensus did emerge, however, on the idea that standards required attention at central level. In addition, some cultural areas or institutions could benefit from being the object of shared responsibility on the part of central and other authorities.

The discussion moved from the question of decentralisation to that of privatisation - another term with different meanings and connotations. For some it was perceived as a process which went against public service, or was linked with negative ideas of "marketisation", whereas elsewhere - notably in the Examiners' report - it was understood to be linked with democratisation, and was perhaps better expressed by the term "de-etatisation".

Responding to the Examiners' group query "How important is legislation?", some delegations answered that it was important to define the roles and responsibility of the various bodies involved in cultural life (government, parliament, public bodies such as associations), while others pointed out that it was possible to operate with a minimal set of laws. The Bulgarian delegation noted that the only new laws in force in Bulgaria were the laws on copyright and concerning the chitalischta. The Ministry considered that there were essentially three main questions to be covered urgently by legislation: how to create conditions for alternative forms of extra-budgetary funding for cultural life, how to make it easier for institutions to undertake their own initiatives, and how to ensure indirect support for culture with the help of tax incentives.

The question of legislation was raised once again during the discussion on the subject of artists - "Is the artist special?". As an artist himself, the Minister felt that he could approach the subject only from an artistic point of view. Other delegations noted however that recognition of artists' special status and working conditions was to be found in many countries in the form of legislation on copyright, pensions, and social security. The Bulgarian delegation and others felt that state support for artists was crucial in order to protect the arts and culture from the risks of increasing

standardisation in the market place and to ensure continuing diversity in national cultural life. It was important however to provide public support for artists without political or administrative interference, for example through artists' councils.

Finally, on the issue of a "national debate on culture", representatives of countries which had recently taken part in the programme of national cultural policy reviews emphasised the need for this debate and its importance as the next stage in the review process: it should be based on wide dissemination of the reports, and the organisation of seminars or conferences with a view to discussing priorities and implementing follow-up action; representatives of countries reviewed earlier in the programme noted that it was also essential to ensure that cultural policies and issues were discussed again at regular intervals, both within the relevant ministry and with all those concerned.

The Bulgarian delegation confirmed that it was planned to conduct discussions at governmental level and throughout the country, and to hold an international seminar in the autumn with the participation of the Council of Europe, neighbouring countries and other countries in transition. Noting that there was clearly a common interest in the issues addressed that afternoon, the Minister thanked the Culture Committee for helping to ensure a lively start to the process of debate.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **ISSUES FOR THE CULTURE COMMITTEE DEBATE**

The report 'An evaluation of Bulgarian Cultural Policy' was written with a view to highlight issues and concerns of particular relevance to Bulgaria and more generally countries in transition.

In order to engender a stimulating debate at the Cultural Committee the expert group involved in the evaluation propose fifteen issues for discussion emerging from the report. Part One includes the more general issues, Part Two those of specific relevance for Bulgaria and recommended by the expert group in their report. Possible questions have been listed under each of the fifteen issues with a view to guide the debate.

#### **PART ONE**

##### **1. CENTRALISATION OR DECENTRALISATION IN CULTURAL POLICY?**

*Bulgaria has known a very centralised cultural policy; the regional level is absent in the cultural field, while the local level faces considerable financial problems.*

What are the primary reasons for decentralisation: Economic efficiency or the drive to democracy and citizen participation?

Can all areas of cultural policy be decentralised: Are there some areas such as cultural heritage protection or the setting of technical standards, say for library management, that need to be directed centrally?

What areas of cultural policy can be best handled at a regional level?

Is a strong regional funding system more effective than one focused on the centre? What is the contrasting experience of countries in transition with a centralised or decentralised system?

##### **2. WHEN SHOULD THE STATE INTERVENE IN THE MARKET?**

*After years of relative isolation, Bulgaria feels "invaded" by foreign cultural products which fragilise local creativity and production and/or hinder its development.*

Some smaller language countries support their book and film production industries and the like, to protect national identity and avoid the mass importation of foreign cultural product: Is it important, and ultimately feasible, to protect national cultures from the effects of globalization?

Some countries seek to stimulate the cultural sector through tax incentives and other fiscal means, such as tax privileges for resident authors or to attract foreign film making: How effective is this? In which other areas have similar initiatives been taken? What are the success stories?

Should the small business sector in culture, such as in crafts, be supported to generate a small to medium sized business sector?

Alternatively what mechanisms have been developed to harness the creativity of artists and creators with entrepreneurship?

Which countries have specific cultural industries strategies and how effective have they been?

### **3. THE PRIVATISATION OF STATE INSTITUTIONS**

*Bulgaria, as most countries hesitates when it comes to the privatisation of state institutions.*

What are the criteria to assess whether a state institution should be privatised: Organisational effectiveness? Economic efficiency or political preference?

What has been the experience of countries privatising publishing houses? Or some national museums? Or the film industry?

Some countries have slowed down the pace of restitution of buildings currently used by cultural organisations. What is the rationale?

Are there other semi-private structures such as foundations or trusts, say for museums, which might be more appropriate than outright privatisation?

### **4. HOW IMPORTANT IS LEGISLATION?**

*Countries in transition need new legislation to introduce changes. Bulgaria has introduced some, but the pace has been slow so far.*

Beyond laws on copyright or regulating the mass media what are the most important laws to implement to encourage cultural development: Sponsorship laws or related laws to provide fiscal incentives?

Or laws, which in part resource the cultural sector.

### **5. FUNDING BEYOND THE GRANT**

*As elsewhere, funding mechanisms in Bulgaria have to be associated with innovative schemes to stimulate audience and customer development.*

What innovative subsidy schemes have been developed beyond the giving of grants: Loans schemes? Guarantees? Tax incentives? Which have been most effective?

Have there been innovative schemes to support areas such as cultural heritage, museums or libraries?

### **6. COLLABORATION IN CULTURAL POLICY MAKING**

*Sectorial policy making at governmental level proves increasingly inadequate in solving cross-societal issues and involving the civil society at large.*

What good examples exist of involving a variety of ministerial departments, such as trade or social affairs in cultural programmes?

What good examples exist of involving non-governmental stakeholders in cultural policy making?

What are the best examples of joint collaboration with non-cultural organisations resulting in positive cultural development?

Networks are increasingly becoming strong partners of cultural policy makers as representatives of civil society: what forms of association have proven successful?

## **7. IS THE ARTIST SPECIAL?**

*Former cultural policies in Central and Eastern Europe gave the artist a prestigious status in society and a correct living standard which, both have vanished as budgets have been shrinking.*

What are the justifications for giving special treatment to artists? Are they intrinsically different from plumbers or doctors?

Is it justified to develop reskilling schemes for artists who are unemployed?

Should artists be trained when there are no job prospects at the end of their training? If there is a reason, what is it?

## **8. WHAT IS THE BEST APPROACH TO DEVELOPING CULTURAL MANAGEMENT?**

*In order to align with mainstream cultural policy trends in Europe, Bulgaria needs to introduce new skills especially in the field of cultural management.*

What have been the most effective means of enhancing the management and marketing skills of cultural organisations: Trainers coming from abroad or trainees visiting cultural institutions abroad?

What has been more effective - developing tailor made cultural management courses or getting cultural managers to learn from general purpose business courses?

By what means have policy makers ensured that access to courses is fair and equitable?

How is the effectiveness of training assessed through follow-up schemes?

## **9. HOW CAN CULTURAL TOURISM BE BEST ENCOURAGED?**

*While Bulgaria has a wealth of resources to offer to cultural tourism, know-how, skills and infrastructure are yet to be developed.*

What have been the most effective policy tools to support cultural tourism: Dedicated local taxes, such as hotel taxes or resort taxes, or centralised incentive schemes?

How important is it to involve the hospitality industry?

What successful examples of public/private partnership to develop cultural tourism have been initiated?

## **10. SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF BUILT INFRASTRUCTURE FOR CULTURE**

*Heritage is often considered as the primary responsibility of the State. Bulgaria wishes to continue this tradition, but funds are lacking.*

What imaginative ways have been found to restore and maintain the built infrastructure for culture?

In some countries for example, the national lottery has allowed the cultural buildings to be renewed and new centres to be built.

Have other countries had experience of using lottery receipts for culture?

## **11. HOW CAN EAST AND WEST LEARN FROM EACH OTHER?**

*While the "West" is instinctively the first region transition countries turn to when searching for new models, the very notion of transition should be examined in all its potential facets.*

To what extent are Western models of cultural policy useful for countries in transition? What are the strengths and weaknesses?

Are there examples of approaches adopted in the East that would be useful for Western countries to copy?

## **PART TWO**

### **12. A NATIONAL DEBATE ON CULTURE?**

*The group of experts recommends that a national debate be initiated in Bulgaria.*

Has any other country had experience of a national debate on the future of culture?

Who was the initiator? The government, a political party, an independent group of experts?

Was it based on a top-down or bottom-up approach? Did it have any effect? If so what were the changes that were implemented?

Should such debate be conducted regularly, eg every 3-5 years?

### **13. DEVELOPING LOCAL AND AMATEUR CULTURE**

*The chitalischta in Bulgaria is the primary network, with a glorious history, for local cultural development; the expert group recommends that they be reinvented for 21st century needs.*

What kinds of local multi-purpose arts venues or networks exist that combine traditional arts and new media activity? How were these funded? How effective have they been? What is their spread of activity?

Has support for local cultural initiatives in any way threatened support for national institutions?



**14. EUROPEAN COOPERATION**

*Bulgaria wishes to contribute to European culture and benefit from bi- and multilateral cooperation schemes.*

Within its international cultural policy, should Bulgaria invest in cultural centres, fairs exhibitions and other such promotional events?

Or should it give priority to providing young artists with training opportunities abroad in areas where know-how and skills are underdeveloped?

What means should it deploy to assess progress of its cultural policy through comparison with other countries to ensure that wherever possible best practice models are adopted?

**15. A FINAL QUESTION**

Has there been any successful cultural policy initiative in your country, which has not been covered by the questions above?