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**The national cultural policy of the Slovak Republic**

**Report of a group of European experts,  
by Francis Denel (December 2002)**

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## FOREWORD

This analysis and evaluation report is the outcome of a process launched early in 2000 by the Government of the Slovak Republic and, more specifically, the Ministry of Culture.

A first, contact-making visit by the Council of Europe representative and the rapporteur in June 2000 was followed, in December of the same year, by a first working meeting with the Minister, Mr Milan Knazko, the Minister of State and the directors of the various agencies in the Ministry of Culture. This meeting was used to raise some first questions of chronology and method, set a timetable for the exchange of cultural information between the Council of Europe and the Slovak Ministry of Culture, and collect the few documents and specialised studies prepared in Slovakia.

The group of European experts, led by Dominique Wallon, a French civil servant who had successively held a number of leading cultural posts (Cultural Development, Theatre and Cinema) in his country, and myself, as rapporteur, advised by Elisabeth Rohmer and Raymond Weber of the Council of Europe, immediately sought the assistance of Ms Helena Vaz da Silva (Portugal) and Mr Andrei Plesu (Romania) – but co-ordinating schedules proved difficult, and their input could not be used in practice.

A further, really thorough mission in April 2002, lasting four full days and taking in Bratislava and several other towns and locations, allowed us to form a fuller picture of Slovakia's geography and history, to see numerous sites and monuments, and to visit various cultural agencies and institutions.

Our talks with the Minister of State, Mr Milan Gacik, and his main assistants, and with the authors of the National Report and various decision-makers and active players in Slovak cultural life, were particularly wide-ranging, enlightening and fruitful.

The final National Report, both full version and summary, was submitted at the beginning of July 2002. The speed and care with which these texts were planned and prepared made up for some earlier delays - common with this kind of work, which is necessarily complex and, as the Slovak authorities told us, a "first" for them.

Our own report and comments must essentially be seen as an analysis of the National Report and its accompanying documents, supplemented by the information collected at the working sessions in December 2002 and, above all, in the course of our week-long visit and meetings in April 2002.

We are indebted to all those who gave us so much of their time, and freely and unstintingly shared their information and ideas with us. We have tried to repay them by adopting an equally open approach.

Some of our criticisms may seem a little blunt, but the position they reflect is - intellectually and technically – as objective as we can make it. Our remarks and observations do not claim to be exhaustive, or to tell the whole story. They simply try to live up to the remarkable work which has gone into the planning and writing of the National Report and its accompanying documents. They also try to reflect our admiration and respect for Slovakia, its history and culture, its whole-hearted determination to embrace democracy, and its commitment, in spite

of constraints and very real difficulties, to rejoining Europe and sharing in its decisions, choices and values.

## INTRODUCTION

The historical background to this cultural evaluation carried out jointly by the Slovak Republic and the Council of Europe should be briefly summarised.

The first point to be noted is that, as this evaluation was being completed, the Copenhagen Summit (12-13 December 2002) finalised the decision to admit Slovakia to the European Union.

The basic decision on enlargement was taken in 1993, and detailed discussions began in 1998. Recently, the Commission declared that ten new countries, including the Slovak Republic, would be able to join in January 2004, and this decision was confirmed in December 2002 by the Heads of State and Government in Copenhagen. The Irish referendum of 20 October 2002 allowed the Treaty of Nice to go ahead. Like the other nine candidate countries, including the four in Central Europe (Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia), Slovakia has been preparing at top speed since 1998 to take the Community's values and requirements on board. It is true that these countries are not all equally ready and on the same starting line. It is also true that the final treaty on accession will contain "safety clauses", and that the practical details of enlargement – particularly funding and subsidies – are still under discussion. But it is also recognised that some of these countries are better prepared than many current members were when they joined.

Three basic conditions were laid down for membership: candidates were required to be genuine democracies, have market economies, and incorporate European legislation into domestic law and enforce it in practice. These general requirements have unquestionably been satisfied - over 800 experts and nearly 250 assessments attest to that. The changes are enormous, given these countries' past, the hardships they have endured and the obstacles of all kinds they have faced.

Our present assessment of Slovak cultural policy cannot ignore this general transformation. Its modest purpose is thus to pinpoint progress made, but also shortcomings and areas where some catching-up is still needed, highlight a few uncertainties, and provide clarification and help with completion of the final stages under optimum conditions and in the Slovaks' own general interest.

Europe realises that it is making huge demands on candidates, and giving them very little time to meet them, despite the fact that some existing members are not always equally demanding of themselves. This analysis accordingly sets out to be understanding, open and tolerant - but without making undue concessions.

## **I - CONDITIONS OF CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN SLOVAKIA**

### **1. Socio-economic situation**

Slovakia's position among the five Central European candidates is interesting for several reasons. First of all, it is an integral part of that "Mitteleuropa" which succeeded the Habsburg Empire and was long fated to be, as the Czech writer Milan Kundera put it, "geographically in the centre, culturally in the West and politically in the East".

All of these countries shared a common destiny, and particularly "the metaphysical night of communism" (Georges Mink), but they also had their differences and peculiarities, reflected in the crushing of liberal tendencies in Prague in 1968, Poland's struggles in 1981 and Hungary's economic pragmatism. The way in which Slovakia became independent, separating from the Czech Republic without a referendum, is one of things which make it different.

Slovakia's population (5.5 million) is greater than that of the Baltic candidates (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) but half that of the Czech Republic and seven times less than that of Poland, itself the same as Spain's – a fact that is often forgotten.

Its growth rate, officially put at 3.3% in 2001, is equal to the Czech Republic's, very similar to Hungary's and appreciably higher than Poland's.

Experts accept that these countries, with the exception of Poland, have escaped the global economic slowdown and are likely to maintain growth rates higher than those of the European Union in 2003 and 2004. Privatisation, which is always difficult and seldom popular because of its strong symbolic significance (even in Western Europe) is forging ahead in the face of all obstacles. It is impossible to exaggerate the determination which these countries, Slovakia among them, have shown in unreservedly deciding to make three radical changes in a very short space of time: first, a political and ideological change, turning their backs on the previous system, secondly, an economic change, adopting market economy principles and rules (in spite of effects that have, at the very least, been destabilising at world level and in neighbouring countries), and lastly, a cultural and socio-cultural change, marked by a radical shift in ways of thinking, habits and everyday life-styles.

On the plus side, these rapid, complex and fundamental changes are generating growth, which is largely due to the profits produced by privatisation, which is more in evidence now than in 1992-1998. At the same time, they are conditioned by a random flow of foreign investment and by uncertain growth, indeed recession, within the European Union. They are also reflected in social instability, which sometimes reaches critical proportions. Although inflation has stabilised and is offset by a general rise in wages, the average unemployment rate in Slovakia remains disturbing (between 18.6% and 19.4%, depending on the region), even tops that in Poland, and is estimated to be more than twice the EU average (7.6%) in 2001.

It is common knowledge that these economic and social data play a key part in determining public cultural policy, and also private cultural practices and behaviour - in Slovakia as in other countries.

## 2. Slovakia's decision for democracy and Europe

In spite of these massive economic upheavals and their social effects, the Slovak Republic has constantly reaffirmed, since 1998, its commitment to Europe and to European models and values.

It is estimated that 66% of Slovaks are pro-European – a figure almost on a par with that in Hungary and considerably higher than that in all the other countries which will be joining the EU in 2004. The results of the latest general election, in autumn 2002, broadly confirmed those of the 1998 election. Observers were quick to point out that voting patterns reflected the electorate's desire to join Europe and NATO as well – in other words, stick to the line adopted earlier. Few countries have ever opted so resolutely for a particular culture and civilisation. So courageously either, since these choices do not pander to the public, but, on the contrary, demand sacrifices from them.

Since its "official" birth in 1993, Slovakia has become a recognised and viable state, in spite of all the prophecies of "inevitable collapse" and "foreseeable failure". These gloomy predictions were conditioned by the fact that this is a country with an area of barely more than 49,000 km<sup>2</sup>, of which close on 2/3 or even 3/4 are mountainous, making for difficult access and very low population density, and in effect cutting it off from its neighbours.

Indeed, its lack of urban centres (only nine towns and cities have over 50,000 inhabitants), and the off-centre location of its capital, Bratislava, did not bode well for economic, industrial and cultural development and vitality - according to standard criteria, which assume the existence of a capital and network of major urban centres, linked by rapid communications, and possessing the cultural infrastructure and facilities needed to cater for, encourage and fund both private "consumers" of culture, and significant bodies and institutions concerned with training, creation and dissemination in the cultural field.

These objective considerations, which were indeed unfavourable at first glance, took no account, however, of those genuine, vital and distinctive features which have run through Slovakia's entire political history, from the founding myth of Greater Moravia and on to inclusion in the Kingdom of Hungary, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and, more recently, Czechoslovakia. A real Slovak consciousness – present all the time, vitalised by recognition of its own belatedly codified language, and even at the root of the Constitution – is today the source of the recently created Republic. This independence and stability are helping to make relations with immediate and other neighbours in Central and Eastern Europe increasingly harmonious and trouble-free - even if some influential and politically significant groups are still a prey to aggressive self-assertion, fuelled by genuine ethnic tensions. These trends and factors must not be overlooked in any critical review of cultural life in Slovakia.

Nonetheless, it would seem that the democratic gains and the existence of a strong, autonomous Slovak Republic, that is free to decide its own destiny, are now irreversible. These values are rooted in a long, continuous history. They were taken up and reaffirmed in a process which began again in the 1960s and culminated in 1968's "socialism with a human face", and have been validated – since the great changeover of 1989 – in the double presidential election under universal suffrage and the fully democratic elections of 1998.

After barely nine years of official existence, the progress made has been remarkable, even though there have been hold-ups, postponements and occasional retreats in full

implementation of the decisions taken and the principles adopted. The National Report is remarkably clear about this, and itself states that the euphoria of 1989 and the movement towards changes in attitudes and laws which it triggered have sometimes been disorderly and, to say the least of it, unevenly applied, frequently cancelling out their own effects. It does not deny that democracy in Slovakia tended – in spite of some definite progress – to mark time once this period of rediscovered freedom was over. Even since 1998, it suggests that the relative difficulty of implementing certain decisions (which nobody actually questions) has continued to weigh to some extent on Slovak political life in general, and on the planning and implementation of cultural policies in particular. To different degrees and in different forms, this problem has also, understandably, been shared by all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe; but it is far from being exclusive to these “transition” countries.



## II - TOOLS AND INSTRUMENTS OF STATE CULTURAL POLICY IN THE SLOVAK STATE IN RECENT YEARS

### 1. Budgetary and financial resources

In the next few pages, we shall be essaying a more quantitative approach to cultural policy in recent years (1998-2001), using quantitative, financial and budgetary data supplied in the National Report.

In this connection, we should like to thank the authors of the report for the trouble they have gone to in collecting statistics; we shall also occasionally refer to the data collected and analysed by Dr. Jan Privara in his useful study, *Evolution et état actuel du système de financement public de la culture en Slovaquie* (National Cultural Centre, Bratislava, 1999), which was sent to us after the first mission in December 2000.

We felt that examining budgetary resources was vital; the state budget is, after all, both the essential instrument of any public cultural policy, and a reflection of how that policy develops over time. This proved a complex exercise, possibly rendered more difficult in Slovakia's case by certain details of presentation (figures given at random in thousands, millions or billions of SKK), rapid and often unexplained variations in budget structures and, more particularly, in the account given of government and other cultural institutions.

Lastly, channelling public funds through budgetary and semi-budgetary agencies can make it hard to see how public funding actually operates, especially since it is income/expenditure shortfalls which – in semi-automatic, uncontrolled and uncontrollable fashion - trigger state-funded subsidies. These ambiguities create multiple problems: opaque management, automatic mechanisms, demotivation, short-term management, and failure to get a grip on public spending. The full version of the Slovak Report (p. 90) pointedly highlights this fundamental problem - long since identified, but still unsolved – and looks to the current reform of public administration to put things right.

One of the most obvious examples of changes in institutions and funding methods is the Pro Slovakia Fund which, after long years of independence, became a ministry-controlled programme in 2002. Even more striking is the case of Matica Slovenska, a very old foundation with its own, almost exclusive cultural activities, responsibilities and funds, which effectively acted as the real Ministry of Culture from 1992 to 1998, but now serves nationalist political interests and, since 2000, no longer gets funding under the state budget.

This makes it easy to see why the Slovak Government has decided to give absolute priority to administrative reform, while simultaneously reviewing approaches to the funding of culture.

These reforms are urgently needed: any further indecision, any lack of coherence, would seriously compromise Slovakia's cultural development. We shall return to the question of administrative reform when we look at the decentralisation process launched in 2002.

The first point to note here is that, however these public resources are allocated, funding for culture in Slovakia still comes almost entirely from the state, and is managed centrally. Paradoxically, centralisation has even increased in recent years, as the state has expanded its responsibilities, taking over certain funds (e.g. Pro Slovakia), and directly managing various

institutions and agencies which are rated as being of public interest, although the criteria governing these take-overs are not always spelt out fully.

In fact, public funding in Slovakia is currently in an extremely weak position, owing to a combination of factors: culture is solely state-funded; these funds are centrally managed, are subject to continual cut-backs (see below), are channelled through intermediate agencies and are intended simply to cover operational deficits, without there being any programme, defined objectives or contractually specified resources; and the country is making the transition to decentralisation by setting up regional structures.

The Report makes no secret of the fact that this situation is critical; we cannot help sharing its concern that implementing such sweeping reforms effectively and successfully will take several years. The desire for reform, which is eagerly awaited, certainly seems genuine and general, but the project's continuing success will depend on the political make-up of the new governing majority, on possible delays and resistance, and on the delicate compromises which will have to be made. There is a danger, too, that the overall economic situation may dictate priorities and make urgent measures necessary in areas which have nothing to do with culture.

As for the current situation, it has to be said that the total state budget for culture (approximately 3.9 thousand million SKK) has been stagnating and even declining. It is lower than the 1995 and 1996 budgets and, although figures are hard to come by (because of inflation, conversion to a common currency: dollars or euros, etc.), the percentage of GDP earmarked for culture - 0.62% of GDP in 1993, 0.43% in 1999 - today barely tops 0.6%, which is scarcely half the figure for the EU countries.

Of course, these culture budget/GDP and culture budget/state budget ratios and percentages are purely indicative and relative, since the ways in which public budgets are presented anywhere in Europe have as much to do with political image and argument as they do with strict reality. None the less, the authors of the National Report make no attempt to disguise this clear downward trend in public funding for culture.

If we now turn to "targeted" funds (i.e. funds which are pre-allocated or "earmarked" in West European terms), several remarks must be made. First of all, there are variations in the "Pro Slovakia" Fund which are never clearly accounted for. This is an interesting example of a fund which is, to a large extent, independently managed, and which supports a variety of structures and, above all, projects - a genuine innovation by comparison with the blind, mechanical plugging of spending gaps. As part of the wholesale move away from state control, the Fund was first downsized, and then brought back under the Ministry of Culture's direct control in 2002. There seems to be some doubt in Slovakia as to whether these funds serve any real purpose, as we shall see later, when we look at Slovak cultural strategy by major sectors of activity. These funds draw on sources which are not directly state-controlled (fiscal measures, private donations, patrons, sponsors, etc.) and are undeniably useful. They are managed more flexibly, are free of purely administrative constraints and delays, and are more responsive to innovative projects. If entirely state-funded, they would have two drawbacks: they would not significantly increase cultural resources and so would not reduce the burden on the public purse, while also weakening to some extent the exercise of full state authority and responsibility.

A second point which needs making is that by far the largest slice of these "targeted funds" - 64.5% - goes to "churches and religious communities" (this figure is corroborated by the

figure of 13.8% given for the 2000 state budget). Even without enquiring into the principle of the separation (or otherwise) of church and state, the justification for this level of funding, or the spiritual and social role of these recipients in Slovakia past and present, there is no reason why the criteria applied in allocating and apportioning these funds, and the action taken to monitor their use, should not be indicated. The information we collected during our mission in April 2002 (e.g. from the episcopal authorities) made us aware of the leading spiritual, social and cultural role played, in a broad sense, by the Slovak Church. We also gained a clear picture of the extent of its property – almost a third of all protected monuments – the value of the assets restored to it, its active role in building new places of worship, its publishing activities, and its television and radio facilities. Fuller information on the way in which the global sum allocated to the Slovak Church from public funds would make it easier to assess its cultural role, and certainly to effect some desirable rationalisation of public spending on Slovak culture.

Still on the subject of these “targeted funds”, we note that the funds allocated to “associations of interest” (does this mean of public interest?) in the 1999 budget were dropped in 2000, while “civic” associations got a tenfold increase. These variations and these terms (which are doubtless significant) need explanation and comment.

These observations and queries merely confirm the points and criticisms made by the authors of the National Report themselves, whose unfailing lucidity and objectivity compelled the experts’ respect.

It is generally agreed that rectifying these - doubtless temporary - illogicalities in the public funding system and in the framing of state budgets is an urgent priority, and vital to the sweeping cultural reforms which are anticipated in the Slovak Republic.

## **2. Administrative and operational institutions. A crucial priority for reform**

This year (2002) and the next few years will be crucial for the future development of culture in Slovakia. Great hopes rest on the reorganisation of the regions which began as far back as 1991, but whose effects are hard to gauge. We have heard many doubting, sceptical and critical comments. These have focused on the excessive cost of earlier reforms which were never completed, uncertainty over the regional committees and their role, the random restructuring of activities and agencies within interdisciplinary institutions which began in 1994, but was dropped four years later, etc.

These recent experiments obviously cast a shadow over the current reforms, but they do not necessarily discredit them. Reform of public administration, and regionalisation in particular, are seen as the clearest example of “less government meaning better government”, as essential to diversifying resources, and as a way of mobilising energies and talents close to beneficiaries. However, this approach, which is one of the dominant trends in the EU countries, cannot produce magic effects on its own, unless it is carefully thought out and planned beforehand, and supported by a coherent series of back-up measures.

The year 2002 has seen major changes in the cultural field, and the effects of these are hard to measure. Almost all the cultural institutions (151 out of 167, following the reorganisation of July 1999) have been placed under the direct control of the new regional authorities. This radical change has been made, even though the new regions have no tax income of their own (while the central state, as we have seen, has cut back its own cultural funds), have barely

established themselves in offices of their own, and - we have been told - will be giving culture minimum priority in the present fragile socio-economic climate. Moreover, the sensitive question of minorities and of the regions' geographical boundaries will have to be taken into account as these authorities develop their identities. Lastly, the new shape of the Government majority (particularly with communist representatives returning, and continued significant representation of the Hungarian community) may have an appreciable influence on development of the decentralisation process.

The Ministry of Culture, for its part, has made considerable efforts to rationalise, but has barely reduced its staff and has even moved into areas which might be regarded as lying outside the state's purview by assuming responsibility for craft trades, churches and religious communities, minority cultures, etc.

In April 2002, the group of experts visited the Trnava Region. The regional authority had been established in January 2002 and was in the process of moving into its offices, while cultural activities – specifically the 18 cultural agencies and 3 administrative staff - were being transferred to it from April under Act 416. Health, education and social affairs were its declared priorities, and it was due, during its four-year term of office, to discuss approaches to co-operation and the division of responsibilities with the municipalities.

In this legal context, as with decentralisation anywhere in Europe (even at an advanced stage), elected representatives and the people responsible for culture at local level tend to develop mixed feelings. They all have a sense of being part of a dynamic and exciting process but, as time goes on and serious local problems make themselves felt, they all come to feel that the central state is remote and indifferent, is hanging on to its authority, is often late in paying subsidies, and is content to transfer responsibilities – but not the funds needed to discharge them.

On the other hand, the major cultural institutions, and performing and creative artists, often feel safer in the long term with state funding, which is more stable and less exposed to pressure from local elected representatives, who are not all equally interested in culture. It is true that the dangers of feudalism and cronyism are never slight at local level. At the same time, regional institutions and creative artists have often achieved national and international success in nearly all the member states.

The trend itself seems irreversible, and the country as a whole and the newly elected regional representatives are both clearly behind it. As time goes on, Slovakia will find its own path and pace among the various European models, which offer a wide range of options<sup>1</sup>. At all events, cultural decentralisation, when it has succeeded, has relied on close involvement of local cultural protagonists in various forms of consultation (e.g. regional assemblies, seminars, sectoral meetings) and on pluriennial agreements between the state, the regions, local authorities, and cultural agencies and institutions on activities and budgets. These agreements make it possible to set priorities, guarantee funding and formally involve the various partners. Above all, Slovakia will have to define the role of the regions as an intermediate level between the state, on the one hand, and cities, towns and communes, on the other. Given the relatively sparse network of towns and urban centres, the country's low population density and the extent of its mountain areas, innovative methods will certainly be needed to match the situation in each region. "Sustainable development", based on

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<sup>1</sup> Cf : Angelo (Mario d') and Vesperini (Paul) – *Politiques culturelles en Europe : régions et décentralisation culturelle*, Council of Europe, August 2000.

“regional plans” covering all aspects of a region, and above all preservation of the natural heritage, may prove an especially useful concept. It will certainly be necessary to strengthen inter-regional co-operation, in terms of both investment and activities, and also, of course, to work across frontiers with neighbouring countries.

The Slovak Republic’s future would seem to depend very largely on the success of these decentralisation, reform and modernisation plans – and Europe must remain open and attentive to the progress of this delicate, complex process.

### **3. The legislative and regulatory framework of cultural development**

The full version of the National Report provides an admirably clear-sighted and objective analysis of this key question – the legal basis on which Slovakia’s cultural development now rests.

It relates this to the four main phases in the country’s overall political development:

- The proliferation of new laws immediately after 1989, reflecting a feeling of ideological, political and cultural liberation in the broad sense. Two symbolic texts, the Theatre Act and the Voluntary Sector Act, illustrate this “revolution”, in which creative and performing artists played a decisive role.
- As if in reaction to this vibrant but partly disorganised trend, massive centralisation, if not actual dirigisme, based on the Ministry of Culture, set in again from 1991.
- The assertion of democratic principles in the 1992 Constitution then came as a turning point, confirming the radical break with the past.

Lacking a clear cultural policy, which the pace of political change and the near-inextricable complexity of the political landscape made it hard to define, the country went through successive “waves” of legislative change, peaking in 1995, and then again in 2000, 2001 and 2002. Successive governing coalitions set out to tackle general policy issues, strengthen their specifically national approach to handling and promoting the social and economic changes involved in switching to a market economy, and reorganise cultural life to match these changes, while respecting EU requirements. The Report notes that the accession process has sometimes been marked by a certain incoherence, and indeed confusion, and has varied in its effectiveness.

This verdict obviously needs to be corrected, even if it squares with some of our own observations. A more balanced view would be that most Slovaks are extremely demanding, very mature, expect a great deal, and are somewhat impatient in the matter of culture and democracy. Also to be welcomed is the total frankness of the authors of the National Report, who were given a remarkably free hand by the Government.

As a partial conclusion to this chapter, we might sum up as follows:

- A fair number of the essential cultural funding measures have been introduced, but total resources are still below European norms, and even those of neighbouring candidate countries (such as the Czech Republic). The fact that regional and local authorities (which count for more than the state in Western Europe) do not participate, tells heavily against Slovakia's future cultural development. Neither the current administrative reform and decentralisation, nor the non-state resources which fiscal measures may release in future, are having any truly noticeable effects.
- Secondly, the overall reform of public administration, which has been resolutely launched, marks a real step forward, bringing Slovakia into line with the trend successfully pursued in Europe for some years past. The next two years, which will certainly be difficult, will be decisive.
- Finally, the Slovak Republic can today be said to have – in terms of its Constitution, general legislation and sectoral laws and regulations – the right kind of overall system. In the light of developments in the last few years, some people stress that the important thing in the next few years will be genuine enforcement of these laws and regulations.

Slovakia might be well advised to acquire the research, study and statistical analysis facilities it needs to identify priorities, and support and adjust cultural policies and strategies on the basis of hard data.

### III - SECTORAL ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL POLICY IN SLOVAKIA. VARYING SITUATIONS

When the first meeting and contacts took place in December 2000, it was decided that presentation of the National Report would be mixed, combining the operational and sectoral approaches. The idea was to bring the classic sub-categories (from heritage to culture industries) together and relate them to historical, political, institutional, economic and social analyses and data.

Following this approach, the National Report has made a remarkable job of surveying the general conditions of cultural development and discussing them critically, while noting that the scientific tools needed to explore the economics of culture and evaluate cultural policies are to some extent lacking.

The method chosen was a difficult one, and has not been totally adhered to. However, the first part of the Report (Chapter 1: *Starting point*, and Chapter 2: *Current state of cultural policy*) is sufficiently broad and wide-ranging to balance and illuminate the more conventional presentation of Chapter 3, which discusses *Areas of creation, dissemination and preservation of cultural values* separately.

These three chapters can thus be read together and used to illuminate one another. Moreover, each of the traditional cultural disciplines in Chapter 3 is itself discussed critically, put in historical perspective, and treated as a specific set of issues.

Basing ourselves on the information in the Slovak Report, other documentary sources and points noted during the various missions, we felt able to make a distinction between favourably placed sectors, less well-placed sectors, and sectors in an unfavourable or even critical position. This division, which establishes a kind of hierarchy of sectoral situations, might usefully permit the identification of policy priorities by means of comparative examination.

We accordingly propose adopting the following presentation:

- **Sectors, disciplines and activities in a favourable or satisfactory situation**
  - Heritage, protection and conservation
  - Theatre and music
  - Popular arts and traditions
- **Sectors, disciplines and activities in a less favourable or difficult situation**
  - Audiovisual arts and cinema
  - International activities
- **Sectors in flux or “light and shade” situations**
  - Libraries, literature and publishing
  - Galleries and museums. Plastic and visual arts
  - Minority cultures

Obviously, opinions on this classification may vary, depending on the viewpoint (government, those actively involved in culture, the public) and the criteria adopted (e.g.

quantitative, qualitative, economic, artistic). This problem is intrinsic to culture itself, and part and parcel of any attempt to evaluate cultural policy.

## **1. Generally favourable situations**

### *1.1 Heritage, protection and conservation*

Slovakia has a rich built heritage of great quality and diversity, covering a long period of time: medieval military architecture, major civil and religious monuments, bourgeois architecture, and traditional and vernacular architecture.

The government, local and regional authorities, specialists and the public have all been conscious, to varying degrees, of the importance of this heritage in terms of symbolism and identity, and the political, social and cultural developments of the last few years have expanded the concept of heritage to include industrial architecture and non-material items.

The laws and regulations are well-developed and appropriate. The “Declaration on Cultural Heritage” of February 2001 provided useful, pioneering definitions, and gave Slovakia a specialised, active body - the Monuments Institute - to apply them.

The organisations and institutions responsible for listing and research have a long tradition, and are dynamic and well-equipped. The growing role of architects, craftsmen specialising in restoration and voluntary associations should be noted. Municipalities with more than 2,000 inhabitants are required to have land-use plans, and this should make it easier to control building and manage the built environment.

The few specific examples we saw and the information we collected suggested to us that there was real co-operation between the ministries concerned (Culture, Interior and Environment) – very necessary in view of this enlarged, cross-disciplinary conception of heritage, which extends to regional planning.

The weak point - not a minor one - remains the relative decline in state funding (the Report says, for example, that spending on the renovation of historic monuments was halved in the ten years from 1990 to 2000), which has not been offset by the local authority aid for owners provided for (but not yet implemented) in the administrative reform programme.

Nonetheless, the necessary structures and laws, skills and expertise, political determination and public support are all present.

Quantitatively speaking, the state of conservation of protected monuments is generally satisfactory. More worrying is the fact that, with very few exceptions, nearly all the privately owned protected monuments are in danger.

### *1.2 Archives*

This heritage, too, is remarkably rich, with a long and - since the 18<sup>th</sup> century – well-structured institutional tradition.



The archive system is centrally managed by the Ministry of the Interior. Archive organisation has been discussed throughout Europe in recent years, and most archives are now attached to the institutions responsible for culture – an option which reflects a more heritage-based and scientific conception of archival and documentary sources.

Apart from the actual organisation of the archives, which is completely logical (although separate management of the mining archive is a distinctive feature), the 2002 Act puts the Slovak Republic on at least an equal footing with other member states, and sometimes even adopts a more progressive, open and democratic stance on access, and on consultation and communication of archival sources.

### *1.3 Theatre and music*

Slovakia has a long and lively theatrical tradition. This survived both the ideological pressures of the old regime and the successive administrative changes introduced between 1989 and 1998, which were sometimes contradictory, and often both misunderstood and resented.

In simple quantitative terms, the number of theatres doubled between 1991 and 2001, as did the number of companies and the number of productions. Audience figures may have fallen<sup>2</sup> (this is not peculiar to Slovakia), but they still remain satisfactory.

The sharing of responsibilities between the state and local and regional authorities is a logical part of the decentralisation programme. The state has already clarified the situation by conferring national status on the Slovak National Theatre, the New Stage in Bratislava and the State Theatre in Banska Bystrica, and giving directors appointed by competition fairly precise remits and funding. Some towns and municipalities have also made remarkable efforts to maintain theatres.

Differences in legal status between public and private theatres, public and independent companies, and professional, semi-professional and amateur companies are being clarified, although it is as hard in Slovakia as anywhere else to pinpoint and assess the various distinctions and funding methods - especially in the independent theatre sector, which is highly varied.

There is a range of types (puppet theatre, dance, Slovak-language productions, theatre for children and minorities), and there are cabarets.

The profession is well organised, has managed to make its voice heard in difficult times, and still does so today.

This dynamic sector, vulnerable but still lively, and a crucial part of the nation's cultural life, will continue to play a key role, in spite of all the problems and especially the continuing lack of security for writers, directors and performers. The planned move towards contractual agreements between the state and companies on projects and objectives, with concerted evaluation, is a decisive step.

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<sup>2</sup> Figures from the communist era include compulsory group visits by schoolchildren and the public.

The current administrative reform, which rouses essentially positive expectations and not too much anxiety in this field, will be crucial. Further delays, let alone abandonment or failure, would have disastrous consequences.

**Music**, which has a lively tradition in Slovakia, has experienced the same changes as other cultural activities. Up to 1989, musical life could rely on major state institutions, which were stable, active and generously funded, but dirigiste and academic, subjecting artists to strict ideological control. Since then, a considerable increase in freedom and openness has gone hand in hand with declining resources, financial uncertainty for performers and composers, and some destabilisation of institutions, resulting from the many reforms carried out piecemeal.

Today, there are some genuinely positive signs: the Music Centre, set up in 2000, will make it easier to visualise and evaluate national policy. It appears that the major musical institutions are well divided up, throughout the country, between the capital (Philharmonic Opera at the National Theatre) and the regions (Zelena, Kosice and Banska-Bystrica), that traditional music groups are active, and that the network of elementary music schools is well-structured and effectively linked to the National Conservatoire. Slovak Public Radio commissions and broadcasts high-quality music, festivals like those of Bratislava and Melos have an international reputation, and music associations and amateur music are well-established. The Music Fund provides substantial resources.

On the other hand, there are real signs that the audience for classical music is declining, despite state support for educational concerts; unfortunately, this is not peculiar to Slovakia.

Apart from improvements that are still possible and necessary, the information we collected on our mission suggested that the most sensitive point was the social status of performers. Salary levels, either fixed or paid out of Soza, oblige many of them to take on two or three jobs (as interpreters, teachers, etc.) and accept poorly paid foreign tours. Conversely, Slovak musical institutions cannot afford to invite foreign performers, who command far higher fees. This relative artistic isolation is harmful, since it threatens one of the most notable elements in the country's musical "genius".

By comparison with other countries, however, we feel that musical life in Slovakia is still unusually rich, lively and diverse, and that it has the basis and the talent to develop still further in the broader European context.

#### *1.4 Popular arts and traditions*

Our meetings and missions gave us an opportunity to appreciate the importance, both symbolic and real, of this area of culture. Slovakia's turbulent past, the sweeping changes it has undergone in recent years, and its predominantly rural geography and social structure all combine to make this sector particularly important.

It receives special attention from the Ministry of Culture, which has set up its own Council for Traditional and Popular Culture, and a significant part of the Pro Slovakia Programme is reserved for it<sup>3</sup>. Other European member states are aware of the vitality of this sector, which has absorbed contemporary creative influences and trends (design and plastic arts).

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<sup>3</sup> However, 30% of the 2001 Pro Slovakia budget line "General and local culture" is not exclusively earmarked for these particular activities.

At a time of rapid change, these lively art forms still bring the generations together and unquestionably contribute to national unity.

There is always a danger, of course, that people may become fixated on national identity, cling to an idealised past, and develop a kind of Slovak “complex” (this was often mentioned to us) in dealing with neighbouring countries (notably the Czech Republic and Hungary) and liberal European societies. This strong ethnic and cultural attachment, which is centred on ULUV, a body which has been active for over half a century, seems unlikely to prove an insurmountable obstacle to mobilisation of the creative forces of a modern and democratic Slovakia.

Within this first group, which seems, with all due caution, to be quite favourably situated, it is interesting to note that a certain balance has been struck between heritage and conservation activities, and creative activities centred on the major fields of theatre and music.

## 2. Weaker situations

### *2.1 Cinema and audiovisual arts. Looking for a way out of crisis*

This sector is clearly the least well in hand and the least secure. Its situation is markedly less favourable than in earlier periods, when there were strong, centralised administrative structures, numerous cinemas, and abundant and stable distribution facilities.

In general – a point which cannot pass unmentioned – it proved impossible, after 1989, to return to the previous level of public spending on culture.

### **The crisis in production and distribution**

The “crisis” in film and the audiovisual sector in Slovakia is, as in many transition countries, the result of breaking with the previous period, without having viable alternative structures and funding.

The EU countries themselves have not solved all the qualitative and quantitative problems which beset their cinema and audiovisual industries (cf. the present ongoing debate in most European countries about the future and the funding of cinema and public television, programme quality, violence and digital television).

Given its special features (size and population, poor reception areas, different governing majorities, etc.), Slovakia’s efforts deserve mentioning.

In the **cinema** field, the SFU has made a large number of necessary structural changes, has cleared many outstanding debts, and has revived conservation, research and culture-promotion activities.

In the **audiovisual** field, Slovak law now complies with that of the EU, following adoption of the European Directive and Agreement on cross-border television and the Law on transmission and retransmission, and the setting-up of an *ad hoc* Council to act as an independent regulatory authority.

Problems remain, however, and these new laws and regulations, which are theoretically in line (some say, artificially harmonised) with European norms, have made no real difference to a situation which is still considered unsatisfactory. The Slovak Government and Ministry of Culture have set up a Media and Audiovisual Department, which shows a clear sense of the need for progress in this complex field, and a determination to make it, but appropriate back-up structures have still to be devised.

The Group saw how much Slovakia was counting on methodological support, expert guidance and help from the EU in this field, which it regards as vital.

In spite of the specialised coverage in the National Report and the previous study (*Evolution du paysage audiovisuel en Europe Centrale. La République slovaque: un marché en quête de stabilité*, by Martin Smatlak and Andre Zmecek, Situation, 1997, revised edition), our information remains too general – and so we cannot probe very deep. This report will have to be extended in ways to be decided (e.g. targeted missions and discussions, thematic seminars). We did not actually meet any senior television executives, and the new law, which sets out to restructure all the conditions for creation, production and distribution of audiovisual works, has not yet – as far as we know - been passed.

The aim is to raise 200,000,000 SKK per annum, with the help of linked funding schemes and fiscal measures, and set up a support fund, making it possible to get back to an output of five feature films a year (as compared with 12 in 1990, and only 2-3 since 1996), and restructure the cinema network.

The actual results achieved with this law will have to be evaluated in the years ahead, in Slovakia's own interest and in that of Europe's audiovisual and cinema industry and culture.

This is hard to do at present, and there seems to be little prospect of finding a way out of the crisis.

The collapse of the Koliba Studios in 2001, after a complicated privatisation exercise, has left Slovak film production in a state of genuine chaos, which will certainly be hard to overcome.

On the other hand, cinema attendance has stabilised and even increased relatively, while the cinema network is now better matched to the country's geography and demography - even if a lot of equipment need replacing.

Fewer film-makers may be going abroad in search of work.

We were able to gauge the interest roused among informed and mainly young film-goers by the Bratislava Festival and, to a lesser extent – in spite of the organisers' dedication and skill - the Trencianske Teplice Festival.

In the film production and distribution field, very close co-operation, both with neighbouring countries (especially the Czech Republic) and with European support structures (Eurimages, Media Plus), is not just necessary, but vital.

In the **television** field, public television plays only a marginal part in producing material, and has not generally broken its ties with the political parties, although there is an independent regulatory body. Its resources and audience are in serious, continuing decline, and its

finances are seriously out of balance. Staff find this hard to accept, and dissatisfaction, anxiety and a sense of near-total impotence are rife among them. The 1991 split with Czechoslovak STV, known to be exceptionally good, seems to have been disastrous for Slovakia.

On the other hand, the private channel Markiza Slovakia has been totally successful since it was launched in 1996, and drains off most of the advertising revenue. North American investors are heavily involved, and are watching the audiovisual industry in Central Europe sharply.

This crisis - this kind of dead-end in which Slovakia's audiovisual industry and culture have landed, in spite of legislative efforts and European harmonisation - is the most disturbing aspect of Slovak cultural policy.

The pictures painted by the National Report and the above-mentioned 1997 study are identical, with no really noticeable changes, and we shall have to wait for the possible effects of the new law, which will need to be regularly monitored and evaluated.

### *2.2 International activities. A continuing lack of "visibility"*

The complicated histories, cultures and traditions of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are little known in the West. Although Prague, Vienna and Budapest are sometimes visited by Europeans, Bratislava is still a rare destination. Not enough attention is paid to their literature. How many West Europeans had read Kertesz before he won the Nobel Prize? With the exception of Vaclav Havel, do people know anything about their leaders? Before EU enlargement became imminent, the international press rarely devoted any space to these countries which have been trying patiently, in the last ten years, to reform themselves and satisfy the famous Copenhagen criteria, laid down by Brussels.

Our visits and missions showed us that Slovakia knew far more about the countries of Western Europe than vice-versa.

The deadlines for joining the NATO and the EU for political and democratic reasons, which the international community imposed after 1992, did not encourage the development of international relations. These various constraints are compounded by the relative inferiority complex noted above, which is scarcely justified, and the understandable priority which leaders give to solving internal problems.

Some of the arts have nonetheless managed to cross the country's frontiers - particularly the plastic and visual arts and music, which are universal and transcend all language barriers.

The wisdom and dynamism of the Czech, Hungarian, Polish and Slovakian leaders, who placed culture high among their concerns in the Visegrad and V4 context, and set up an international fund to promote joint programmes, cannot be overstressed. These "regional" agreements, and also Initiative 4, actually extend co-operation beyond the V4 membership.

This co-operation between Central European countries has great political and symbolic value: it broadens horizons, and mitigates the temptations of self-involvement, nationalism and localism. It has already generated a new and sensitive awareness, and should be extended further to increase results and optimise investment. It serves as a bridge, and a platform for

ideas, initiatives and enhanced creativity between each of these countries, whose funds might prove inadequate on their own, and the Western world of which they are a part.

The information we collected during our missions invariably suggested that there was a desire for openness and co-operation, but also gave us the impression – in spite of high-quality international schemes - that a great deal of effort was being wasted, and that inter-ministerial projects, which were left to networks and fragmented individual initiatives, instead of being properly planned and concerted, could be better co-ordinated.

In this area as well, one has to bear in mind the tension between the need and desire to be heard (reasonable enough in an exercise such as a National Report) and total objectivity.

Slovakia's image is still confused, too blurred, and insufficiently dynamic and positive.

Full integration within Europe, backed by cross-border co-operation which the present decentralisation process should encourage, will certainly break down the country's still-remaining relative isolation.

### **3. Sectors in a state of flux. "Light and shade" situations**

This section will cover three areas: 1) libraries, reading, literature and books; 2) museums and art galleries; 3) minority cultures, which are a complex issue in Slovakia.

These are of different kinds and are not in a definitively critical situation, but their positive features are matched by weaker ones, which need constant watching.

#### *3.1. Libraries, literature and publishing*

The experts were able to explore this sector fairly thoroughly when they visited the National Library in the city of Martin, symbolic heart of the Slovak Republic.

This library's story illustrates the development of cultural policy in Slovakia since the end of the Second World War fairly clearly. In the period prior to 1989, a solid and effective hierarchy of major cultural institutions was established under heavy ideological influence. A short period of enthusiastic reform, sometimes badly handled, gave way to firmer control between 1992 and 1998 - with good results. In the last few years, there has been carefully planned reform, with clearer principles and aims, but this has been affected by the weak economic and social situation, which may limit its effects.

The situation since the passing of the Libraries Act in 2000 seems to have been a mixed one. The institutional framework and organisation are clearly defined, and there is an ambitious five-year plan covering, *inter alia*, new buildings, digital listing of collections and catalogue access. Here again, results will have to be carefully assessed, with annual waystage reports. In 2000, the state earmarked 8% of the total culture budget for this sector - considerably less than for theatre (18%), and the same as the one-off sum set aside for the restoration/reorganisation of Bratislava Castle Museum.

Nonetheless, the 12 scientific libraries, 25 academic libraries and 200 public libraries in the national network are not all in the same situation.

For example, the Martin National Library, an outstanding scientific library, is disadvantaged by the recent failure to invest in up-grading its low-powered computer equipment, and purchasing new works for its collections. Statutory deposit does not work well enough, and its capacity for international scientific and cultural co-operation is thought insufficient.

On the other hand, the library is well-stocked and well-used, (in spite of its outlying location), its staff have considerable scientific and professional expertise, and its facilities for conservation and consultation are appropriate and effective.

As for public libraries, the various people we talked to and the authors of the National Report both expressed some concern over the state of local libraries: some libraries have simply disappeared since they were transferred to the local authorities in 1991, purchases and acquisitions have sometimes stopped completely, and professional and non-professional staff lack proper training. The current decentralisation programme, greater awareness on the part of local authorities, better equipment and increased funding, and restructuring based on municipal libraries, multimedia and branch or mobile libraries – all of this may revitalise the public system, giving libraries the central cultural role that they play in current member states.

The number of publishing houses has reportedly more than doubled in the last decade, reaching 7,500 today; the number of books published remains stable.

Although public support for literary activity is tending to decline, or showing little change, real and undeniable efforts are being made in the information and distribution fields, with the help of specialised publications, translations and an admittedly patchy presence at international book fairs, as well as rational restructuring based on the National Literary Centre (NLC), although this has not solved all the distribution problems.

But the market remains very vulnerable, publishers' returns are uncertain and, above all, production costs have risen so steeply that book prices have – depending on source – increased by a factor of between three and six. It has been proposed that the prices of books used for educational or cultural purposes should be cut.

### *3.2 Museums and galleries*

The experts visited a number of museums and galleries in Bratislava and the regions (e.g. the mining museum in Banska Bystrica). Taken together, the information gleaned from curators, the Ministry and the National Report suggest that the situation is a mixed one.

First of all, given its history, demography and geography, Slovakia has quite a good range of museums and galleries. Here again, successive and contradictory structural and organisational changes – of the kind with which we are now familiar – have made for administrative instability.

The most disturbing aspect is the almost total suspension of new acquisitions in all the country's museums and galleries, although the Slovak National Gallery has made a modest fresh start since 1998, when it made no purchases. Even though it seems likely that many of the earlier purchases were not necessarily dictated by artistic considerations, this state of affairs cannot fail to alarm. Artists in any market economy are both freer and less secure than artists on state salaries under the old regime. At the same time, the very recent decision (2002) to limit the tax rate for artists on low incomes to a fixed 2% clearly shows that

Slovakia genuinely takes the arts seriously. The current administrative reforms are certain to provoke further radical changes and strike a new balance between state, local and regional control. The time needed to implement them may have partly negative effects in the short term, given national and regional priorities, and delays in transferring public funds to the regions in the interim. Although state museums may feel relatively safe from a worsening of their working conditions in the short term, and although a very few local authorities will take a real interest and provide funding, regional museums and galleries will probably need several years to recover lost ground and make up for the scaling-down of their activities - particularly in the fields of research, acquisitions and conservation.

However, the experience of other member states, where museums and libraries remain a vital part of cultural life, suggests that museums and the arts will generate their own resources in the medium term by attracting sponsors and patrons – a semi-universal pattern in the visual arts in Europe and the West in general. Here, Slovakia will have to introduce and strengthen the right kind of fiscal measures.

The discussions launched a short time ago on setting up a major national exhibition centre, of the kind which exists in all other European countries, will have to be revived, so that the work of foreign artists (almost totally absent at present) can be accommodated and shown, and the necessary dialogue with other countries encouraged.

The enthusiasm, ideas, commitment, expertise and skills we encountered during our missions give reason to hope that this difficult transition will be negotiated, and the necessary changes made, with minimum disruption.

### *3.3 Minority cultures*

We were able to see that this is a particularly sensitive and complex issue in Slovakia; the European institutions are giving it their special attention, both from a humanitarian standpoint and from that of respect for cultural diversity, without hierarchies or segregation.

In objective terms, today's Slovak Republic is, broadly speaking, the most ethnically diverse and heterogeneous country in Europe.

This complex situation is due to the large number of minorities, of which there are no less than twelve; it is also due to the way in which they are divided, with Hungarians accounting for 10-11% of the population, and much smaller Polish, Jewish, Moravian, Croat, Russian and Bulgarian communities; finally, it is due to the historical background to the creation of the Slovak Republic, which grew out of the political philosophy of a homogeneous, united nation-state sharing a common language.

In this highly symbolic and image-ridden field of modern sovereignty, the Slovak Republic must be given credit, particularly since 1998, for its resolute, whole-hearted commitment to democracy.

Although Slovak was declared the only state language in 1995, a law on the use of minority languages has been passed, school reports are issued in two languages, and the European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages was ratified by Parliament in July 2001. There is no question of there being an official policy of discrimination.



A special department has been set up within the Ministry of Culture, and there is also a National Committee. The laws on administrative reform and decentralisation officially provide for minority representation and participation, and funding of minority cultures. The country thus has laws and regulations which accord with European standards, as well as the necessary structures and funding.

There are still tensions, however, and not all minorities are in the same, or even a comparable, position. The Hungarian community (around 10% of the Slovak population), for example, is significantly represented in government and occupies a special position. Its representation in parliament (about 11%) allows it to play a sometimes decisive role by delivering majorities in support of the compromises needed in the pursuit of reforms.

It has close ties with Hungary, which is seen as the “mother country”, and which even provided, in a law passed in April 2002, for funding to support the education of Hungarian children in Slovakia and Romania, and for preferential working conditions for holders of a “Hungarian certificate”. These measures, which show how strongly the Hungarian minority is aware of its identity, will have to be dropped once Slovakia joins the EU. It will be up to future governments of this “Euroregion” of Central European countries, once it forms part of the wider EU complex, to make the most of the collective enrichment that the Hungarian community can contribute. In return, the latter will have to open itself confidently to the cultural life of Slovakia and all the countries of this enlarged Europe.

At sectoral level, four theatres for national minorities have received state support. In the last five years, there has been a real and significant increase in the total funding provided for various forms of minority culture.

There remains the difficult question of the Roma minority. This is not just a problem in Slovakia – indeed there are regular signs that various European countries are relatively unable to solve the problems of sites, immigration, integration, schooling and humane and decent living conditions completely. This minority is reportedly the second largest in the Slovak Republic - around 100,000 according to the last census, but actually several times that figure, since many Roma do not register, for a variety of reasons.

Reports by international agencies indicate that this minority lives in impoverished conditions, and that near-total unemployment is endemic in most regions. Although the central authorities are clearly anxious to improve their situation, there are various forms of discrimination at regional and local level, and opinion polls indicate that Roma are the target of strong xenophobic feelings. This “murky” aspect of Slovakia’s image has been discussed in the European press.

On the other hand, various manifestations of Roma culture (theatre, music, writing, associations, mutual aid schemes) are regularly recorded and reported, and the Slovak Government is unquestionably providing assistance. The serious and growing marginalisation of this minority needs to be addressed in concerted fashion at pan-European level.

Slovakia itself must continue to work towards becoming a country at once enriched by its cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity, and united by a shared sense of Slovak identity.

#### IV - SWOT POINTS BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

We should like to conclude this report with the usual SWOT evaluation of cultural policy.

This list of strengths and weaknesses, to use the conventional terminology, can only be indicative. It may well be too “impressionistic”, and open to conflicting interpretations. This being so, the points we make will not necessarily be the same as those made in the National Report.

**The greatest strengths are:**

- In **general** terms:
  - the combination of a democratic political system with free elections, a democratic Constitution and freedom of expression, particularly in the form of a pluralistic press, which is recognised as such by international agencies;
  - a conscious opting and “desire” for Europe, an openness to the world, which is motivated, not merely by economic concerns but also by the genuine choice of a particular culture and civilisation;
  - a remarkable capacity for change, development and adaptation;
  - talents, creativity, tradition, expertise and skills.
- In **cultural** terms:
  - a national network of long-established cultural agencies and institutions, which have survived all the vicissitudes and changes, and are generally well-adapted to their tasks, having regard to the geographical and economic situation and constraints;
  - rapprochement and co-operation with neighbouring countries;
  - an awareness of culture within the broader framework of “sustainable development”.

On the other hand, there are certain **weaknesses** which may hold back cultural development in the short and medium term:

- The very difficult situation of the audiovisual and film sectors, which have no real prospects;
- An overall decline in funding for culture, with no real provision of alternative funding;
- Less security in the short term, resulting from administrative decentralisation, uneven regional development, and the priority understandably given to the social sector and education at a time of radical economic change;
- More generally, the difficulty experienced by governments with slender majorities in implementing policy decisions in the long term, and enforcing laws and regulations.

Finally, we can say - with all due reservations - that today’s modern, democratic Slovakia has achieved a rapid, radical transformation which deserves the greatest respect. Progress in the last five years has been remarkable; the legislative and regulatory basis established for cultural activity – both the basis itself and the prerequisites of a genuine “cultural policy” – put Slovakia very much on a par with the other candidate countries and most of the present EU members. For all that, the next few years will be crucial, and future developments will have to be regularly and rigorously monitored.

It is also up to Europe and the countries of Europe to make a totally sincere and unreserved effort to find out more about these exceptional changes and reforms and, more fundamentally, form a fuller picture of Slovakia's cultural riches and diversity, and help it to fulfil its aspirations.

**APPENDIX - PEOPLE IN POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY TALKED TO, AND CITIES AND AGENCIES VISITED IN SLOVAKIA**

**1. First session, 23 June 2000 in Bratislava**

*CE Experts:*

**Francis Denel**, CE expert, Institut national français de l'Audiovisuel

**Elisabeth Rohmer**, Deputy Head of the CE Cultural Policy Department

*Representatives of Slovakia:*

Milan Gacík, Minister of State of the MC of the SR

Peter Maráky, Director General of the Cultural Heritage Section of the MC of the SR

Pavol Tvarozek, Director General of the International Co-operation Section of the MC of the SR

Bozena Krížiková, Director of the European Integration Section of the MC of the SR

Branislav Rezník, Director of the Arts Department of the MC of the SR

Miroslava Teluchová, European Integration Department of the MC of the SR

Terézia Gasparíková, Interpreter

**2. Second session, 3-4 December 2000 in Bratislava**

*CE Experts:*

**Francis Denel**, CE expert, Institut national français de l'Audiovisuel

**Raymond Weber**, Head of Culture and Cultural Heritage at the CE

**Dominique Wallon**, Chair of the European Working Group

*Representatives of Slovakia:*

Milan Knazko, Minister of Culture

Milan Gacík, Minister of State at the MC of the SR

Dr. Oskar Novotny, CSc

The Directors General of the Sections of the MC of the SR

The Directors General of the Ministry of Culture's methodological centres (Monuments Institute, Theatre Institute, Slovak Cinematographic Institute, Music Centre, Slovak Design Centre).

**3. Third session, 3-7 April 2002: Bratislava, cities and regions in Slovakia**

*CE Experts:*

**Dominique Wallon** (France), Chair of the European Working Group

**Francis Denel** (France), Institut national français de l'Audiovisuel, Rapporteur to the CE Group of Experts

**Raymond Weber** (Luxembourg), Head of Culture and Cultural Heritage at the CE

**Elisabeth Rohmer**, Deputy Head of the CE Cultural Policy Department

*Towns and cities visited:*

Trnava, Trenčianske Bohuslavice, Zilina, Martin, Martinček, Spišská Kapitula, Levoca, Kezmarok, Spišská Sobota, Banská Stianica, Bratislava

***People talked to:***

Luba Blaskovicová, Theatre of the Old City, Pro Gremium, Gremium voluntary sector

Jozef Búda, Director of the State Chamber Orchestra

Tibor Díte, Director of the Museum of Western Slovakia

Mária Halmová, Director of the Ethnographic Museum of the Slovak National Museum, SNM

Peter Hiroš, Director of the Municipal Museum of Bratislava

Ivan Jancár, Director of the Municipal Museum of Bratislava

Jaroslav Kacer, Director of the M. Hrebenda Slovak Library for the Sight-Impaired

Dusan Katuscák, Director General of the Slovak National Library

Peter Kerlik, Director General of the International Co-operation Section of the MC of the SR

Jaroslav Kilián, Academia Istropolitana Nova

Miroslav Kollár, Editor of RNPC, Institute of Public Affairs

Pavol Komora, Director of the Historical Museum of the Slovak National Museum, SNM

Katarína Kosová, Director General of the Monuments Institute

Martin Kováč, Co-ordinator of the RNPC project, National Foundation Trust for Historic Sites and Landscapes in Slovakia

Božena Krížiková, European Integration Department, International Co-operation Section of the MC of the SR

Jozef Labuda, Director of the Slovak Mining Museum

Pavol Mestán, Director of the Jewish Museum

Peter Mrva, Director of the Povazská Museum

Zuzana Mrvová, Editor of RNPC

Emil Nediélka, Director of the J. Palárik Theatre

Mária Novotná, Director of the Spis Museum

Alena Pániková, Open Society Foundation

Miroslava Petrovská, Interpreter

Ladislav Snopko, Mosty-Gezarim, Petrzalka District Cultural Centre

Jozef Surovec, Director of the Central State Mining Archives

Priska Stubnová, Director of the J. Koniarik Art Gallery

Miroslava Teluchová, Department of European Integration, International Co-operation Section of the MC of the SR

Stefan Zima, Slovak Folklore Union

Frantisek Zivcák, Director of the Regional State Archives, Levoca

Meetings with representatives of the Slovak National Theatre, SND, at the première of the ballet *Le sacre du printemps, Requiem*