

**Cultural Policy Peer Review of Serbia**  
**Report of the Council of Europe Experts<sup>1</sup>**  
**ART AND CULTURE, AN INVESTMENT FOR SERBIA'S FUTURE**  
**Rapporteur: Philippe KERN**  
**26 August 2015<sup>2</sup>**

**Experts:**

Kimmo Aulake – Ministerial advisor, Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland  
Philippe Kern – Rapporteur, Managing Director of KEA European Affairs, Belgium  
Lars Seeberg – Independent artistic advisor, board member of the Royal Theatre, Denmark

**Council of Europe representative:**

Kathrin Merkle – Head of Culture and Democracy Division

## **1. General considerations**

### **1.1. Essential facts**

Population: 7.1 million - Capital: Belgrade (population: 1.6 million)

A parliamentary democracy

25 administrative regions, 167 municipalities

Around 17,000 employees in the public culture sector – 76 work at the Ministry of Culture and Media

900 cultural events and festivals - mainly in the field of dance and folk music (strong tradition)

533 public cultural institutions - 400 civil society cultural organisations

---

<sup>1</sup> The opinions expressed in this work are the responsibility of the independent experts who produced the report and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the Council of Europe.

<sup>2</sup> This is the second version of the expert report replacing the previous version from April 2015.

## **1.2. Introduction<sup>3</sup>**

The Republic of Serbia is still confronted with the consequences of the devastation of the nineties and the difficulties of the present decade. Yet many of the surviving strengths of Serbian cultural life are derived from a long tradition of cultural investment. The country is still relying on infrastructure dating from the defunct Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia, in which decentralisation and institutional self-government were key characteristics of cultural policy. These traditional practices are still applicable today and are currently being adapted in response to the new social, economic and political conditions. One of the main challenges is to modernise the institutions to adapt to the new borders, new forms of cultural consumption, budgetary constraints and the need to internationalise and network as well as mobilise alternative sources of funding (investors in Serbia are more active in investing in, or sponsoring, sport than art and culture). The appetite for cultural investment needs to be increased. Another challenge relates to the positions of the state and Serbian municipalities in respect of promoting the emergence of the creative economy, largely through cultural and artistic education and practices.

With the collapse of former Yugoslavia, cultural productions (e.g. films, books, journals, festivals, etc.) lost their audiences, readers and markets. The cultural infrastructure that followed was, as a result, too large to survive and demanded (in percentage terms) more and more public funds, which have been difficult to mobilise at a time of budgetary constraints. The market for art and culture is still in its infancy in Serbia. However the artistic, but also popular, successes of the Belgrade Philharmonic and the Belgrade Dance Festival, to name but two prominent examples, show the potential of Serbia's cultural institutions to reach out.

## **1.3. Main public authorities responsible for culture**

The Ministry of Culture and Media and Media is the main body responsible for policies and strategies relating to cultural development. It supports 26 cultural institutions of national importance, regulates both the cultural sector and the media and takes measures to protect the cultural heritage. Twenty five per cent of the Ministry's budget is left within the discretionary power of the Minister. The National Council for Culture (NCC) was set up in May 2011 and reports to the National Assembly. Its members are selected from respected artists and cultural managers for a five-year period<sup>4</sup>. The

---

<sup>3</sup> Based on the Council of Europe/ERICarts, "Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe, 14th edition", Country Profile, Serbia, January 2013, Ms Milena DRAGIĆEVIĆ-ŠEŠIĆ (Belgrade), Mr Aleksandar BRKIC (Belgrade) and Ms Hristina MIKIĆ (Novi Sad).

<sup>4</sup> The Council has 19 members, confirmed by the National Assembly: 4 are proposed by government, 4 are from public cultural institutions covering prominent areas: heritage, performing arts, librarianship and cultural development; 4 members represent art associations (literature and translation; visual arts; music; drama); 1 member represents other cultural associations; 2 members are from the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2 members are from the University of Arts and 2 members are proposed by councils of national minorities. The role of the NCC is to analyse and give its opinions on the state of the arts in Serbian culture, to make suggestions about cultural development, and participate in the creation of a national strategy for cultural development and assess its implementation.

Council meets once a month. It has no specific budget. It gives opinions on draft legislation and strategy papers.

The Ministry is keen to develop Serbia's international relations and fight the isolationism resulting from the war, during which Serbia suffered from embargoes and sanctions for 10 years. Serbia is actively developing concrete exchange projects with the European Union and neighbouring South-East European countries, as well as its bilateral co-operation with other countries. The Ministry has agreed significant co-operation projects with both China (Serbia acting as host country of the Shanghai film festival and Beijing book festival, notably) and Russia.

Serbia's cultural policy faces several challenges, often linked to the turbulent recent past:

- financial crisis, with the perception that culture is not a priority investment;
- difficulty of reforming and professionalising performing arts institutions;
- finding a balance in supporting different cultural and linguistic minorities;
- some major cultural facilities not yet operational (Museum of Contemporary Art and National Museum in Belgrade, which should open in October 2015 and May 2016 respectively, for instance);
- need for the definition of a new identity to promote the national interest whilst embracing cultural differences;
- division of labour between the National Council for Culture, as an advisory body, and the Ministry of Culture, as the executive authority, especially in the preparation of the Cultural Development Strategy..

#### **1.4. Cultural infrastructure<sup>5</sup>**

There are nearly 533 public cultural institutions operating in Serbia, where there is no urban area without a cultural institution. Among cultural institutions, the most common are so-called "polyvalent" centres (multi-purpose cultural centres) which are not merely used for a single activity, but extend to different areas of culture and cultural productions (theatre, music, cinema, library activities, folk programme, exhibition activities, etc.) and thus provide an opportunity for citizens to enjoy various amenities.

In addition to public cultural institutions, about 2,000 cultural associations play an active part in the area of cultural programming and production. A large proportion of associations are active in the folk dance and music sphere.

It is estimated that approximately 10,000 people are permanently employed in the culture field.

Serbs have an above-average cultural participation rate compared to other European countries. Their culture favourites are folk music, theatre and reading. There are

---

<sup>5</sup> Cultural resources of regions of Serbia, Cultural policy of the cities of Belgrade and Novi Sad – Centre for Study in Cultural Development, Belgrade 2012.

numerous festivals in Serbia (music, films, books), and some, such as Kustendorf, EXIT, Bitef and the Belgrade Dance Festival, have acquired a significant international reputation. The expertise of these festivals could be exploited more systematically for the benefit of a multitude of other festivals. Belgrade has a strong reputation for nightlife and entertainment and still plays the role of a cultural magnet in the region.

A large number of public cultural institutions and events in Serbia are based in Belgrade, once the capital of former Yugoslavia (until 2000). There is also a large network of multi-purpose cultural centres, a legacy of the communist era, well distributed across local communities. Ninety per cent of the budget for institutions is provided by municipalities. The activities of the Ministry of Culture and Media are more focused on Belgrade, where the major national cultural institutions are based (22 out of 26 national institutions are based in the capital city).

Serbia established National Councils of National Minorities in 2009 to represent national minorities. There are 20 national minorities with over 2,000 members in Serbia. 83.3% of the population are Serbs. There are 19 national councils in the country. Institutional organisation of minority rights in the Republic of Serbia is perceived as vital in stabilising relations between various cultural communities. National councils are responsible for education, culture and the media. Seven national councils have established cultural institutions<sup>6</sup>.

The autonomous province of Vojvodina, as a separate region (33.3% or exactly a third of the population are non-Serbs) has 18 provincial institutions which manage their cultural programme under the leadership of a Secretary of State based in Novi Sad. Among these 18 institutions there are 5 cultural institutes dealing with cultural production and heritage of certain national minorities in Vojvodina (Institute for Culture of Vojvodina Hungarians, Institute for Culture of Vojvodina Slovaks, Institute for Culture of Vojvodina Romanians, Institute for Culture of Vojvodina Ruthenians, Institute for Culture of Vojvodina Croats). There are 10 theatres of national minorities in Vojvodina (in 6 of which productions are in the Hungarian language). The province also has almost 200 amateur theatre companies representative of minority languages.

The development of culture and creative industries is a new phenomenon in Serbia. The experts noted that private initiatives, even with limited public support, are emerging organically in Belgrade (Mikser, Nova Iskra, KGrad) and also in Novi Sad, home to the country's IT industry. However, given the potential of CCIs to contribute to economy and job creation, but also to harness the nation's intangible assets, the current budget appropriations and overall investment appear to be modest. The delegation was quite impressed by the people managing private creative hubs and by the infrastructure set up. Belgrade has no reason to envy other European creative cities. The creative economy is on the move. But are political authorities, either at municipal or state levels, aware of the opportunities?

---

<sup>6</sup> Interkulturalnost – Magazine – October 2013/ n06, Miroslav Kevezdi ,p 114

In 2014 the Ministry of Culture and Media was asked to fund 229 projects, to the value of 306 million dinars (approximately €25 million)<sup>7</sup>. Ninety-one projects received support totalling 62 million dinars (€5.1 million). Because of financial constraints less than one third of projects are supported, with on average less than 30% of the event's budget; 50% of resources are devoted to funding festivals (there are more than 200 festivals in Serbia). Geographically the main beneficiary is Belgrade with 50 % followed by the Vojvodina Province (30%), with the rest of Serbia accessing 20% of the funding. The Ministry regrets the lack of applications from independent artists. Applications for support for national minorities' cultural activities are few, as funding is very limited. National minority institutions may benefit from "homeland support", in particular those of minorities linked to European Union member states. The EU Creative Europe programme is seen as an essential complementary source of funding, as is Eurimages for cinematography. Serbia has taken the necessary steps to join European cultural networks, in the expectation of future membership of the European Union.

In the name of transparency, applications for grants are managed by around 22 ad hoc committees (16 in the cultural field and 6 in the media field) comprising 3 to 7 persons who are in charge of reviewing requests for funding. These committees have been set up by the Ministry of Culture and Media to prevent political interference and contribute to the sector's professionalisation. 150 persons throughout the country take part in these committees' work.

The country is going through an important privatisation process in the fields of media (TV and radio), which may threaten the existence of local stations. The freedom and pluralism of the media is a cornerstone of democracy and it should be safeguarded in all circumstances and independently of the form of ownership. Serbia's media and cultural institutions are subject to political pressures affecting the democratic image of the country. The non-governmental international organisation "Reporters without Borders" has recently downgraded Serbia's ranking for freedom of expression.

### **1.5. The legal framework**

Serbia is going through an important update of its legislation in the field of culture, most of which is quite recent:

- law on Culture ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 72/2009);
- law on Cultural Property ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 71/94);
- law on Library and Information services ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia ", No. 52/11);
- law on Compulsory Copy of Publications ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia ", No. 52/11);

---

<sup>7</sup> Source: Ministry of Culture and Media, Serbia

- law on Old and Rare Library Holdings ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia ", No. 52/11);
- law on Issuing Publications ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 37/91, 53/93, 67/93, 48/94, 135/04, 101/05);
- law on Cinematography ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia ", Nos. 99/11, 2/12 - correction);
- law on Legacies, Foundations and Funds ("RS Official Gazette", No. 59/89);
- law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities (2002) and Law on National Councils of National Minorities (2009).

A number of legal initiatives are currently ongoing, reflecting the active cultural policy implemented by the Ministry of Culture and Information in cooperation with other ministries and the Government of the Republic of Serbia:

- The draft amendments to the Law on Public Procurement was adopted in July 2015, which will exclude the cultural sector from the system of large public procurement in accordance with the Directive 2014/24/EU of the European Parliament and the Council.<sup>8</sup>
- The proposal of amendments to the Law on Culture was also adopted in July 2015. It will contribute to more efficient functioning of the cultural system.<sup>9</sup>
- Lastly, a new set of media laws was enacted in August last year.

It is important for the Ministry of Culture and Media also to take a close interest in intellectual property and competition issues, as they affect the well-being of the culture industries. Cultural production and supply is threatened by the lack of copyright protection and enforcement.

## **2. The mission**

The mission was set up by the Council of Europe to support the development of a cultural strategy in accordance with Article 19 of the Law on Culture (2009) of Serbia. The experts' mission entailed travel to Belgrade on 14-15 November 2014 and 24-27 February 2015. During the latter visit, the experts also visited Novi Sad.

The mission was organised by the Ministry of Culture and Media of Serbia in collaboration with the Council of Europe and involved visits and interviews with officials from the Ministry; the Centre for Study in Cultural Development, the main research centre of the country ([www.zaprokul.org.rs](http://www.zaprokul.org.rs)) and the representatives of state-supported cultural institutions in the performing arts sector (National Theatre in Belgrade [www.narodnopozaoriste.rs](http://www.narodnopozaoriste.rs), BITEF [www.bitef.rs](http://www.bitef.rs), Yugoslav Drama Theatre [www.jdp.rs](http://www.jdp.rs)).

---

<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, every public procurement in the cultural sector will fall under the mechanism of so-called small public procurement, which requires transparent allocation of resources on the basis of three bids, without cumbersome bureaucratic procedure, as has been the case.

<sup>9</sup> The European Commission assessed the draft as fully compliant with the policy being conducted in the EU, which is focused primarily to the protection and promotion of cultural diversity in accordance with the UNESCO Convention 2005, which is an integral part of the *acquis communautaire*.

The team had a meeting with the board of the National Theatre (but not the current Director). On its second visit the team visited creative hubs in Belgrade (Mikser House, K-Grad, Nova Iskra), the “Kingdom” of artist Viktor Kiss. It interviewed heads of the international department of the National Library of Serbia, the Belgrade Philharmonic, the Yugoslav Cinematheque and the Serbia Film Centre, as well as members of the National Cultural Council and the head of the Belgrade Dance Festival. In Novi Sad it had a meeting with the Vojvodina Cultural Centre, directors of local theatres, members of national minorities councils. The Secretary of State in charge of Culture of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina welcomed the delegation.

The complete list of persons and institutions visited or interviewed is in Annex 1.

## **2.1. Priorities from the Ministry of Culture and Media**

The current Minister of Culture and Information, Mr Ivan Tasovac, was appointed in 2012. He is a former Managing Director of the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra. In a meeting on 14 November the Minister set out the following priorities:

- transformation of the main cultural institutions to make them responsible for audience development and to establish a process of performance evaluation;
- fostering of transparency in the management of cultural institutions to promote trust and good governance;
- expression of cultural diversity through intercultural dialogue among different religious and linguistic communities in the country.

The Minister is adamant that quality and excellence in the cultural offer and cultural management are a precondition to enable the country to develop and implement a cultural strategy. His priority is to develop stronger cultural structures and support people and projects. The Ministry is ready to support flagship initiatives such as the Belgrade Dance Festival or the Literary Prize, regarded as examples of remarkable public-private partnership which show how much quality culture investment can help to change Serbia’s image and improve the country’s self-confidence.

In a drive to decentralise further he is developing a new initiative aimed at supporting municipal authorities (“Cities in Focus”) willing to invest in culture and art. The priority of the Ministry is to build capacity and promote the development of good quality artistic productions.

## **2.2. General observations**

### **2.2.1. Political governance and leadership**

Cultural institutions are suffering from financial and political neglect due to the economic and political crisis. Serbia suffered from a cultural embargo for more than 10 years, with almost no cultural and artistic exchanges. The cultural policy challenge is enormous. The impact of cultural investment on economic and social well-being is largely unknown outside the Ministry of Culture. Efforts have to be made to get culture taken more seriously by other policy departments, both at state and municipal level.

### 2.2.2. Cultural institutions and management

Some downsizing may have to take place for financial resources to be used more effectively in a country whose priority lies elsewhere in view of the economic and social crisis. Public cultural institutions operate slowly as autonomous economic entities. Public funding supports structures rather than artistic projects. The majority of public structures are old-fashioned in management and overstaffed, with little incentive to promote audience development. Entrance tickets are heavily subsidised, making it more difficult for private initiatives to emerge.

### 2.2.3. Minorities

The authorities have set up numerous institutions to cater for national minorities (Hungarians, Croats, Slovaks, Romanians, Ruthenians). It is however unclear how these institutions benefit the arts and culture sectors beyond protecting the cultural heritage and linguistic expression. The role of these institutions in promoting intercultural dialogue within Serbia or with neighbouring countries remains to be defined. The matter is sensitive, and the team felt that the time available did not allow it to study the issues in depth or to go further than making general suggestions aimed at mobilising institutions to promote mutual understanding and cultural exchanges. Cultural diversity is an enormous asset for stimulating creativity. In the province of Vojvodina a third (33,3%) of the population is non-Serb. The total population increased significantly, by 100,000, during the war.

### 2.2.4. Culture and creative industries<sup>10</sup>

There are 10,000 culture and creative enterprises and 80,000 employees in the industry, representing 3% of Serbia's GDP (close to the EU average). The team was impressed by the quality of the creative hubs visited in Belgrade. Remarkably, these hubs are managed by people from the arts and culture sector, thus showing the importance of arts education in stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship. The growth of these initiatives is largely organic. Public funding is limited. A strategy to make the most of

---

<sup>10</sup> For more information on culture and creative industries please refer to the work of the Centre for Study in Cultural Development [www.zaprokul.org.rs](http://www.zaprokul.org.rs), and the article "Cultural Industries and the Diversity of Cultural Expressions; International Institutional Framework and the Current Conditions in Serbia", Hristina Mikic, Creative Economy Group, Belgrade, Interkulturalnost, October 2013, p.58.



these initiatives remains to be developed. The Ministry of Culture and Media should seize the opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of arts and culture in stimulating tomorrow's creative economy.

Public funding for the cinema industry (€3 million) has increased threefold over the last year, but still lags far behind the support systems of neighbouring countries (Croatia €9 million, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia €7 million, Slovenia €5 million and Romania €20 million). Each year, an average of 4 or 5 feature films are produced (total AV production around 30 films/year). The market share of Serbian cinema is a remarkable 30%, but very little showing of independent/art house cinema. Like in other European countries, box office is dominated by Hollywood. Co-productions with neighbouring countries are a strong feature. The country has yet to adopt an incentive scheme that encourages private investment and attracts foreign productions more systematically. Such fiscal incentives have proved successful in many countries. The country benefits from low cost and high technical skills in the audiovisual industry, thereby having the potential to attract foreign productions and the subsequent inward investment.

The culture and creative industries are key sectors, as they make access to cultural productions available to a wider audience and contribute to the funding of artistic activities. The Ministry of Culture and Media in 2010 set up a task force for the development of the creative industries (Creative Serbia 2020).

#### 2.2.5. International

Serbia is active internationally: it participates in the culture strand of Creative Europe (the EU Programme) and in Eurimages (co-productions). It is currently negotiating access to the MEDIA strand of Creative Europe. It is also a member of the Council of Ministers of Culture of South East Europe established in 2004 (set up to operate like the Nordic Council). The Creative Europe programme is perceived as an important tool for European collaboration and funding. Serbia should not overlook other EU funding opportunities that will benefit neighbouring countries (Structural Funds, Strategy 2020). Other international initiatives include agreements with:

- the Council of Europe – European Convention for the Protection of the Audiovisual Heritage (ratified 22/1/2015), Faro Convention (ratified 29/7/2010), Granada Convention (accession on 28/2/2001) and Valletta Convention (ratified 14/9/2009);
- UNESCO – World Heritage Convention and Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005);
- China (Belgrade hosted the 2015 summit of Heads of Government of Central and Eastern European countries and China and will organise an ambitious exhibition in the context of the Silk Road route);
- the Russian Federation (Programme of Co-operation);

- neighbouring Balkan countries and neighbouring EU countries in a bilateral cultural relationship with former Yugoslavian territories reported to be good and without problems, with strong co-operation notably between institutions and private organisations, especially in music and cinema.

### **3. Strengths and weaknesses of Serbia's cultural policy (a brief analysis)**

These observations are based on a 5-day visit. They are necessarily superficial and dependent on the institutions and people met and interviewed. They are nevertheless useful for crystallising impressions and learning from a team of experts familiar with cultural policy issues, albeit less familiar with the country's cultural, social and political complexities.

#### **3.1. Strengths**

##### **3.1.1. Political governance and leadership**

- The Ministry of Culture and Media is genuinely committed to developing and implementing an effective cultural policy striving for excellence and artistic quality.
- A quite recent legal framework (6 new laws adopted since 2009).
- The Law on Culture of 2009 represents a contemporary approach to culture and forms a sound legal basis. The same can be said of sectoral laws.
- The legal foundation for culture in Serbia is in formal terms in line with that of most EU countries regarding arm's length principles.
- There is an established and well-regarded research centre to guide policy making and collect data (in existence since 1967).

##### **3.1.2. Cultural institutions and management**

- Strong traditional cultural infrastructure (533 national, provincial and local institutions).
- Cultural offer in particular in theatre (40 professional theatres in Belgrade with 12 public theatres) and music, as well as festivals/events (around 900).
- Strong emphasis on folk culture in the regions.
- Strong arts education – 4 faculties at Belgrade University, for instance.

##### **3.1.3. Minorities**

- Twenty national councils cater for minorities and the expression of minority languages.

##### **3.1.4. Culture and creative industries**

- Large pool of creators, individual talents, institutions and industries.

- Emerging promising culture and creative industries in local independent clusters growing organically.
- Relatively strong publishing and audiovisual sector.
- Attractiveness as a low-cost country with good technical facilities and skills.

#### 3.1.5. International

- Active international involvement: Serbia has repositioned itself as part of the international community. Former Yugoslavia now represents 6 countries; this is the opportunity for Serbia to be a focal point in South-East Europe (including Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey).
- Active participation of Serbia's cultural industries in trade fairs, notably in the publishing (Beijing, Frankfurt, Leipzig, Moscow, notably) and film markets (Berlin, Cannes).
- Active member of the Council of Ministers of Culture of South East Europe (since 2004).
- Positive cultural relationships and co-operation with former Yugoslavia territories.
- The US tour of the Belgrade Philharmonic, made with private support (Foundation), set a good example for other cultural institutions to follow (80% self-financed). The training of cultural managers from China in May 2015 will be an opportunity to develop an operational relationship. The South-East European Pavilion involving 6 countries is a good example of co-operation within the industry (Cannes Film Market). The film industry is good at finding co-producers in the region or through bilateral co-operation (such as with France) in order to close funding gaps. Its film professionals seem to be well connected, particularly at European level (EAVE, Europa International).
- The Serbian film archive is a very rich resource (100,000 films), and the digitisation programme is well advanced. The film archive has a rich collection of feature films from "non-aligned countries", but also from China (before the Cultural Revolution) and Czech cinema (before the 1968 Soviet invasion).

### 3.2. Weaknesses

#### 3.2.1. Political governance and leadership

- The current Law on Culture (art. 17.4) states that the National Council for Culture shall "participate in the development of strategy for cultural development...". The use of the term "participate" seems to have caused some confusion on the division of labour between, and responsibilities of, the Ministry and the Council. Given the different roles of the Ministry and the Council, as well as the central role of the Strategy, any clarification at the level of the law should be useful.
- Some argue that the NCC should become the representative body that could take stock of the strategy, organise consultation and ensure consistency. This would provide more stability, since Ministers have changed quite often in the past. On

the other hand, the NCC aims to represent the culture sector, which can also be consulted through representative cultural associations and others. It is the experts' view that the NCC, as a body set up by parliament, should not be involved in the exercise of the executive powers of the government. It can, however, provide an important contribution in collecting and analysing information and opinions on cultural matters and communicating these to, and relaying replies from, members of parliament. Of course, nothing should prevent the Ministry of Culture and Media and the NCC from having mutually enriching exchanges on topical issues.

- Lack of or deficiency of local strategies. Cultural policy is often a victim of political infighting, particularly in some cities (Belgrade and Novi Sad).
- Cultural centres are sometimes victims of political pressure from extreme nationalists (confirmed in interviews with local stakeholders). This poses a threat to artistic expression.
- Local press reports appear about the violation of freedom of expression, to the detriment of Serbia's image in the world.
- Political interference in nominations (in particular at municipal level), which has been addressed at national level through the introduction of more transparent processes. However does transparency enable the best candidates to be selected in a sector where there are egos wanting protection?
- Limited co-operation between the Ministry of Culture and Media and other Ministries (Education, which is responsible for arts education, Tourism, Ministry of the Economy, which seems to cover the creative industries). This is not Serbia-specific, but cross-collaboration should be considered at a time when Serbia is rebuilding a new economy that requires new skills and processes to generate innovation.
- Problem of consistency between different levels of governance (Ministry and National Council on the one hand, central and local governments on the other hand).
- Lack of policy continuity (in the past 10 years, the Minister has been replaced on average every 18 months, even if the government remains stable) – for information there are 60 civil servants within the Ministry, equivalent to a country such as Finland.

### 3.2.2. Cultural institutions and management

- Extreme reliance on the state budget for the main cultural institutions. The Minister wishes to change this and force cultural institutions to be more business-minded which should imply the introduction of business management skills at board level.
- Lack of criteria and their application for further subsidising the performing arts sector (e.g. relevance for social/cultural debates and emancipation; audience

attention; international recognition; international touring; participation in collaborative productions, awards; regional co-operation; etc.).

- Annual accounting for institutions prevents planning. Programming seasons are quite late in some institutions.
- Private consumption of culture is weak, with limited consumption of publicly financed art and culture: 85% of young people do not go to museums, for instance.
- Lack of performance criteria for cultural institutions. It is difficult to get information on audience attendance and diversity in national institutions.
- Entrance tickets are heavily subsidised, which lowers the entry barrier to performances but makes the private cultural offer uncompetitive (only few private theatres in Belgrade).
- No flagship events or too many events.
- Structures are too heavy and costly (for instance there are 110 dancers - some of them beyond dancing age - on the payroll of the Belgrade National Theatre, whilst there are 80 at la Scala in Milan). There is no life-long training scheme enabling talented artists before they reach retirement age to prepare to become teachers or managers.

### 3.2.3. Minorities

- Lack of coordination (and vision?) among national councils for minorities in terms of instigating cultural dialogue within Serbia, as well as with the respective "home countries".

### 3.2.4. Culture and creative industries

- Insufficient understanding of the contribution of cultural investment to economic development, job creation and social cohesion (including the promotion of intercultural dialogue).
- The culture and creative industries are looking for a correspondent at government level to help contribute to the modernisation of numerous areas of public policy, relating to education, social matters, entrepreneurship and urban planning.
- Insufficient understanding of the contribution of independent cultural centres to the cultural performance of Serbia, and of their potential to attract national/international interest.
- There is an opportunity to attract more foreign investment in Serbia, considering its technical facilities and skills in the audiovisual sector. Tax rebates linked to local investment would create significant jobs and activities.
- There is a need to develop a strategy to support the internationalisation of creative entrepreneurs and SMEs.

### 3.2.5. International

- The embargo of the 90s has isolated Serbia for almost a decade – limited cultural exchanges for a long period – and this seems to have caused a disconnection between culture and, especially, young people.
- There is much emphasis on the promotion of folk culture. A modern Serbian cultural narrative needs to be developed. The process of European integration is key.
- The National Theatre and other cultural institutions should network at European level and internationally, with a view to learning from foreign experience, and not necessarily to putting on productions (as costs are often prohibitive due to the size of the infrastructure).
- Neighbouring countries are more attracted to EU funding than the EPA fund – risk of isolation for Serbia which is not a member of the EU.
- Serbia needs to devise co-operation with European cultural institutes such as the Goethe Institut, British Council or Institut Français, so as to access EU funding more systematically or to benefit from minority language programmes and networks.

## **4. Policy recommendations**

*“Great art helps to develop thinking, imagination and understanding” - Valery Gergiev*

### **4.1. Political governance and leadership**

It is important that the Ministry spells out its strategy and channels energies towards achieving clearly identified goals. There is strong demand from stakeholders in the field to understand and share the vision. This is the opportunity to assert the competences of the Cultural Ministry, and also to show the impact of investment in culture on policy-making, offering a more holistic vision of what culture policy encompasses:

- promotion of artistic excellence (through high quality training, institutions and events, as well as a strong NGO and cultural industry sector);
- leadership of a cultural and artistic revival in the Balkans;
- building of a positive image of the country, attracting tourism as well as foreign investment, but more importantly to rebuild trust and empathy with neighbours;
- support for economic and social innovation via culture and art, and incorporation of the promotion of economic and social development, as well as citizens’ well-being, into the objectives of cultural policy;
- support for entrepreneurship and jobs in the culture and creative industries;
- support for intercultural dialogue between the diverse communities;
- building on international co-operation (including market access and diplomacy).

The development of a vision will help to underpin the Ministry’s transparency and professionalisation objectives. It will help to remedy the perception that the Ministry is pushing for market liberalisation without consideration for the arts and that

liberalisation will only benefit Belgrade (as donors will not want to go elsewhere). It will also make possible better coordination between municipalities, regions and the state.

To prepare the ground and make possible wide consultation, the experts recommend the holding of a major conference, a “summit” aimed at gathering all cultural stakeholders to debate the subject of cultural policy in Serbia. This event would be used as a platform to launch subsequently the culture strategy and define its objectives. A summit would be a way of mobilising artists and institutions around a single objective: to raise awareness of the importance of the arts and culture for the future of Serbia. It will present what has been achieved and consider future directions.

The experts believe that it is important to clarify the policy objectives of the Ministry not only in relation to the management of cultural institutions, but also in relation to:

- education for culture and audience engagement (how to engage with the younger generation and stimulate curiosity as well as imagination in the digital era);
- the heritage and cultural memory (so diverse in the country) – the role of art and culture in building a narrative that is inclusive. Which cultural identity for Serbia?
- media and information policy – the freedom of expression ranking should be carefully monitored by the authorities to avoid creating a negative image;
- access to culture (the role of the media, the cultural industries, the Internet and cultural institutions), with a need to examine the links between arts and the creative economy and the role of artists in interceding between conventional art and digital technology;
- international exchanges;
- the culture industries and their role as investors in and distributors of culture, also in the context of independent arts/cultural centres that tend to be hubs of innovation;
- professional development to achieve a skilled arts workforce (identify training requirements).

The goal will be to express a clear commitment in pursuit of artistic excellence and the celebration of quality of the arts so as to connect the arts with people at a time of strict financial discipline. The Ministry is right to build capacity, as this will make possible the implementation of a future strategy. A strategy is needed to give cultural stakeholders, whether public or private, an inspiring vision, and it will motivate stakeholders towards an explicit goal.

Independently of a strategy paper to follow the “summit ” (that could coincide with the opening of the Contemporary Museum in Autumn 2015), the experts also suggest the introduction or amendment of regulations as follows:

- proposal of legislation to attract sponsorship and private investment in the arts. Review of tax legislation in this respect (donations, inheritance, sponsorship);

- review of existing law to take into account the specifics of culture productions (such as public tendering which excludes small players, labour law in relation to the employment of artists);
- review of the public service obligation in relation to exposure for the arts on main media, notably TV, and broadcasters' obligations to invest in national productions (drama, cinema, documentaries).

#### **4.2. Cultural institutions and management**

The Ministry has rightly identified the reform of the main national performing arts organisations as a key priority. This is a legitimate objective considering the amount of funding mobilised by these institutions. The experts take the view that Serbia cannot afford so many institutions and urgently needs to reform the regulations governing such institutions to adapt the system to Serbia's means, as well as to enable the emergence of new talents. There should be more resources devoted to and reserved for creation and original artistic endeavours. The experts were impressed by the amount of talents and initiatives in the country.

The experts recommend the following:

- consider reducing the number of state-managed cultural organisations or link the amount of state subsidy to the ability to raise alternative sources of funding. Institutions should be given a target of 15% self-funding within 3 years and 25% within 6 years;
- support private investment in the arts by granting tax incentives or rebates. This would send a strong signal to the expatriate community wishing to give back to the homeland. A system of foundations with special tax status could be established;
- state grants to be linked with artistic programming, rather than the size of the infrastructure;
- establish a system of short-term contracts for artists and technicians working in theatre, dance and opera and establish a training scheme to retrain actors, musicians and dancers no longer called on to perform, but who could train the next generation of talents. This may need a revision of labour law;
- consider the establishment of an arms-length organisation – like the Arts Council system in many countries - responsible for defining art funding strategy and using the peer review system for the selection of projects deserving support. This organisation, reporting to the Ministry, would replace the existing 22 committees currently screening projects on behalf of the Ministry. This small new structure would work independently and reflect the state of the art in other European countries. It would have a fixed budget. Its expert members should hold office for a four-year period, for example;
- organise training seminars on audience development aimed at national cultural institutions. Set up criteria and analyse carefully: a focus solely on visitor



numbers may lead to mainstream programming and not necessarily to *new* audiences;

- set up evaluation systems and multi-year programming budgets for institutions, including corresponding public procurement rules to allow for flexible reaction by institutions.

### **4.3. Linguistic minorities**

The experts take the view that national minorities afford an extraordinary opportunity for the development of creativity and art forms in Serbia. Art enables the exchange of ideas. It shapes meaning for the future. Institutions have been set up to preserve the various national cultural heritages notably in Vojvodina Province. It appears that well-educated young people from those minorities tend to leave Serbia. The conditions for emulating interaction and cultural exchanges between the communities have to be strengthened through cultural policy. Therefore the experts suggest a policy which:

- favours artistic value and contemporary creation to stimulate originality in cultural expression. Funding should go to projects rather than structure. The efforts of the Ministry in this respect are to be commended;
- provides incentives for national cultural centres for minorities to collaborate on joint cultural projects. Subsidised cultural projects should as a matter of priority support intercultural dialogue within Serbia, as well as between Serbia and neighbouring countries. Funds for the Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad and the National Theatre in Belgrade should be more evenly balanced (currently a ratio of 1:10);
- establishes within the Ministry a small structure responsible for implementing the above principles; enables coordination as well as the pooling of resources between different initiatives;
- considers the establishment of a Balkan or Slavic literary prize (or a cinema/TV drama prize) to celebrate linguistic diversity and support cross-border circulation of art works and artists in the region.

### **4.4 Culture and creative industries**

Initiatives such as Mikser House, Nova Iskra and K-Grad are emblematic of a global trend: the emergence of new social and economic initiatives aimed at networking competences, whether artistic or technical, to deliver product or service innovation. It should be pointed out that those initiatives are managed by people with strong arts and cultural backgrounds. They show how much art and culture contribute to other policy fields, such as entrepreneurship, training and social services, beyond the traditional remit of culture policy (heritage promotion, cultural institutions and artistic expression). The experts take the view that the Ministry should take an active

interest in these bottom-up initiatives and reflect on their contributions to Serbia's attractiveness as a place to create, innovate and share. They are the expression of a new culture – a culture of experimentation, sharing and networking – a feature of a post-industrial society. The experts make the following recommendations:

- integrate these projects into the Ministry's consultation process (including the NCC) with actors of the cultural sector;
- the Ministry to draw attention to/raise awareness of the benefits of these initiatives and monitor the development of these initiatives to provide political support and be able to identify needs and requirements;
- consider policy required to stimulate these bottom-up initiatives and their organic growth;
- Consider introducing new tax legislation to attract more substantial sponsorship and investment into the arts and culture;
- the Ministry to encourage the interaction of these projects with the traditional cultural sectors, to enable the latter to understand new technology and consumption trends and adapt accordingly, but also to permit the former to contribute innovative and creative ideas.

#### **4.5. International exchanges**

Cultural policy and players would greatly benefit from Serbia's membership of the European Union. Serbia's cultural project and creative industry policy is at a disadvantage compared to neighbouring countries (Croatia, Slovenia, Slovakia) benefiting from EU support (Cohesion Funds, EU 2020 Strategy, Digital Single Market). The Ministry should go beyond the Creative Europe programme and consider ways of participating in better-funded policy programmes linked to the EU's interest in culture and creative industries as a source of innovation, such as creative industry programmes funded as part of EU social funds, EU regional Policy, Enterprise Policy or the Serbia Pre-accession to the EU funding. The Ministry should continue to pursue bilateral collaboration with other countries, as they represent alternative sources of cultural interaction and financial resources for local cultural players.

The experts recommend:

- development of an international policy supporting connections and networking, with a view to helping local artists to compare their visions with the rest of the world and enable the expression of the local distinctiveness. An artist-in-residence programme, international exchanges, workshops and training, including between independent and more established institutions, should be sponsored to make use of the international presence during festivals to train or open the eyes of young or future talents. The focus should be on developing training facilities. Household international names with Serbian origin should be called upon to assist and lend their reputation;

- consider a “Non-Aligned” cultural festival as a flagship cultural event open to the world;
- find every opportunity in the country to showcase talents (sport or trade events). The Ministry to identify opportunities in the next 5 years to champion the arts as reduced public funding requires partnership and the pooling of resources;
- harness the capacity of Serbian culture professionals and entrepreneurs to participate in international networks.

## **5. Conclusions**

The team of experts was overall impressed by the determination and vision of a Ministry of Culture and Media driven by artistic excellence and ambition. Considering the financial constraints and a recent turbulent history, Serbia’s cultural policy is moving in the right direction by focusing on transparency and professionalism so as to preserve artistic integrity and quality. The team would like to encourage the Ministry to spell out its cultural policy vision with a view to calming any fears that the current policy will mainly be driven by financial and market liberalisation objectives. This policy should integrate a new societal dimension linked to the impact of globalisation and digitisation, thus encompassing the contribution of art and culture to stimulating new forms of artistic expression as well as a creative economy – in the formal and independent sectors – stimulating employment opportunities and entrepreneurship.

The above recommendations are intended to be practical and cost-effective. They are inspired by practices in other European countries of a similar size. Serbia has a wealth of creative talents, a tremendous positive energy and a cultural diversity which, well managed, can make the country the artistic centre of South-East Europe.

The team would like to thank Serbian officials and people for their tremendous hospitality and openness.

26 August 2015

## Appendix

### Council of Europe Cultural Policy Peer Review of Serbia

#### Cultural policy makers, professionals and practitioners interviewed by the Expert Group

##### Visit 1: 12-14 November 2014, Belgrade

- Minister of Culture and Information of Serbia, Mr Ivan Tasovac
- Assistant Minister for Contemporary Art and Creative Industries, Ms Ana Vucetic
- Assistant Minister for International Relations and European Integration, Ms Asja Drača Muntean
- Senior Adviser or National Coordinator, International Relations and European Integration, Ms Ivana Zecevic
- **Compendium** author Ms Milena Dragisecic-Sestic, Ms Hristina Mikic and other authors of the Compendium of Cultural Policies profile of Serbia
- Staff of the Centre for Study in Cultural Development, Ms Bojana Subasic
- Members of the Steering Committee of the National Theatre in Belgrade and the management of the Bitez Theatre, Ms Jelena Kajgo and Mr Milos Latinovic
- Members of the management of the Yugoslav Drama Theatre, Ms Tamara Vuckovic

##### Visit 2: 24-27 February 2015, Belgrade and Novi Sad

- Professor at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts, president of the National Association of Theatre Critics and Theatrolgists, International Association of Theatre Critics director of conferences, Mr Ivan Medenica
- Assistant Minister for International Relations and European Integration, Ms Asja Drača Muntean
- Senior Adviser, International Relations and European Integration, Ms Ivana Zecevic
- Heads of the international co-operation departments of national cultural institutions:
  - o National Theatre, Mr Milorad Jovanovic
  - o Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra, Ms Asja Radonjic
  - o National Library, Ms Tamara Butigan Vucaj
  - o Yugoslav Cinematheque, Marjan Vujovic
  - o Film Centre Serbia, Ms Snezana Maric
- Director of Mikser House, Ms Maja Laic
- Director of the Kulturni Centar GRAD, Mr Dejan Ubovic
- Director of Nova iskra, Mr Marko Radenkovic
- Director of Ciglana, Mr Viktor Kiss
- Film producer and chair of the programme council of the Serbian cultural centre in Paris, France, Mr Milos Djukelic
- Film producer; representative of the National Council for Culture and Management Board of Yugoslav Cinematheque, Mr Miroslav Mogorovic

- Provincial Secretary for Culture and Public Information, Mr Slaviša Grujić, and his assistants Mr Dragan Srećkov, Mr Milan Micić, Mr Atila Juhas, Mr Boško Baroš, Ms Dušica Juribašić and Ms Bojana Begović
- Representatives of the European Affairs Fund, Mr Siniša Lazić and Mr Andrija Aleksić
- Director of the Cultural Institute of Vojvodina, Mr Vladimir Kopicl, and staff members Mr Dragan Ilić, Mr Miroslav Keveždi and Ms Aleksandra Đurić-Bosnić
- Director of the Gallery of Matica Srpska, Ms Tijana Palkovljević Bugarski
- Director of the Pavle Beljanski Memorial Collection, Ms Jasna Jovanov
- Director of the Serbian National Theatre, Mr Aleksandar Milosavljević
- Associate in the Student Cultural Centre Novi Sad, Ms Marija Popović
- Director of the Novi Sad Theatre, Mr Valentin Vencel
- Director of the National Theatre in Subotica, Ms Ljubica Ristovski
- Directors of the cultural institutes of national minorities in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina:
  - o Director of Vojvodina Slovak cultural institute, Ms Milina Sklabinska
  - o Director of the Institute for Culture of Vojvodina Croats, Mr Tomislav Žigmano
  - o Director of the Institute for Culture of Vojvodina Ruthenians, Mr Sergej Tama
  - o Director of the Institute for Culture of Vojvodina Romanians, Mr Ursu Todor
  - o Director of the Institute for Culture of Vojvodina Hungarian, Ms Martina Gondi, and associate Ms Karolina Nadi
- President of the National Council for Culture, Ms Mileta Prodanovic
- Director of the Belgrade Dance Festival, Ms Aja Jung