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G|M|F The German Marshall Fund
of the United States

STRENGTHENING TRANSATLANTIC COOPERATION

East European Reflection Group (EE RG)

Supporting Cultural Actors of Change in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine

Synthesis Report

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Executive Summary

"The roots of (culture's) ability to draw in bystanders, sceptics and even adversaries lie in another fundamental social difference between the arts and other activities – they trade in meanings".[1]

The European Cultural Foundation and The German Marshall Fund of the United States have begun a process of cooperation with the aim of supporting the capacity of cultural actors to be effective agents of change in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. As a first step in designing their approach and programming to underpin the efforts of those cultural actors working towards the democratisation, modernisation and Europeanisation of each of these countries, an East European Reflection Group process has been established. This process included three distinct phases – the preparation of situation assessments for each country concerning the capacity of the cultural community to contribute to processes of transformation, the corroboration of the findings presented in each of the reports with influential cultural actors and stakeholders in each of the countries at country consultation meetings and the elaboration of a synthesis of the results of these two phases as a basis for the development of strategic action on the part of ECF and GMF (and potentially a selection of other donor partners) in support of cultural actors of change in the three countries concerned. Three country specific reports outline the needs of each cultural community and specific measures that could improve the local situation of the independent culture sector. This report outlines umbrella lines of action that are drawn from the country situations identified.

Important as country specificity is and even taking into account the very different socio-political situations apparent in each of the countries today, the East European Reflection Group process has identified several significant ways in which an ECF / GMF partnership, enriched with support from other members of the donor community, could provide much needed support to the positive functions that the cultural communities in each of these countries play for processes of democratisation, modernisation and Europeanisation.

While in each of the countries, the cultural community is playing a significant role for the development of a democratic political culture, for the opening up of debates in the public sphere that would otherwise be marginalised and for bringing together people from diverse backgrounds, social groups and political affiliations to discuss issues of importance to the development of their societies, each has some important weaknesses that are limiting their effectiveness to be positive agents of change. It has become apparent that the cultural communities face similar challenges in extending their ability to be cultural actors of change. In particular, these are related to a lack of resource sustainability, difficulties in communication between the governmental and non-governmental cultural sectors, the need for better capacity in advocacy, fundraising, sustainable project management and other technical skills, the difficulty of developing consensus inside the cultural community itself concerning its role and priorities and the need to reach beyond the minority constituencies independent cultural communities often address.

In an attempt to indicate direction for further action, the synthesis presented indicates several lines of action that the ECF / GMF partnership could consider to pursue in the coming years in support of cultural actors of change in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. Additional support from and partnership with other members of the international donor community will be essential to ensure sustainable and coordinated action in areas such as advocacy towards European and international institutions, research into the situations, concerns and needs of the cultural communities in terms of their capacity to be cultural actors of change over time and capacity building within the international donor and institutional community for working with and on the cultural contribution to processes of change and transformation in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine.

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[1] Matarasso, François and Landry, Charles, Balancing act: 21 strategic dilemmas in cultural policy, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 1999, p. 89.

Introduction

The East European Reflection Group[2]

Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine have recently become direct neighbours of the European Union. Both Moldova and Ukraine have also become closer partners of the European Union through the European Neighbourhood Policy. Neighbourhood usually refers to people next-door, people we know, or could easily get to know. It implies interest, curiosity and solidarity in the other living close by. For the moment, the European Union's "neighbourhood" is something of an abstract notion, lacking in substance. In order to avoid ending up "lost in translation", it is necessary to question and some of the basic premises on which cultural and other forms of European cooperation are posited.

In an effort to create constructive dialogue with this little known neighbourhood, the European Cultural Foundation (ECF) and the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) are currently preparing a three-year partnership to support cultural agents of change in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. In the broad sense, this programme is to work with, and provide assistance to, initiatives and institutions that employ creative, artistic and cultural means to contribute to the process of constructive change in each of the three countries.

ECF and GMF have begun a process of reflection in order to understand the extent to which the culture sphere in each of the three countries under consideration can support change, defined here as processes and dynamics contributing to democratisation, Europeanisation and modernisation in the three countries concerned. This reflection process attempts to assess needs and will use reported realities as the basis for discussing and developing proper cultural action and eventually new cultural instruments. Several principles guide this process of reflection.

Contextualisation: it is vital to differentiate the national and local conditions from immediately observable regional similarities. Countries of the region in focus face very different challenges and are differently accessible. Recommendations for concrete measures will have to sensitively consider contextual specificities on a case-by-case basis.

Reflection-Action-Advocacy: This process combines a reflection, action and advocacy. The exact content and shape regarding actions and advocacy will entirely depend on the outcomes of the reflection process but will address both EU countries and the countries in focus.

Outstanding actors: This process gathers outstanding individuals, representing institutions and organisations that are playing an important role in the areas of culture and change in the region. They are invited to participate in their individual capacity and they do not claim to represent their country of origin or any public authorities.

Results: This process is result-driven. It aims to deliver tangible results, including new means and instruments in support of cross-border and trans-national cultural cooperation in and with Eastern Europe. Several tools can be imagined (for example, capacity-building or mobility programmes, placement schemes, summer schools, Eastern Europe Fund, scholarship programmes) but the concrete outputs should be decided upon only after assessment and discussion of the concrete local needs and aspirations of local actors of change.

Partnership: This process seeks cooperation with other foundations and organisations that have working experience in the region so as to enhance the coherence, complementarity and effectiveness of the initiative. It seeks to identify and involve artistic initiatives inside the

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[2] European Cultural Foundation and German Marshall Fund of the United States, East European Reflection Group (EE RG): Cultural Actors of Change in Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova, Project Description.

European Union with the aim to increase knowledge and interest in the artistic and cultural scenes of the Eastern European neighbourhood.

Impact: This initiative seeks to create synergies with existing networks, programmes and policies currently in place to support cultural and other actors of change so as to bring in players from the Eastern European neighbourhood and further afield, open up debate, and raise public awareness of the region in focus (for example, Grantmakers East Forum, Tallinn, October 2007) .

The EE RG process, therefore, aims at supporting cultural actors of change in their efforts to democratise, modernise and Europeanise the societies in which they live and produce. This is to be achieved through the development of a medium to long term strategy and programme of cooperation between ECF and GMF based on evidence of the actual situation and capacity of the cultural community in each county to effect the changes it considers necessary, in their own sector, but not exclusively, in relation to cultural and other policies, and in terms of the overall quality of life of citizens in the societies where they are active. To this end an initial mapping of the situation, problems and issues facing actors of the culture field has been undertaken for each of the three countries. This mapping aimed at identifying outstanding individuals who combine intellectual strength and practical activity to the benefit of positive change within the arts and culture fields, but who also do or could impact other areas of society.

This mapping exercise has involved a variety of cultural actors ranging from artists to cultural mangers and from public institutions to local cultural NGOs. To the extent that this was not an exercise in determining the capacity of cultural policy in each country, the process of reflection has tended to focus on the so-called "independent" cultural sector, i.e. non-governmental actors in the cultural sphere, even if each of the country reports does devote quite some attention to the situation as concerns cultural policy development and implementation in each country and advisors or experts trusted by state cultural actors have also been involved. The process has further tended to focus on those involved in "contemporary" cultural production and forms, somewhat by default as it is the independent cultural sector that tends to be more involved in that kind of cultural production. Nevertheless, more traditional artistic and cultural producers have variously been included in the consultation process, most often according to their weight and visibility in the culture sphere where they operate. Finally, this process of reflection has not been limited to the culture spheres of each country purely. In an effort to understand the socio-political and economic contexts in which processes of change are being pushed forward by cultural actors in each of the countries, the reflection process has also surveyed members of the wider civic and political communities and relied on their outsider perspectives to corroborate affirmations made by members of the cultural communities surveyed and consulted. All those invited to participate, however, can be understood to be "exceptional" in some manner. Whether as creators of art, as managers of cultural processes, as experts in cultural policy development or as key actors of civil society and public life they have been recognised for the quality of what they do and of how they do it both at home and abroad.

This initial mapping was conducted using a specially developed questionnaire. It focused on the opinion of respondents concerning the prospects for actors of the culture sphere in each country to constructively support processes of change in favour of modernisation, democratisation, Europeanisation. Target persons and institutions invited to answer the questionnaire were chosen on the basis of preparatory meetings in each of the countries – in Minsk, Belarus, in March 2007; in Kyiv, Ukraine, in April 2007; and in Chisinau, Moldova, in May 2007. Secondary source materials, and in particular, the Compendium on Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe (www.culturalpolicies.net/web/index.php), were used as a documentary basis for the preparation of the country reports. Later, country consultation meetings were organised (in June and July 2007) with the aim of reviewing and corroborating the situation assessments outlined in the country reports with local cultural actors, on the basis of which they were revised and finalised.

The reflection process has, therefore, explored ways that influential individuals and collectives created or significantly contributed to change and has attempted to lay out the main features of the cultural policy systems in each country along with the main problems respondents considered

essential to their effectiveness or ineffectiveness in underpinning processes of change in a constructive manner.

It is expected that the Eastern European Reflection Group process will achieve the following results in the medium to long term:

- Facilitating networking and partnership building between individuals and organisations in the region, and of countries from the target region with EU countries;
- Triggering curiosity in the Eastern European region and introducing it to the mental map of cultural operators and artists in the west;
- Devising a policy orientation on the place of cultural cooperation in the European Neighbourhood Policy;
- Launching a concrete cooperation instrument tailored to the needs analysed in the course of the reflection process;
- Preparing a publication (on-line, and possibly off-line) and a public event in the Netherlands to publicise the results of the process;
- Contributing to ECF's diversity focus through supporting cultural actors of change in Eastern Europe (integration) and exploring the contribution of the Eastern European Diaspora to multiple European citizenship (migration).

This Report

The present synthesis report is the culmination of the reflection stage of the wider EE RG process and its purpose is to document the situation and potential of the culture sectors in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine as a basis for understanding how an international partnership such as that between ECF and GMF can support the contribution of the cultural sphere to transformation processes, in particular processes of Europeanisation, modernisation and democratisation, in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, and the region of Eastern Europe more broadly. It includes common trends in the situations of the culture sector in the three countries and strategic approaches for the international community to underpin the efforts of cultural actors of change in the region.

The present document is a synthesis of research activities undertaken and an interpretation of their results so far. Research activities undertaken included:

- The identification of relevant partners and experts in the cultural community in each of the countries (through preparatory visits and meetings with outstanding members of the cultural community);
- an assessment of the situation and capacities of the cultural community in each of the countries (using questionnaires to a selected group of cultural actors and secondary sources);
- corroboration of the situation assessment for each country (through consultation meetings with members of the cultural community from each country);
- the elaboration of elements for a strategic framework on the basis within which practical actions may be prepared as part of a three year cooperation programme between ECF and GMF (through the consultation of further secondary source materials).

The situation assessment presented, along with the strategic considerations contained in the conclusion to this document, will serve as a basis for the development of the partnership between ECF and GMF, along with concrete programmatic instruments, in support of actors of change in the cultural sphere. The circle of partners involved in the process will be enlarged to include other potential supporters of change through culture, especially other international donors involved in cultural activities in the three countries, through a strategic workshop and by taking advantage of several regular funder coordination meetings, forthcoming in autumn 2007 (for example, Grantmakers East). Together with the three more detailed country reports prepared in the first phase of the reflection group process, this document serves as the evidence base for further ECF / GMF action in support of cultural actors of change in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine.

This report has four sections. The first, entitled "Culture and Change" focuses on clarifying some conceptual and terminological issues for the further elaboration of the report, including understandings of the main terms used in this process of reflection (e.g. culture, cultural actor, change including modernisation, democratisation and Europeanisation) and sets out some basic ideas about the relationship between cultural action and processes of transformation based on other research conducted by experts in the cultural field.

The second section, entitled "Contemporary Contexts: Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine", provides brief background information concerning the three countries subject of this enquiry including the situation of their culture sectors. This information provides a basic synthetic framework within which to place following considerations on the capacity of the culture sectors in the three countries, acknowledging that the three country reports included in annex are quite detailed and require some time to be read and understood in depth. It also explores the idea of "region" that is commonly applied to the countries under consideration, as, in the opinion of this author at least, the term can be somewhat misleading, especially if thinking about the development of relevant action to the support the culture sectors in each of the countries.

The third section, entitled "Culture and Change in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine", provides a synthetic overview of the ways in which the culture sectors in the three countries can be seen to contribute to processes of change and transformation, as understood in this reflection group process. It attempts to problematise each of the possible functions of the cultural sectors for change, highlighting strengths and weaknesses and areas where support from the international cultural and donor community could be useful. This section provides examples of cultural actions and projects from each of the countries that the EE RG team considers exemplary of each of the functions of the cultural sector for change.

The fourth and final section of this report, entitled "Elements for the Development of a Strategic Plan" attempts to interpret the complex picture of the capacity of the cultural sectors in each of the countries to contribute positively to processes of modernisation, democratisation and Europeanisation with the aim of providing strategic orientation to staff and partners of both ECF and GMF for the planning of their three year cooperation programme to support cultural actors of change in the three countries. This section presents several principles that could inform both the development of that programme and the eventual implementation of its main instruments or lines of action, whether by ECF / GMF or including several other donor partners. It continues with several lines of strategic action that could form the basis of the programme of cooperation. The concrete needs and recommendations of the partners from the cultural community in each of the participating countries have been related specifically to one of these strategic lines of action. In line with the principles outlined, the programme can be seen as an umbrella of coordinated action through which specific, needs targeted implementation may be conducted in each of the three countries in partnership with local actors who know best the context where they operate.

Culture and Change

"In the cultural sector, individual vision can have a huge and unforeseen impact, where substantial public resources can appear to produce no change at all".[3]

The mandate of this report and the expertise of this author does not extend to a theoretical excursus on the meaning and functions of culture for society. Nevertheless, to avoid the practical misunderstandings that can result from a variety of readerships from different fields of expertise being addressed by one product, some definitional issues do have to be addressed.

In the first place it is important to clarify the basic terminology that is being used in the report. In the second place, it important to provide a justification for why certain terms will be used in certain ways in this report, when there would be more options available. To this end, the following section presents a working understanding of culture and cultural actors, and attempts to define change, in terms of the three characteristics that have been central to the enquiry undertaken in this EE RG, those being democratisation, modernisation and Europeanisation.

Culture

For the purposes of this process and for very pragmatic reasons, the term culture is understood in very broad terms as encompassing all art forms, media and the traditional culture sector but also cultural policy, cultural industries and all forms of cultural production.

Research, debates and policy making efforts in the culture sector over the last 15 years have tended more and more towards this extension of the meaning of culture. The preamble to UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity of 2001 states that

"… culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of a society or a social groups, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs".[4]

A recent project undertaken by Sida on cultural citizenship states that

"Today the challenges, the opportunities and the responsibilities of cultural policy are changing, broadening and connecting with economic, social and environmental policy. Cultural policy, that is to say, is about the fundamental human right of citizenship and the fundamental human objective of sustainable development … Culture can no longer only or mainly be restricted to the opera house or gallery – 'the arts' – but must be looked upon and treated as a basic driving force behind human behaviour and central to human development'.[5]

Obvious as it may seem, put simply, but necessarily, therefore, cultural actors are those who are actively engaged in the culture field, whether as creators or as managers of cultural creation, in voluntary or paid positions, amateur or professional, within government agencies or non-governmental organisations. All those who are somehow concerned with cultural development can be considered as cultural actors for the purposes of this analysis.

These definitions of culture and cultural actors have been instrumental to the way in which partners in and participants of this reflection process have been chosen.

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[3] Matarasso, François and Landry, Charles, Balancing act: 21 strategic dilemmas in cultural policy, Council of Europe Publishing, 1999, p.7.

[4] Preamble to the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2001. The full text of the Declaration can be accessed on the following website: http://portal.unesco.org/en.

[5] Larsson, Agneta, A summary of the Report "Towards a Cultural Citizenship – Tools for cultural policy development" by Colin Mercer, Sida, 2002.

Change

Change is a complex phenomenon. To be sure, this reflection process is not concerned with all types of change and all forms of transformation. We have chosen to focus on three aspects of processes of transformation currently observable in the three countries under scrutiny – those being democratisation, modernisation and Europeanisation. All three are relatively recent phenomena for the countries concerned, having really only begun with the end of the Cold War. All three are interlinked and have complex socio-political effects on the societies concerned.

To understand the ways in which the cultural community in each of the countries can contribute to making change in this three-fold sense happen, it is necessary to understand the nature of each of those processes and how they have played out in each country. Obvious as it may sound, it is important to acknowledge that each country is at a different stage of development in relation to the three dimensions of change this reflection process focuses on.

Simply focusing on the recent history of change in the three countries concerned, we immediately see that democratisation was the necessary condition for the other two processes to begin. In the Green Paper on the Future of Democracy in Europe commissioned by the Council of Europe, Philippe C. Schmitter and Alexander H. Treschel defined modern political democracy as

"… a regime or system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their representatives."[6]

They further contend that

" … the future of democracy in Europe lies in fortifying and perpetuating existing formal institutions and informal practices than in changing them."[7]

All three countries took tentative steps towards democracy at the end of the 1980s, instituting what can be understood as democracy in name – the procedural minimum of a constitution and competitive elections. But, as Ralf Dahrendorf soberly warned

"It takes six months to create new political institutions, to write a constitution and electoral laws. It may take six years to create a half-way viable economy. It will probably take sixty years to create a civil society."[8]

And, all three have experienced difficulties and obstacles, some even being waylaid, at different points in the transition. The Orange Revolution put Ukraine back on track for potential NATO and European integration. Moldova exists currently in a kind of semi-democratic limbo, alternately pulled in the direction of old-style Communist conservatism by Moscow and reform-minded liberalisation by Brussels. Belarus, the only country that has not yet embarked on democratisation, remains stuck in a kind of pre-modern isolation, as if in the political sphere time had stood still, while technological advances abound. But, democratisation is also a profoundly social phenomenon and it is quite difficult to assess its results using the tools of measurement at the disposal of research. Often, one has to content oneself with democratisation effects being counted rather than the impact of the process being understood.

In the opinion of this author at least, the incompleteness of the democratisation in each of the three countries remains the root of many of the endemic problems that they experience. Examples of such difficulties abound, from rampant corruption and political instability in Ukraine, to government clientism and monopolisation of areas usually left to develop freely (e.g. the media) in Moldova. In Belarus, the active suppression of opposition from political and civic

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[6] Phlippe C. Schmitter and Alexander H. Treschel (eds.), "Green Paper on the Future of Democracy in Europe" (draft), for the Council of Europe, by a working group of high level experts, (source: http://www.coe.int/t/e/integrated_projects/democracy/05_key_texts/02_Green_Paper/),p.16.

[7] Ibid, p. 7.

[8] Ralf Dahrendorf, "Reflections on the Revolutions in Europe", Chatto and Winds, London, 1990, p. 93.

circles is certainly the consequence of the regime's fear that it will be the "loser" of the change game if it even so much as briefly relaxes its grip.

Robert Dahl noted that

"Whatever form it takes, the democracy of our successors will not and cannot be the democracy of our predecessors".[9]

In other words, there are no recipes. Democratisation, through culture or any other means, must be determined by local conditions and actors, involves significant efforts to reform and cannot be achieved overnight. Rather, it is an ongoing, even never-ending, process.

The social realities of these countries have also changed as a result of the transition. This social modernisation, accelerated by globalisation, has been an important challenge – to those in positions of responsibility and power as well as to ordinary citizens.

In the Green Paper, Schmitter and Treschel characterise this challenge using the following question. Referring to democracy, they ask

"… how well do its well-established formal institutions and informal practices 'fit' with the much more rapidly changing social, economic, cultural and technological arrangements that surround it and upon which democracy depends both materially and normatively?"[10]

A good example of the tension expressed in this question is the issue of identity, a matter often discussed in terms of cultural modernisation. On the one hand, the frequency with which identity is discussed as if people in the three countries concerned were engaged in a process of "catching up for lost time" is surprising for outsiders. The many years of occupation and de-nationalisation under empires of various political persuasions during the 19th and 20th centuries experienced by these "nations", gives them the sense of having been isolated from their European cultural heritage and normal European processes of state-building. At the same time, this sense of a shared cultural heritage has often been accompanied by highly static and exclusive notions of "national culture". Aggressive national pride, a sense of entitlement over others who, although citizens, "do not belong" and certain kinds of intolerance are common, as is the populist instrumenstalisation of the emotions raised by unscrupulous political actors. Cultural debates about the primacy of language as the marker of identity and ethnicity as a more valid indicator of belonging than citizenship tend to play out tensely. State-building can be mixed up with nation-building. This tension can cause people to experience insecurity and fear in social relations and can even create, reactionary social and political backlashes.

In this respect, Europeanisation has come to be seen often in very "rosy" terms as the panacea to solve all such problems. But, for most ordinary people, Europeanisation has come to be synonymous with joining the European Union and speedy improvements in economic conditions, rather than with a profound identification with the fundamentally humanist values of the European integration project – human rights, the rule of law, democracy, peace and some of the basic principles that those values imply – cooperation across national borders, subsidiarity. This is not an unproblematic misunderstanding. The European Union will not offer the real carrot of full membership to Moldova and Ukraine any time soon. Acceptance of this fact is essential, in the opinion of this author, to making the participation of these countries in programmes under the European Neighbourhood Policy effective. The EU has made its stance on Belarus clear, but despite the support it continues to demonstrate for the cause of regime change, it is not going to be the one to make that change and even after the change is made, the likelihood of Belarus being offered membership is relatively slim. Again, a fact that has to be accepted if effective policies and programmes are to be developed. For ordinary people, it is

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[9] Phlippe C. Schmitter and Alexander H. Treschel (eds.), "Green Paper on the Future of Democracy in Europe", for the Council of Europe, by a working group of high level experts, (source: http://www.coe.int/t/e/integrated_projects/democracy/05_key_texts/02_Green_Paper/),p.7.

[10] Ibid, p.10.

disappointing to have to accept such facts. And, more often than not, it leads to a questioning of the values underlying European integration. In the very long run, these values will spread through the societies in question – will come to be accepted – with or without EU membership. That is the way of the global world and the natural process of modernisation that takes place in halfway free societies. But, how much more profound that acceptance, if it was to be the result of cooperation, partnership and mutual recognition in a relationship of equals.

Culture in Times of Change – Contemporary Cultural Dilemmas

In a surprisingly short but, nevertheless, seminal policy document commissioned by the Council of Europe in 1999, François Matarasso and Charles Landry set out five categories of strategic policy dilemma facing the cultural sphere in Europe in the 21st century. These recognise the increased pace of change, as has been experienced in Europe and all over the world since the advent of the information and communication technology revolution, as the context in which the cultural field develops and sets out the implications of that context for professionals and lay persons who wish to engage with cultural development in contemporary Europe.

The five relate to
   a.   fundamental understandings of the nature of culture
   b.   the implementation of cultural policies
   c.   the developmental effects of culture for societies
   d.   the economic impacts of cultural activity and e. the challenges of managing the cultural sector.

Through their elaboration Matarasso and Landry chart the challenges facing professionals and voluntary workers in the cultural sector. The dilemmas described, ranging from definitional and conceptual issues such as whether the primary role and function of culture for a society should be developmental or ornamental (having a self-justifying value) to practical implementational questions such as the extent to which public and / or private actors should be involved in the delivery of cultural policies and programmes, point to a fundamental questioning of the function, role and utility of culture for contemporary societies and of how that can best be expressed in policy and concrete programmes.

At the heart of this questioning, which has been ongoing for several decades by now, and of central importance to this reflection process, lies the issue of the extent to which culture should make progressive contributions to the development of society – in other words, its role in processes of societal change – such as, but not limited to democratisation, modernisation and Europeanisation.

In this relation, Matarasso and Landry state that

"The dilemmas over culture and democracy have been complicated by the emergence of another conception of culture during the 1980's and 1990's – culture as development … The value of cultural activity to social and economic vitality, and to sustainable communities, was recognised by landmark reports from UNESCO (Our creative diversity, 1996) and the Council of Europe (In from the margins, 1997), building on research in individual countries including France and the United Kingdom … At its simplest, this has led to the use of cultural techniques to achieve non-cultural ends – for example, the use of theatrical performances and workshop activities to promote health awareness messages. But, the more sophisticated analysis recognises the inescapable socio-economic impacts of all cultural activity and places a joint emphasis on the cultural and developmental benefits of … investment in culture. This conception of culture places it at the heart of … policies addressing key issues such as civil society, social cohesion, community capacity building and so on."[11]

Important lines of enquiry are raised for this process of reflection by the contemporary historical evolution of the concept of culture, as outlined by Matarasso and Landry. Firstly, the ways in

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[11] Phlippe C. Schmitter and Alexander H. Treschel (eds.), "Green Paper on the Future of Democracy in Europe", for the Council of Europe, by a working group of high level experts, (source: http://www.coe.int/t/e/integrated_projects/democracy/05_key_texts/02_Green_Paper/),p.15–16.

which participation in cultural activities impacts persons, groups and communities is neither obvious nor straight forward and depending on the circumstances participation may have different outcomes for different categories of participants and often has unintended outcomes. It is acknowledged that cultural action can contribute to social, economic and even political development in a variety of ways. But, exactly how and with which impact (in terms of change) is as much a function of the environment and context, as it is of the objectives or format of the cultural action. Further, it is often assumed that cultural participation improves the quality of life, especially social life, in a particular context, but the relationships between different aspects of the quality of life and the results of cultural action are weakly understood. The extent to which such change could be programmed is also difficult to assess. Hence, in the following section, we will try to assess some of the possible (and generic) relationships between change and cultural action, looking specifically at the social and other impacts of cultural projects that could be considered as leading to improvements in life quality.

Change through Culture?

Social and other impacts of participation in cultural projects

While evaluating the social and other impacts of individual, group or community involvement in cultural activities is a relatively recent field of enquiry, some seminal empirical research projects have been carried out in the late 1990s.

In one such research project, carried out in several towns in the United Kingdom and other countries in Europe in 1997, covering a wide range of forms of cultural activities (from amateur theatre to modern dance) and types of participant (from children to offenders), François Matarasso and his colleagues were able to identify fifty concrete ways in which participation in arts projects had beneficial outcomes on the participating individuals, groups or communities.

Participation in the Arts

Can …

1/ Increase people's self-confidence and sense of self-worth
2/ Extend involvement in social activity
3/ Provide a forum to explore personal rights and responsibilities
4/ Contribute to people's employability
5/ Develop community networks and sociability
6/ Promote tolerance and contribute to conflict resolution
7/ Help validate the contribution of the whole community
8/ Promote intercultural contact and cooperation
9/ Develop contact between the generations
10/ Build community organisational capacity
11/ Encourage local self-reliance and project management
12/ Be a means of gaining insight into political and social ideas
13/ Facilitate effective public consultation and participation
14/ Facilitate the development of partnership
15/ Strengthen community cooperation and networking
17/ Improve perceptions of marginalised groups
18/ Allow people to explore their values, meanings and dreams
19/ Transform the responsiveness of public service organisations
20/ Provide a unique and deep source of enjoyment

While it would be redundant to repeat every one of those potential benefits here, it is remarkable to note that they cover a significant range, with fields as diverse as health and education being referred to. The insert box contains a notable selection of benefits listed in the final report of the research project.[12]

While we have clearly stated previously that the "arts" can no longer be simply considered as synonymous with the entirety of cultural action or the cultural field and while it is most certainly beyond the scope of this reflection process to analyse the extent to which the fifty potential impacts identified by Matarasso and his colleagues have been achieved by cultural actors in our three target countries, this "wish list" could be considered a first step towards the establishment of indicators for such an in-depth analysis and, therefore, it can serve as an initial point of

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[12] Matarrasso, Francois, 1997, Use or Ornament? The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts, Comedia, Stroud, p.11.

reference for understanding the potential functions and benefits of cultural action for processes of transformation.

The fact that this list is significantly predicated on social impacts, beneficial largely to the individual as a social being in the community notwithstanding, it points out several benefits that can also be understood as relevant to the definition of change (democratisation, modernisation and Europeanisation) preferred in this reflection process. Firstly, it is both difficult and arbitrary to try to separate wholly social impacts from those of a political or economic nature. Such impacts clearly overlap. Some social benefits can have important political and economic consequences. Many of those listed above, if harnessed properly, can have profoundly modernising and democratising effects, reaching far beyond those who participate in cultural actions or the cultural community. This could certainly be said to be the case for benefits relating to community capacity, increasing the political literacy of the citizenry, creating links between public services and the citizens and developing contacts and communication between members of the community would usually not come into contact with each other on issues of relevance to their lives locally, which all have some explicit political dimension, impacting as they do on the political participation and initiative of the individual or the community, empowering them to act in a responsible citizenly manner.

No less importantly, the strong intercultural dimension of cooperation across cultural backgrounds and origins, as well as the development of pride in the common contemporary cultural traditions, that can be created by cultural action are important for the promotion of Europeanisation. The openness of the citizenry to European integration is often motivated by projections of material well-being that European Union accession cannot guarantee in the short term. Further, claims that some countries are inherently "European" as justification for integration are weak in the face of important differentials in standards of living, access to mobility and other rights. Europeanisation is not only functional or technocratic. It also has to be felt. Cultural projects are well placed to create conditions for this kind of feeling to develop because of their propensity for dealing with diversity in a positive and respectful manner. While politics and economics have their role to play, the sense of belonging that European integration implies is far from guaranteed by their impacts.

Cultural Action and the "Quality of Life"

While the relationship between cultural action and "quality of life" is a relatively new area of research and few studies have to date been published, it has become popular recently to discuss the potential of cultural action for improving "quality of life", especially in urban centres where social and economic transformation has led to problems of poverty, crime and social degeneration, with all the potentially negative implications for the nature of social life and relations these phenomena may have. Several interesting projects demonstrate the potential relationship between cultural action and improvements in the quality of life of its participants and wider circles of beneficiaries.

The "Living Heritage Project"[13] supported by the King Baudouin Foundation between 2001 and 2005 in four countries of South East Europe is a good example. Through support to some 140 local projects in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Romania, involving a global sum of funding of approximately 2 million euros, the Living Heritage Programme developed a unique approach to community development with tangible results. Its main objective was to nurture innovative practices in strengthening communities in remote rural areas through a creative use of cultural resources. Moving beyond traditional approaches to heritage the project proposed an approach that conceptualised heritage as a form of social capital that may contribute to the improvement of the social environment in local communities. The uniqueness of the approach can be seen in the fact that this programme was more about investing in people than heritage – strengthening community and civil society using cultural heritage as the vehicle.

The final report of the programme, entitled "Living Heritage – Community Development

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[13] www.fondationroibaudouin.org/code/page.cfm?id_page=125&id=837&lang=EN.

through Cultural Resources in South East Europe" lists the following statistics as an anecdotal demonstration of the impact of the programme:

- Between 2001 and 2003, the Living Heritage Programme in Macedonia created temporary work for about 165 people, put on 9 major festivals and established 5 new museums;
- In the first two years of action in Bulgaria, Living Heritage projects involved about 3,200 volunteers and over 50 community celebrations attended by a combined total of 8,800 people;
- The first 14 Living Heritage projects in Bosnia & Herzegovina involved an estimated 900 volunteers, who contributed some 10,500 hours in voluntary work, establishing 10 new dance, music and craft groups, restoring 4 buildings for use as community cultural centres and created 4 new museum exhibitions, and involving 500 children in out of school education. The 30 cultural activities they organised were attended by at least 6,000 people.

On the basis of such results, the initiators and stakeholders of this programme propose that such local heritage projects can produce significant outcomes in areas such as social cohesion, economic growth and civil society development, while responding to the need of communities to value and protect their specific cultural traditions and culture heritage. Among its achievements are the empowerment of a large number of project teams, community facilitators and civil society organisations. It has helped these social actors to durably change their local situations by building up their human, economic and social capital. In so doing, the programme has also contributed to the improvement of the quality of life of those participating and their immediate social relations, creating a "nicer" local environment, developing contacts between people who likely would not meet and interact regularly, developing confidence in the capacity of the community to overcome its own problems and so on. Subjective as evaluations by participants of such actions may be, they indicate the sense of pride and satisfaction that getting involved in local cultural action can create, a good starting point for further improvements to the sense of well-being of citizens where they live and relate to each other socially.

Tempting as it may be, however, one must not get carried away. As many benefits as it clearly may have, cultural action also has its limits. It is extremely difficult to assess the extent to which the "cultural" dimension of the action undertaken is causally responsible for any impacts or changes that may occur, even at the local level. This is especially so when one looks at the relationship that local actions and their impacts have to wider processes of social, economic and political change at the level of a country or a region. One way is to look at how public policy reacts to local demands for change. But, this can be tricky. As demonstrated by one highly specialised and in depth research project undertaken by the Centre for Cultural Policy Research at Glasgow University in Scotland in the United Kingdom in 2006[14], it is far from obvious that a causal link exists between improvements in the quality of life for those participating (and their immediate social circles) and cultural projects. Other factors, and especially economic development, seem to play an equally important role. In addition, the subjective nature of quality of life assessments makes evaluations by beneficiaries of cultural projects an inconclusive, or even unreliable, source of evidence for their impact. At the same time, relevant and objective indicators for qualify of life research have not yet been developed or tested in relevant quantitative and qualitative research. The results of this project, therefore, raise more questions that it has been able to answer and points to the need for more and better research into quality of life issues to be conducted, lest simplistic assumptions be made about the relationship between cultural action and profound change to the nature of life as it is lived in particular contexts.

Lacking in depth and scope as it necessarily does, this report will not propose that there is a causal relationship between change in the sense elaborated above and the work of the cultural actors surveyed in this reflection process. Rather, and as we hope will be demonstrated in the next sections, the results of this working group process can be understood as tentatively corroborating several of the above experiences, even if only anecdotally. It is important to

[14] Susan Galloway, Prof. David Bell, Christine Hamilton and Adrienne Scullion (co-authors), "Quality of Life and Well-Being: Measuring the Benefits of Culture and Sport: Literature Review and Thinkpiece" (source: www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/01/13110743).

acknowledge this for three reasons. First, one cannot assume that the above benefits will be the result of cultural action, but one can aim to achieve change and with effective support, can guide cultural action in that direction. Second, not all of the impacts mentioned above are within the capacity or scope of the cultural actions referred to in our country reports. Nevertheless, it is possible to point to some which have been observed in all countries. Finally, the experiences of related activities as those described above and conducted by other actors, in Europe and even further afield, can provide insights relevant for the development of the proposed three year ECF / GMF partnership in support of cultural actors in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, while at the same time taking into full account the specificities and differences between them.

The above caveats notwithstanding, it is the estimation of this author that on the basis of the above considerations, it is possible to affirm that, in general, participation in culture can

- contribute to the democratic process, through the formation of consensus and common agendas and by engaging individuals and groups in collective reflection, debate and discussion in the public sphere, from which they learn about the democratic process and have the chance to participate in the public sphere;
- foster social cohesion by bringing people from different social, political, religious, ethnic and national backgrounds together, fostering the development of mutual respect and understanding, through contact and discovery of people one would usually not have the opportunity to come into contact with in a positive and empowering environment;
- lead to empowerment by providing individuals, communities and groups with more confidence in their own abilities, creativity and power to make results happen for the mutual benefit of all in the process often leading to concrete educational successes, lasting cooperation between different stakeholders and the creation of sustainable partnerships;
- improve the quality of life of individuals, groups and communities by providing them with opportunities for diversion and entertainment and for social interaction with other people

In a later section of this report, we will present a more detailed treatment of the functions that cultural action has been observed to have for change (in our three-fold understanding) across the three countries subject of our enquiry. In the next section, we present some background information about the social, political and economic situations in each of the three countries and their cultural contexts.

Contemporary Contexts: Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine

As mentioned in the introduction to this report, neighbourhood implies familiarity and relative closeness. Unfortunately, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine are relatively unfamiliar for the majority of other Europeans. Even for many of those active in international and European politics and policy-making, they remain distant and strange. A little background information concerning the social, economic and political contexts that these countries represent is warranted in introduction to the synthetic analysis of the potential of the cultural sphere in each country to be an actor of change. Contextualising processes of change in each of these countries is all the more important taking into account the tendency to treat these three countries as a region, their major differences in political, social, economic and even cultural differences notwithstanding.[15]

Facts and Figures

The Republic of Belarus has a population of approximately 9.9 million and occupies some 208,000 square kilometres of land. As of March 1, 2006, the population of the capital Minsk was estimated at 1,782,500. The official languages in Belarus are Belarusian and Russian. The currency is the Belarusian rouble. 69% of Belarusian citizens live in urban settlements. The population consists of 81.2% Belarusians, 11.4% Russians, and smaller groups of Poles, Ukrainians, Jews and "other ethnicities". Eastern Orthodoxy is the largest religious denomination, followed by Roman Catholics and smaller communities of Protestants, Jews, Muslims and Buddhists.

For its part, the Republic of Moldova is a small, landlocked country located in South-East Europe, between Romania and Ukraine, between the Prut and Nistru rivers. It covers approximately 33.8 thousand km² of territory and has a population of 4,320,490 (estimation, July 2007). Its capital, Chisinau, is home to approximately 780,000 people. The majority of the population is considered "Moldovan". This, however, is a contested term and concept – with many claiming that the Moldovan ethnos is not different from the Romanian ethnos. In addition, other national and ethnic groups live within the borders of the Republic of Moldova – in particular, Ukrainians, Russians, Gagauzians and Bulgarians. There is a small "Romanian" minority, but it is difficult to distinguish these from other Romanian speaking Moldovans. According to public information established based on the 2004 census, 95.5% of Moldovan citizens indicate their religion as Eastern Orthodox Christianity, although affiliation to the Moldovan Orthodox Church subordinated to the Russian Orthodox Church or the Orthodox Church of Bessarabia subordinated to the Romanian Orthodox Church is not possible to distinguish. Other religious groups include traditional and new Protestant faiths, Roman Catholics and a tiny Jewish minority.

Ukraine, on the other hand, is one of the largest countries in Europe, with a land surface of 603,700 kilometres. The Ukrainian population was 47.1 million in mid-2005 and it is estimated

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[15] This section has been developed in reference to several documentary sources including: Council of Europe/ERICarts, "Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe", 8th Edition", 2007; World Bank, Poverty Report on Ukraine, 2003, Summary; Freedom House, Nations in Transit 2006, Moldova and Ukraine; European Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy, ENP Progress Report, Moldova, (COM (2006) 726 final), Brussels, 4 December, 2006; Institute for Development and Social Initiatives (IDIS) Viitorul, Political and Security State Watch: Monthly analytical bulletin on Moldova, Number 1 (June, 2007) and Number 2 (July 2007); and the following websites: www.belta.by/en/bel/culture, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chernobyl_disaster#_note-Chernobyl.info, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moldova, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/print/md.html, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/1102303.stm, http://www.uis.unesco.org/profiles/EN/EDU/countryProfile_en.aspx?coe=8070, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukraine.

that 60% is under the age of 25, representing an enormous human resource. However, the population is both shrinking and ageing rapidly. The majority of the population lives in urban areas. Ukraine is highly diverse, with more than 130 national minorities and religious groups living side-by-side within its borders and benefiting from the rights of Ukrainian citizenship, comprising nearly 21% of the population. With the exception of the dark days of World War II, relations between different cultural groups in Ukraine have traditionally been peaceful.

History

From the late 18th century until its occupation at the beginning of World War I, Belarusian territories were part of the Russian Empire. Belarus was one of the founding members of the Soviet Union in 1922, having known only a very brief period of independent statehood between 1918 and 1919. The Belarusian intelligentsia and what bourgeoisies existed in Belarus were decimated during Stalin's purges, with a significant number being deported to the Gulag during the 1930s. Shortly, thereafter, Belarus was laid waste by the Great Patriotic War (World War II) and approximately 25% of the population was killed. Settled with Soviet citizens from elsewhere in the USSR, Belarus' fortunes improved in the aftermath of the war, becoming one of the most developed Soviet Republics through lightening industrialisation and urbanisation programmes. The late Soviet period was again one of sadness for Belarus. About 60% of the radioactive fallout from the Chernobyl nuclear disaster of April 1986 in Ukraine landed in Belarus.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union on December 8, 1991, paved the way for independent statehood for Belarus (declared on August 25, 1991). Hopes were high that Belarus would quickly transform and develop democracy, the rule of law and a market economy. Yet, Belarus failed to make a sharp break with the past, and the main institutions remained in the hands of former Communist elites, only mildly reformed. The 1994 Constitution created the opportunity for the direct election of the president and significantly increased the powers of that institution. In a surprise victory in the 1994 elections, Alexander Lukashenko, a relative new comer to politics without significant reputation, was elected president. From the very outset, he made it clear that he would not tolerate being contradicted, and under his rule Belarus has become increasingly authoritarian in nature. For this reason, the Lukashenko regime is regularly referred to in the international media as the "last dictatorship in Europe".

For its part, Moldova had a long and complex history of partition, occupation and annexation before becoming an independent nation state on 27 August 1991, with elements of what today is known as the Republic of Moldova having periodically belonged to the Russian Empire, the Habsburg Empire, Romania or having been occupied by the Nazi German Reich and the Soviet Union. Despite Romanian resistance, the Soviet Union conquered and annexed the entire territory of what is today the Republic of Moldova in August 1944. Soviet rule brought about a harsh policy of de-nationalisation and Russification, as well as the almost complete destruction of the local intelligentsia and the rich farming class. The Soviet government began a campaign to promote a new Moldovan ethnic identity, asserting in particular that the Moldovan language was distinct from Romanian. Hence, Moldovan was to be written using the Cyrillic rather than the Latin alphabet, harking back to before 1860, when Moldovan had been written using a variant of Cyrillic by some communities. After the catastrophic famine of 1946-7, which caused the death of close to 300,000 citizens, the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic industrialised rapidly, receiving substantial financial and technical support from the central authorities of the USSR. Despite stirrings among some local intellectuals and students during the 1960s, a strong dissident movement, as known from other parts of the USSR or Poland in the 1970s and 1980s, never emerged in Moldova, where the KGB was successful in using bribery and intimidation to keep Romanian national sentiment under control.

Moldova started to move towards independence in the late 1980s with Glasnost and Perestroika. In August 1989 a language law was passed, adopting the Latin alphabet for Moldovan and declaring it the state language of the Moldovan SSR. This was a significant moment for the rehabilitation of Romanian language culture as one of the most important markers of Moldovan national identity. In 1990, fearing the rise of Romanian nationalism and as a counter measure to the seeming inevitability of unification with Romania proper, Transnistria claimed independence

from Moldova. The situation erupted into a brief armed conflict in 1992. Russian forces intervened backing the separatists and the self-proclaimed, but internationally unrecognised, Transnistrian Moldovan Republic exists to this day as a result of Russia's ongoing troop presence. Under the auspices of the OSCE, a multi-party negotiation process was established including relevant interested parties such as Russia, Ukraine, the European Union and the United States. To date it has not succeeded in regularising the situation of the region to the satisfaction of all parties in the conflict.

During the first ten years of independence, Moldova was governed by coalitions of different parties led by former Communist apparatchiks turned democrats. In the 2001 elections, the Communist Party of Moldova won the majority of seats in the Parliament and appointed Vladimir Voronin as president. His first term in office was characterised by a foreign policy orientation towards Moscow and what has been termed by critics as a re-Sovietisation of Moldova. But, in a dramatic U-turn, the 2005 elections saw Voronin and the Communist Party re-elected on a pro-European integration platform. The government's critics claim that its commitment to European Union accession is largely declarative in nature and that measures are not being taken to ensure the speedy reforms necessary to make membership in the near future realistic and point to the poor record of the incumbent government on human rights protection, especially in the area of freedom of expression, as proof of such unreadiness for European Union integration.

In the wake of the collapse of the Austrian and Russian empires and the Russian Revolution, Ukrainian self-determination became topical, and several attempts at the foundation of a state were made between 1917 and 1920. Ukraine became a founding member of the Soviet Union in 1922. Industrialisation was fast and painful for the Ukrainian population. Stalin's Collectivisation led to widespread famine and in 1932 to 1933. The *Holodomor* (Ukrainian for famine) claimed millions of lives, although the figures for the actual number of deaths vary considerably. During the 1930s, the Ukrainian elite was decimated in Stalin's purges on the pretext of "nationalist deviation" for their espousal of the use of Ukrainian language. World War II was a dark time for Ukraine. Some elements saw the war as an opportunity to achieve statehood and allied themselves with Nazi Germany. On the other hand, Kyiv became famous for its resistance to Hitler's invading forces in 1941, being named a "Hero City" by the Soviets. Nevertheless, the war took its toll. Once home to an enormous Jewish population and several extremely influential Jewish communities (Lviv, Odessa, etc), Ukraine lost approximately half a million Jews to the Holocaust in addition to the millions of other Ukrainians civilians and troops. The immediate post-war period was dominated by reconstruction and further man-made disasters including another devastating famine in 1946-7. Nikita Kruschev, who succeeded Stalin in 1953, was First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Ukrainian SSR from 1938 to 1949. He oversaw the improvement of relations between the central authorities and the Ukrainian SSR and under the thaw of the 1960s several Ukrainians came to prominence for their dissidence. They were nevertheless suppressed. The later Soviet period under Brezhnev was largely uneventful for Ukraine, although it did see the re-intensification of policies of Russification and repression.

With secession from the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine was established as an independent state in the true sense of the term. Unlike many of its neighbours it managed the transition to independence without spiralling into conflict and chaos. Leonid Kravchuk was elected president of the Ukraine on December 1, 1991. His successor, Leonid Kuchma, was elected in 1994 and served for two consecutive terms, leaving office in 2004. From 2000 onwards, Ukraine's governing elite demonstrated obvious authoritarian tendencies and the fundamental freedoms of Ukrainian citizens, in particular their freedoms of association, political conscience and expression, were openly violated. The issue of Leonid Kuchma's succession gave rise to the Orange Revolution, which erupted in November 2004 after the second round of the presidential elections was accompanied by massive manipulations in favour of the candidate of the ruling coalition, then-serving Prime Minister, Victor Yanukovich. Large-scale protests, led by the opposition candidate Victor Yushchenko and organised by Ukrainian civil society, eventually returned democracy to Ukraine, which until then was one of the few surviving authoritarian and non-democratic regimes in Europe along with Belarus. Since then, significant progress has certainly been made in the area of democratic consolidation, as demonstrated by the international

community's verdict on the 2006 parliamentary elections as being both free and fair. This notwithstanding, since the victory of the democratic opposition and the election of president Victor Yushchenko, there has been an almost unending series of political crises (often provoked by revelations of corruption or by infighting in the Orange Coalition), significantly marring and practically bringing to a halt the reform process and political instability has led to elections being held early on a regular basis.

Economy

The actual economic situation of Belarus is somewhat difficult to assess and reliable data are hard to come by in this relation, as most publicly available statistics concerning the economic performance of the country are published by the government in Minsk. In the first place, unlike the case of the other two countries under scrutiny in this reflection process, Moldova and Ukraine, Belarus does not have a privatised liberal market economy. Approximately 80% of Belarus' economy is state owned and run. That makes the majority of Belarus' work force an employee of the state. As one commentator candidly put it "Lukashenko is almost everyone's boss" in Belarus. "Business" has been largely co-opted by the regime, although some business persons have taken the side of the democratic opposition. This, of course, has often has adverse effects on the profitability of their businesses. Despite the fact that Belarus produces little that would be considered competitive on the international market, it does have some basic manufacturing industries, which continue to function thanks to their monopoly in the domestic market, exports to Russia and the command approach to economic planning preferred by the Lukashenko regime. Nevertheless, living standards are remarkably high in Belarus. State employees have been wooed into political passivity by substantial real wage increases every year since 2000. Prices have remained relatively low and, even if people do not have much, they have enough for basic needs and even a few luxuries. Propaganda increases the working population's sense of self-satisfaction. Poland and Lithuania, which recently entered the EU, are portrayed as economies where the working man is exploited for the profit of international fat cats. If the regime in Minsk has succeeded this far in pacifying the population with economic sweeteners, it has been largely because of Russia's policy of tacit economic support to Lukashenko in the form of cheap gas deliveries. But, this situation is slowly but surely changing. It is becoming apparent that Russia's doubling of the gas price in early 2007 and its demands for Belarus to pay back its debt (Summer 2007) have begun to put pressure on the state budget, even if Lukashenko has been able to solicit financial assistance in the form of further loans from other countries. Commentators who regularly visit Minsk point out that the gap between prices and wages is growing and people are beginning to feel the economic pinch. Reform of the economy is most unlikely, as this would loosen the almost total control the regime has over the population. If Lukashenko has remained in power until now it is certainly because of the fear of ordinary Belarusians that any change of government will bring economic shock therapy and immediate disimprovements to their material well-being.[16]

Moldova is the poorest country in Europe with GDP per capita of US $2,500[17] in 2006. While it enjoys a favourable climate and quality farmland, it has no major mineral deposits and as a result, the economy remains largely dependent on agriculture. Society has remained quite rural, despite fast industrialisation during the Soviet period. In 2004, approximately 40% of the population of Moldova was living under the absolute poverty line (US $2.15 (PPP) per day. While GDP growth was steady at 6% every year from 2000 to 2005, this growth was fuelled by consumption by Moldovans who receive remittances from family members working abroad rather than by investment or output. It is estimated that almost 1 million Moldovan citizens work abroad, mostly in Portugal, France, Italy and other countries of the European Union or in Russia. In

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[16] Sheperd, Robin, "The Economy and Democratic Change – The Missing Link?" in Forbrig, Joerg and Demes, Pavol (eds.), Reclaiming Democracy – Civil Society and Electoral Change in Central and Eastern Europe, German Marshall Fund of the United States and Erste Foundation, 2007, pp. 205 – 216.

[17] At the time of writing (mid-September 2007) the following exchange rates were in force (source: www.oanda.com, accessed on 16 September 2007): 1 USD = 0.721 Euro: 1 USD = 2,151.50 BYR, 1 USD = 11.927 MDL, 1 USD = 5.1138 UAH. Note, however, that much of the financial information provided in this report dates to previous years and, therefore, the use of current exchange rates can lead to inaccuracies.

2006, Russia banned the importation of Moldova's wine, one of its only exports, claiming it did not meet international hygiene standards. This, combined with the doubling of the price of Russian gas, has placed considerable stress on the economy, and it remains considerably vulnerable to higher fuel prices, scepticism on the part of foreign investors, the effects of long term frozen conflict and poor weather, as demonstrated in summer 2007 by considerable public concern over Moldova's food security as a result of the unprecedented temperatures Europe experienced and the subsequent drought in Moldova.

Since 2000 Ukraine has registered impressive economic growth, with an annual average between 2000 and 2004 of 7.3%. Sections of oil and gas pipeline run through Ukrainian territory and it is part of an important Eurasian transport corridor. It appears that absolute poverty has been decreasing (according to World Bank World Development Indicators, GDP per capita (PPP) in 2004 was 5,491 USD) and unemployment has been rather stagnant since Ukraine embarked on its programme of economic liberalisation. Nevertheless, important side effects of the transition to the market economy have been the growth of inequality between urban and rural areas, an increase in the poverty gap between the poor agricultural areas of the country and the rapidly growing big city economies and an increase in underemployment, especially in the agricultural sector. Regional inequalities, such as are obvious to observe between the largely urban and industrialised East of the country and the agricultural West, are indicative of the current socio-economic situation of the country.

The Neighbourhood – Regional Relationships and Political Outlook

At the same time as the European Union refers to these three countries as its immediate neighbourhood and as the border of the EU now lies with each, Russia also remains an important player in relation to their political and economic development. And each has a special, if quite distinct, relationship with that country. This relationship has a significant impact on foreign and domestic policy choices and regional cooperation, but also on the chances for modernisation, democratisation and Europeanisation of each of the countries under scrutiny in this reflection process. And, it is determined not just by Kremlin political technologists and their imaginations about Russia's near abroad or continued sphere of influence. The strong social penetration of the Soviet experience in each of the countries concerned and the fact that Russian (whether one likes it or not) continues to be a lingua franca in the majority of the countries of the former Soviet Union are important factors influencing how ordinary people perceive their neighbourhood. This influence is necessarily stronger than that exerted by the European Union, often perceived as far away, impenetrable and discriminatory as a result of its restrictive mobility policies. In the end, a very large proportion of economic migration from these countries ends up in Russia, not in the European Union. They have easier access – visa requirements and language do make a significant difference here. And, many do well financially in Russia, helping to support their extended families at home with not unimportant remittances. If from a political perspective, the influence of Russia is not welcomed, from a social perspective the picture cannot be considered so black and white. Hence, the idea of a "European neighbourhood" is certainly a relative concept.

Although little love is lost between President Putin and his Belarusian counterpart Alexander Lukashenko, both Russia and Belarus have long negotiated the creation of a state union. Despite this, closer integration of the two countries has hardly progressed beyond rhetoric. The citizens of Belarus, quite used to independent statehood by now, seem less and less inclined to consider union with Russia in their interest. While the relations between the two presidents have deteriorated in recent years, the Kremlin continues to both tacitly and actively support the regime in Minsk, with both political and financial resources. Given recent economic developments, Russia's increasing of energy prices and the resulting difficulties in the Belarusian economy and state budget, many observers are looking to 2007/8 as a possible turning point in the stability of the Lukashenko regime. The political opposition struggles hard to survive the difficult circumstances and to retain a degree of unity. Civil society has basically gone underground and continues a non-violent guerrilla war on the regime in an effort to liberate the hearts and minds of the general population from their stupor. Foreign support for democrats in Belarus is considerable but, clearly, the international community is not able to intervene directly and

remove Lukashenko. The consensus, initiative and momentum for democratic change in Belarus will have to come from within, and its advocates will have to succeed in mustering the support of the general population.

The political sphere in Moldova is dominated by several specific issues, most notably the frozen Transnistrian conflict and Russia's influence over Moldovan foreign and domestic policies. Critics, inside and outside the country, also accuse the incumbent government of having a poor human rights record. For example, elections in Moldova have regularly been marred by irregularities, including the arrest and harassment of opposition candidates, disruption of independent media and biased state media coverage of candidates favoured by the incumbent government. Opinions are mixed concerning the outlook. Economic reform has been slowed by the political promises of the current government to maintain economic control and by endemic corruption. However, progress reports on the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy indicate that progress is being made in the eradication of corruption and that despite the slow pace of initial reforms, it seems to be picking up. Such optimistic indications, notwithstanding, the political vacillation of President Voronin between Moscow and Brussels remains an important factor influencing the speed of reform and Moldova's chances of European Union accession seem fairly slim at this point.

The victory of the Party of Regions in the parliamentary elections in Ukraine in March 2006, and the nomination of Victor Yanukovitch to the position of Prime Minister is both an indication of the disappointment of a large part of the population with the ongoing political instability and its disillusion with the former-opposition leadership and of the fragility of the political consensus in favour of a West-oriented liberal democratic Ukraine. The growing power that Russia's petro-income accords the country, the Kremlin's regular use of gas price rises for what most neighbours fear are ulterior political motives and the Russia-leaning foreign policy preference of Yanukovitch and the Party of Regions only intensifies the sense of instability that surrounds the country presently. Post-revolutionary state and society face new challenges of democratic governance and of growing socio-economic inequality. Dependency on Russia for gas and, therefore, its expectation that Ukraine will support Russia's current government, sit uncomfortably with Ukrainian aspirations to join NATO and the European Union.

The above also implies that Russia forms part of the European Union's neighbourhood, and the extension of relations between these three countries and that institution through the European Neighbourhood Policy, bi-lateral arrangements or policies, means being aware of Russia's concerns and interests and how it perceives its relationship with the European Union. The more assertive (even aggressive) stance Russia has taken of late on the European and global political stage indicates clearly Russia's wish to have a privileged relationship with the European Union. It most definitely is not interested in being part of the ENP. In the cultural sphere, a relatively new area of engagement for the European Union, but one growing importance since the May 10 2007 announcement of a new European Union strategy for culture[18], this plays out in interesting ways. Seven million euros have been allocated by the RELEX family for cultural cooperation with Russia. On the insistence of the European Commission, and despite the disapproval of the Russian government, civil society in Russia has to be consulted on the way in which the programme that this money will finance will be developed and a conference will be convened in 2008 for this purpose.[19]

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[18] The full text of the communication along with other background documents to the European Union strategy for culture can be accessed on the following website: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/communication/comm_en.html.

[19] Exchange of views with Vladimir Sucha, Director Culture and Communication at the Directorate General Education and Culture of the European Commission held on the 19th of September 2007 in Bratislava Slovakia on the occasion of the Meeting with Donors and Partners in round up of the reflection phase of the ECF / GMF East European Reflection Group (EE RG), Cultural Actors of Change in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine.

Culture

Language and identity are important issues of public debate in all three countries. In Belarus, the Belarusian language is subordinated to Russian and because prominent members of the democratic opposition and certain civic groups see its use as a marker of resistance, speaking, singing or writing in Belarusian has come to be associated with subversion of the regime. In Moldova, competing visions of nation and state have led to an almost absurd situation, whereby the daco-Romanian commonly used throughout history on the territory of Moldova and which is from a linguistic point of view largely considered identical to Romanian, is called by a different name (Moldovan) and in the opinion of some, should be written in Cyrillic script. Being on one side or the other of the Moldovan / Romanian language divide is also a marker for important political cleavages in Moldovan society, notably between pro-reform and pro-West elements and pro-communist and pro-Russian of the political elite. The frozen Transnistrian conflict also has some of its roots in this linguistic vortex. To complicate the matter even more, Russian remains an important lingua franca in administration and politics in Moldova and Romanian / Moldovan (whatever one prefers to call it), even though it is the official language, has not been mainstreamed. In Ukraine, there is a strong linguistic cleavage between different regions of the country. In the West, people continued to speak Ukrainian even during the Soviet Period and a large part of the population maintained a certain fluency in its use. In Central and Eastern Ukraine, the use of Russian was more widespread, even at the advent of the Soviet Union, and gained ground as a result of active Russification policies. This cleavage has a political equivalent, with those favouring NATO and EU integration and the pro-reform (Orange) course for Ukraine being concentrated in Kyiv and other Western Ukrainian cities and preferring to speak Ukrainian. The conservative, neo-Communist and pro-Russia (Blue) camp, concentrated in the industrial east of Ukraine, have tended to prefer Russian language.

There has been a tendency over recent years for the language / identity issue to dominate all political debates concerning culture in these three countries. If and when culture is discussed in the public sphere it is more often than not discussed in terms of national culture, whether or not the "national" language is given enough importance and if not how to ensure that. It is undoubtedly an emotional issue for many people and not always scrupulous political elites have made significant populist use of this issue to gain the support of undecided or uninterested voters. The debates taking place inside the cultural communities in each of these countries have, necessarily due to the involvement of specialists, been more diverse and sophisticated, centring on manifold issues, some related and some unrelated to ideas about national culture, national identity and national statehood. Interestingly, in the experience of this author, if they do discuss such issues, it tends to be in a much more inclusive and "modern" or more accurately "post-modern" manner than in the public political sphere.

The country reports outline in more detail the specifics of the situation of the cultural sphere and of cultural policy development in each of the countries. The situation of the cultural sector in each country is certainly unique and some differences in the situations of the cultural sector between the countries are striking. The choice of the small but influential contemporary and alternative cultural scene to ally itself to the democratic opposition and to work actively through their cultural production for the regime, puts the alternative culture sector in Belarus in a very specific and precarious position, not unlike that of the dissidents of Central and Eastern Europe of the 1970s and 1980s. In this context, it is impossible to speak about modernisation and Europeanisation before the achievement of democratisation, whether through culture or otherwise. In Moldova, the situation of the culture sphere is significantly influenced by the deep rooted identity issues surrounding language, and its capacity for divisiveness. The clientilism of the current government, as attested to by its tendency to support some cultural actors but not others, is also an important distinguishing factor, leading to the exclusion and isolation of many artists for their non-alignment with the current cultural priorities of the ruling coalition. In Ukraine, political infighting and instability of the post-Orange revolution phase, has caused significant fragmentation and unhealthy competition in the civic and political sectors, including culture. This has led to a certain kind of paralysis in cultural policy development, as the Ukrainian cultural scene has to date been unable to overcome its internal divisions to achieve effective advocacy in front of the lack of action on the part of the governmental authorities responsible

for culture. The regular changes of government that ongoing political instability has led to, have also contributed to this paralysis.

The uniqueness of each specific context, notwithstanding, it is possible to discern some common tendencies in the challenges and difficulties experienced by the culture sectors across the three countries, especially if one takes into account the capacity of the culture sector for contributing positively to change. According to the information collected during this reflection process, it has been possible to observe five common, critical and interlinked weaknesses of the cultural sector in the three countries, as follows:

Economic viability and sustainability

Cultural industries and contemporary independent or alternative cultural formations in all three countries are chronically under-resourced, often existing at the margins of survival, using once off project funding and personal resources simply to be able to continue to produce. There is little indigenous private investment. That which comes from abroad, mostly Russia, is viewed with significant suspicion, and is even openly accused on cultural colonialism and lowering quality standards, and the government is not in a position to cover the cost of anything other than the most basic tasks of a cultural policy (securing the cultural heritage of the country from degradation and eventual destruction). The financial resources that cultural producers and other actors involved in the independent sector dispose of usually come from international donors with culture specific programmes or who are interested in the usefulness of cultural projects for other objectives, especially social or humanitarian. Consumers do not yet dispose of the necessary wealth to be able to afford luxuries including cultural products, and even if they did, they are often not aware or not interested in contemporary artistic production. All this to say that the economic viability and sustainability of the independent cultural sectors in three countries is extremely weak and will have to be significantly strengthened in order to have anything more than marginal impact in terms of change.

Monopolistic attitude on the part of the governmental authorities responsible for culture

It seems to be a common assumption of elected representatives and the officials that are charged with implementing their policies that once elected, even with a majority acquired on low voter turnout, that it is their right to do what they have set out to do in their election manifesto and without significant consultation or discussion beyond the walls of the ministry concerned. This is by no means an exclusively Eastern European phenomenon, nor does it have to be a feature of transition, but the culture spheres in each of the three countries concerned by this enquiry suffer from it. The benefits of good governance, inclusive policy making and transparency of government action notwithstanding, the authorities responsible for culture in the three countries are not inclined to involve the independent culture sector or to support it. This has implications for the financial survival and viability of contemporary artistic production and cultural industries. This also has consequences for the relevance of policy making and the effectiveness of its implementation, something of which all partners met during the consultation meetings were highly critical. The need for more profound debates on the raison d'etre of public administration and the competence of public officials notwithstanding, the public authorities responsible for culture in each of the three countries need to be challenged to reassess their attitude to the independent culture sectors. Whatever their reasons for fearing the inclusion of the independent sector, the benefits of cooperation over exclusion have to become apparent, before significant reform in the culture sector will be viable and before the culture sector will be strong enough to take a lead in wider societal transformation processes.

Brain-drain and the foreign purchase of artistic talent

Of significant importance to the capacity of the cultural sector in each of the three countries to contribute positively to change are its human resources. For many reasons, but especially because of the economic precarity that the choice of becoming a culture producer or professional in the independent culture sector entails, young artistic talent in the countries concerned by this enquiry is literally being bought out of the culture market before they have even had the chance to

establish themselves. The lack of private and public investment in cultural innovation and development, clearly has something to do with this. But, it is also significantly determined by the larger neighbouring culture market which Russia represents. There are several reasons for that. The first is ease of access. Many young talented people, whether creators or managers, communicate freely in Russian or could learn to without difficulty and obtaining a visa to work in Russia is not difficult, especially if one has a wealthy sponsor. The second is opportunity. Young artists, in particular, have difficulty to access opportunities to exercise their profession, to be successful, because local art markets and cultural industries are weak. In Russia, young artists and cultural managers have more opportunities to exhibit, perform and work in their branch. The third, is financial reward. In addition, to more opportunity, a larger art market and more developed cultural industries have the potential to be more financially rewarding for ambitious young self-starters. The Russian environment, economic and cultural, is awash with capital. Finding a sponsor or accessing capital to start a business is far easier than in the home market. For a Russian business person to bankroll large scale cultural events, exhibitions and media productions is often a drop in the ocean of their wealth. The opportunity to be involved in a well resourced project can be the launch pad for a new artistic career. Finally, once in Russia, and once established, it is difficult for those who have left to go back home. More often than not that would mean to leave behind relative affluence and a career that is on the up and up. Of course, Russia is not the only destination for ambitious young members of the cultural community who want to make their way in life and work, but it is destination number one, at least for the moment, considering that some other countries (for example, in the European Union) are less open to immigrants from the Eastern neighbourhood, whatever their profession. Clearly, this kind of brain-drain is not without its negative consequences for the capacity of the cultural sectors in the countries concerned by this enquiry to contribute actively to change. Many of the young artistically talented people who could take initiatives to change something in their country and in particular in the culture sector are living and working elsewhere and cannot be engaged actively at home. The natural avant garde in the cultural community is poached before it has the chance to grow into its role as an agent of change.

Weakness of cultural policy implementation

For more reasons than just financial, actual implementation of cultural policy in each of the countries demonstrates relative weakness. Years of neglect, structural degradation, little or no investment in human resource development, low priority on the reform list and general political instability have all contributed to the fact that, even in cases where a cultural policy has been elaborated, the capacity for implementation of the public authorities responsible for culture has been reduced. Of course, this is not a problem exclusive to these countries or even to the cultural sector in these and other transition countries. The extent to which governmental authorities responsible for culture came under criticism for what is perceived by the independent sector to be their inability to implement even the stated objectives of cultural policy, let alone to engage in innovation or developmental activities was, nevertheless, striking. The extent to which this criticism is more than just the result of the polarisation of the field and attendant animosities between groups with different positions, mandates and stakes, and therefore, valid, is very difficult to assess. Nevertheless, the superficial impression is that capacity, political will and even competence in the ministries concerned are often limited.

Lack of consensus and advocacy

For their part, the independent cultural sectors in the countries concerned do not escape unscathed. It became apparent that a generalised problem within the independent sector in each of the countries is the lack of internal consensus required for effective advocacy efforts, especially towards governmental actors, of whom the independent sector is so scathingly critical. The competition outlined above is of course one of the reasons for this, mitigating against inclusive consensus building processes about the role and raison d'etre of cultural policy. But, some organisations have tried to establish representative platforms through which cultural actors could work together towards common objectives. These have tended to peter out relatively quickly. Heretical as it may sound, this author would venture to suggest that it this is also a result of donor policy. The absolute refusal of most donors to work with institutional funding

approaches keeps many NGOs in a state of insecurity that limits their long term visioning ability and, in practical terms, advocacy potential. Project funding is, of course, important and nobody supports the creation of further donor dependency, but without realistic prospects for sustainable continuation, even the best projects will be discontinued when the money runs out and the specialised expertise developed within them will be lost to business or other fields, where people can make a living.

International cultural cooperation and European cultural policy frameworks

While it has been noted that the integration of cultural operators from this lesser known neighbourhood of the European Union is not as developed as it should be, and European institutions cannot necessarily claim to be a daily presence in the work of the cultural operators we surveyed, European institutions have consistently played a significant role in the development of cultural cooperation in the wider Europe, both for its own value and for the strong contribution it can make to processes of Europeanisation and European Union integration.

UNESCO is the only United Nations agency with a mandate to work in the field of culture and has since its establishment has acted as a laboratory of concerning appropriate cultural policies and strategies, a clearing house for collecting and disseminating information, knowledge and best practice in the field of culture and as a standard setter for genuine international cultural cooperation. Since the 1990s, and in recognition of the acceleration of processes of globalisation, UNESCO has taken a keen interest in issues related to cultural diversity and the challenges it poses to states, adopting the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity in 2001.[20]

The 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions is one of the legal instruments UNESCO has at its disposal for supporting the "protection" of cultural diversity in its member states. In principle, by the obligations it imposes on its signatory parties, it binds parties to safeguard specific cultural rights, related to the maintenance of the diversity of cultural expressions within the parties' borders. At the same time, it acknowledges the primacy of fundamental human rights, such as freedom of expression, and requires any action undertaken to safeguard the diversity of cultural expressions to consider this. At the same time, the convention considers the civil society sector as a key partner in action to safeguard the diversity of cultural expressions.[21] It is noteworthy that Belarus, notorious for censorship and its persecution of independent cultural operators, has ratified the convention. Moldova, lately criticised for its poor record on media freedom, has also ratified this convention. At least in theory, this instrument can provide additional justification to those who seek to protect fundamental human rights in situations of non-democracy – in theory, because the Convention's mechanisms of enforcement are weak. To date, Ukraine has not ratified the convention and, therefore, it is not in application in that country.

The Council of Europe is the oldest institution of European cooperation and from its very inception was given a mandate by its member states to engage in cultural cooperation, that being perceived as a key instrument for fulfilling its fundamental aims of promoting peace and pluralist democracy, human rights and the rule of law on the European continent. In fact, its most fundamental document along with the European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights is the European Cultural Convention, which prospective members of the Council of Europe have to sign and ratify before being allowed to accede. If in the early days, culture was largely viewed as synonymous with art, the Council of Europe's approach to working with culture has changed significantly in the last fifteen years, broadening in scope to recognise the important role that culture plays for social cohesion, democratic development and even economic growth. Over

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[20] The full text of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity can be accessed at the following website: http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=19742&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

[21] UNESCO, Ten Keys to the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (CLT/CEI/DCE/2007/PI/32). More information and access to the full text of the Convention is available at the following website: http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=31038&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.

the years this has been reflected in its activities to support the capacity of government and civil society, especially in new member states (which since 1990 have mainly been the former state-Socialist countries of Eastern and South Eastern Europe and the Caucasus), to develop and implement cultural policies that respect agreed European standards. Its latest large scale initiative in the field of cultural cooperation, entitled the Kyiv Initiative, promotes democratic development through culture in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine is based on the experience of the project "Support for Transition in the Arts and Culture in Greater Europe" (STAGE) and the "Regional Programme for Cultural and Natural Heritage" for the South Caucasus region (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia). It was launched in September 2005 during the 5th (enlarged) Ministerial Colloquy of the countries participating in the STAGE Project.

The aim of the Kyiv Initiative is to promote the development of cultural policies and strategies for the reinforcement of democracy, intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity in the region addressed. Actions to be carried out within the framework of the initiative will seek to: a. promote the human dimension of society by means of maintaining the core values of culture, democratising present-day public life, and emphasising the role of culture in the development of society; and b. ensure a wide engagement in programme initiatives to promote intercultural learning and dialogue, tolerance and respect for other nations and to grant young people access to the common values of European society.[22]

Until very recently, and rather surprisingly if considering the breadth of competence now in the hands of that European institution, the European Union has had a relatively weak mandate to work in the field of cultural cooperation. If successive European treaties (Maastricht, Nice) extended the competence of the Union to engage in policy areas beyond trade and the economy such as education, culture was rather a neglected field. Nevertheless, concern about the identification of citizens with the European Union, about social tensions between groups from different cultural backgrounds in urban settings and about terrorism and security have put culture squarely on the agenda.

On May 10 2007, the European Commission adopted a policy statement on the role of culture in the globalising world.[23] This communication affirms the central role of culture in the process of European integration and proposes a new cultural agenda for the European Union and for its relations with third countries. This policy statement presents three major objectives including the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, the promotion of culture as a catalyst for creativity in the framework of the Lisbon strategy and the promotion of culture as a vital element in the Union's international relations. Together form a cultural strategy for the European Union's institutions and the member states in the cultural and creative sector.

This statement represents a historical political moment for the culture sector and a window of opportunity for cultural cooperation with neighbouring countries to the East of the EU's borders. It is the very first consistent statement on cultural policy by the European Union and has the support of several important Commissioners (responsible not just for culture, but also development, foreign relations, enlargement), the Commission's President, Jose Manuel Baroso and several influential member states. While it remains to be adopted by the member states, and there has been some resistance from certain elements of the public administrations, those responsible for culture in the European Commission have high hopes that it will enlarge their scope of action and enhance their access to cultural operators in the target countries of this partnership.

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[22] For further information concerning the Kyiv initiative please consult the following website: https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1010005&BackColorInternet=DBDCF2&BackColorIntranet=FDC 864&BackColorLogged=FDC864.

[23] More information about the new EU strategy for Culture can be found at the following website: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/communication/comm_en.html.

It is clear that the success of its implementation will also be dependent on partnership with civil society actors.[24] There are many good arguments in favour of member states adopted the strategy. On the occasion of its announcement, the President of the Commission said

"Culture and creativity both touch the daily lives of citizens. They are important drivers for personal development, social cohesion and economic growth. But, they mean much more: they are the core elements of a European project based on common values and a common heritage – which, at the same time, recognises and respects diversity."[25]

Further, and cynical as it might sound, cultural cooperation is not expensive, but has been proven to bear fruits for social and even economic development. Not unimportantly, it is not about EU membership per se, but acknowledges the sense of belonging these countries feel towards Europe. This could serve to reduce the tension with which discussions of the European integration of these countries play out. And, even if such benefits are difficult to measure, culture is recognised as having a positive social impact, increasingly bringing it to the fore of security debates, social inclusion / cohesion and civil society agendas (c.f. migration, etc).

Nevertheless, there are several important challenges remain to be addressed in relation to the opportunities for cultural cooperation with and around the three countries concerned by this analysis. It must be acknowledged that the EU has difficulty to communicate with the three countries concerned in a coherent and non-intimidating manner, not least because of the thorny issues of EU membership for Moldova and Ukraine and how to effectively deal with the regime in Belarus. It must be acknowledged that to date the European Neighbourhood Policy, the primary instrument of bi-lateral cooperation between the EU and Moldova and Ukraine, has no cultural component, although awareness for the need to rectify this is growing within the Union. It must be acknowledged that the new member states, which would certainly have a special role to play in facilitating cooperation with their neighbourhood as a result of their own experiences of success and failure in transition, are not very much aware of the cultural component to bi-lateral or regional cooperation and the "window of opportunity" that this political momentum presents. And finally must be acknowledged that on the practical level, it is extremely difficult for cultural operators anywhere, let alone in these isolated and inexperienced countries, to use European Union support programmes, even if they are eligible to do so. Making relationships with the European Union real for cultural operators functioning at the grass roots level in these countries will mean to work through intermediaries – difficult for a bureaucratic structure such as the European Commission and fraught with complications, especially in terms of who can be considered a legitimate partners for implementation of EU programmes (independent or governmental partners, etc).

All the above developments serve to move culture from position of ornament to the position of instrument for change in European policy agendas, beyond the specifics of cultural policy. This "window of opportunity" is an important moment for profiling the needs of cultural actors of change in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine and could be of significant importance to the effectiveness of the ECF / GMF partnership, enlarged with support from other donors and partners active in relation to the three countries.

Conclusion

While the observer of these countries would not be wrong to cite proximity of geography and a similar course of political and social history since the mid 19th century as valid reasons for treating Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine as a 'region', the contemporary post-Soviet and independent phase of their development demonstrates their significant differences. Whether it be the fact that if speaking about transition one has to acknowledge that Belarus has made the

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[24] Exchange of views with Vladimir Sucha, Director Culture and Communication at the Directorate General Education and Culture of the European Commission held on the 19th of September 2007 in Bratislava Slovakia on the occasion of the Meeting with Donors and Partners in round up of the reflection phase of the ECF / GMF East European Reflection Group (EE RG), Cultural Actors of Change in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine.

[25] European Commission Press Release (IP/07/646), "First-ever European strategy for culture: contributing to economic growth and intercultural understanding", Brussels, May 10 2007.

transition from one form of authoritarianism to another, rather than to democracy as in the case of Ukraine and Moldova or that the full consolidation of democracy in Moldova is less than guaranteed, especially in the areas of fundamental political rights, such as freedom of the media and expression, the socio-political context that is Belarus, Moldova or Ukraine has become sufficiently differentiated to require differentiated action in support of cultural actors of change. It is indicative that, as one of the participants of the consultation meeting with Moldovan cultural actors candidly put it when asked if Moldovans consider themselves Balkan, geo-politically constructed references such as 'Balkan' or 'former-Soviet' are convenient labels at particular moments and Moldovans have a tendency to use them on a 'needs' basis. It is certainly not unrealistic to assume that Moldovans are not the only ones.

Of course, many effective and worthwhile programmes have been developed with the 'region' of Eastern Europe in mind and the culture sectors in each of the three countries have benefited considerably from such. Umbrella programmes with common guiding principles and objectives across countries have already proven their worth in more than just the cultural field. Nevertheless, it is the strong conviction of this author based on the results of this reflection process that any programme of support for cultural actors of change in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine must focus on the very specific challenges and weaknesses of each particular culture sector in relation to its capacity for supporting change at home. Concrete actions and support measures may be contextualised in wider cross-country and longer-term objectives such as those of the reflection process itself, but those actions need to be developed on the basis of evidence of a specific need and should be determined by consensuses reached at the local level where the actions are expected to have their impact.

Culture and Change in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine

Our brief survey of cultural actors in the three countries has revealed several concrete ways in which culture has beneficial effects for each society in terms of its democratisation, modernisation and Europeanisation. This section will attempt to sum up the benefits observed in the concrete contexts described by those involved in the reflection process from the countries in a synthetic manner and to provide examples of how each makes a contribution to transformation in the three countries under consideration. These considerations and examples have been drawn directly from the situation assessments presented in the three country specific reports and, therefore, more in depth descriptions of the functions of culture and of the contributions of each of the cultural communities can be found in the annex to the present report. Suffice it to say that even if there are many other potential benefits that culture could have for society in the three countries and in general, each of those mentioned below can be understood to already be visible to some extent or degree in all three countries studied or having potential to develop.

Free Theatre, Minsk, Belarus

Free Theatre (http://dramaturg.org/?lang=en) was founded in March 2005 by Belarusian playwright Nikolai Khalezhin and theatre manager Natalia Koliada. In May 2005 the team was joined by stage director Vladimir Scherban, who has produced the majority of the performances of Free Theatre. "Free Theatre" activities include the implementation of master-classes by leading theatre figures from Europe, the USA and Russia for young Belarusian playwrights and scenarists; organising the International Contest of modern dramaturgy "Free Theatre" and publishing an almanac of plays; underground performances of prohibited Belarusian and modern European and American plays with the aim of breaking the ideological stronghold the dictatorial regime has on the population; public readings of Belarusian plays in Belarus and abroad at leading European theatre festivals; publishing a collection of Contemporary Belarusian Dramaturgy; translating plays by young Belarusian playwrights into foreign languages.

In the first 2 years of activity, Free Theatre has produced seven performances of thirteen plays, with an approximate audience of 5000 persons. Under the current political regime in place in Belarus, Free Theatre is unable to obtain official registration, premises or facilities. Performances and rehearsals are held free of charge to the public in secret, in private apartments and other inconspicuous locations. Free Theatre occasionally performs in the open air in the woods. In addition, some 4000 persons have attended Free Theatre performances abroad. Currently ten professional actors, four managers and two technical assistants constitute the theatre's staff. Members of staff have been repeatedly harassed by the authorities. Most of them were working in state run theatres prior to the their engagement in opposition to the regime and were promptly sacked and they are regularly arrested and imprisoned for shorter or longer periods on trumped up charges. Free theatre cooperates with other members of the underground cultural community in Belarus from the fields of music, art, photography and cinematography. Free Theatre is host to the International Competition of Contemporary Drama and has gained international acclaim as a result of its touring activity. It has received endorsements from several famous figures from the theatre world, including Vaclav Havel and Sir Tom Stoppard. It has been a member of the European Theatre Convention since April 2007.

Creation and re-creation of a public sphere

In each of the three countries, the independent cultural sector plays an important role in creating and re-creating a functioning, open and transparent public sphere, in which those citizens that wish to have a role beyond periodical voting, have the opportunity to participate. This is an ongoing process of communication, with the public (no matter how small the audience) through which critical debate on the socio-political realities of the country is opened up.

However, to speak about a "public sphere" is more or less complicated considering a specific context. The political climate and situation of the consolidation of democracy in each country is essential to the existence of a functioning public sphere, whose role is to articulate in a peaceful manner all the competing and potentially clashing interests and concerns of the citizens. Unfortunately, even in many long established democracies, the public sphere is dominated by those holding political and media power, and does not fulfil this essential role for the health of the society and polity

adequately. But, in these three countries one can observe some peculiarities concerning the role of culture in the development of a public sphere. A public sphere as considered crucial to the functioning of a democracy, does not exist in Belarus and is relatively recently established in Ukraine and Moldova.

In Belarus, official culture and state ideology are the public sphere, they colonise and essentially pervert it, given that a public sphere is supposed to be the space where the citizens have the chance to express their concerns and interests and there is no space for opinions that do not conform. Hence, if a public sphere exists at all, it exists as a result of the survival of pockets of independent and alternative thinking and action – one of these being culture, especially contemporary cultural production. People who come into contact with the counter-culture, as its actors consider their sphere, are exposed to experiences of the functioning of a democratic political culture and to the idea of a public sphere, because they are exposed to open questions of a political and existential nature and because it often shocks them into thinking about the state of their society.

The issue of contemporary economic migration from Moldova was raised at the consultation meeting. It has become not only a subject of debate in journalism but also through theatre and the visual arts. Cultural consumers coming into contact with such production are challenged to think about the way they feel about this contemporary phenomenon and the ways in which it is being dealt with by the government and other responsible authorities, or to re-evaluate their attitude to how it affects members of their family or close acquaintances who have migrated to find work. At the same time as migration itself is changing Moldovan society, the cultural sphere is changing the way people think about it and articulate that to relevant authorities. In the political climate that reigns in Moldova this is an important contribution to democratisation because it works in favour of free and diverse media (also in terms of the language of communication) and control of state action by the citizenry.

> **Belarusian Language Journalism in Belarus**
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> *pARTisan*
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> The cultural criticism magazine *pARTisan*, published by Arthur Klinau, has only a small, and admittedly, highly specialised readership, but it tackles important social and political debates from the perspective of the artistic community and tries to explore the response that the artistic community could potentially have to these. It is a vehicle for both the expression of opposition and the debate of contemporary socio-cultural issues that are fundamental to the success of change and transformation in Belarus. In the sense that is raises these issues and opens them up for a broader debate, it has a civic educational function, even if only for a small elite within the counter-cultural community. At the same time it provides an important platform for reflexive debate among cultural producers concerning their role in relation to change in Belarus and the post-Lukashenko direction the country and its cultural sector should take. In a recent interview with Artur Klinau in Eurozine (www.eurozine.com) he speaks about the inherently partisan nature of the Belarusian culture historically and today. In the political context of dictatorship that currently exists in Belarus this is an interesting proposition, as the metaphor of culture as guerrilla waging a just and non-violent war on a criminal regime may be motivating to more than just the already "converted".

Since the Orange revolution, Ukraine has improved its record on freedom of the media and transparency. Nevertheless, the public sphere is dominated by political figures and their multi-millionaire friends and by scandals and political back-bighting. The legacy of the Orange revolution, and the role that culture played in it, is important in this respect. In that context, culture was instrumental in providing space for debate on the direction the country should take and for interest mediation. In the new post-Orange revolution context, and especially at the local level, culture actors are well positioned to initiate and require other actors to engage in discussions about quality of life issues. This is a step in the direction of re-establishing the public sphere as the space for citizen participation, rather than as a place for scandals and recrimination to play out, as has recently been the case.

Identity formation

In exploring themes of history, ethnic origin, geo-political orientation and other existential issues through art and cultural production, the cultural community is contributing to the ongoing process of identity formation in their respective countries. In so doing in a variety of forms and using a variety of entry points, the cultural community supports the development of an open, dynamic and variable – possibly even a post-Modern – understanding of cultural belonging, one which is close to that espoused in the context of European integration and that takes into account the multitude of ways that an individual and a society as the sum of its individuals and communities would like to identify themselves.

Nevertheless, in all three countries, ideas about belated nationhood abound, including in the cultural community, and with them, highly static understandings of national culture. This is certainly most visible in the fact that the status of the "national" language, for itself and in comparison to the status of Russian, remains so high on the agenda of any discussions about identity or statehood. In Belarus, Belarusian language is actively discriminated against by the authorities in favour of Russian. The primacy of Russian over Belarusian is a tenet of state ideology and active use of Belarusian language in the public sphere has come to be associated with opposition to the regime. At the same time, many of those opposing the regime do so precisely because they feel Belarusian national identity and state independence are threatened by the current treatment of the Belarusian language. The problem of language is not dissimilar in Moldova, although it has led to civil unrest in that country and is one of the intractable issues at the origin of the Transnistrian conflict. The language issue in Moldova demonstrates a deep seated disagreement among Moldovans concerning their sense of identity as ethnic Romanians or as distinct. The attitude of the current government, which critics complain discriminates against Romanian and the Romanian language cultural community, has caused animosity and tension. In Ukraine, which is linguistically more equally divided than the other two countries, with Russian and Ukrainian speakers tending to be concentrated in discrete geographical areas, the tension is visible in the political sphere, in particular when thinking about state building. Those espousing Ukrainian national independence are often the more West and Europe leaning. They speak Ukrainian and see the ongoing use of Russian in many "official" contexts as an affront to their national pride. Those who espouse the idea of Ukraine as a natural partner to Russia, tend to be anti-NATO and can even be anti-European integration. These speak Russian and see the demands for Russian to be treated differently than Ukrainian language by Ukrainian "nationalists" as impractical and unjust. There is a degree of militancy in Ukraine surrounding the language issue.

In some way, in each of the countries, the independent culture sector is dealing with issues of language and identity. Some elements do so in a more or less progressive or confrontational manner. No matter the approach, they all ask audiences to think twice about their basic identity assumptions. In all three, this links to the question of Europeanisation. If "Who are we?" is the

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Romanian Language Journalism in Moldova

Contrafort

Contrafort is a magazine publication of young writers in Moldova in the Romanian language (http://www.contrafort.md/). Launched in October 1994, Contrafort promotes a modern critical thinking taking its lead from innovative tendencies in contemporary literature. One of the most important priorities of Contrafort is the moral advancement of society, the awakening of civic spirit and the implantation of the principles of the open society among its readership. The magazine constitutes a space for dialogue between the various aesthetic tendencies and orientations developing in the Republic of Moldova, debating topics of major importance, such as (among others) the post-modern paradigm, multicultural society, European identity, East-West cultural interference, critical revision of literature written under communism, the relations between artists and power and the information revolution. Contrafort has a typical magazine profile, including articles on various topics and reviews of contemporary books, theatre, film, music and plastic arts. One of the programmed objectives of the magazine is to promote dialogue with other cultural regions of the world. Thus, Contrafort has published special editions, covering cultural phenomena developing in other countries such as Germany, Mexico, the United States, Czech Republic, France, Russia, Hungary, Estonia and Romania.

very first question asked, then the second is often "How European are we?". And even if many of the debates are not always very progressive (and sometimes can even be very nationalistic and exclusive) in their treatment of issues of language and identity, they do contribute to the continued acceptance of a diversity of approaches to the issue of cultural identity. This is an inherently modernizing factor.

Education

The independent culture sector offers professional educational opportunities to members of the community. Professionals in the field of culture may benefit from training, capacity building, further professional development or simply the opportunity to keep up to date with latest trends in contemporary culture through activities organised by organisations within the community and from abroad. This is of significant importance given that they usually are unable to access this kind of education in the national education system at home, and in the absence of such educational opportunities, many feel obliged to emigrate to pursue their chosen profession. This is particularly evident in the field of cultural management. Through such educational efforts the cultural sector is contributing to the modernisation and Europeanisation of the culture sector by creating new generations of culture professionals trained in the latest approaches to cultural management and development, and particularly by bringing them into contact with processes of European cooperation in the culture sector.

In addition, and not-unimportantly for the consolidation of democracy in Moldova and Ukraine and for change to democracy in Belarus, the independent culture sector offers a variety of civic educational opportunities to members of the public, notably, to young people and children, through cultural activities that focus on socio-political issues of relevance to the development of the society. The effectiveness of the use of cultural methods and forms (theatre, film, literature, music) for the purposes of civic education has been documented the

Professional Education for Members of the Cultural Community in Ukraine

The Centre of Contemporary Art (http://www.cca.Kyiv.ua) in Kyiv was established by George Soros in 1993 as part of the international Soros Centres of Contemporary Art (SCCA) network. The Centre seeks to encourage the development of an artistic community by enabling artists, art agencies and professionals to undertake their own projects, participate in exhibitions of contemporary art, obtain information and establish local and international contacts. Since February 1999, it has been registered as the Centre of Contemporary Art – an Independent International Charitable Foundation, which is a co-founder of the International Contemporary Art Network Association (ICAN) registered in the Netherlands. The Centre works with existing expressions and significant events of contemporary art and of artistic culture, fosters contacts at the crossroads of traditions, disciplines and technologies and facilitates interaction between the artistic community and the general public. The objective of the Centre is to sow the seeds of change, to be both a catalyst and a participant of change. The Centre works in the fields of exhibitions and presentations, providing space for curators to organize exhibitions of Ukrainian and foreign artists who deal with contemporary issues and to present their art to a broad audience in the Centre's gallery; resource development, fundraising and creating strategic partnerships are the means for the Centre to continue its activity and education and research, developing flexible education models, which create fields of dynamic exchange within the artistic community, between the community and the public at large and build up an audience for contemporary art. One of the main achievements of the Centre since its creation has been the establishment of professional education courses for cultural managers in Ukraine, so that they do not have to go abroad to become qualified in their chosen profession. It is estimated that as a result of the activities of the CCA, Ukraine today has a small but qualified and specialised group of young cultural management professionals that are changing the face of cultural institutions and developing cultural industries.

world over. From "edutainment" through "Theatre of the Oppressed"[26] which focus on the development of attitudes and values rather than educating facts, pedagogical approaches to civic education have consistently relied on cultural methods to bring across messages and facilitate difficult debates in sensitive situations.

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[26] See www.theatreoftheoppressed.org for a full description of this civic educational methodology developed by Augosto Boal.

In the Belarusian context, theatre and music have had particular success in sensitising the public to their civic rights and the importance of citizen control over political processes in the country. Young people have responded with particular enthusiasm to the impromptu guerrilla-like performances of the Belarus Free Theatre and to the social messages contained in popular songs like *Mayo pakalennye* (My Generation) by the group *NRM* (Independent Republic of Dreams). In Moldova, "Europe" was given as an example of the kind of socio-political theme that is treated in this manner. This is an important contribution to raising the level of civic awareness of the citizens from an early age. In the context of the Orange Revolution, civic education campaigns aimed at getting out the vote in the run up to the presidential elections, made significant use of cultural methods to simply get people interested in their right to free and fair elections.

A recent example from Ukraine is the Sir Elton John / anti-AIDS concert that took place in the centre of Kyiv in July 2007. The Pinchuk Foundation arranged for Sir Elton John to perform for one night only in central Kyiv, on a strong anti-AIDS platform. The likelihood that so many spectators would attend an activity aimed at the same kind of awareness raising against AIDS had a super star not been involved and had the concert not been offered free of charge to the public is rather slim. The organisers used the occasion to distribute condoms and spent quite some time before the concert delivering anti-AIDS prevention messages to the crowds that came to the concert. Even if the main interest of the majority of people was not to learn about AIDS prevention, there has been a residual educational effect.

Community development

The cultural community is naturally predisposed to non-governmental organising. In so doing, and as an important sector within civil society, it contributes to the improvement of social relations, developing social cohesion, in other words. On the one hand it provides often atomised urban citizens the chance to participate in forms of collective action which are not necessarily political, but nevertheless, create opportunities for persons with a variety of opinions to discuss issues of importance to them as individuals and to the

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Local Community Development through Cultural Resources in Ukraine

The non-profit, non-governmental organisation "Development Centre 'Democracy through Culture'" was founded in 2000 as an information and analytical centre. The Centre implements various cultural and development projects supported by international organisations and foundations, the Ukrainian Parliament (*Verkhovna Rada*) through its Committee on Culture and Spiritual Heritage, the Ministry for Culture and Tourism of Ukraine and local authorities of Ukraine. Its mission is to contribute to the formulation, implementation and development of modern cultural policy in Ukraine. Its activities include promoting the application of European and global cultural policy principles and approaches in Ukraine, supporting reforms in culture (legislation, funding, administration), producing ideas and developing technologies that improve the cultural and social policy of Ukraine, involving the public in creative activities and decision-making processes concerning culture and other issues of concern, collaboration with the state administration in formulating the state cultural policy on central and local levels and developing international partnership and information and cultural exchange.

One of the Centre's most ambitious projects to date is entitled "Model 21: Cultural Transformers" and is conducted in cooperation with the Swiss Cultural Programme for South-East Europe and Ukraine. Running from January 2006 for a period of 3 years, its mission is to activate, dynamise and democratise five communities through culture and to develop, share and promote models for creative cities and creative rural regions in Ukraine. The project is being implemented in Nizhyn city (Chernihiv region), Pryluky city (Chernihiv region), Reshetylivka district (Poltava region), Kremenchuk district (Poltava region) and Khorol district (Poltava region). It activities include mapping and exploring cultural needs and resources of the given communities, finding and selecting five capable core groups of cultural transformers, providing the core groups with training and coaching so that they can plan, implement and evaluate two or three mini-projects in their communities and developing a network of internal and international partnership between creative communities.

The Centre promotes the results and best practices of this project through a variety of tools including a newsletter, toolkit, CD and video/DVD and using its specially developed web-site on cultural policy issues and local development through cultural resources (http://eng.model21.org.ua/mission).

communities they consider themselves part of and to get in touch with civil society organisations (interest mediation). Further, it provides opportunities for communities who usually do not have the opportunity to meeting to get to know each other (for example, different ethnic, religious, political, geographical groups).

In Belarus, the counter-culture constitutes a community all of its own. It is marginalised and isolated by the actions of the government, working underground. Their common goal changing the political regime in Belarus creates their cohesion and maintains their solidarity. They are like-minded and hope to gain the interest of other like-minded persons by breaking down the fear of political discussion and free expression that pervades the wider public using cultural methods. This is significant as for the timid, but nevertheless curious, among the general public, the counter-culture can act as a bridge to the political opposition, who do not necessarily inspire trust in members of the general public with ease. Someone who does not necessarily agree with the Lukashenko regime, may nevertheless not be willing to go out on the streets and risk their job by becoming active in the political opposition, but they might be willing to explore scenarios for change in a more indirect manner. In the long run, this may lead them to change their voting behaviour. Nevertheless, it is specifically because this community is so wholly identified with wish to change the country that it remains controversial, and to an extent polarising, at least for a certain segment of the population, who value their material comfort over all other things and are risk averse.

In Moldova, the cultural actors who participated in the country consultation meeting see the cultural community as ideally positioned to act as a lead partner in addressing one issue of acute social concern for the country's development and social cohesion – the growing urban – rural divide. The majority of Moldovans live in small rural towns and villages and their quality of life has been diminishing steadily. In this regard, the situation of the "culture houses", which in small towns and villages, were a cultural and community focal point is of particular concern. The rehabilitation of at least some of the culture houses with a revised and modernised mission would provide an important impetus to improving the quality of life of rural and peripheral communities. The cultural community has the specialised knowledge of how cultural work is being done in small local communities and direct access to the communities concerned to be able mobilise their creativity. Nevertheless, the question of how to adequately resource such community development efforts remains a sticking point.

Conflict transformation
The fact that culture is often cited as a reason for conflict, and that cultural differences are regularly intstrumentalised by unscrupulous political leaders to gain support for populist and demagogic goals, notwithstanding, cultural activities have been proven to be effective in re-establishing trust between groups in conflict in other regions, most notably in the former-Yugoslavia and in the Caucasus. This is particularly true of those cultural activities that focus on involving young people and children who are more inclined towards reconciliation than adults.

Moldova, as others in the post-Soviet region, has not escaped civil conflict. The de-facto frozen nature of the Transnistrian conflict is an ongoing obstacle to Moldova's further political, economic and social development. Moldova is, therefore, probably the most obvious of the three countries where culture could play a role in conflict transformation, if given the opportunity. The extent to which reconciliation processes involving the cultural community are currently up and running or even possible, precisely because of the lack of movement on a political solution, is difficult to asses. But, the need for a political process notwithstanding, the cultural community seems to be well placed and has relevant experience and know-how to have a positive influence. It remains to be seen if the political actors responsible for both the conflict and its resolution will allow the cultural community adequate space to place a constructive role in processes of reconciliation and trust-building. The creation of the political will that would legitimate cultural actors getting involved could also be a matter for advocacy by the international community, and especially the European Union which already has a place at the negotiating table.

Political Video Art in Ukraine

An emerging artistic genre gaining in popularity is the area of video art. Several young artists associated to the Centre for Contemporary Art in Kyiv have engaged in the development of experimental video projects centring on political issues and having their own brand of political message. One of the videos resulting from those projects takes an ironic look at the electoral process using a combination of performance art and video techniques. During a real election campaign, the artists simulated the electioneering activities of a political party, putting forward messages concerning cultural rights and the importance of culture as a policy issue as part of a fictitious platform. They actively interacted with others who were engaged in the same kind of electioneering activity (but for "real" political parties) as well as with members of the general public interested in the platforms of the political parties and passers by in the street. The video artist recorded the entire experience and edited a kind satirical "party political broadcast" from the material recorded. This was shown to audiences in the context of CCA Kyiv events and served as a catalyst for discussions of cultural policy issues in some cases.

While neither Belarus nor Ukraine have witnessed violent conflict, socio-political conflict is definitely an issue. In Ukraine, such conflict erupts very visibly onto the public sphere and ordinary people are increasingly aware of it. Corruption scandals, political instability and open in-fighting among political allies stem from a clear absence of consensus among relevant political actors concerning the direction in which the admittedly young Ukrainian democracy should develop (and more worryingly, a seeming lack of will to engage in consensus building). At times, such socio-political conflict has been articulated in regional terms accompanied by quite destructive speculation concerning the territorial integrity of the country. Such populism is more often than not accompanied by cultural justifications which deliberately blur important distinctions between political expedient decisions (too often involving the protection of vested interests) and issues of cultural identity or belonging. In Belarus, socio-political conflict of this nature has to be brought to the people, as it is not permitted to penetrate the public sphere, controlled and dominated as it is by the state. State ideology dictates that all is well in Belarus under Lukashenko's strict, but nevertheless, benevolent leadership. Citizens who feel and know otherwise have to find ways to demonstrate to the rest of the public that the veneer of normality presented on state television is anything but. Cultural organisations and individual artists, especially in the field of contemporary art are addressing issues of socio-political conflict and are challenging the monopoly that state and political actors in both these countries have on such debates. They do not necessarily do this in a systematic manner or in the public eye, not having wide enough audiences for that, often employing guerrilla methods to shock people into thinking about the situation in their country and to take a stand. By engaging in this kind of conflict transformation, they also contribute to the modernisation and democratisation of their countries.

Leisure and entertainment
It should not be forgotten that participation in culture is also motivating for its entertainment value. Life for the majority of the world population is difficult and the social and economic conditions imposed by transition in these countries make them no exception in this respect. Ordinary people also simply enjoy engaging in cultural activities because it provides them with an alternative experience to their daily routines of making a living and providing for their families. At the same time, there may even be residual educational effects for participants of hedonistically conceptualised cultural activities. In providing entertainment and leisure through culture, the cultural community is making an important contribution to the improvement of the quality of life of the citizens of the three countries. Given that ordinary people often do not have a lot of spare money or time for engaging in leisure, they appreciate activities which do not require significant investments on their part in terms of time or money. This also has an educational function for the artistic community, in which the "art for art's sake" attitude was quite common until recently.

In Ukraine, art as entertainment is an emerging field and especially contemporary art is not yet widely appreciated enough to be considered mass entertainment. Nevertheless, highly mediatised contemporary art projects, such as the Pinchuk Gallery in Kyiv, have demonstrated that there is interest among young, upwardly mobile and well to do Ukrainians in contemporary art as a leisure pursuit, a segment of society which is as economic development speeds up. Large scale museum and gallery projects in other cities, such as the harbour gallery in Odessa, are also

growing in popularity. Nevertheless, one's financial capacity does seem to dictate one's ability to consume art as entertainment, even when ordinary people decide they are interested in going to a contemporary art exhibition. In Moldova, most people find it difficult to afford themselves tickets to a show or a movie, so entertainment is limited to that which is broadcast on television or that which can be consumed free of charge. It is noteworthy that in neither Kyiv nor Chisinau did this author come across a clear city initiative to provide cultural activities to ordinary citizens of the nature of a "summer cultural festival", including open air cinema, readings, music and theatre performances, as exist in some other capital cities in Central and Eastern Europe, although it is clear that there would be interest on the part of the ordinary public would such be available. As demonstrated large scale cultural events, such as the Elton John AIDS prevention concert that took place in Kyiv in July 2007, entertainment is a more complex phenomenon than it is credited with being and is well known to have residual educational affects on audiences. Many approaches to civic education and social mobilisation explicitly make use of so called "edutainment" methods. It would probably be going too far to credit mass entertainment with the modernisation of society, especially in countries where public service broadcasting is weak and mass entertainment, especially television, is dominated by commercial and profit making concerns. Nevertheless, it is plausible to argue that would the cultural community have the opportunity to be more involved in decision making concerning the content of publicly broadcast mass entertainment, it could fulfil a more educational function than it does currently.

As concerns the leisure and entertainment function of cultural offers, Belarus does tend to represent something of an exception. The counter-culture is neither pretty nor easy to digest. The visual arts, other related genres and music, all engage in aesthetic conflict – confronting the Soviet and contemporary Lukashenko aesthetic with its own moral bankruptcy with the aim of destroying it in the eyes of its audiences and opening them up to modern and foreign influences from the contemporary art scene. Hence, contemporary art can be quite aggressive – in its imagery, in its message and in its emotional impact. It goes to the heart of the matter, it leaves no space for escape from the hard facts, it shocks. It is probably not always so easy to enjoy. Nonetheless, audiences keep growing. This can be explained by the authenticity of the experience of the counter-culture – it makes people feel honest and that they have integrity, and as such they feel better about themselves. On the other hand, satire and humour play an enormous role in the counter-culture. So, while the situation might be desperate, at least one gets a chance to laugh about it. And, it should not be forgotten that people also simply enjoy the quality of the performance. Even the most hard hitting material, that for example Belarus Free Theatre is performing, is infinitely better quality than that of the dusty official cultural offer. At least for a growing minority of young, urban, educated Belarusians, this seems to count.

Communication with authorities
With their critical, yet constructive approach, to working with members of the state and local authorities, members of the independent sector contribute to building bridges between governmental and non-governmental partners and to the overall mediation of interests in the society. Clearly, in this respect, the openness of the governmental authorities to cooperation is essential and often it is lacking. Nevertheless, when this is possible, it constitutes an important contribution to the democratisation of social relations, favouring accountability, transparency and good governance.

In the case of the three countries concerned and, of course, to differing degrees, communication between the cultural community and governmental authorities is a problem. Of course, there are exceptional cases, where specific cultural organisations are both legitimately respected by the rest of their non-governmental colleagues and at the same time consulted on a regular basis or invited to participate in discussions by government. But, such cases do tend to be exceptional and the relationship tends to have been established through the person of a specific respected individual (a former Minister, a leading actor, etc). The organisation, as such, is usually less important. Clearly, this is a problem for the sustainability of relationships, partnerships and communication.

More often than not, at least in the opinion of those who have participated in this reflection process, communication between the cultural community and government authorities is limited to the essential and does not fulfil the role of passing important messages from collectives of

citizens to their representatives concerning their needs and how they wish their representatives to represent their concerns to legislatures and implementers of policy because the authorities refuse to engage. At the same time, the cultural community, by virtue of its performance vocation, can nevertheless proclaim those messages to a voluntary audience. Often, that is how those in power come to be interested in the message. If it is critical, and calls for change, authorities can get nervous about the effect that such messages will have on the voting behaviour and general "obedience" of the public, and become more responsive. This mechanism is inherently democratising and modernising, because it calls people in power to account and even more importantly, because it raises the awareness of citizens to their right to hold people in positions of authority to account.

The independent cultural communities in both Ukraine and Moldova have made efforts to overcome this kind of non-communication with government, especially as concerns cultural policy issues and they have received support from foreign and international donors and specialised organisations. Nevertheless, the consultation with Ukrainian cultural partners in Kyiv in July 2007 demonstrated that the difficulty of the cultural community to communicate with the government authorities responsible for culture and other domains is not only a matter of lack of will on the part of those government authorities. There is a general tendency of the cultural community to competition and fragmentation. This is bad for advocacy, encourages clientilism and gives the government authorities an excuse not to cooperate, stating that they lack a legitimate partner. In Moldova, until recently government participation in any form of cultural policy making activity initiated in

> **Cross-Sectoral Partnership for Cultural Policy Development in Moldova**
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> In the context of its social mission, the Cultural Policy Program of the Soros Foundation-Moldova in cooperation with the European Cultural Foundation, Amsterdam is developing an innovative pilot project that is contributing to the creation of cross-sectoral partnership between governmental and non-governmental actors for the development of cultural policy. The project is entitled "Visions on Cultural Policy for Moldova: from changes to viability" and was launched in December 2006. It runs to the end of 2007 (http://www.soros.md/programs/arts/en.html).
>
> The project foresees the drafting of initial policy visions and concrete practical measures for cultural development in Moldova, which are collected, conceived and commonly accepted/shared by all leading stakeholders in the cultural field, including governmental representatives. It also aims to set up a task force/working group comprising cultural managers and decision-makers who will promote current needs and interests of the cultural sector and advocate for them at all relevant policy levels. The project also focuses on the development of training and capacity building programs and tools/services gradually serving all relevant stakeholders in Moldova's cultural sector.
>
> It is expected that the long term effect of this project will include the empowerment of a committed and networked group of culture professionals who can act as local trainers/consultants/experts who can develop and implement future training- and consulting programmes in Moldova, which among other shall serve the professionalisation of cultural managers dealing with strategic planning, organisational development, and fundraising but shall also address cultural administrators in the provinces and executives at all decision-making levels concerning culture.

the non-governmental sector was hardly possible. But, the involvement of international organisations in actively supporting consensus building within the cultural community and advocacy towards government has begun to change the climate in which these issues are discussed and, therefore, the climate of potential relations. In this regard, there seems to be what one might call a "cooperation dividend" for the independent cultural sector. By cooperating internally and demonstrating a united front to government authorities, they take the sector more seriously and are more willing to engage.

Ever the exception, the counter-culture in Belarus is not in a position to communicate with the governmental authorities due to its repressive policies. The state basically refuses to acknowledge the existence of the counter-culture. Ironically, many members of the counter-culture were state employees at some time in their careers, but fell foul of the paranoia of the authorities and were removed of their positions and the possibility to gain employment anywhere else. But, even if the counter-counter culture cannot have formal contacts with the authorities, some acknowledge that

clandestine contact does exist between certain culture officials and the actors of the independent sector. This could be an indication that not all members of the apparatus are fully indoctrinated by or loyal to the regime. On the other hand, there is always the risk that such contacts are a form of espionage that the state undertakes in order to undermine the counter-culture. It remains to be seen if members of the governmental authorities responsible for culture can eventually, with persuasion, become a progressive force for change, of any kind, in Belarus.

Elements for the Development of a Strategic Plan

Introduction

The findings of our initial mapping exercise have provided some clear indications for the problems and challenges facing the cultural communities in these three countries in terms of their capacity to influence processes of transformation. At the same time it has revealed concrete ways in which the cultural community can support processes of democratisation, modernisation and Europeanisation and is being observed to do so in the three countries. But, these imply some important needs if that capacity is to be improved and grown. In this reflection process we have encountered plenty of examples of good practise of how the cultural communities themselves are attempting to extend their reach as actors of change in their societies, in the fields of democratisation, modernisation and Europeanisation. Over the years, the international community has acted supportively to the cultural communities in the three countries, providing some financial and educational resources, advice and opportunities to exchange with their counterparts in other countries. In each of the countries, to differing degrees and in different ways, international organisations and donors have developed programmes to provide complementary assistance to governmental and non-governmental actors in the culture sphere in the fields of professional education, cultural policy development and the stimulation of cultural industries.

Nevertheless, our survey of the opinions of members of the cultural community in each of the countries has also revealed what they consider to be the somewhat fragmented approach of the international community to the issue of transformation – interpreting it differently, supporting different categories of change agent and focusing on some but not other needs. Often these priorities are determined not by the local communities concerned by the actions initiated but by the international community's reading of a situation it does not entirely have the knowledge to master. For many, the lack of concerted and coordinated action on the part of the international community has limited its effectiveness quite significantly. Financial support has also been relatively limited and is often difficult to access for small, local organisations. Further, in recent years, some members of the international donor community are withdrawing from the culture sector (and also from Eastern Europe).

While the individual country reports outline the specific needs of each of the cultural communities and the recommendations of the cultural actors surveyed, this section will attempt to outline ways in which ECF and GMF, in partnership together with other members of the international donor community, could provide support to the efforts of cultural agents of change in these three countries.

Elements for the Development of a Strategic Plan

This enquiry has identified four categories of measures that could be undertaken by a variety of international donor and support organisations, including those in the cultural field, interested in the promotion of change and transformation in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine through culture. In the context of an umbrella programme, these priority lines of action are encompassing enough of the needs of the cultural communities in each of the countries to take into account country specific measures for supporting change though culture.

Sustainable resource development
Our survey has revealed the chronic under-resourcing of the cultural communities in the three countries. Both the governmental and non-governmental cultural sectors experience significant difficulty in sustaining their most basic functions. Even where funding is available, it seems that the sustainability of action undertaken using that funding remains one of the greatest challenges. One preoccupation has to be the increasing tendency for international donors to withdraw from

the culture sphere. Another is certainly the bureaucratisation of the funding process. Our survey has confirmed that some very small organisations on the local level that are doing some of the best work for change in their countries have little or no opportunity to access international funds because of the rules of international donors exclude them and little or no funding is available to them locally. Any future programmes undertaken by international donors need to take into account the ongoing problems of duplication and fragmentation. In addition, the kind of resources that are available are an issue. Money may be available for promoting foreign cultural production or teaching foreign languages in a given country, but not for the development of local cultural capacity.

According to our findings the independent cultural communities believe that international donors should offer more consistent moral and material support to independent cultural creators in the three countries, in the form of grants, creative fellowships, study or practise visits abroad, sponsorship for participation in international events important to the cultural community, where local cultural actors could familiarise themselves with the cultural milieus and realities of the European space and construct fruitful personal and institutional relationships with their European counterparts. Focused financial support, even small scale, is needed for journals, publishing houses, theatre companies, exhibition and art galleries, video studios, film makers and independent TV channels among others. In addition, this support should not exclusively focus on the capital and large urban centres, but take into account the very special cultural needs of rural communities, often cut off from the most basic cultural developments.

Some specific measures that could be undertaken in the area of "sustainable resource development" are:

- the development of new funding mechanisms for the explicit support of promising and relevant cultural projects in the three countries
- the provision of fast, small scale, non-bureaucratic grants to the widest spectrum of culture projects possible
- the provision of financial and material support for inherently cultural projects, which do not necessarily have an explicitly political message
- the reinstatement of medium to long term institutional funding programmes (of a competitive nature) for organisations conducting work supportful of change through culture
- the development of better coordination of funding provided by international organisations active inside the three countries
- the consolidation of current funding available from different sources for the same purpose
- the in depth assessment of how much funding is available, from whom and until when for change through culture
- the creation of better information concerning the available funding using available technological means in relevant languages
- the development of specifically targeted training for cultural operators from the three countries in the area of resource development in relevant languages
- the elaboration of a common understanding among key donors concerning change through culture

Developing outreach to wider audiences of citizens

This reflection process has revealed that, in general, contemporary culture, and especially contemporary art, in the three countries remains an elite project (if for very different reasons) – something interesting to an initiated minority, but little known to the wider public. Unfortunately, the fact that many non-governmental organisations are involved in cultural activities does not particularly change the outreach situation, because it is also only a minority of people that are actively involved in non-governmental organisations and those involved in cultural activities through NGOs often have little to do with contemporary cultural development. It seems that young people are currently taking the greatest interest in contemporary cultural production. Where children are involved in cultural projects, their parents take an interest and have been known to become involved. But, the main difficulty in terms of outreach seems to be the lack of

access of the independent contemporary cultural sector to public mass media. This has several reasons, among them the tendency of government to monopolise state media and the lack of interest of commercial media in this kind of cultural production. At the same time the weakness of cultural industries in the three countries remains an issue for the dissemination of contemporary culture to wider audiences.

Some specific measures that could be undertaken in the area of "outreach to wider audiences of citizens" are:

- the provision of material support to underpin and grow existing networking projects created by the cultural communities in the three countries (existing internet platforms, art criticism magazines, etc) to consolidate the capacity of each to communicate beyond its current minority constituency
- the provision of support to independent cultural actors to access the local mass media (state and commercial), including financial incentives to mass media for inclusion of cultural programming and "socially beneficial content"
- the provision of support to independent culture producers for disseminating their cultural production to wider audiences
- the provision of support to the emergence of local cultural industries, including capacity building within the independent cultural sectors concerning cultural industry development
- the provision of support to independent cultural projects for children and other audiences that are rarely reached by the independent culture, especially in local / national languages
- provision of support for events and activities that communicate directly with citizens concerning the role of culture for change (for example, attractive cultural events, free of charge, in public places, including an awareness raising dimension concerning cultural issues, etc)

Training and capacity building for the cultural community
Despite evidence of quite some investment in training and capacity building – as it seems to be one of the areas for which international and foreign donor organisations are willing to provide financing – the independent culture sectors in all three countries continue to need support for their further professionalisation and integration into European networks and artistic communities. Their educational needs range from increased foreign language competence to professional development opportunities in the field of cultural management. This is not to say that all relevant expertise is required to be brought in from outside the countries, though. In fact, based on our findings, several local organisations and institutions in each country are well placed to act as the lead partner in the development and implementation of relevant training programmes, and professional development courses for cultural managers already exist. There seems to be no lack of expertise or capacity to provide training. However, the training and professional development courses that do exist are not integrated into any of the formal or professional educational systems of the countries concerned and, therefore, cannot be recognised with a qualification. Due to a lack of adequate funding, such courses are often carried out on a fee paying basis and are dependent on the success of applications for project based funding on a yearly basis. Their sustainability is, therefore, a significant issue. So much for the independent sector. In the state sector, there is a crisis of capacity – capacity to lead, develop and implement policy. Here, training and capacity building would have to focus on governance and management, but gaining access to the relevant civil servants, creating the critical mass of willing state employees, who recognise their need for improved competence, is far from easy, especially for international actors.

Some specific measures that could be undertaken within a line of action on "training and capacity building" are:

- the organisation of language courses for artists, cultural managers and other cultural operators with the aim of facilitating international communication and their integration

into relevant networks of cooperation and exchange (experience, information, expertise) at European level
- stocktaking of current professional development and training programmes available to assess the extent to which duplication can be eliminated, standards be elaborated and new offers need to be developed
- the organisation of project development and management workshops for cultural actors
- the organisation of training in fundraising and financial management for cultural managers and other cultural operators to improve capacity for accessing sustainable funding
- the provision of opportunities for young, progressive cultural actors to receive relevant and recognised professional education at home or if necessary abroad
- the opening up of professional development mobility programmes to cultural actors from these countries
- advocacy for the elimination of visa controls and restrictions on participants of cultural exchanges, training programmes, professional development seminars, etc, from these countries entering the EU
- advocacy for recognition of the crisis of capacity in the public cultural sectors of these countries towards government
- the development of specially adapted training and professional development offers for cultural operators working in state authorities, at the local and national levels
- the development of specially targeted training in advocacy skills for independent cultural actors

It is important to reiterate that many of the above training and professional development offers do not need to be developed from scratch, existing in some shape or form in the country already and being delivered by local trainers and that it is important to involve such local stakeholders that already received training or benefited from capacity building activities in the further elaboration of consolidated or new programmes. Only in the last instance should entirely foreign expertise be contracted in, and in particular, training should not be developed without consideration of the very local conditions, hence local trainers should be empowered to take the lead in actual delivery.

Consensus building and advocacy towards relevant authorities
The reflection process has revealed the important and often entrenched difficulties of the independent cultural community in each of the countries to develop internal consensus on cultural issues and policy development and, therefore, a certain lack of effectiveness in advocating for change in their own policy sector vis a vis the authorities responsible. The difficulties the independent culture sectors have in developing internal consensus and external advocacy on a common platform stem from many reasons, but at the origin are assumptions and inherited ideas about the legitimacy of some actors over others to initiate and take the lead in discussions of cultural policy and required change and reform to the sector. At the same time, political will and leadership are lacking and if it is to have lasting effect it has to come from inside the community itself. Nevertheless, the international donor community could support, with moral and financial resources, the efforts of the several independent organisations in each of these countries that wish to begin this process of consensus building. And the international community could use its moral authority to insist that the governmental authorities take a constructive attitude to initiatives taken by such independent actors.

Therefore, international partners should advocate for governmental and non-governmental partners to work together in favour of an integrated policy making process that takes into account the needs of both the capital and the peripheral areas in each country. This process should focus on the elaboration of strategies for cultural development and practical measures that favour actual implementation taking into account the reality of a lack of resources and making use of the small, but nevertheless, well educated, generation of young cultural managers available to the cultural sphere in each country. In particular, such strategies should focus on preventing the further progression of the current and far-reaching brain drain that the cultural sphere experiences and the further development of relevant educational and professional development opportunities for cultural managers.

Some specific measures that could be undertaken within a line of action on "consensus building and advocacy" are:

- stock-taking of previous efforts to initiate consensus and platform building initiatives so as to build from where they have finished their work and to understand the difficulties or obstacles they encountered
- assessing who among independent and governmental cultural actors could be lead stakeholders in such a consensus building exercise
- advocating for such an initiative among sceptical constituencies (especially, government if the initiative is coming from the independent sector)
- provision of material support for longer term processes of consultation and consensus building involving the broadest spectrum of stakeholders at national, regional and local levels
- provision of training in advocacy skills to members of the independent cultural communities
- raising awareness in governmental circles as to the importance of participation in such activities with other members of the cultural community

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Any programme of support (in the culture or any other field) requires its own support measures, to ensure that the programme is reaching its objectives and the best of its potential. While the capacity of the two institutions initiating this reflection process and that of the wider international community was not the explicit subject of this reflection process, it has been possible to deduce three areas where further investment would be required to ensure the successful implementation of an eventual ECF / GMF cooperation programme (potentially including several other international donor organisations) to support cultural actors of change in the three countries concerned by the East European Reflection Process.

Research
Evidence based programme development requires research. The international donor community is becoming more sensitive to the need for ongoing research into the needs of the communities it aims to support and for involving those communities in the identification of the needs that will be treated by their programmes. A more in depth understanding of the needs of each cultural community, which is updated on a regular basis, is necessary for the evaluation and monitoring of the results of the programme. Research activities are also a means of finding new partner organisations. Indeed, research activities can be conducted by partner organisations in the cultural community itself. Nevertheless, such research activities that are required should be built into the programme from the very beginning. It is to be avoided that they be developed and conducted on an ad hoc basis.

Internal competence development
The international donor community needs to consider its own competence for providing support to the independent culture sectors in each of the countries. Russian language is particularly important for gaining the trust of members of the cultural community in these three countries and for understanding the environment in which cultural issues are discussed as much as for actual communication – regular and direct communication with beneficiaries and implementers of the programme is essential. Keeping up to date on socio-political developments and regular visits to the country to meet partners and stakeholders in the programme and to visit projects will provide clues to adjustments that may have to be made as the programme implementation progresses.

Advocacy towards key international institutions and donors
Obstacles do exist to the implementation of a programme developed around the above lines of action. In particular, international cooperation vis a vis these three countries has been known to have been impeded by visa and mobility restrictions, formal requirements on organisations applying for and receiving funding and excessive bureaucracy. Creating the conditions for the

better integration of the cultural communities into European cultural networks and development will require significant advocacy towards key international institutions with influence over certain of those obstacles. Most notable is the European Union whose mobility restrictions on the citizens of 3rd countries has regularly had adverse effects on cooperation with these countries, including in the context of this very initiative. While a new and exciting "window of opportunity" has opened up as a result of the recent announcement of an EU culture strategy, it remains to be seen what kind of impact it will have on the integration of cultural operators into European cultural networks, on the day to day situation of the independent culture sectors in each of the countries and on the functioning of the European Neighbourhood Policy. Advocacy will be required to ensure that this opportunity is used to the best advantage for cultural actors of change in the three countries concerned. Better advocacy towards the rest of the international donor community concerning the constructive role that the cultural community in each of these countries undoubtedly play for change will be necessary to ensure that it buys into any programme of support developed by ECF and GMF. Gaining the support of donors who usually do not look to the cultural sector for partners to fulfil their strategic objectives will be essential. Convincing others who are considering exiting the cultural sphere that their support can have an important impact and is still very much needed will be a difficult task. That effort may be assisted by involving respected patrons to act as a good will ambassadors.

Conclusion

Recognition for the role of cultural actors for change in terms of democratisation, modernisation and Europeanisation is slowly growing and, superficial as it may be, this mapping exercise has pointed to several ways in which the cultural communities in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine are creating socially beneficial "facts on the ground". Increased coordination between international donors working in the culture and related spheres will be required to maximise the potential of the cultural actors of change we have encountered in this reflection process. In the opinion of this author, that should be the essential role of the international donor and institutional community – facilitating, supporting and advocating.

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The Cooperating Organisations

european cultural foundation

The European Cultural Foundation is one of the leading independent organisations devoted to cultural development, and is a passionate advocate of cultural cooperation.

It campaigns for, initiates, develops and supports cultural cooperation activities across the broader Europe in four with four main objectives:
- developing new cultural experience and media activities by offering grants and by initiating and coordinating programmes for organisations and individuals
- cultural policy development, particularly for the integration of European society
- giving culture a stronger voice and profile at all levels
- working in partnership with other leading European cultural organisations

ECF believes in the enriching experience of diversity, and in the power of culture to promote mutual understanding and respect. We therefore support cultural cooperation and advocate strong cultural policies for Europe.

The ECF approach is to focus our work through themes, which have a contemporary relevance for culture and civil society. Its work currently focuses on the experience of diversity and the power of culture. We will be exploring and developing this in three main areas:
- Artists exploring diversity
- Migration - how migrants contribute to creativity in Europe
- Inside Out - activities which deal with diversity issues both from within and beyond the European Union

Established in 1954, ECF has more than 50 years experience in European cultural cooperation. It is based in Amsterdam in the Netherlands.

For more information please consult the ECF website: **www.eurocult.org**.

G | M | F The German Marshall Fund of the United States

STRENGTHENING TRANSATLANTIC COOPERATION

The German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) is a non-partisan American public policy and grant making institution dedicated to promoting greater cooperation and understanding between the United States and Europe.

GMF does this by supporting individuals and institutions working on transatlantic issues, by convening leaders to discuss the most pressing transatlantic themes, and by examining ways in which transatlantic cooperation can address a variety of global policy challenges. In addition, GMF supports a number of initiatives to strengthen democracies.

Founded in 1972 through a gift from Germany as a permanent memorial to the Marshall Plan assistance, GMF maintains a strong presence on both sides of the Atlantic. In addition to its headquarters in Washington, DC, GMF has seven offices in Europe: Berlin, Paris, Bratislava, Brussels, Belgrade, Bucharest and Ankara.

For more information please consult the GMF website: **www.gmfus.org**.

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This report has been complied on the basis of information collected by questionnaire, secondary source research, consultation meetings with leading figures from the independent culture sector conducted Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine in June and July 2007 and with donors and partners in September 2007.

The Rapporteur Generale prepared draft country reports using the information contained in the questionnaires received from a limited number of respondents working actively in different branches of the culture sector as well as publicly available material written in English and Russian. The European Cultural Foundation/German Marshall Fund Eastern European Reflection Group (ECF/GMF EE RG) team travelled to the region to meet a cross-section of relevant actors from Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine to build a more in-depth picture of the situation of the culture sector in each country and its potential as an agent of change. Based on the consultation meetings, the draft reports were expanded and refined.

The present document is a synthesis of the situation assessments undertaken. Its preparation is part of the wider East European Reflection Group process currently being implemented by ECF/GMF to document the situation and potential of the culture sectors in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine with a view of understanding how an international partnership such as that between ECF and GMF, enriched by cooperation with other donors and partners, can support the contribution of the cultural sphere to transformation processes, in particular processes of Europeanisation, modernisation and democratisation, in those countries and the region of Eastern Europe more broadly. This includes common trends in the situations of the culture sector in the three countries and strategic approaches for the international community to underpin the efforts of cultural actors of change in the region.

The ECF/GMF team would like to thank all those who have contributed to the development of the Eastern European Reflection Group process and the preparation of this report, not least those cultural actors of change who have contributed with their motivation, time and commitment to the Europeanisation, modernisation and democratisation of their respective countries.

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