

Cultural Policy and Politics in the European Union

- speech by Andras Bozoki, Minister of Culture of Hungary -

I. FROM CRISIS TO CRISIS; THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EU CULTURAL POLICY

Culture has never been at the core of European integration. While economic, legal and political integration of the countries of Europe has a history of around fifty years by now, the first cultural aspects of the cooperation among the member countries of the (then so called) European Economic Community could only be observed in the 1970s, and one could argue that even today we cannot yet talk of a truly European cultural policy.

The founding fathers of Europe seem to have forgotten about culture. The first reference to culture in the treaties came as late as 1992 as one of the many novelties of the Maastricht Treaty. Leaders of Europe had the tendency to pay attention to culture only when a crisis or a major new stage of closer integration called for solutions aiming to (re)connect the people to the European project. Jean Monnet himself recognized this mistake. Looking back at the history of European integration he once said that "If we were to do it all again we would start with culture."¹ I want to argue that Monnet was right in believing that culture should play a greater role in European integration and it should be more closely connected to the core areas of economic, legal and political cooperation.

In my speech will first review and evaluate the development of the EU's cultural policy, before discussing in more detail the current situation we are facing in Europe and outlining the role that, I believe, culture could play in resolving this crisis.

¹ Quoted in Shore, ..Inventing the 'People's Europe': Critical Approaches to European Community Cultural Policy, *Man* 1993, pp 779-799.

1.1.1970s and 1980s: First steps towards a European cultural policy

It was in the 1970s at the time of a major recession, the great oil crisis and the first enlargement that the very first attempts towards a European cultural policy could be noted. Undoubtedly the inclusion of UK, Ireland and Denmark brought about a crucial change in the workings of the community. The simultaneous growth of unemployment and inflation further increased feelings of insecurity of European societies. So much that in 1973 the (by then) nine member states felt the need to sign a "Declaration on the European Identity" emphasizing that they share "the same attitudes to life, based on a determination to build a society which measures up to the need of the individual." In 1975 the Tindemans Report declared a need for a policy to transform the 'technocrats' Europe' into a 'People's Europe.' As a result, in the late 1970s, the European Commission with the support of the European Parliament started to develop a cultural policy.

In 1979 a major democratic breakthrough, the first direct elections to the European Parliament took place. The voter turnout - 63% on average, but only 32% in the UK for example - was much lower than expected and experienced at national parliamentary elections. This shock sent a clear message to politicians of Europe that economic and legal integration alone will not result in a united Europe. With the aim of filling the legitimization gap the forming European information and cultural policy set the double goal of improving communication on Europe and creating a European identity capable of binding citizens of (an ever increasing number of) member states together, thus generating their support for closer integration. (Ironically, participation rates in European parliamentary elections have been on a steady decline ever since, reaching an all-time low of less than 46% at the first elections in an EU of 25 members in 2004. These results eloquently prove that, despite all efforts at a European information, communication and cultural policy, the EU's legitimization problem became more and more serious along the path of closer integration.)

In 1984 the European Council set up a Committee for a People's Europe and entrusted it with the task of working out measures in order to strengthen the

European identity and improve the image of the Community. The Committee in 1985 produced two substantial reports (the Adonnino Reports) designing measures which indeed were important steps towards making Europe relevant and visible for the individual and constituted the first significant elements of a European cultural policy.

The first report concentrated on practical measures to promote the positive impacts of integration on people's life (system for recognition of diplomas, simplification of border controls, duty free allowances etc.). The second report devised the plans for some tangible elements of a forming cultural policy. It advocated cooperation between member states in the field of culture, communication and information. It proposed cultural projects, such as cultural exchanges, town twinning schemes and youth programs and emphasized the need for information campaigns. The report also contained the plans for the symbolic tools of creating a European identity: a European flag, a European anthem and other European emblems (including, for example, postage stamps). Despite the preponderance of important practical and symbolic measures affecting the cultural field, however, the reports stopped short of devising a coherent cultural policy.

Again, the timing of this new attempt to provide a broader base for integration through strengthening the cultural aspects of cooperation and making Europe visible to the people was not accidental. It took place parallel to the development of the Single European Act, launching a major new stage in the process of economic integration: the creation of the Internal Market. It also ran in tandem with the second, Mediterranean wave of enlargement (and the first with several significantly poorer countries joining the 'club'). Clearly, both the creation of the internal market and the enlargement of the community were major developments that people had to be convinced to accept, or at least tolerate.

The new Delors Commission in 1985 adopted a "Working Program for the Creation of a People's Europe" and started to implement the proposals of the Adonnino reports including important steps attempting to create a common European culture and collective identity. The blue flag with twelve yellow stars (already used by the

Council of Europe) was adopted as official flag of the EC. Beethoven's Ode to Joy became the anthem of Europe. European passports, driving licenses and number plates were introduced. A European ritual calendar was created (with 'European Cultural months' and May 9 as the official Europe Day). The Eurovision song contest was launched, European postage stamps printed and European sporting events initiated. European cities started to be designated as 'Cultural Capitals of Europe.' The creation of a 'European Cultural Area' was also to be served by promoting educational exchanges, the translation of literary works, and town twinning schemes.

1.2. The post-Maastricht period: Culture 'legalised'

The next crucial stage in the integration process came in the early 1990s with the Maastricht treaty creating the European Union and launching the project on Economic and Monetary Union. Closer economic integration was again sought to be legitimated by a tribute to culture. The Maastricht treaty was the first to institute cultural policy as an official EU policy, by codifying a separate title on culture and by including among the objectives of the Community the stipulation that the Community should contribute to the promotion of culture of the member states. The treaty also called for "a new stage in the process of creating an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe."

The treaty article on culture states the goal of cultural policy as follows: "The Community shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore." Cultural policy is governed by the principle of subsidiarity, with Community action is to be taken only if the objective cannot be achieved sufficiently by member states alone. Thus EU-level cultural policy is limited to encouraging cooperation between member states, and „if necessary supporting and supplementing their action." A culture compatibility clause suggests that cultural aspects should be taken into account when implementing other community policies.

The referenda on the Maastricht treaty in 1992 - with 'no' prevailing in Denmark and 'yes' winning only by a margin of 0,1% in France - was another shock which reopened the debate on democratic deficit. Again, culture and communication was expected to provide the solution. In communication the new buzzword became transparency. In the cultural field three community programs were launched after the entry into force of Maastricht treaty and ran until 1999. 'Kaleidoscope' focused on visual arts, 'Ariane' on literature, reading and translation and 'Raphael' on cultural heritage. The combined budget of the three programs amounted to €78 million.

In the year 2000 the three community cultural programs were merged under the 'Culture2000' program which was extended to run until 2006 with a total budget of €240 million. 'Culture2000' aims to promote creativity and disseminate culture by supporting Europe-wide cooperation between cultural organizations, institutions and representatives of the member states, and by supporting the dissemination of European culture both within and outside of the EU. Three types of activities can gain support: innovative, experimental actions, actions of multiannual cultural cooperation, and cultural events with a European dimension. As a requirement, participants must come from several member states. A new Culture2007 program has been proposed by the Commission for the period 2007-2013, which focuses on mobility of both artists and works of art and intercultural dialogue as a way to enhance cultural cooperation. The Commission proposed an increased budget of over €400 million. But the draft Financial Perspective adopted by the European Council in December 2005 shows no real growth in the budget for the period 2007-2013, only a stabilisation of existing levels of spending in the field of internal policies aiming to make European "citizenship work," including culture, youth programs and the audiovisual.

1.3. Evaluation of EU cultural policy

So should cultural actors be happy or dissatisfied with the current place of culture in European integration? It is clearly a positive move that after the initial decades of

total silence on the role of culture in European integration, the realization clearly sank in that Europe cannot be united if culture is neglected, that culture has the potential to narrow the gap between European societies and the process of integration.

At the same time culture should be recognized as much more than a means to secure public support to elite ventures. Without investing in culture we cannot build a competitive economy or ensure the wellbeing of the society. Problems associated with social and labour market policies, or the healthcare and the education systems cannot be successfully addressed as long as culture is treated as a luxury and not as a source of development. As a result of a real recognition of culture as an economic factor and as an instrument of social integration, cultural programs should not merely accompany and follow closer economic and legal integration, but cultural policy should be integrated with economic and social policies.

The treatment of culture as an identity issue is well justified. Still especially the early approach of EU cultural policy seems to be contradictory. On the one hand it celebrates Europe's cultural heterogeneity, on the other it aims to create a common European identity through instilling a sense of common history, common values and common cultural heritage. I truly believe that national and European (as well as regional and local) identities could be non-conflictual layers of one's self-identification reinforcing each other. Still, European identity as created through EU cultural policy is in conflict with national identities because of the identical methods of identity generation used. The symbolic bases of a desired European identity - flag, anthem, frontiers, passport, postage stamps, and a shared calendar and history - have all been among the 'props' and tools of the national identity producing process. Using the very same tools on the supranational level implicitly calls into question the legitimacy of nation states.

Moreover nation states gained legitimacy by emphasizing differences between the national community and 'outsiders', presenting cultural differences between members of different nations as natural and fixed. This resulted for example in several national versions of European history. In order to form a common European

identity, the task of European elites would be to unmask the exclusionary means of national identity creation, instead of using the same methods to create the shared European identity. But EU cultural policy simultaneously attempts to celebrate diversity and to impose uniformity, without explaining what should be given up from former fixed and closed national identities and what is gained in exchange from a common European identity. The failure to generate a European identity with these methods is also reflected by public opinion data. Only 17% of EU-citizens declare to often feel European besides a national identity.²

I believe that the bases of European identity should not be concurrent with those of the nation state. European cultural policy should not try to create an illusionary homogeneity. Rather it should emphasise the multiplicity and the continuous transformation of identities. Just as there is no single uniform European identity, we cannot talk of a single European public sphere either. Instead national public spheres could and should be Europeanised through promoting European issues that are important in the given national, regional, local context. Cultural cooperation and common creation - which receive a welcome emphasis in recent European cultural action programs - are the best ways to transform and enrich identities and to build down walls between national cultures.

But culture is still mainly framed in terms of national culture in Europe. Various restrictions prevent the creation of a real European cultural policy. The decision rule in the field (as a rare exception to the codecision procedure under which the Council and the Parliament decide together) is unanimity in the Council - signalling the sensitivity of the area and the unwillingness of member states to give up sovereignty. Moreover, harmonisation of the laws and regulations of member states in the cultural field is explicitly prohibited by the treaty. As a result, the scope of community cultural policy is limited to launching community programs and initiatives. The Constitution would bring some improvement by extending qualified majority vote to the area, and by making the culture related articles in European Charter of Fundamental Rights binding. But this is not enough. I believe that the EU

² Standard Eurobarometer 64: Public Opinion in the European Union, European Commission, (Autumn 2005), http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/index_en.htm.

should be more courageous in setting common goals in the cultural field. The supremacy of national competence including the prohibition of harmonisation of national cultural regulations should be reconsidered. The second part of my lecture will consider the specific role culture could play in resolving the current stalemate of European integration.

II. CULTURAL SOLUTIONS TO EUROPE'S CURRENT CRISIS

Today Europe is again in a critical state in which the role of culture should be examined. 2005 has been a difficult year for European integration. Ethnic riots in France and the terrorist bombings in London provided unwelcome proof of the alienation of ethnic urban groups and the failure of the integration of immigrants in European societies. The derailment of the European Constitution process which aimed at consolidating the enlarged Europe through the deepening of integration is not independent of these phenomena. The failure of the Constitution should draw our attention to feelings of insecurity of West European societies, which are increased by the urgency of structural reforms of continental European welfare states and by the EU's biggest ever enlargement the year before. In the wake of the failed referenda in France and the Netherlands, European pessimism was further increased last June by the inability of European leaders to conclude an agreement over the EU's next financial perspective. (The last minute compromise in December of the European Council on the EU budget for the period 2007-13 gives us hope that 2006 could be a turning point in the European trajectory.) In 2005, at the half-way point for the Lisbon agenda aiming to make the EU "the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010" it seemed painfully clear that this goal cannot be reached.

The difficulties of Europe are reflected in the negative public mood of European societies. Since eastern enlargement of the union took place in 2004, support of EU-membership has declined in the majority of member states. Less people believe that their country has benefited from membership and less hold a positive view of the

union. Trust in the European institutions (the Commission, the Parliament and the European Council) has declined in the majority of member countries.³

These social, political and economic tensions show that *the enlarged Europe is lacking in both cohesion and competitiveness*. Many fear that these problems might foreshadow a long term European stalemate and some would argue that at a time of crisis Europe should concentrate on painful political, as well as social and economic policy reforms and should not waste time and resources on such 'frivolities' as culture. I believe, however, that the contrary is true. Social and economic problems cannot be righted as long as culture is considered a luxury of the fortunate few and not as an important source of economic growth and social development. I will argue that culture is instrumental in overcoming the current stalemate in the integration process, in discovering and realising the value of increased diversity.

Culture has the potential to provide a solution to this social and economic crisis due to its unique ability of enhancing cohesion and competitiveness simultaneously. Economics usually assumes a trade-off between cohesion and competitiveness, but I argue that culture can prove that they can be mutually reinforcing. In terms of cohesion, culture means inclusion, cooperation, self-respect, solidarity, tolerance, equality of opportunity, curiosity and dialogue. In terms of competitiveness, culture brings innovation, ingenuity and creativity.

Cultural priorities and considerations should become an integral part of social policy, foreign-, security- and development policies, as well as economic policy reform. To bring about cohesion within (national and European societies), culture can be used as a tool of social policy. Culture as a tool of foreign and security policy serves the goal of preventing growing differences and tensions along the union's new borders. To bring about a strong Europe we can be proud of on the world scene, culture could also play a role in development policy towards less developed countries. To increase European competitiveness and potential for long-term

³ Standard Eurobarometer 62-64: Public Opinion in the European Union, European Commission, (Autumn 2004 -Autumn 2005), http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/index_en.htm.

growth, culture should be used as a tool of economic policy, as part of the renewed Lisbon strategy.

11.1« Cohesion through culture

II.1.1. Culture as a tool of social policy

Enlargement to include the ten new countries increased (cultural and linguistic, as well as social and economic) differences within the EU. Fears of eastern enlargement are blurred with and reinforced by pre-existing feelings of insecurity due to globalisation, decline of national competences, economic stagnation, crisis of the welfare state, aging societies and migration. Although the feelings of insecurity have many sources, in view of the unprecedented scale of EU enlargement West European fears seem to be redirected towards new member-states and their migrant workers (besides immigrants from external countries). The lack of political consensus concerning still further enlargement and the future shape of the EU further increases this feeling of insecurity and results in a refusal to come to terms with growing diversity.

Feelings of insecurity, lack of enthusiasm and political discontent with both national and European politics and growing hostility towards migrants do not only characterise „old" European states. Support to EU-membership declined since last spring in 21 out of 25 member states of the union, including 8 of the 10 new members. In the majority of member states - including 9 out of the 10 new members! - support to further enlargement of the union has declined since the spring of 2005.⁴

Globalisation, enlargement and immigration make both old and new member states, as well as Europe as a whole increasingly multicultural. Culture can play an important role to ensure that this trend is not considered a threat, but rather an opportunity. An opportunity to celebrate diversity, to enhance self-respect and the respect and curiosity for others, to induce a culture of dialogue and cooperation.

⁴ Ibid.

And at the same time opportunity to increase European welfare, improve competitiveness through creativity and an increased capacity for change.

Culture is especially important in times of social, political and economic tensions, *as culture has the capacity to keep communities* (at local, as well as regional, national or European levels) *together*, provides them with poise and identity also amidst unemployment, economic or social difficulties. Without culture there is no community, without community there is no human dignity. Culture provides a tool for mutual understanding between and within communities and thus an important means to fight against prejudice and xenophobia. Migrants and immigrants can play a special role in communities by connecting cultures and public spaces.

In the new member states the discrepancy between cultural opportunities (e.g. between cities and villages) is greater than in 'old' Europe, given the deficiencies of access to and distribution of cultural goods and services and the lack of resources of local and central governments. Cultural habits of the richest and poorest layers of society differ more in the Eastern part of the EU and traditions of strong local communities are weaker than in consolidated societies of old EU-states. The use of culture as a means of social mobility and inclusion, however, has a bigger tradition in this region.

To enhance cohesion between and within member states of an enlarged Europe, cultural considerations must be taken into account in social programmes and cultural projects should be made more socially sensible. At the European level cultural priorities should play a greater role in programmes realised under the structural funds. Best practices of planning for culture that helps maintaining diversity and inclusiveness and of incorporating cultural considerations into national development plans should be systematically exchanged.

II. 1.2. Culture as a tool of foreign and security policy

At the same time no inclusive Europe can be built within if it comes at the price of breeding exclusion and insecurity beyond its new borders. Europe's cultural borders do not coincide with the borders of the enlarged union. The EU's new Eastern

borders and the visa regimes new members had to put in place towards new neighbours cut across linguistic and ethnic regions, and the inclusion of new members into the Schengen regime threatens to further disrupt long standing ties of regional cultural cooperation.

Building walls is likely to increase instability, which may in turn negatively influence the EU as well. This underlines the important security aspect of cultural cooperation. Cultural ties help to build dialogue and trust, curb prejudices and negative stereotypes, and thus contribute to peaceful relations and stability. Cultural cooperation should therefore play a greater role as an instrument of the EU's neighbourhood policy and its strategy of further enlargement and it should both precede and accompany political and economic integration.

II. 1.3. Intercultural dialogue

The Commission's plan to declare 2008 as the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue could not be timelier. The increasing number of national (regional, local, etc.) cultures within the EU produces diversity, but if these cultures remain separated, walls may develop between communities. *Multiculturalism in itself is not enough: We have to be able to interpret each other's thoughts; we have to understand each other's messages.* Culture and cultural exchange are indispensable for the self-respect and self-determination, as well as the mutual understanding of communities, whether local, national or European. The objective is the recognition, appreciation and promotion of diversity: the diversity of cultures and cultural performances. Thus European and national cultural policies must encourage the openness of cultures and create spaces of dialogue among them.

I believe that intercultural dialogue must be advanced at multiple levels: First, within multicultural societies and localities resulting from migration and mobility. Second, between societies of the old and new member states. Thirdly, between societies of EU-members, prospective members and non-members (especially new neighbour countries). Fourthly, intercontinentally, between Europe, America and Asia as well.

An evident aim of a Europe-wide intercultural dialogue would be the consolidation of shared values and the emergence of a European identity made up by multiple identities. No European culture, no identity, no values, however, should be imposed from above, rather they should be transformed and reinvented through exchange, cooperation and common creation.

Thus intercultural dialogue must involve more than a mere exchange. It has to foster cooperation and common creation; it has to provide societies with capabilities enabling them to deal with and profit from a complex multinational, multicultural, multilinguistic environment. *This increased diversity could serve as the very basis for Europe's development, its source for innovation, as its capacity for renewal.*

II.2. Competitiveness through culture; Culture as a tool of economic policy

Finally, I would like to emphasise the interrelations between culture and competitiveness in three areas: human capital and the promotion of lifelong learning, support to creative industries, and widened and equal access to cultural goods and services for all.

11.2.1. Role of human capital and lifelong learning

Differences in economic development between the richest and the poorest regions in an enlarged Europe are manifold. Many sceptics still have to be convinced that enlargement is not a process that dooms European integration to failure; rather it brings a unique opportunity for enhancing economic competitiveness and realising the Lisbon target. Enlargement greatly increases the pool of the main European resource that might enable the EU to catch up and take over the US and East Asia. This resource is human capital. The incorporated large pool of human capital can be enhanced by supporting lifelong learning.

11.2.2. Creative industries

It is financially and socially worthwhile to invest in culture because it produces measurable benefits both in terms of GDP and employment. Statistics from the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) of the United Nations

demonstrate vividly that countries and regions that invest in enhancing the creativity of their citizens gain in terms of economic growth. The countries where the contribution of cultural activities (copyright industries) to the GDP is highest - the UK, the US or Sweden - are also among the most competitive in the world. This suggests that cultural innovation and creative industries are among the best tools to become competitive. Creative industries involve diverse areas such as cultural tourism, the media and entertainment industries, software development, fashion design - all of them among the most dynamic branches of global economy in the 21st century.

II.2.3. Access to culture

Widening access to cultural products for everyone is essential in order to enhance both cohesion and competitiveness. I believe that it is one of the most important areas of cultural policy today, when digital access to cultural content and services as well as the creation and uploading of online content must be taken into account to an ever growing degree.

Digital networks provide unprecedented opportunities of distribution of ideas, cultural products and their use in education. *Accessibility is the key to understand the cultural market in our era.* Opening up and facilitating access to European heritage and contemporary culture provides a competitive advantage with the United States in the global cultural competition. *European culture can triumph over global mass culture by simply being within reach.* At the same time decreasing discrepancies in access to culture is a precondition to enhancing economic competitiveness.

Access to culture is often faced with limitations posed by contemporary copyright regimes. As a result of technological advancement the institutional structure based on century-old definition of intellectual property is starting to fall apart. We should begin a process of finding creative ways to rethinking our intellectual property system, and find those ways that equally satisfy the author, the public good and the

market in the 21st century. The demand of public access should be especially emphasized in the case of publicly sponsored cultural content.

Freeing media archives would be especially in the public interest in Eastern and Central Europe. In our region, state media enjoyed monopolies until 1990. Making state-owned cultural archives accessible is therefore of vital interest. Several legal solutions may offer themselves to tackle the issue. The Adelphi Charter on Creativity, Innovation and Intellectual Property, for example, is an initiative of the Royal Society of Arts in the UK and signed, among others, by the Brazilian Minister of Culture, Gilberto Gil. It calls for wide coalitions that aim at an intellectual property regime that ensures both sharing of knowledge and rewarding of innovation. A cultural and legal movement, the *Creative Commons* offers diverse licence options within the current legislative framework that provide access to culture, enhance creativity and support sustainable economic development for the less privileged groups and communities. What is common in these initiatives is that they all widen access to culture in the public domain, in the public interest, and contribute to the competitiveness of cultural products.

III. CONCLUSION

I aimed to argue for attributing culture a greater role in Europe's current search for increased cohesion and competitiveness, for recognising and emphasising the role that cultural considerations should play in social, foreign, security and economic policies. Obviously, a more substantial cultural program at the European level would be important. Still, even within the existing budgetary limits, culture has the potential to contribute to the solution of the European stalemate. A closer voluntary coordination of national cultural policies along selected priorities, the harmonisation of cultural, social, economic and foreign policies, and the incorporation of cultural priorities into educational programs, support schemes to Small and Medium Enterprises, regional development programs, and above all in the Lisbon agenda would be a huge step forward.

I believe that through cultural cooperation we can create a new political culture in Europe, we can strengthen European values and build up the much needed and continuously transforming European identity, and on this basis reduce the cohesion and competition deficit we are currently faced with.