

The Community and culture

European File

European culture is marked by its diversity: diversity of climate, countryside, architecture, language, beliefs, taste and artistic style. Such diversity must be protected, not diluted. It represents one of the chief sources of the wealth of our continent. But underlying this variety there is an affinity, a family likeness, a common European identity. Down the ages, the tension between the continent's cultural diversity and unity has helped to fuse ancient and modern, traditional and progressive. It is undoubtedly a source of the greatness of the best elements of our civilization.

The European Community should not even attempt to define a common policy for such a complex cultural landscape. Nor should it attempt to coordinate the cultural policy of its Member States, which are rightly jealous of their independence in this area. In so far as coordination is useful, it is already undertaken on behalf of all democratic countries in the continent — not just in the Community Member States — by the Council of Europe.

But without yielding to the temptation of excessive harmonization or duplicating existing efforts, the Community does have a role to play. It cannot completely ignore cultural life and its European dimension.

- The European treaties enjoin the Community to unite the peoples of Europe and promote their economic and social betterment. In achieving these aims, cultural factors must be taken into consideration. Culture determines a people's way of life and sense of European identity. It often lies at the root of antipathies and affinities between different peoples. It can contribute directly to their economic and social development. Cultural

progress can equally be seen as one of the aims of this development. Deepening the quality of life is not simply a question of material improvements.

- Community rules on the free movement of goods and services must be applied to artistic works and performances. Creative artists and performers are just as entitled to Community support in the solution of their economic and social difficulties as any other group of workers. Community action to improve the unity of the internal market, freedom of competition, vocational training and social and regional development must apply in the cultural sector. At the same time, special factors which influence the world of culture must be kept clearly in mind.

Between 1969 and 1973, a series of summits of EC Heads of State or Government stressed the need for Community action in the cultural field. The European Parliament made similar recommendations following debates in 1974, 1979 and 1981. The Parliament's Cultural Affairs Committee has identified a host of cultural problems and outlined possible solutions. The European Commission has responded to these pleas. In 1973 it set up a Cultural Department. In 1977 it submitted a draft action programme for the cultural sector to the Council of Ministers. A modest financial outlay (686 500 ECU¹ in 1982) has allowed some of the Commission's suggestions to be implemented. In 1982 the Commission issued a new communication on stronger action in the cultural field. It was published just after the first ever informal meeting of cultural ministers in Naples on September 17 and 18. The ministers again stressed the need for a European dimension in cultural affairs.

The will therefore exists for a broadening of Community cultural activity, in close cooperation with the European Foundation set up by the Member States in 1982. This foundation is intended to deepen the mutual understanding of the peoples of the Community. It is also expected to promote a better understanding of the European cultural heritage, in its diversity and common identity. At the same time, the Foundation will try to encourage a clearer understanding among Community citizens of the progress being made towards a European Union. Various projects are under consideration. They include publications, the organization of exchange visits, the promotion of language learning and the preservation and enhancement of the Community's cultural heritage.

The new communication from the Commission to the Council reviews progress in the cultural field and outlines possible future action in four main areas: free trade in cultural goods; the improvement of working conditions for cultural workers; widening the audience for culture; and the conservation of the Community's architectural heritage.

Coping with frontiers: the free movement of cultural goods

The movement between Community countries of works of art, musical instruments or film cameras is still impeded by a variety of obstacles, ranging from red tape to cash deposits. Workers in the cultural field should be entitled to see the Common Market in action and enjoy all its benefits.

¹ One ECU (European currency unit) = about £0.62, Ir. £0.89 or US \$0.95 (at exchange rates current on 11 February 1983).

- The European Commission has already proposed a regulation which would facilitate the temporary export of cultural or other goods from one Member State to another. It intends to go further and make a study of all the different obstacles to free trade in works of art. The Treaty of Rome allows Member States, under certain conditions, to forbid or limit the export of national treasures of artistic, historic or archaeological importance. But other interests are at stake. Creative artists must be protected and national cultures should be accessible abroad. The Community must therefore define the criteria – whether of age or rarity – for legitimate restrictions on exports.
- Liberalization of trade must not be allowed to apply to stolen works. The lifting of controls should not be a charter for crime. The Commission plans to introduce record cards for artistic works. Owners will be give free access to the system. If a work is stolen, a special service will distribute its description. This should help to prevent the disposal of the stolen item.

Coping with unemployment and poverty: the improvement of living and working conditions for cultural workers

The Community must ensure that rights enshrined in the European Treaties are enjoyed by workers in the cultural field. This should apply especially to rights of freedom of movement and settlement and the granting of social security benefits equal to those given to citizens of the host State. The need for increased efforts in this area is revealed by Commission studies covering the economic and social conditions of cultural workers, social security benefits for artists, and the protection of copyright, notably against the pirating of audio-visual material and its unauthorized transmission abroad. This work is to be complemented by a statistical survey of employment, earnings and social allowances in the cultural sector. In sum, these studies represent a first ever overview of social and economic conditions in the European cultural field.¹ They demonstrate that action is needed at Community level in a number of areas.

- In the first place, many cultural workers earn less than they need to live. They are forced to take a second job or abandon their art. The Commission is interested in helping them in a variety of ways. It is planning a green paper on the harmonization of national laws governing copyright for creative artists and performers, since differences between existing national laws create serious problems. Efforts are also needed to up date national laws which influence television rights and the reproduction of records and cassettes by new audio-visual equipment. Two European directives are already foreseen. One is to deal with the fact that playwrights or composers are entitled to a share of box-office earnings but not a share of the public subsidies by which theatres and concert halls increasingly pay their way. Logic demands that subsidies of this nature should be split between the organizers, the author and the public. The second directive seeks to harmonize the length of time over which a creative artist is allowed to claim royalties. The ten Community Member States have five different periods. Spanish entry

¹ They include *A handbook for plastic artists*, published by the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

will make this six periods, ranging from 50 to 80 years. This is somewhat excessive for a Common Market. Other protective measures are required, for craft workers and photographers as well as sculptors or painters. In all member countries, artists should be given 're-sale rights' which would guarantee them a percentage of the proceeds every time their works are sold. The Commission also hopes to extend throughout the Community the principle of a 'public domain' for works whose royalty period has expired. In most Member States, producers and editors presently have free access to works on which royalties no longer have to be paid to authors or their heirs. In future the Commission would like a royalty to be paid to societies of authors who would use the cash to boost their welfare payments or arts sponsorship.

- Concrete social and tax measures are also needed. The Commission wants all freelance cultural workers to be covered by decent social security conditions. It has also published a draft directive which seeks to reduce VAT payments on arts sales (with direct sales completely exempted). At the same time, the Commission is trying to encourage all Member States to make special tax arrangements which would take the irregularity of 'artists' earnings into account. The Commission is suggesting that artists should be allowed to spread tax payments for a particularly good year over a number of annual tax returns. It also wants to see tax laws changed to favour cultural foundations and arts sponsorship.
- Unemployment is especially severe in the cultural field. The causes are varied: dwindling audiences, poor training opportunities and lack of even the small investments needed in this sector. In several Member States up to 80% of actors are out of work. And yet jobs for artists and performers could be created quite easily. The European Social Fund is ready to support national programmes for the training of cultural workers and the creation of jobs. The Commission is particularly eager to support action designed to fill the many vacancies it has detected in certain branches of cultural activity, notably for orchestra players and creative craftsmen. The Commission is already investing the limited funds available to it in schemes designed to widen the audience for culture and train cultural workers. Community grants have been given to young musicians and dancers, including support for musicians in Sienna and Dublin, violin-makers in Cremona, composers at the University of Surrey and dancers in Brussels. Since the career of a dancer is short, new Community grants are to be made available to retrain dancers as ballet instructors.
- The skills of cultural workers can be enhanced by personal contact with colleagues. In 1981 and 1982, the Community financed a European tour by a company of young Italian actors, a visit to Greece by 50 cultural workers from all nine other Member States and a visit to Brussels and other Member States by 50 Greek artists as part of the Europalia Festival. The Community also funds exchange visits by young cultural workers, a youth orchestra drawn from all ten member countries and conducted by Claudio Abbado, and the Wiltz Festival in Luxembourg, involving actors, singers, musicians and dancers from five member countries. Finally, a sort of European network of museum directors was established with the opening at Norwich Castle museum of European rooms containing temporary displays from museums in various member countries. All such efforts must be continued and amplified.

- Special efforts should also be made to support those cultural workers who are determined to resist the flight to the big cities. Despite poor sales and performance opportunities, and consequently low earnings, these artists and performers are dedicated to preserving and portraying regional and minority cultures and languages. The European Regional Fund should channel Community aid into the training of cultural workers in the regions and the creation of local employment in the cultural sector. A pilot programme has been launched at the Royal Eisteddfod of Wales, the annual festival of Welsh language and culture.

Coping with new media technologies: widening the audience

The development of radio, television and new techniques for sound and vision has considerably increased the individual and family audience for works of art. But support must be given to reading, the cinema and 'live' art forms such as concerts or plays, which establish a direct rapport between performers and audience. This is the heart of our culture and does the most to encourage creativity, develop young artists and promote jobs. Efforts to encourage live art must be directed increasingly towards the young, both in the schoolroom and outside. Young people should be brought into contact with artists who can explain their techniques and encourage self-expression, especially in art forms which appeal to the young, such as the theatre.

- To widen the audience for culture and strengthen international links and help to improve conditions for cultural workers, the Community places a great emphasis on exchange visits. It relies heavily on the help of professional organizations in its Member States and the counsellors and cultural foundations they maintain in one another's capitals. In 1980 the Community funded a 'four cities' concert organized by three Member States. This experience helped the Community to move towards more adventurous forms of cultural exchange. In 1983 and 1984, the EC will sponsor a travelling exhibition of 150 young European painters. In 1985 it will jointly sponsor with the Council of Europe a 'European Music Year'. Its aim will be to extend public awareness in three ways: to encourage a new interest in music amongst young and old alike; to publicize young musicians; and to introduce contemporary composers to a wider audience. In the literary field, the Community has plans to sponsor the translation of representative works from its Member States. The programme began with 20 titles in 1982. There are also long-term plans to promote poetry in the Community.
- Concrete action is needed to safeguard the cinema. Televised films are not, in themselves, enough. The real way to appreciate a film is to see it in the cinema as part of a live audience. The Community is already funding research into ways of improving dubbing and subtitling techniques. Its aim must be to assist the creation of a European distribution network strong enough to compete with the American 'majors' in Europe and further afield. A start could be made by setting up a European film festival and sponsoring the distribution of the best films.
- Development of new audiovisual technologies has created a variety of social, cultural and economic problems. The Community must help to remove the threat which they

pose to employment and earnings for creative artists and performers. In conjunction with the Council of Europe it should study ways of making the new media contribute financially to the survival of traditional forms such as literature and the theatre. The newer forms, such as television, raid the theatre and books for raw material. With satellite broadcasting threatening an explosion of new television stations, joint action is needed to prevent ruinous competition and to preserve minimum standards. Efforts must also be made to square the demand for broadcasting over national frontiers and the need to protect national cultural identities.

Coping with the ravages of time: conserving our architectural heritage

The conservation of our heritage can be justified culturally and aesthetically. But there are also sound economic reasons for taking urgent action. Preserved monuments attract tourists and aid regional development. Conservation work creates jobs.

- The Community gives 50 annual grants to conservation and restoration study and training centres at Louvain, Munich, Rome and Venice. The grants are made to architects, town-planners, specialized craftsmen, gardeners and students of the preservation of our heritage. The Community also supports holiday visits by young people to voluntary restoration sites and architectural digs. It aids the nuclear study centre at Grenoble which is developing ways of applying nuclear technology to conservation techniques.
- But further action is required. According to the terms of the Treaty of Rome, the European Investment Bank is allowed to make loans for conservation projects. These can involve monuments of major, Community-wide interest or buildings in underdeveloped regions whose restoration could bring economic benefits to the area, notably through tourism. The European Commission is prepared to consider making such loans more attractive through interest rate subsidies. A first scheme was launched at the end of 1982 at a museum on the Greek island of Milos. The Commission is also ready to consider individual conservation projects submitted for cash aid from other Community spending funds, such as the European Regional Development Fund. Finally, the Commission hopes to follow up the European Parliament's call for annual conservation programmes. These could be applied, for example, to ancient Greek and Roman amphitheatres, whose restoration could be included in schemes for the development of the Mediterranean economy, especially intended to develop tourist facilities. Community, as well as national and local aids, would be facilitated by a European 'cost-benefit' analysis which would help to assess the likely social and economic advantages of conservation projects. A certain amount of conservation work is also undertaken by private individuals. The Commission intends to recommend that governments should reduce the tax burden on owners of historic houses which are open to the public.
- Further measures are planned or already in operation as part of the Community's environment protection programme. The Commission has published a draft directive which seeks to lay down common standards for assessing the environmental impact —

especially on ancient buildings — of major public and private development projects. The European Commission and European Investment Bank already take these factors into account before approving aid for infrastructure and other development schemes. In addition, European directives are helping to combat air pollution which does enormous damage to old buildings. Even the marbles of the Acropolis have been damaged in this way. The Commission intends to fund research work on pollution from the use of oil by industry and domestic central-heating systems. It also plans to draw up a list of buildings most threatened by various types of pollution and nuisance.



The European Commission has no intention of trying to exert a direct influence on culture itself or of launching a cultural policy which would duplicate efforts by so many others. Stronger Community action in this field should mainly be directed towards improving the social and economic conditions which influence cultural activities. The aim is to aid the world of culture to enjoy more fully the advantages implied by the existence of the Community. This will help not only the cultural sector itself but contribute to the economic and social development of the Community as a whole. Ultimately, this should make a significant contribution to European civilization ■



The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the official views of the institutions of the Community.

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