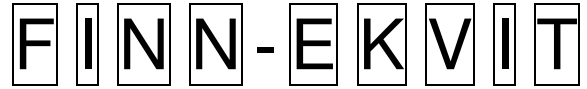




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Successful completion of the Sarajevo Conference on the development of the culture industries in South-East-Europe by reinstating concrete, transborder cultural co-operation:

RECONSTRUCTING CULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY IN THE BALKANS

SUMMARY REPORT

The Conference, organised by European Research Institute for Comparative Cultural Policy and the Arts (ERICArts) and the Finnish NGO FINN-EKVIT, together with the regional organisers "Blue Dragon" NGO (Sremski Karlovci), CULTURELINK (Zagreb) and the Goethe-Institute (Sarajevo), was held in Sarajevo, December 2 – 4, 1999. Some 70 participants, coming from 17 different countries and international organisations, took part in the event, others have announced they would join in the follow-up process.

The Meeting was opened by the Governor of Sarajevo Canton, Mustafa Mujezinovic, and by *speakers* from the three Governments which had committed themselves to support this first encounter of representatives of the culture industries and other experts from in- and outside of a troubled Region:

- Pirkko Rainesalo from the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture in the context of the Finnish EU-Presidency,
- Norbert Riedl from the Austrian Federal Chancellery and
- the German Ambassador in Sarajevo on behalf of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Speakers from the Council of Europe and its Culture Committee were also addressing the participants, during the Meeting. Additional sponsors have been the Finnish National Commission for UNESCO and KulturKontakt Austria, together with the Canton of Sarajevo and local firms.

The main *aim of the Conference* has been to re-establish and re-vitalise transborder artistic and cultural ties within the Balkans, between its nations and with other European countries. The organisers had considered such a goal to be not only important for the return of mutual trust between different peoples in the Region. Taking into account results of their previous research in the field of the culture industries, they were convinced, as well, that the initiation of concrete, transborder co-operation projects in such fields as book trade, film and AV-production, music and theatre festivals, art exhibitions, new media art projects etc. could become an important factor for the economic and moral reconstruction in this Region and for upholding cultural diversity.

While problems of artistic and intellectual exchanges in South-East Europe were addressed frequently at other meetings during the last months, the crucial role of the culture industries and media production in the reconstruction process were largely ignored. As underlined in the Declaration of the EU-Conference in Essen, May 21, 1999, which was also co-organised by ERICArts, the culture industries "can reinforce endogenous regional potentials and improve the underlying conditions affecting general economic development"; in other words: they can contribute to a democratic cultural environment in the Balkans. Therefore, the Conference was designed to identify suitable projects, to explore possibilities for organising and financing them as well as to facilitate dialogue among the relevant actors, including policy makers and international organisations.

- 2 -

The main debates and exchanges of experiences or project proposals took place in the *four Conference Workshops*:

- A general session on the role of the culture industries in regional development and economic, political and social reconstruction in the Balkans

As well as three sector specific workshops on:

- The role of performing arts including: theatre, music, festival and other cultural events
- The role of literary arts including: publishing industries, writers, translators, press, libraries, bookshops
- The role of visual arts including: design, painting, multimedia art, art museums, galleries

If we are to judge the *results* against such expectations, it can be concluded, that the Conference identified or proposed

1. concrete problems/barriers for transborder co-operation inside the Balkans and with other parts of Europe (this discussion went far beyond a mere complaining about lack of funds etc., identifying, for example, legal impediments for exports and necessary changes in the banking procedures);
2. first concrete steps and medium-term strategies to overcome these problems;
3. methods and tools for developing an atmosphere for cultural co-operation within the region;
4. conditions and instruments of support for the reconstruction of firms/organisations working in the culture industries in the Region or for the establishment of new independent structures;
5. first steps necessary to facilitate specific co-operation projects between participants of the Conference (in the field of visual arts, the new Network BAN concentrating on avantgarde exchanges and Internet projects was already founded during the Conference, for example, while a more general structure called "Balkankult" is now organising support for the follow-up process) as well as
6. concrete measures and funds which directly support cultural exchange and other transborder projects (to this effect, other, more practical follow-up meetings will be held during the coming months in different sectors, e.g. as an encounter of publishers and rights managers from South-East Europe and the West at the next Frankfurt Book Fair).

Other concrete proposals concerned the possibility of a *Cultural Ministers Conference* with participants from all parts of the Region, to which the Austrian Government extended an invitation for Spring or Summer 2000 (another such meeting has already been foreseen in Sarajevo for the year of 2001).

Under the present conditions in the region, sustainable transborder projects will need *resources*, bank guarantees or at least some "seed money". Given the well-known economic and societal dynamics of the culture industries, the new Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe will surely have to consider such projects or programmes in its reconstruction agenda. If, in addition, a specific funds organisation or sponsorship programmes are required, the European Cultural Foundation has, in principle, expressed its willingness to act as an administrative host.

[The *Programme Committee* for the Conference included: Dubravko Bibanovic (Sarajevo), Danielle Cliche (Bonn), Ritva Mitchell (Helsinki), Dimitrije Vujadinovic (Sremski Karlovci), Andreas Joh. Wiesand (Bonn).]