

Romania in Europe's "Culture 2000"

Europe's perception

With all the controversies, Europe is a reality geographically, politically and economically. But what about culture? Can we speak about common aspirations, mentalities, traditions and heritage? In other words, does Europe propose a coherent cultural image? Where does the spiritual map of the continent begin and where does it end?

Recently, a Romanian friend who left to the United States of America long time ago, brought to Romania, for the first time, her 10 years old daughter, who was born in Los Angeles. During their stay here the child had suffered. She didn't like the food nor the narrow and tortuous streets, nor the baths and the toilets missing all the American utilities, nor the cars or the people, nothing. Being well raised she didn't complain, but her sufferance was obvious. She didn't participate in any discussions, she stayed all the time reading in a corner. If she was asked how she was doing, she would answer with a heart-breaking sigh: "I am fine, it's ok". After two weeks her mother tells her that they will leave Bucharest to go to Frankfurt to meet her father. The little girl prudently asks: "Where is Frankfurt?" "In Germany", answered her mother. "And Germany?" "In Europe". Then she couldn't control herself and she burst into tears: "I don't want in Europe anymore!"

For me, witness of this scene, the girl's anger towards Europe was mainly a reason of satisfaction. Well, I said, finally, looking from America, Romania and Germany are both European, Frankfurt is closer to Bucharest than Los Angeles, which, I admit, until then it didn't seem so obvious to me. It was confirmed to me that Europe's identity must be looked from outside in order to have a meaning, by reading an essay written by Umberto Eco, published in 2001, pointed out by Harald Hartung, head of the Cultural Unit from the European Commission, during the "Our Europe" Forum from the 7th of December 2005. What does Umberto Eco say? "I love France which I consider my second homeland like many other natives from Piemont Region. But when I am in France I am bothered by many aspects of the French culture and traditions. I have a leaning towards Germany because I am married to a German woman but probably also because of this I hardly bare the German people. And in the same way it happens with other European countries. But when I land in America and I confront myself with the American life style in New York, I fell at home only among the Europeans. It's the only way I discover how much an European I am. Only outside Europe I become an European patriot.

From this point of view, the definition of the cultural Europe becomes more fluid, generated by the clichés, prejudices, customs and traditions. But nobody can deny they exist.

Promoting Europe's identity

How does Europe sustain the construction of its own identity? In the European State Community Treaty it is clearly stated that in all its actions decision and reglementation, the European Commission, the EU's executive body, will take into account the cultural factor, that the implementation process can not change the cultures' diversity of the member states. Therefore, the protection of the cultural identity is placed in the fundament of the Union. This is a programmatic view of the role of culture, but not a pragmatic one.

From the perspective of a financial approach, it is clear that for the administration in Bruxelles, the cultural domain of the member states does not represent a prioritary field of intervention. For example the budget granted to the unique programme for promoting cultural actions was of 236,5 million euro for 2000-2006 for all the countries - members or candidates (30). The resources for the cultural and artistic projects are ridiculous compared with the billions granted for developing agriculture or industry. There are granted enough money so that you can say that the cultural domain is not ignored. In other ways, there is such little money that they seem to have a symbolic signification. And from the Union's perspective the culture's role has a symbolic meaning. It is not desconsideration. Culture is seen as a factor of identitary structuration, emblematic, a projection of common spirituals values, expressed in a diversity of forms impossible to standardize.

But isn't it a paradox that although culture is given a prioritary role, the Community does not offer consistent funds to sustain this role? The paradox is just apparent: the European states have decided to invest mainly in the effort of harmonizing and unification of the reglementations and practices in the sectors that permit it: economy, finances, justice, research, trade, medicine, industry, agriculture, services. In these fields there must exist a set of laws voted in unanimity so that the Union can take action. How to try to establish rules in culture? Culture contains assets, creations, and unique individualities. How to transform a Leonardo da Vinci, a Balzac, a Brancusi or a Bela Bartok in obligatory provisions for all the states? Then, further, at the cultural administration level, how to impose the same unique structure to manage the material and immaterial heritage of a collectivity? This is made of unrepeatable values that can not summit to the same rule. Therefore controlling and establishing standards in culture would be an absurd attempt, which the Central and Eastern European countries have experienced during the totalitarian regime. Implementing the political control in culture had provoked well known effects: the mutilation of the collectivities identities, the oppression of personalities, the aggression of the mediocrity, the drastic restriction of the liberty of thought and expression, mixing history, overturning the hierarchies of authentic values, aggression of the material heritage. The cultural dirigisme experimented in the communist states was not only against production, but it proved to be impossible to be carried out because it was the expression of an unwise ambition which was stopped by the natural resistance of the people.

Thus, the European community's attitude towards culture makes sense. Europe's culture is made of the European countries cultures. Each member state has the duty to preserve and develop its own culture. By summing up the specific values of each culture, its born the spiritual wealth of Europe. The full image of Europe's culture is given by the unique voices concert from its whole, for a better highlighting must communicate with one another, manifest in a common space, carefully keeping their own unique values. The European states not only do they have the right, but the obligation to sustain in they own way their culture, through laws and institutions which they consider adequate to accomplish these objectives. It is the obligation of each state to finance the cultural programmes and projects and not the obligation of the Union's leadership.

If this is the truth, why did the European Commission launch a special programme for culture, why are funds spent for sustaining cultural projects? Why weren't suppressed all the cultural projects from the communitarian policies? The answer is given in an article of the European Community Treaty, the only one that refers to this subject, no 151.

Here are the five paragraphs of the 151 article:

1. 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.

2. Action by the Community shall be aimed at encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, supporting and supplementing their action in the following areas:

- improvement of the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European peoples;
- conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage of European significance;
- non-commercial cultural exchanges;
- artistic and literary creation, including in the audiovisual sector.

3. The Community and the Member States shall foster cooperation with third countries and the competent international organisations in the sphere of culture, in particular the Council of Europe.

4. The Community shall take cultural aspects into account in its action under other provisions of this Treaty, in particular in order to respect and to promote the diversity of its cultures.

5. In order to contribute to the achievement of the objectives referred to in this Article, the Council:

- acting in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 251 and after consulting the Committee of the Regions, shall adopt incentive measures, excluding any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the Member States. The Council shall act unanimously throughout the procedure referred to in Article 251;
- acting unanimously on a proposal from the Commission, shall adopt recommendations.

One can easily observe that from five paragraphs, three of them insist on the idea that the policy promoted by the European Community in the cultural domain is respecting and promoting the cultural identity of a nation or of a regional collectivity and it favors the dialogue between cultures. In such a situation which may be the role of a suprastatal institution like the European Commission whose duties are to establish common rules of behavior for all of us? Well, an unique case for an unique reality- that of the European cultures- the European Commission according to article 151, has the duty to find a mechanism through which it encourages not the uniformity, but the diversity. European integration in the cultural field means defending and promoting diversity: the material and immaterial heritage, the artistic creation, the mentalities, the traditions and customs, the languages of the nations and collectivities are all elements of this essence of which Europe is proud of. But diversity must be explored through dialogue. The European Commission accepted the special mandate received from the Community, creating in 2000 a specific program. "Culture 2000" is a mean of dialogue of the cultural diversities.

Like any initiative of a general provision of the EU, the Programme was defined as a Decision of the European Commission (508/2000). Because it is a decision, it became subject in the *acquis communautaire*. In other words, accepting the norms and the consequences coming from the Decision 500/2000, which sets up Culture 2000 Programme, is part of the necessary conditions so that a state can be a member of the European Union. In Romania's National Adherence Plan to the European Union, Decision 500/2000 is the only one mentioned in Chapter 20, for the component of Cultural Policies.

Europe through "Culture 2000"

The Programme was planned to work for five years (2000-2004) with a total budget of 167 million euro. In 2004, the European Council approved Decision 626/2004/EC concerning the amendment of Decision 508/2000/CE. "Culture 2000" Programme will end in 2006 with a supplementary budget of 69.5 million euro, but keeping unchanged the objectives initially written in the Treaty's 151 Article.

Decision CE 508/2000 formulates clearly precise objectives regarding the projects that will be financed through "Culture 2000" Programme: promoting dialogue and mutual knowledge of the European culture and history; promoting the creativity and the cultural transnational dissemination and also the mobility of artists, creators and other cultural operators and professionals and of their work, with a special care for the young and the social disadvantaged persons and for cultural diversity; promoting the cultural diversity and the development of new cultural expression forms; using and promoting, at European level, the common cultural inheritance significant for Europe; dissemination of know-how and promoting positive methods of conservation and preservation; recognizing the role of culture in the socio-economic development; housing the cultural dialogue and the cultural exchanges between European cultures and the ones outside Europe; the explicit cultural recognition as an economic factor and as a

social integration and a civic attitude factor; improving the access to culture in the European Union for more citizens.

These objectives must be transposed as much as possible in concrete projects. The projects are built on three key-words: competition, partnership and co-financing. In order to be financed the project is introduced in an open contest. The jury is formed by independent experts named from all countries. The partnership is established between the European Commission and the cultural operators from all the 30 eligible countries, on one hand, and between the cultural operators represented by at least three different countries for the annual projects and from at least five countries for the multiannual projects, on the other hand. Co-financing means an investment from own resources from the initiators of the project, in amount of 50% of the total budget for the annual projects and of 40% for the multiannual projects, the Union covering the rest. So, the Europeanity of a project is measurable by the number of the participant countries in the project, while the co-financing represents the material prove of the cultural operators determination engaged in the project.

Romania in Europe's "Culture 2000"

Since 2001 there have been accepted in the programme also the candidate countries, among which Romania.

According to Decision No. 6/2001 of Romania's association to "Culture 2000" Programme and the Memorandum of April 4, 2005 the financial contribution that Romania must award at the European Union general budget for its participation to the Programme is:

1. Romania pays the mentioned contribution, in the following way: a part from the national budget and a part from Romania's PHARE National Programme. PHARE funds are transferred to Romania through a separate Financial Memorandum, in accordance with the procedures of PHARE programming. Together with the part coming from the state budget, these funds represent Romania's national contribution.

2001	2002	2003	2004	2005 and 2006
317540 euro	317540 euro	317540 euro	317540 euro	317540 euro

2. PHARE funds were requested by the following calendar:

2001	2002	2003	2004	2005 and 2006
709536 euro	709536 euro	709536 euro	709536 euro	709536 euro

The rest of money, up to 709,536 Euro, is assured by the state budget.

The substantiation of these payments was made by adopting three Government Bills (HG 1276 /2001, HG 523/ 2002 and HG 649/ 2005) regarding the payment of Romania's contribution to "Culture 2000" Programme general budget. Starting with 2001, the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs paid each year the part of the contribution from the state budget, the payment from the PHARE funds being made by the PHARE National Fund.

According to procedures, the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs has initiated, within the Department for European Integration, Harmonization, Media, the Cultural Contact Point (CCP) which will realize the information dissemination regarding the annual calls of proposals of “Culture 2000” Programme and to facilitate the participation of as many operators to the programme.

The Cultural Contact Point has defined responsibilities according to the Financing Contract signed annually by the general director of the Education and Culture Directorate of the European Commission and the director of the Department of European Integration, Harmonization, Media. The Cultural Contact Point has received from the Commission an Operational Grant representing 50 % from the total activities budget, the rest of 50% is co-financed by the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs.

The Cultural Contact Point has exclusive competences regarding specialty consultancy and the distribution of relevant information. Because the applications for the annual calls for proposals are sent directly to Brussels, the experts from the Cultural Contact Point do not have access to the financial date of the contracts which the European Commission, after evaluating the selection commissions, sign with the initiators of the winning projects. Monitoring the separate contribution on each project participant can be made only estimatively starting from the project’s total budget and applying the percentage established in the regulations of the leaders or the co-organizers and only after publishing the winning projects in the European Commission Official Journal.

Following this estimation, we can say that in 2003 the substantial growth of the Romanian number of projects meant a direct attraction of funds, of over 900.000 Euro (which represented, for the first time, overrunning the national contribution). A Romanian initiative was selected for financing, for the first time in 2003, and other 16 annual and multi annual cooperation projects, financed by the European Commission, during the Third Action – European Heritage Laboratories. The Romanian annual project was approximated to 300.000 Euro.

Each year, the participant countries must name independent experts for the evaluation commission gathered in Brussels. The experts have the mission to select the winning projects, taking into account some precise criteria. Romania had the right and the obligation to name experts in each evaluation session. Since 2001 and until 2005, Iosif Kovacs, Aurora Tarsoaga, Adrian Craciunescu, Alexandru Nancu (heritage), Ilarian Stefanescu (performing arts), Horia Maftei (book translation), Raluca Bem Neamu, Mirela Dauceanu (visual arts) have participated from the Romanian side to the jury’s work. The experience accumulated by the experts during the evaluation sessions was developed by inviting them to the seminars and forums dedicated to the Programme.

Starting with 2001 (the calls for proposals for 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004), the cultural operators from Romania have participated at 64 projects financed by “Culture 2000”:

2001 – 11 projects, 12 operators, total budget: 8.378.982 Euro (co organizers and partners)

2002 – 16 projects, 32 operators, total budget: 5.939.976 Euro (leaders, co organizers and partners)

2003 – 17 projects, 20 operators, total budget: 5.701.086 Euro (leaders and co organizers)

2004 – 20 projects, 42 operators (leaders and co organizers)

For 2005 we introduced only the general figures:

2005 – 10 projects, 15 operators, total budget: 1.342.692 Euro (leaders and co organizers)

Since 2005, the Cultural Contact Point has been included in another institution: the Consultancy Centre for European Cultural Programmes which is a public institution subordinated to the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs. It has the obligation to prepare the Romanian cultural market for the access to European programmes and funds which allow the insertion of cultural components, others than the ones from the programme dedicated to culture. The creation of the Centre represents fulfilling a commitment written in the Position Paper, Chapter 20, of the Romania's National Adherence Plan, which confirms the necessity to strengthen the institutional capacities in administrating the cultural domain. According to the mandate, the Center also represents Romania in the Management Committee for "Culture 2000".

The Consultancy Centre for European Cultural Programmes is a public institution subordinated to the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs that functions according to the Government Bill 68/ January 2005 which stipulates among others: to promote the "Culture 2000" framework programme; to inform cultural operators regarding the European and national institutions involved in the promotion of European cultural actions and projects; to ensure communication at regional and national level between cultural operators; to assure the exchange of information with similar structures from the participant states to the "Culture 2000" framework programme; to assure, upon request, consultancy services and expertise for Romanian cultural operators in order to elaborate projects in the framework given by European programmes, including through concluding contracts; to represent the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs in the Management Committee of the "Culture 2000" framework programme; to represent the Romanian Cultural Contact Point for the Programme Culture 2000 of the European Union in the network of similar institutions of the other 29 European participant countries; to organize specific actions (congresses, seminars, conferences, know-how exchange) which support cultural or artistic European programmes, in Romania, at the request of the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs or of other institutions and organizations; to edit in any type of format and to distribute materials regarding the initiation, the development and the finalization of European cultural programmes.

The Consultancy Centre actions according to the provisions of Art. 151 of the European States Community Treaty assumed by Romania through the Position Paper of Chapter 20 from the Negotiation National Plan for the Accession at the European Union and through the Decision 6/2001 of the Association Council European Union - Romania. Together with its partner, the European Institute for Cultural Routes in Luxembourg, the Consultancy Centre evaluates and organizes possible European cultural routes with cultural content which can become possible cultural tourism projects. The Consultancy Centre prepares, through seminars, training courses, debates, the cultural market in Romania in order to make it able to draw European funds, different of those proposed by "Culture 2000" Programme, with the aim of creating cultural and artistic projects.

The Consultancy Centre develops partnerships or concludes contracts with other institutions in order to implement projects of common interest, others than those comprised within the framework of "Culture 2000" Programme.

In order to achieve its mission, the Centre can initiate and organize cultural events and can realize and distribute presentation and information materials.

The web pages created in 2001 and 2002 (www.eurocult.ro and www.cultura2000.ro) by the European Integration Department within the Ministry of Culture and Religious affairs were taken over by the Consultancy Center in April 2005.

The creation of a Cultural Regional Observatory (PACT) was decided on October 21-22, 2005, during an International Forum of Cultural Networks involved in the development of the "Culture 2000" Programme. PACT was created following the experience gained by the Romanian Cultural Contact Point and it will assure a synthesis of cultural partnership initiatives at regional and cross-border level and it will allow cultural operators to answer in a more consistent and effective way to the challenges launched by the new financing opportunities given to Romania starting with January, 2007.

The European level of Romanian projects

It is natural to try an evaluation of the relation between Romanian cultural operators and their partners from other countries involved in the "Culture 2000" Programme because, as shown earlier, the European level of a project is measured by the number and quality of the associated partners. It is of course irrelevant to compare the capacity of Romanian operators to launch and to associate to European projects with the capacity of the Western European institutions which have a tradition of decades of cross-border and multilateral co-operation of decades. It seemed more relevant to try to define the Romanian contribution compared to other Eastern and Central European countries which shared similar political experiences. This point of view is shared by the Budapest Observatory co-ordinated by Peter Inkei in an analysis (a brochure translated by the Romanian Cultural Contact Point in 2004 with the title "Culture 2000

through Eastern Eyes”). This evaluation tries to outline the guiding lines of the Romanian organizations towards specific European areas and their capacity to cope with the concurential regime of this programme.

Therefore, during 2001-2004, 818 projects were financed through the “Culture 2000” Programme. 48 projects were initiated by Central and Eastern European operators: 11 by Poland, 9 by the Czech Republic, 7 by Romania, 5 by Hungary, 3 by Slovenia, 5 by Lithuania, 3 by Letonia, 2 by Estonia, 2 by Slovakia and 1 by Bulgaria. Consequently, Romanian project leaders represent 14.58% out of Central and Eastern European countries.

The Western European project leaders have collaborated with co-organizers in Romania in a proportion of 10.62%. 32 co-organizers are Romanian out of 320 co-organizers from Central and Eastern Europe. 9 are from France, 8 from Italy, 4 from Great-Britain, 3 from Austria, 2 from Germany, 2 from Greece, 2 from Luxembourg, 2 from Spain, 1 from Belgium, 1 from Finland and none from Denmark, Ireland, Holland, Portugal and Sweden. The lack of interest of countries from Northern Europe for Romania is obvious and so is also, surprisingly, Portugal’s lack of interest.

In exchange, Romanian organizations who initiate projects choose Sweden and Holland.

Western European co-organizers are included in the 7 Romanian projects in this manner: France-4, Germany-4, Italy-4, Sweeden-3, Holland-2, Belgium-1, Greece-1, Spain-1 and Great Britain-1.

Romania had 21 co-organizers from Western Europe compared to Poland- 24, Czech Republic- 20, Lithuania-17 and Hungary- 10. The total number for Central and Eastern Europe is 116. The orientation of Romania for Western Europe is of 18.10% out of all co-organizers invited in Central and Eastern – European projects.

If we were to measure the interest revealed in a mutual way approach from and to Romania in relation to the West we would obtain this co-operation map: in the first place France - $9+4=13$, after that, Italy- $8+4=12$, Great Britain- $4+1=5$, Spain- $2+1=3$, Greece- $2+1=3$, Belgium- $1+1=2$. Romania shows an unrequested attraction to Germany, Sweden and Holland who were involved in Romanian projects but who did not invite Romanian operators to join their winning projects. In the winning projects of the Romanian operators we find a percent of 27.58% of Eastern and Central European organizations which represents less than a third of the total of involved co-organizers. Romania’s trend to orient towards the West is more than obvious. Therefore, in the 7 Romanian projects are associated 8 co-organizers from former communist countries: 2 from Hungary, 2 from Poland and 1 from Estonia, Lithuania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Before this brochure was published, the winners from 2005 were officially announced. We could find out that the data for the 2001-2004 period do not modify considerably. It is good that the number of project leaders grew from 7 to 11. All in all, for 5 years, Romania participated to the 989 winning projects in a proportion of 7,48% (74 projects) which makes us one of the first Central and Eastern European countries to participate in "Culture 2000" projects.

What do these figures and percentages mean? They are, undoubtedly, an indicator of cultural affinities with European countries and an expression of the capacity of the Romanian organizations to adapt to European strictness in conceiving and developing European projects and to be attractive for external partners. It should be mentioned that the analysis takes into calculation only the projects that received funding and not those applications that were elaborated and sent to the Commission but which did not receive the necessary points to be declared winning projects. If the analysis would take them into account, then the figures above would be slightly modified. Anyway, what is important is the fact that in the relation between the operators from the 30 countries is the achieved application and not the virtual one.

When we received the task to support the "Culture 2000" Programme, we thought that we should be contented with the primary result of provoking a change in the self-sufficient centralized mentality revealed in the network of cultural institutions in Romania. We did not hope that in only 3 years the participation to the Programme would become a real alternative funding source for dozens of institutions, that it would generate solid partnerships with similar European institutions, that it would connect the cultural policies to the European spirit. It is true though that the European Union's Cultural programme cannot and will not propose to solve the problem of funding the cultural sector entirely and not at all at national level. The funds of the European programme for culture are a drop in the big sea of Romanian needs. But these funds are a visible drop that matters and that adds to the spiritual construction of a united Europe.

We selected from the Romanian offer 4 winning projects with the conviction that they are relevant for their diversity, innovative spirit and organizing capacity that could be successfully revealed in the framework of the "Culture 2000" Programme. I hope that they can become a catalyzing factor for the initiatives that will surely come.

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