



The Project is funded  
by the European Union

EUROEAST CULTURE

RMCB Unit

**Eastern Partnership Culture Programme  
Regional Monitoring and Capacity Building Unit  
(RMCBU)**

**EuropeAid Contract No 2010/255-219**

**ADDENDUM**

**to the Regional Research Report  
on Cultural Policies and Trends  
of the Eastern Partnership Countries**

**Studies and Diagnostics on Cultural Policies  
of the Eastern Partnership Countries**

The document is prepared by the Regional Monitoring and Capacity Building Unit of the Eastern Partnership Culture Programme

May 2015

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The RMCBU Project is implemented by a Consortium led by [Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit](#) (GIZ) GmbH in partnership with [HYDEA S.p.A.](#) (Italy) and [RWTH Aachen University](#) (Germany).

## **Preface**

This document complements the Regional Research Report on Cultural Policies and Trends of the Eastern Partnership Countries (*Regional Research Report*) prepared by the Regional Monitoring and Capacity Building Unit of the Eastern Partnership Culture Programme (RMCBU) in August 2012 and revised in January 2013. The report was published at the Programme's web-site: (<http://www.euroeastculture.eu/en/database-of-materials/view-rmcBU-studies-and-diagnostics-on-cultural-policies-of-the-eastern-partnership-countries.html>).

The Addendum reflects the major changes that occurred in the cultural policy context of the EaP countries since 2012. The document also mentions lessons learnt from the EaP Culture Programme I implemented from April 2011 till March 2015 and lists the main challenges of the cultural sector of the partner countries. The content of this document is the sole responsibility of the RMCBU and reflects the opinion of contributing experts. It can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission. The document was prepared by Mr. Terry Sandell, RMCBU Experts, with contributions by Mr. Luciano Gloor, RMCBU Team Leader and Ms. Tetiana Biletska, RMCBU Capacity Building Expert.

In early 2013 the RMCBU published the *Regional Research Report* and six Analytical Base-line Reports on the Culture Sector and Cultural Policy of the EaP countries (*Base-line Reports*). The reports were intended for a broad range of audiences that includes all culture stakeholders in the countries of the Eastern Partnership and the European Union. The documents summarised results of the *Studies and Diagnostics on Cultural Policies of the Eastern Partnership Countries* carried out by the RMCBU from October 2011 to March 2012 in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The studies were focused on the national cultural policies of these countries and practically orientated to provide strategic guidance to the entire Eastern Partnership Culture Programme and to all activities of the RMCBU Project. A tailor-made system to analyse the current situation in the culture sector of the EaP countries was elaborated by the RMCBU. It was primarily based on conceptual comparative analysis of the countries' specific policies with applicable international standards exercised by the RMCBU in cooperation with six local experts and guided by an international expert. Preparation, publication and further promotion of the reports stimulated comments and contributions from the Programme's stakeholders and other interested parties, leading to debate on cultural policy matters for the EaP countries and beyond.

All six *Base-line Reports* and the addenda are published at the Programme's web-site at <http://www.euroeastculture.eu/en/database-of-materials/research-and-studies>.

## **Major Changes in the Cultural Sector and Policies of the Eastern Partnership Countries since 2012**

For making accurate and objective evidence based assessments of changes that apply to the countries of the Eastern Partnership region during the past 3-4 years in terms of reform and development of their cultural sectors the research and statistics systems are still not developed enough to meet what is needed for contemporary strategic management and policy assessment. It is one of several lacunae in the countries' cultural systems that their capacities are very limited in relation to research and statistics and the basic tools to evaluate the cultural sectors of the countries in the region are still not in place, which also limits the ability for them to develop evidence-based policies. It is to be hoped that the EaP Culture Programme II with its increased means will be able to address this specific aspect of capacity building by strengthening the research and statistical base in all of the countries, both within the state institutions and outside.

That said, some trends at a regional and country level can be observed and analysed, albeit with a degree of unavoidable subjectivity. Interpretation of those trends depends on who you are or from where you are observing. It is very much a case of on the one hand seeing the glass as half-full and on the other also being able to see the same glass as half-empty.

Even over twenty years after independence and a de-colonisation process which has in many cases given the countries (back) their own developing identities and national agendas, the Soviet 'vertical management' model of rigid structures is still one of the key problems, especially with regard to the state and local government cultural sectors. Agendas, when they exist, are driven primarily by the structures and how the bureaucratic machine operates, not by a problem- or need-focussed approach, which thrives on cross-fertilisation and the ability to identify and make pragmatic 'connections'. When connections are made, or innovation is present, as does happen, it is often through personal connections as this is the only way to cut through the rigid structures and deal with real problems or challenges in sensible ways.

The pernicious influence of the 'vertical management' model does not only affect the state and local government structures. It affects the other parts of the cultural sector spectrum - the independent/NGO world, the growing and increasingly important private/entrepreneurial movement in the region (characterised by cultural and creative industries start-ups and the 'hub/cluster' movement) and also the economically important commercial/business cultural sector which is all too often dismissed as not being part of 'culture'. The fact that there is no symbiotic or any kind of functioning relationship between these various cultural sectors results in all of them being weak because they are not exploiting synergies, working horizontally or building any common agendas when it is evident that they have in different ways common problems, needs and frustrations.

In the past three to four years the EaP Culture Programme I has worked towards contributing to the creation of a positive 'climate' or 'context for culture'. What is perfectly obvious even from the limited research and analysis that could be done is that the 'climate' or 'context for culture' is more affected by non-cultural factors than cultural ones, certainly with regard to many daily working conditions of culture actors. This includes such things as project, company or NGO registration procedures, the Tax Code, employment legislation, VAT rules that sometimes are not applied as per the law, the IP environment, customs and excise regulations and so on. These are factors that affect all parts of the cultural sector - state/local government, independent/NGO, private/entrepreneurial and commercial/business and even beyond all sectors of society but they rarely seem to appear as priorities on the agendas of Ministries of Culture or of cultural organisations in general nor of governments.

New thinking is however developing. Unfortunately another weakness of the region is that the tools for learning from experiments or successes in the cultural sectors of the countries are not in place. The most obvious problem is that case-studies and 'good-news stories' are not systematically collected, analysed on their cause-effect relations and promoted, yet all six countries have good examples of learning experiences which could be shared with their neighbours.

The twenty and more years since independence has been a 'Post-Soviet' period which, when one looks back, was more 'Soviet' than 'Post-'. It has been a period in which understanding the legacy (the positive

as well as the negative) was not easy and took up so much 'energy' often at times of critically harsh economic and political, internal and external, challenges. Two extremely difficult decades have passed since independence. Slow and often frustrating progress has been made but there have also been missed opportunities for positive structural change and reform in the cultural sector. To a greater or lesser extent the six countries of the region, each in its own way, may now be reaching a watershed as far as the pace and direction of cultural development and cultural policy are concerned. There are increasing indications, as well as both non-cultural and cultural shaping events, that suggest the 'Post-Soviet period' and the hitherto mainly dead weight of the Soviet legacy is finally giving way to a 'post-Post Soviet period' in which genuinely forward-looking cultural policy can now start to emerge.

There is for example beginning to be agreement about moving on from the old 19th century/Soviet definition of culture being exclusively buildings-based 'classical' culture even in the more conservative state sector. The fact that the region's six ministers of culture could agree in summer 2013 on the Tbilisi Ministerial Declaration<sup>1</sup>, symbolically showed that the role of culture and its contribution to other social and economic agendas is beginning to be accepted and promoted in the region, even if for the time being in some cases just as a lip service.

Evidence of the final throes of the 'Post-Soviet period' and non-acceptance of the 'status quo' it represented has been most evident and visible in Ukraine since the winter 2013/2014 when 'value issues' related to governance, corruption and quality of life erupted onto the streets of Kyiv. The political, diplomatic and psychological ramifications of what has been happening in Ukraine are profound for the whole region. Social and political 'tectonic plates' are shifting.

The imminent passing of the 'Post-Soviet period' in the region is, symbolically at least, illustrated by Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine signing EU Association Agreements. The Agreements themselves reflect quietly maturing social and political trends in those countries. This can be observed, for example, most clearly in the democratically-inclined and modernising society which is beginning to emerge in Georgia, evidenced by not only the peaceful shift of power after the 2012 elections but also, in the cultural sector and in a quite different way, by the recent pre-historic gold mine heritage 'scandal' – called the 'Sakdrisi Case'<sup>2</sup>.

In the three other countries, there are also signs of a changing of eras. In Azerbaijan, the physical transformation of Baku most dramatically illustrates the country's oil-funded and somehow culturally-driven national strategy that also is an example for culture that not per se is serving and supporting civil society and the needs of the large population, if not connected to values, such as democracy, transparency and participation. However, there are other aspects, such as the significant change in the use of the Azerbaijani language. The adoption of a presidential decree called 'concept for culture' in 2014, although being essentially a rather eclectic list of cultural fields and activities foreseen for development and financial support by the government, marks nonetheless a first step in recognizing the role of culture for the country's development. In Armenia, alongside a commitment of the government to join the Eurasian Economic Union, one sees an energetic desire to engage with Europe, powered to a large extent by its younger generations, and reflected, at least in the cultural sphere, through the commitment to participate in Eurimages, the CoE's film co-funding body, and the interest in the EU's 'Creative Europe' programme.

The situation in Belarus is perhaps more complicated. In certain respects Belarus is seen incorrectly as a pariah although it's governance is not that different from for instance Azerbaijan. But even in Belarus and in an unhelpful environment, if looked at in its own very specific context, change is happening in the cultural sector. It is surely significant in local cultural policy terms and as a sign of changing times that in the last three to four years although the Belarusian language had become synonymous with the political opposition to the government, a Minister of Culture started to make speeches in Belarusian at the opening of cultural events and that in the last couple of years the Ministry of Culture website apart from improving significantly in terms of content is also now using Belarusian language. Belarus is frequently

<sup>1</sup> The document was adopted by the Ministers of (responsible for) Culture or Heads of delegations of the EaP countries at the First Eastern Partnership Ministerial Conference on Culture held in Tbilisi, Georgia on 28 June 2013:

[http://www.euroeastculture.eu/struct\\_file.php?id\\_n=38](http://www.euroeastculture.eu/struct_file.php?id_n=38)

<sup>2</sup> For details, please see the Addendum to the Base-line Report on the Culture Sector and Cultural Policy of Georgia, pp. 5-6:

<http://www.euroeastculture.eu/en/database-of-materials/view-georgia-analytical-base-line-report-on-the-culture-sector-and-cultural-policy.html>

dismissed with the sound-bite of 'the last dictatorship in Europe', but however obstructive the authorities may be to what is treated as normal and healthy elsewhere in Europe, there is nevertheless in Minsk at least a fairly thriving cultural scene. This is mainly driven by the younger generations, and in terms of physical venues may be limited but an independent music scene exists, independent publishing can be found and critical debate around cultural policy does take place publicly. Even in areas of culture fully controlled by the state such as cinema and film production, there have been in recent times, in a Belarus context, significant changes. For example apart from investment in the refurbishing of the Belarus Film Studios, there is a new policy of official involvement in international co-productions with 'western' partners although some local critics would interpret this as not entirely positive with Belarus simply being a junior and not significant partner in such scenarios.

It is important of course while observing what seems to be the beginning of a change of era and celebrating the appearance of 'green shoots' in the cultural sector not to mistake the first month of pregnancy for the ninth! In all countries in terms of cultural policy and development there is still a lot to do related to sorting out the past as well as a challenging forward-looking agenda in terms of professionalization, change and reform. The agenda and challenges need to be embraced at not only national level but also at regional and municipality level. The state and public bodies, the independent and NGO sector, the private and entrepreneurial players and the commercial/business institutions and projects all need to be engaged. To be successful, much of the agenda needs to be powered by the younger generations.

The agendas for change and development are beginning to emerge more clearly and increasing numbers of players, individual and organisational, are beginning to engage with them. The current Cultural Policy 'Road-Map' process in Georgia is a particularly interesting and inspiring example, that, if driven transparently by the ministry of culture and following the initiated participatory approach bears the chance for a real step forward. The fragmented but enthusiastic cultural policy discussions and work taking place in Ukraine in the shadow of war is another area where there is commitment and energies harnessed to the potential for positive change. In Moldova, interesting initiatives have been taken from which others could learn. It is interesting to note that under the grant-funded projects of the Eastern Partnership Culture Programme I, the country with the most involvement and highest profile was Armenia. It is now to be seen, how the government and the civil society in Armenia succeed in capitalising on the input that these projects have injected into the cultural life of the country, including cultural policy initiatives.

### **Common Needs, Challenges and Characteristics of the Cultural Sector of the EaP Countries**

The individual country addenda to the Base-line Reports in fact in most cases reflect confidence in the positive change that is beginning to take place. While the individual countries are individually developing in different and diverse ways, there are still many needs, challenges and characteristics common to the region.

Some of these needs, challenges and characteristics include:

- Strategic and conceptual approaches to the development of the cultural sectors and sub-sectors and the role of culture within society;
- Development of joined-up, research-driven and evidence-based cultural policies at national, regional, municipal and local levels;
- centre-region relations and addressing urban-rural cultural planning imbalances, including the failure to replace or reinvent the old 'Dom kultury' provision (by imaginative use of new technologies and digitalisation?) and, in general, appropriate approaches to decentralised delivery of local cultural needs;
- creating a positive environment for cultural development, including through measures related to cultural and non-culturally-specific legislation (e.g. implementation of IP legislation, Tax Code and budget regulation reforms, etc.);
- cultural leadership and in particular its relation to access, participation, creativity, personal growth and agenda-setting;

- the potential of 'creative cities' and creative clusters and hubs and their contribution to cultural, social and economic development;
- support for cultural and creative industries as a vector for developing social and cultural entrepreneurship and to facilitate directly and indirectly the empowering involvement of younger people and their creative abilities into the cultural mainstream. This will be an important contribution to a wider agenda of breaking down barriers and addressing historically inherited Soviet structural weaknesses such as the absence of integration of the state/public, independent/NGO and private/entrepreneurial and commercial/business cultural strands into unified national, regional and local cultural policies and strategies;
- advocacy and professional development and the creation and support of genuinely representative sub-sector professional bodies and associations to replace the lingering legacy of the 'creative unions' of the Soviet past and allowing the policy dialogue to move from an unstructured debate among individuals to a structured exchange between institutions, which is a precondition for a real democracy as well as for transparency and accountability;
- innovative strategies and diversified approaches to cultural funding;
- integration of youth, gender and environmental objectives into cultural policies and practices;
- development of an effective statistical and practical research base for assessing, analysing and monitoring the effectiveness and efficiency of the cultural sector including its contribution to non-cultural agendas.

To conclude this document, it is encouraging to observe that findings and recommendations from the researches and analyses of the RMCBU of the EaP Culture Programme I are confirmed and re-confirmed by strategic reflections of civil society initiatives and think tanks, such as for instance the Nestor Group in Ukraine<sup>3</sup>.

- The division of tasks and responsibilities between state/public authorities and civil society should be based on the idea of authorities being responsible for creating framework conditions and of society taking action for its prospering and sustainable development, and where the state takes action according to the principle of subsidiarity only where it is necessary.
- For this, the independent/NGO sector and civil society need to take responsibility for getting stronger in terms of their role and their level of organisation; civil society needs to be supported in these endeavours.
- Coherently and conclusively, policy-making needs to be an inclusive and participatory bottom-up process.

Culture actors of the EaP countries have acknowledged some of the recommendations of the RMCBU, but both, authorities and civil society still need to integrate them in strategies and transform them into tangible action plans:

- Ministries acting as 'ministries FOR culture' rather than as 'ministries OF culture'.
- Establishing a balance between efforts to preserve and protect cultural heritage and support for contemporary artistic creation and cultural production.
- Creating supportive legal and administrative conditions governing the culture sector, in other words taking serious action to improve the 'climate' and operating environment for culture and cultural development.

The role of the creative and cultural sectors, especially the development of clusters, hubs and start-ups, could become the engine which delivers input, fresh ideas and energy to the wider cultural sector, introducing new entrepreneurial behaviours and attitudes and offering real alternatives to the 'vertical management' model of the traditional state cultural system of the Soviet and Post-Soviet independence periods.

<sup>3</sup> Find their 'Vision for Ukraine: Contract of Dignity for Sustainable Development' under this link <https://www.facebook.com/TheNestorGroup/posts/930899660261756>