

***Art as Cultural Diplomacy: A Forum for Young Leaders***

***"The Role of the Arts in Shaping Europe's Future"***

***(Berlin, 14<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> February 2011)***

***Montenegro - Culture within the international context and European integration***

***Field of activities***

**S**ince the proclamation of independence in May 2006, Montenegro has begun building its administrative capacities on the already existing grounds of public administration. In the framework of this process, activities of the Ministry of Culture have been developed in the following thematic areas: development and enhancement of culture and artistic creativity in Montenegro, safeguarding and protection of Montenegrin cultural heritage, supporting cultural projects and institutions, relevant legislation adoption in the field of culture and monitoring of its implementation, as well as monitoring research in the field of culture.

**R**ealizing importance of the international context, the focus of the aforementioned activities moved towards an aspect of international cooperation. This was confirmed through signing of the *Stabilization and Association Agreement with European Union* in 2007, which contains a clause referring to enhancement of cultural cooperation, mutual understanding, respect between individuals, communities and peoples, as well as to implementation of *UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*.

**T**hrough publishing annual call for proposals, various international competitions and participation in international programmes, cross-border mobility of the cultural operators is encouraged, as well as artistic cooperation and intercultural dialogue. Ministry of Culture has an established call for proposals for co-financing projects and programmes in the field of visual arts, music and stage activities, literature and literary translation, cultural and artistic magazines, theatre, amateur creativity, traditional arts and crafts, creative industries, creativity of the youth and of the disabled. Support of such projects in the framework of national, regional and international contexts provides an opportunity to artists for affirmation of their artistic expression, exchange of experience, and exploring collaboration models.

### ***International programmes and initiatives***

**E**U *Culture programme 2007 - 2013* serves as a mechanism for creating platform of cooperation and its aim is achieving three objectives: promotion of the cross-border mobility of cultural operators; encouraging the transnational circulation of cultural and artistic output; and fostering intercultural dialogue. Montenegro has been a member country of this programme since January 2010 and Montenegrin cultural operators have been presented with a great possibility of gaining funds for their cultural activities in the international context. In this way, collaboration between European organizations working in the cultural sector is promoted through different programme strands, such as cultural actions; European-level cultural bodies; and analysis and dissemination activities.

**W**hen Montenegro joined *Euro-Med partnership* a possibility of forming a network in the framework of *Anna Lindh Foundation* (ALF) aroused. Therefore, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro authorized Ministry of Culture to take over the coordination of the Montenegrin Network within ALF which involves 43 member countries representing national networks. Dialogue and understanding between different cultures and peoples is promoted through this initiative. There are various annual activities

supporting this idea, most important of which are annual call for proposals for co-financing projects, 'Sea of Words' – literary contest and Euro-Med Award for dialogue between cultures. Organizations from Montenegro have been actively participating in the activities of Anna Lindh Foundation, thus forming a part of Network of Networks in the field of ideas and ideology, education, cultural production, media, religion, spirituality and values, cities and diversity.

**M**oreover, when talking about participation of Montenegrin artists in renowned cultural events, it is important to highlight presentation of the work of *Dado Djuric* in *La Biennale* in 2009, one of the greatest Montenegrin contemporary artists of the surrealist figurative art. Events like this stand as vectors of innovative discourse between artists expressing themselves through a prism of their individuality and cultures they come from. In this year's edition of *La Biennale*, Montenegro will participate with a specific project 'The Fridge Factory and Clear Waters' which refers to an opportunity of revitalization of the abandoned factory halls into art institutions for the exchange of artists and ideas in a wider context. Presentation of Montenegro will introduce a concept of a future international multimedia centre 'Marina Abramović Cetinje Community Center Obod' and it will contain Marina Abramović's work and of several Montenegrin artists.

**T**here are many international associations of great value for our country in terms of cultural exchange, cooperation and fostering artistic expression, such as *Biennial of Young Artists from Europe and Mediterranean (BJCEM)* which promotes creativity of young artists and encourages exchanges and development of harmonious relations in Euro-Mediterranean area. *Forum of Slavic Cultures* and *Council of Ministers of Culture of South East Europe* are regional initiatives working towards creating a political platform for cooperation between the artists and implementing cultural projects.

**I**n 2010, Montenegro was a Chair country of the *Council of Ministers of Culture of South East Europe* and *VI Ministerial Conference on Cultural Heritage of SEE 'Cultural Heritage – a Bridge Towards a Shared Future'*, events that gathered

ministers of culture willing to confirm their commitment to mutual understanding and respect of the cultural diversity as a necessary basis for prosperity and regional development. During this period, Montenegrin Ministry of Culture implemented a project envisaged within the Action plan of CoMoCoSEE. The project involved organization of the exhibition with an aim of promoting the art works of the most promising young artists from the member countries of CoMoCoSEE. The exhibition was titled '*Looking Forward*' and it was installed in the National Museum of Montenegro. It represented a flow of creative, interweaving energy of the artists who look forward to opportunities of 'making' and linking.

### ***European integration***

**A**s a process which has been underway in Montenegro since proclamation of independence, *European integration* is a national priority, especially in the light of gaining a status of *Candidate country* for EU membership. Through signing of the *Stabilization and Association Agreement*, a legal background for fulfilling the obligations arising from this document, was created. The aims of the stabilization and association process were laid out in the agreement and refer to supporting efforts of Montenegro in the field of democracy and rule of law, political, economic and institutional stability, functional trade economy, as well as development of regional and international cooperation.

**M**ontenegrin public administration took a next step and created a *National Programme for Integration* which contains provisions ensuring harmonization of national legislation with *EU acquis*. Creation of this document implied joint efforts of each administration body and has proven to be a valuable instrument for meeting the necessary accession criteria. European Commission held annual *Enhanced Permanent Dialogue* meetings and issued progress reports for respective years highlighting the strengths and weaknesses, as well as progress that has been made in particular fields and additional efforts to be invested. In order to assist and support administrative capacities EU ensured the availability of *Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA)* in the framework of which many projects have been launched and implemented. Liberation of visa system was seen as an award for the

efforts of Government that have been put into European integration process. After assessing the state of play, European Commission sent a *Questionnaire* to Montenegrin Public Administration in order to prepare the *Opinion* which was a positive one. The progress which was pointed out in the opinion, among other areas, referred to meeting the criteria that guarantee democracy, rule of law, human rights and respecting and protection of minorities. Therefore, Montenegro gained the official status of Candidate country in December 2010.

**C**ulture as a specific field that cannot be conventionally treated in terms of legal limitations has a major importance in the process of a successful European integration. Intercultural dialogue and respect of the cultural differences of the peoples of European Union represent a firm basis for Montenegro to continue working towards an integral association and stabilization.

**I**n conclusion, cultural and artistic projects and international collaboration contribute to strengthening of liaisons, exchanging and sharing ideas and making a cohesive and productive area shared by Europeans.

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