

“Шетан човек – He is an experienced (lit. travelled) person...”
[Macedonian expression]

Report of the European Cultural Foundation-Fonds Roberto Cimetta Mobility Meeting

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by Hanneloes Weeda, ECF, Oct 2006

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Introduction

For the second time since 2000, the ECF, recognising the usefulness of maintaining a regular platform for exchange and needs assessment, gathered together the coordinators of the major mobility schemes for artists and cultural operators in Europe, and several researchers of mobility. Six years on from the first ECF meeting, it is crucial to take a step back and ask ourselves the question whether we, as cultural managers involved in the mobility of artists, journalists, cultural operators, works of art etc, are ready to re-invigorate the advocacy campaign required to continue improving the ground for further mobility and intercultural dialogue and exchange.

Over the last few years we have indeed seen the creation of new and essential tools and instruments, to help us map, research and analyse mobility (notably EricArts); to help us service the sector by offering a wide range of information and training on mobility (On The Move / IETM) and; to help us voice our common opinion on the need for mobility in Europe toward politicians and decision makers on both national EU member State and European Union level (think of the inclusion of mobility in DG EAC's Culture 2007 programme, or in the programme of the Nordic Council). Yet, despite the progress and these notable initiatives, conducted in a spirit of European partnership, and despite the better argumentation we have launched to convince others of the needs and benefits of mobility schemes, we are still trying to mobilize the sources to advocate for the removal (or flexibilisation) of some of the barriers that continue to hamper the movement of persons and works in the cultural sector, both physically and in virtual space. And the issues at stake are not easy to overcome. They involve the obvious juridical issues, such as visas and labour laws; and they involve more complex issues, such as copyright or migration and integration policy.

In 2004, the ECF commissioned IETM to develop an action plan¹ for mobility in the context of the Dutch Presidency of the EU. This action plan, however, never really led to the big advocacy campaign that it could have sparked, and there was no follow up plan made for the commissioned report after its presentation. Little has changed since then and the plan is still valid. Maybe it would be worthwhile reinvigorating the plan, but this would require the concerted effort of all stakeholders.

In this report we have summarised under thematic headings, the main points raised at the meeting, without giving a full rendering of the minutes, saying who said what. Some recommendations that came out of the discussions have been highlighted.

I. Mobility on the political agenda (mainstreaming mobility)

Before new strategic choices can be made as to the direction that any advocacy campaign for the removal of the obstacles to mobility can take, it is important to recognize that mobility has already been "mainstreamed" as a topic and that it is now on the political agenda, especially at EU level. 2006 has been dedicated to workers' mobility (European Year of Workers' Mobility), and 2008 will be the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, which obviously touches on mobility issues.

Firstly, it remains difficult for the EU to push for more funds for cultural cooperation programmes, facing as it does competition with other priority political areas. Yet mobility is a basic human right and, importantly, one of the EU "freedoms". This makes it legitimate for the EU and the European Commission to act on it, and they use it

¹ The action plan was a part of the Sharing Cultures conference the European Cultural Foundation organized in 2004 in Rotterdam. To see the conclusions and other relevant documents on this issue, please visit the ECF website at www.eurocult.org/key-documents

as an argument to place cultural cooperation on the political agenda. The same applies to the theme “competitiveness”. Intercultural dialogue and diversity, for example, are becoming ever more valued, as they are seen to contribute to competitiveness in the European Union.

Secondly, mobility and intercultural dialogue have been placed on the EU agenda because of the recognition (sparked by the referenda in various Member States on the EU constitution) that cohesion in Europe has not been achieved. Mobility and intercultural dialogue are supposed to make the whole integration process a more engaging one for citizens.

Another force that is influencing mobility is the rise of regionalism. Talented people (a potential workforce) are being welcomed to Europe’s regions, to make them more attractive and for economic ends.

Since 2004, we have also witnessed the creation of new mobility schemes by cities, regions, art councils, ministries and foundations (for example: Art Moves Africa, the redefined mobility fund of the Nordic Council of Ministers – former Sleipnir, as well as the interest in the growing number of Artists residencies in Europe via Resartis and Les Pépinières Européennes pour Jeunes Artistes). This is an indication that the importance of mobility in the cultural sector is valued and recognized and that it is becoming more mainstream.

On the legislative front, there is still no adequate harmonisation taking place in the EU of those issues that directly affect mobility (tax, social security, intellectual property rights, work permits and visas) and this remains one of the most difficult areas in which to advocate for more flexibility and a faster speed of change. Certain tax regulations, for example, that have been set at EU level have not been implemented by the Member States. Therefore lobbying should primarily be taking place on a national level. At the “Mobile Home” meeting that is planned in Helsinki from 9-12 November 2006, a report conducted by the European League of Employers’ Associations in the Performing Arts sector (PEARL) will be presented of research that is currently analysing the main obstacles to mobility². The conference will furthermore call for a template for the Member States to use, to bring some clarity into what already exists and what is still needed in the field of legislation, at least presenting the different national regimes in a more comparative format, even if harmonisation is not possible according to the current rules of subsidiarity.

Proposals:

- Do not restrict advocacy campaigns to the EU level, but start lobbying on national Member State level for some of the more hard-core issues that hamper the movement of individuals and works of art through Europe.
- Include mobility on advocacy agendas in relation to intercultural dialogue and diversity in Europe, as a urgent topic for discussion.

² This report once it will be published in mid December 2006 will be available on the IETM website at www.ietm.org as well as the PEARLE website at www.pearle.ws once it has been completed and published.

II. Mobility as a research topic (mobile mindsets)

ERICarts is currently conducting a major research project on mobility in arts and culture entitled *MEAC*³, which involves 15 scientists from all over Europe. Some of the interesting, lesser discussed topics that are being explored in this project include such questions as:

- 1) what is actually considered as “mobility”, beside the movement of artists from A to B?
 - a. work-related mobility: the pragmatic need for people to move otherwise they cannot perform their work (think of trade and industry, truck drivers).
 - b. forced migration
 - c. tourism: this applies for all Europeans who find it quite normal to move from A to B for touristic ends
 - d. mobile mindsets: this takes place behind one’s desk (some professions are mobile without moving)
 - e. virtual mobility through cyber-space.
- 2) what are the actual “consequences” of mobility?
 - a. brain-drain and brain-gain.
 - b. East-West, North-South relations
- 3) what is still hampering mobility?
 - a. Incompatibility between different EU countries’ legal regulations regarding mobility

In the commercial, or political world mobility is a given. Prodi took 700 people to China

III. Diversifying mobility schemes (mushrooming)

How should we react to the mushrooming effect, whereby new mobility schemes seem to be appearing one after the other? Does this lead to the necessity to streamline, and to harmonise the offer – the mobility framework?

It is important to remember that artists need diversity of offer. By providing financial opportunities, the mobility funds are actually “creating” mobility (opportunities/directing movement flows). Mobility schemes partly take away at least one of the obstacles to artists’ mobility, namely the financial obstacle. They also “direct the flow” of mobility, stimulating travel to areas where artists would otherwise not go.

➤ **Proposal:** Maintain a European network of various efficient small (local, regional, thematic) mobility schemes. The more small, flexible and multifunctional mobility programmes the better, to guarantee diversity. Small regional schemes, are a good tool to provide artists in less supported areas with the opportunity to be mobile and meet their neighbours. However, it essential to ensure that they are visible and accessible.

³ MEAC = Dynamics, Causes and Consequences of Trans-border Mobility in the European Arts and Culture
– More information on this report can be found on the Lab for Culture website at www.labforculture.org

IV. Evaluating mobility (value and impact)

We are often primarily concerned with finding arguments for the positive added-value and impact of mobility.

The mobility of artists and cultural operators supports bridge building in areas that are divided by conflict or other circumstances, through processes whereby a common language can be attained, such as are provided by the arts.

But today we must also pose ourselves new questions, in our endeavour to judge mobility's value:

- 1) does mobility really contribute to cohesion?
- 2) does mobility really contribute to intercultural dialogue and understanding?
Does mobility really help people to open their eyes?
- 3) can mobility make one vulnerable on the transnational market?
- 4) is the harmonisation of legislation we are striving for not in fact restrictive?

Re 1: Does mobility really contribute to cohesion? It is necessary to look at the real flows of mobility. Although mobility programmes exist which actively promote East-East or West-East movement (such as ECF's STEP *beyond* fund and the Gulliver Connect programme of the Felix Meritis for example), the gross of mobility flows are still primarily one way (East to West, South to North) and do thus not really contribute to cohesion. The same applies to cultural goods that are "exported" by the conglomerates.

➤ **Proposal:** European mobility schemes should encourage East-East, South-South, or West-East, North-South movement, so that mindsets are not influenced by the traditional one-dimensional flows. Encourage intra-regional mobility and mobility to less popular or lesser known regions, e.g. EU neighbouring countries, or Arctic Pole countries.

Re 2: Does mobility really contribute to intercultural dialogue and understanding?
It is important not to forget that mobility can also lead to conflict.

Re 3: Can mobility make one vulnerable on the transnational market? When artists move to new places they often need to be re-trained and they lose a part of the investment made in their development in the home country. Being outside one's national background can also make one vulnerable. An artist on the move may have less opportunities than artists who stay at home (be ineligible for national funding for example, or not fall under national social security or labour laws).

➤ **Proposal:** The more artists move through Europe, the more they need to be supported. Mobility funds have a responsibility here, which extends further than merely providing money. Mobility schemes should help to "enable the situation"

Re 4: Is the harmonisation of legislation we are striving for not in fact restrictive? In the education sector, the Bologna process is changing the training landscape dramatically. Courses taught only in English, and harmonization of content, place serious restrictions on scientific freedom that has always been the hallmark of academic practice. What

about diversity in this case? Does harmonization of legislation in favour of mobility harbour the risk of standardisation?

V. The mobility legacy and infrastructure (mobile networks)

Mobility is a fact, an individual aspiration and a basic right. But mobility does not per sé mean “cooperation”. It is a pre-requisite for cultural cooperation, but not a synonym.

Mobility is an investment in people and it leaves behind **networks** of people. This legacy – the networks, are of utmost importance for international cultural cooperation. Especially when it comes to evaluation.

Evaluation of the impact of mobility is something that has not taken proper shape to date. What happens before and after mobility? How much do artists know about their destination before they leave? How do they adapt to new environments? What happens when they get home? What do they do? How do people use what they have actually learned?

How well developed is the infrastructure for mobility inside countries and regions, not only between countries? (Mongolia for example has hardly any roads). Are the individual mobility schemes aware of the regulations in place inside the different countries to which they send artists? What is our responsibility here? Do we tackle and help with language issues?

Another issue that should not be neglected is who is actually supported by our mobility schemes. Current mobility schemes tend to benefit the independent third sector organisations and individual artists, not so much the employees of cultural organisations that are government supported. In general, a rather small percentage of national government spending actually goes to real international cultural exchange. On the cultural markets the impresarios know each other and know the routes to exchanging artists with established international careers. But, for new emerging cultural organisations, finding the possibility to enter the international arena remains difficult.

Proposal:

- - Establish basic and specific evaluation criteria for impact assessment of mobility schemes on a regional level in the long term
- - Pool and store information about existing cultural networks created through mobility programmes
- - Map the necessary national infrastructures and the networking potential that mobility schemes should help to enable

VI. Mobility via virtual routes (cultural dating)

“Cultural dating” on the *internet* is a new form of exchange that does not require funding, or physical movement.

Mobility of mindsets also takes place through, for example, the translation of literary works.

- **Proposal:** Explore in the near future, the cultural patterns of how cultural exchange (and cooperation) takes place on-line, through platforms and blogs.

VII. Mobility and cultural diplomacy (export and import)

All mobility of artists to foreign lands is in fact the export of national cultural values and products. Thus national provision of support for mobility is in fact creating a shop window for national culture. In the case that bilateral contacts between countries are not well set up because of already established inter-state connections, or former (post-colonial) relationships, it may be fruitful to design instruments to forge these links.

Mobility is an asset when it comes to exploring the notion of “what is a European citizen”?

Furthermore, it is well known that there is a large gap between visiting artists and the ethnic diasporas the artists represent.

➤ **Proposal:** Set up special mobility programmes geared towards opening a dialogue between immigrants and visitors.

VIII. SWOTTING mobility

<p>Strengths / opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Year of mobility -Rise of regions (welcoming talent) -Number of studies researching mobility -Diversity of instruments and tools -Cooperation between mobility funds (Assises) -Mobility has been mainstreamed (on political agenda) -Cooperating with different sectors 	<p>Weaknesses / threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Mobility is not always cooperation -Need to correct flows (North-South, West-East, South-South) -Growing concerns around migration in Europe -No proof that effects of mobility are only positive -Risk of standardisation -EU project re. cohesion has failed -Mobility divide (not everyone is mobile) -Fear of brain-drain
<p>Other issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Responsibility of funders (that goes beyond just funding) -Maintenance of diversity of funds on offer (no standardisation) -Need for evaluation and impact assessment -Creation of infrastructure for regional funds -Formative aspect of mobility (movement is training in itself) <p>Areas of contention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Regionalisation versus globalisation -Mushrooming of mobility funds versus synergy and mainstreaming -Expectations versus reality (what can we actually fund?) 	

Conclusion

As a whole, the recommendations that came out of the meeting are more practical than they are advocacy related or politically laden. Diversity is guaranteed by the maintenance of many small funds. Small initiatives that benefit the schemes (mapping, making formats, templates, setting evaluation criteria etc) are now required to professionalise the impact of the funds that we are spending on mobility. Very important is the attention that needs to be paid to helping prepare and enable the infrastructure to which we send beneficiaries.

In general it is useful to bring the mobility schemes together on a regular basis around a specific theme (every two years perhaps). Meetings should be followed up by small project based task forces, treating the recommendations made at the meeting. One such task ahead, could be the further creation of formats and templates discussed earlier:

- for quantitative analysis (who moves where?)
- to trace mobility flows:
 - . on the social level
 - . with regard to diversity
 - . to understand immigration and new migration paradigms (and the reasons for changing movement flows)
 - . to contribute to the creative industries.