

Press release

Regional Parliament of Zilina, Slovakia adopts new cultural policy framework initiated by ECF-run project with overwhelming majority

On October 30, 2007, a great majority of deputies from all political parties represented in the Regional Assembly of the Self-Governing Region of Žilina in the North-West of Slovakia have voted in favour of a new cultural development strategy for the entire region.

This new policy document titled **'From Cultural Values to the Value of Culture'** represents the outcome of an extensive 3-year project the European Cultural Foundation has realised with support from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Matra Programme) and its Slovak project partners from the Centre for Contemporary Arts in Bratislava, The Cultural Department of the Žilina Regional Self-Government, the Žilina-based NGO Truc Sphérique and the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic.

During this project a comprehensive process of developing and implementing innovative principles and new approaches to cultural strategy- and policymaking for the Zilina Region (e.g. entirely new public funding mechanisms) has been initiated from scratch. **The overall aim was to provide the 700.000 citizens living in this region with a higher diversity, quality and availability of local cultural activities.**

The project took place in the context of new professional links and opportunities within the European cultural scene right after Slovakia joined the European Union in 2004 – the year the project started. It also addressed all regional and local cultural organisations in the region and the managers and administrators working in them. Together with the regional cultural authorities, Slovak and foreign experts and professionals from the region they first analysed established practices and then initiated and elaborated new processes and mechanisms of developing regional and municipal cultural policies in Zilina as laid down in the now adopted document.

The strictly participative elaboration of the new policy document has led to a solid base of new working relations between the government, regional and municipals authorities and the artistic community in the Zilina Region.

While the main focus of the realised project has always been on the successful adoption of a totally new cultural policy framework for the Zilina Region different preparatory phases also involved capacity building actions such as cultural management lectures and trainings, focus group workshops, debates and conferences, a study trip to the Netherlands as well as a local grant-scheme for financing pilot projects supporting the new regional development strategy.

The success of the complex process realised for the Zilina Region has already provoked great interest in many other administrative regions of Slovakia to enter similar endeavours. At the same time the working- and stakeholder groups firmly established in the Zilina Region will continue their work with monitoring and supervising the actual implementation and realisation of the adopted cultural development strategy.

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