

# Cultural policy and cultural management

education and training – challenges and opportunities

*policy paper*

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## ABSTRACT

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Education in cultural management and cultural policy has been developed in the Central and Eastern European countries for several years already. University programmes were established, and other forms of education and training were tested. The relevance of existing educational offer has to be evaluated and adjusted in order to respond to existing needs of the public cultural sector. Various researches show a growing gap between current challenges of the management of public culture sector and available education and training opportunities. Specific policy solutions are needed to ensure that the sustainability of the cultural sector is achieved through sound management of cultural organisations, which is impossible without well-educated managers. As the public cultural sector is very complex and the issue of policy and management training provides a lot of challenges, various stakeholders have their role to fulfil in the policy making process in this field.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Context and definition of the problem

*Culture needs participants, professionals and informed audiences.*

*The education system needs to help supply all three.*

*(Simon Mundy, Cultural policy: a short guide)*

Cultural policy and cultural management belong to the issues that have been increasingly discussed in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe over the last several years. The cultural sector overall, and its particular sub-sectors have undergone substantial changes as a result of major political, economic and social developments in the region.

The most general context is outlined by two fundamental questions – what is the place and recognition of cultural policies as a part of public policy, and – on the other hand – what is the acknowledgement of cultural management as a profession.

If we agree and accept that sustainability of the cultural sector is resting on sound cultural policies and professional management, then the educational offer in this field has to be evaluated, and adjusted periodically. It is also necessary to work towards increased awareness of importance of cultural policy making, both nationally and locally, but also in the international context.

Assuming that policy rests on: authority, expertise and order,<sup>i</sup> we also need to acknowledge that those three attributes are not equally important at all moments of the policy process, and that various stakeholders have their chance to influence the policy-making at its various stages. Expertise is needed to identify and/or describe a problem, as well as propose a solution to it. Here is where the cultural managers as well as researchers can contribute to the policy making.

If we follow the model structured in this way: *determining goals – choosing courses of action – implementing them – evaluating the results – modifying the policy*,<sup>ii</sup> we see the role of the cultural sector experts – the academics and practitioners alike, firstly in defining goals, then in implementing them, and evaluating the results.

It is obvious that for the successful implementation commitment and skills are indispensable. This is one of the clearest reasons why **the governments, national and local, should have not only the interest, but also the obligation to make sure that those who implement the policies are well educated and trained.** That concerns both the leaders of particular governmental units – culture department, ministry, etc., and the executives of the organisations that those

authorities supervise. The managers of cultural institutions in the public sector are expected to work towards the goals determined in the policies statements; therefore their knowledge and skills are vital for the policies success.

This is recognised by key international organisations, such as UNESCO or Council of Europe, as well as the European Union. Referring to the anthropological concept of culture, embracing not only arts, but also ways of life, human rights, customs and beliefs, which requires interlinking policies in the fields of culture, education, science, and communication UNESCO has voiced the need for training in management. *“Principles of good management should apply as much to publicly supported arts institutions, programmes and projects, as they do to all state-supported services. As the scope of cultural responsibility must be widened, building a broader, new awareness has become even more essential. (...) The training provided by existing courses in cultural policy and management does not meet this need”.*<sup>iii</sup>

Council of Europe has initiated and supported several important initiatives linked to education and training in cultural policy and management, for example two programmes aiming at strengthening the cultural sector – MOSAIC for the South-East Europe region and STAGE for the Caucasus region. Moreover, the cultural policy publications of the Cultural Policies Research and Development Unit play a very important role for the cultural community in Europe, and are of substantial help in the cultural policy training.<sup>iv</sup>

Another key international player in the field of cultural policy in Europe is the European Cultural Foundation supporting some well-established programmes such as Policies for Culture in the South-East Europe or newer initiatives - Cultural Policy Research Award, or Cultural Policy Education Group.<sup>v</sup>

What are the major obstacles in the cultural policy and cultural management education development?

Policy-making is not widely seen as an activity crucial for cultural managers. It is connected to the fact that the *cultural policy-making* itself is very seldom regarded as an autonomous subject of study and education. There is also a problem with recognition of cultural management as a profession, because - *“though recognised as a highly specialised and skilled activity, [it] still does not readily fit into any one academic category”.*<sup>vi</sup>

The International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) adopted by the International Labour Organisation does not include “cultural (or arts) manager” as a separate

profession/occupation. The complex nature of the arts/culture manager's job does not allow fitting it into this particular framework, even though there are holders of a diploma, or an academic degree in cultural management.

Additionally there comes an issue of differences between the private and public sector management, which might be a source of difficulties with designing educational programmes in cultural management.

In the *new public management* concept managers are increasingly expected to initiate, to propose, to be pro-active. Following this trend, the cultural organisations in the public sector, which are also increasingly perceived as “cultural/educational services providers”, have to face new challenges linked both to the understanding of the role and place they play in the society, and to understanding of the function and position that the leaders (executives and artists) have to fulfil. The literature<sup>vii</sup> on the differences between public and private management points out four main aspects that influence the ways in which management is carried out: organisational environment, organisational goals, organisational structures, and the values of managers. As for the organisational environment – the *complexity* of environment (variety of stakeholders), *instability*, and *absence of competitive pressure* seem to be particularly relevant for cultural organisations. Organisational goals – this aspect is also important for the public management in culture. What influences the management of cultural institution is not only the fact that there are sometimes conflicting goals to achieve (e.g. to promote unpopular and difficult genre of art, and to remain financially stable at the same time) but also the fact the goals are normally intangible, and extremely difficult to measure, therefore also the performance of managers is not easy to assess. Considering the organisational structures: the public sector managers have to face more bureaucracy, than their private counterparts; they also enjoy much lower autonomy. In case of cultural institutions that lack of autonomy, which often means that hiring or firing according to artistic/cultural merit is very difficult or even impossible, poses particular challenge. The issue of values and attitudes towards their work seems to be of utmost importance for the managers of cultural institutions. Therefore they have to accept not only much lower financial rewards, but also the fact that there is no direct financial link between the quality of their work and rewards. All those differences may influence both the way, in which management is performed, and the way, in which prospective and current managers are trained for their job.

At the moment we can distinguish several trends in the cultural management related education in Europe. One of them is the *European (or international) dimension* of courses.

Another tendency reflecting change of attitude towards the role of culture and development is the growing number of programmes *preparing professionals capable to conceive and promote cultural projects influencing tourism and economic development* of a certain territory. Most of the programmes in the CEE countries reflect another big trend, one could actually say – the mainstream of the cultural management education. Those are the *programmes that focus on managing the organisation*. Important changes in the labour market, also in the cultural sector, that is characterised more than any other by short-term contracts, temporary work, and self-employment have inclined some institutions to providing *education for 'cultural entrepreneurship'* also when managing individual careers.

Education for the cultural sector tackles also the cultural policy-making issue. Many authors, both European and American, have presented the rationale for cultural policy as a subject of studies and teaching at universities, and tried to explain why the research done by specialists other than humanities people is not satisfactory: *economists, demographers, statisticians, and policy analysts evaluating culture often ask what many humanists consider the wrong questions and measure what many humanists consider the wrong things. (...) If cultural policies are defined by economic criteria (...) then the norms inherent to neo-classical economics – the bias in favor of efficiency and the systematic undervaluing of what are called 'externalities' – are likely to dominate cultural policy research<sup>viii</sup>.*

The danger of “economic domination” looks quite real in the CEE region, as the shift towards marketisation of culture and ongoing criticism towards public cultural institutions for their (true or not) reckless use of public money is a constant element of the debate – if such debate exists at all – on the development of cultural sector.

This paper is written to present the situation in the Central European countries and point out possible policy actions that are required. It is supported by research funded by the International Policy Fellowship programme of the Open Society Institute.

Methodology that has been used includes on the one hand analysis of available documents, on the other – mailed questionnaire survey and interviews, as well as personal observation and participation. Interviews were conducted in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic with selected persons representing four groups of stakeholders: directors of public cultural organisations, educational institutions, graduates of cultural management programmes, and local government representatives.

## CURRENT SITUATION

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What is worth noting is that the issue of professional development should be seen as responsibility shared between the governance bodies, the organisations, and the managers themselves, with collaboration of the educational organisations. In the cultural sector, especially in the CEE region it is still hard to find the balance where on the one hand organisations would recognise that investing in professional development would strengthen the organisation, and the managers commit themselves to lifelong learning and encourage their staff to do the same; and on the other the local authorities that supervise the cultural institutions would offer commitment and support complemented by coherent and diverse training offer provided by educational bodies.

The management education for the cultural sector is initiated and developed mostly by the educational organisations, and the demand from the authorities concerning the professional development of cultural organisations reflected in the available policy documents, is rather weak.

Education and training options in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland include mostly higher education courses – both full-time and part-time – provided by universities and arts academies. In this group there are both programmes leading to a degree (BA or MA) and postgraduate courses designed for participants already active professionally in the field. There are no programmes of studies that would be dedicated only to cultural policy; this issue is usually covered by varied number of hours within the programme of cultural management.

Apart from the higher education system, there are not so many other opportunities for training in cultural management issues. Ministries and their agencies (such as Cultural Contact Points) offer short specialised trainings on issues linked to the Culture 2000 programme, and other European cultural co-operation issues. Another educational opportunity that has been identified is consulting, most often focused on the issues of grant application writing, or other very practical issues.

Certain forms of training are almost completely absent in the region – most notably the mentorship schemes, prolonged internships, or in-house training schemes. Moreover, the information and experience sharing through professional networks, conferences and peer group meetings seem not to get enough attention as an educational tool. Professional arts/culture management related publications are scarce, and non-formal learning is underdeveloped.

The managers themselves value most those skills / knowledge that one can acquire not necessarily through management studies: knowledge of a particular arts/culture discipline,

foreign language, leadership skills, negotiation skills, decision making. We will easily recognise that apart from the knowledge of a particular discipline, the other skills are in fact not the ones that might be learned in the classroom. The higher education programmes cannot be blamed too much for not providing enough opportunities to learn this type of skills, but alternative forms of training could fill in this gap.

The problem, which can be generally described as **not sufficient and not relevant educational offer for the cultural management and cultural policy field, resulting from the lack of action of governments**. It has several dimensions:

1. existing cultural policy documents do not pay enough attention to the issue of management education for the cultural sector;
2. cultural policy is not regarded as an autonomous subject that should be studied (leading towards a degree); that is linked to the lack of public policy studies in the region;
3. cultural management is not recognised as a “real profession”;
4. there are too few programmes in cultural management;
5. the programmes are not well known and recognised;
6. an important aspect of management education, which is practical training, is not developed due to limitations of the existing higher education system;
7. training options alternative to higher education programmes are very weak and few;
8. international co-operation and funding present new opportunities for development of training options, but those opportunities are not fully explored and used.

Main challenges identified during the research include:

1. lack of training needs assessment, which results in a substantial gap between real needs and existing offer;
2. lack of well developed positive attitude towards lifelong learning concept, especially in case of older generation managers;
3. no clear employment criteria for cultural managers linked to the lack of well defined profile of the job and expectations towards a potential manager of a public cultural institution;
4. constant problem with not adequate funding for the cultural sector;
5. lack of assigning responsibilities for the field – it is not established who is to educate managers for the public cultural sector;

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS - POLICY OPTIONS

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When looking for possible policy options one has to keep in mind especially two situational variables: low financial resources and existing educational system. Efficiency seems therefore the factor that might be decisive, however it is very important to consider also effectiveness and sustainability of proposed solutions.

### *Keeping the status quo - no change in policy*

When public authorities choose this option it may result in activities undertaken by other stakeholders, so it may lead to certain desirable initiatives, which is actually very often the case in the cultural management education. If this is the right choice is rather doubtful, as the lack of interest from the governments might be more discouraging than stimulating.

### *Expenditure instruments*

A couple of options are possible: *grants to the cultural institutions* that want to strengthen professional capacity of their staff, with an aim of participation in certain type of training or organising an in-house training session; or *grants to educational institutions* in order to develop a particular type of training suitable for cultural organisations governed by the grant donor (on local or national level). Grants could be also awarded to educational or research institutions, which would carry out research linked to enhancement of management of public cultural institutions, for example - training needs assessment, effectiveness of particular types of training etc.

*Individuals* could be also recipients of similar types of grants, as well as awards, that would serve as recognition of achievements - on the level of theory (researchers, educators), and praxis alike - for example through awards for best managers.

There are policy alternatives based both on expenditure and regulation, such as decision on increasing the budget of an organisation by an amount that has to be allocated to training expenses of the staff. Subsidy might be increased, but it also might be only restructured - with the regulation that certain amount of money is dedicated to professional development purposes.

Keeping in mind that the public cultural sector is characterised by low and unstable financial resources, expenditure instruments seem to be rather difficult to introduce. Resistance to this type of policy might be especially strongly felt by those cultural operators and artists who often quite rightly claim that the public funding should be directed first of all to the artistic / cultural

production process, and that the administrative costs are usually a big burden for the organisational budgets.

*Regulation-based policy instruments* might be effective in many ways in the cultural management education. Decisions such as *defining standards for managerial posts* in public cultural sector, linked with *formulating explicit criteria and requirements for employment* in the field are clearly needed. It might lead to better understanding of managerial competences in culture, and in connection with specific information tools and training opportunities easily available, might contribute substantially to strengthening managerial skills in the sector. Regulations may also concern educational institutions – for example *recognition (accreditation) of quality education/training providers*. Such accreditation should be conferred in co-operation of educational and cultural departments on national or local level. Obviously, in order to provide such recognition, clear assessment criteria have to be developed first, which is another type of regulation, needed in this case.

Difficulties with introducing this type of policy instruments are linked with lack of agreement on the role of manager of cultural institution, linked directly with the prevailing understanding of the role of culture and its organisations in society in general, and in development (also in economic terms) in particular. The dilemma of artistic versus managerial/economic leadership within an organisation remains unresolved. The issue of accreditation of cultural management training is also quite difficult. For this type of policy instrument a broad inter-sectorial co-operation is needed.

*Information-based instruments*, they seem to be relatively easy to introduce, however in most cases there is no way of assuring that the information available, which is supposed to lead to certain actions or behaviours is used at all. In our case there are plenty of possibilities that might be explored – one of the most effective seems *subsidizing production and dissemination of information* such as databases of training opportunities, online training materials, online documentary resources (legal documents, policy documents, etc.). Information instruments include also *producing textbooks, journals or periodic publications*.

When implementing this type of policy instruments, cost and technology issue have to be considered. The less expensive in production and dissemination resources, i.e. online publications are not easily accessed in smaller centres, where the IT equipment and infrastructure (and

sometimes lack of skills) does not allow benefiting fully from this opportunity. On the other hand, for the younger generation of cultural workers, electronic resources constitute the main pool of knowledge, and developing this type of instruments seems to be particularly effective.

#### *Direct action – establishing an agency*

Establishing an agency with an aim of providing particular services, in our case – training in management for public cultural sector is a solution well known in some European countries (e.g. France or Great Britain), and to some extent present also in the CEE region – we mentioned before trainings provided by Cultural Contact Points (of Ministries of Culture) or organisations supervised by the Ministry (National Cultural Centre in Warsaw). None of these units had been established as a training provider, though, and understandably their training activities are quite limited. An alternative to government agency is delegating the task to an organisation, for example an NGO specialising in training activities. Challenges linked to such a solution include not only defining the decisions on who is to receive the subsidy – the providers of the service or the recipients, etc., but also establishing the ways of supervision and quality assurance.

Implementation of any of the instruments mentioned above requires attention to certain aspects that might be critical for success of policies. It has been already underlined that the public cultural sector is characterised by extreme complexity. Therefore the objectives of policy have to be clearly specified and agreed, in order to establish the evaluation criteria. Those criteria have to take into account not only the efficiency aspect – for example how many people were trained at what cost, or how many publications produced, but also – or rather first of all – the effectiveness of particular instrument. That is much more demanding and difficult to establish – mostly because the timeline for effectiveness measurement is longer, but also because the results are not always tangible and easy to measure. Managerial skills enhancement through training can be judged by the number of new projects initiated or better financial management of an organisation, etc., but assessing to what extent a particular policy instrument contributes to improvement requires a lot of time in a fairly stable and unchanged situation, which is quite difficult to attain in the culture sector in the CEE region.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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1) Local and national governments are particularly responsible for sustainability and sound management of public cultural institutions. To ensure the right level of managerial competences it is advisable:

- a. to define clearly the range of tasks and responsibilities of a manager – especially the top level executives – in cultural institutions supervised by given authority;
- b. to define requirements – also in terms of managerial skills – for managerial posts, and introduce transparent procedures of recruitment, with attention to management education;
- c. to stimulate professional development of cultural organisations staff through introducing an obligatory item in the organisational budgets – dedicated to training expenses;
- d. to allocate grants to educational bodies and commission particular training options;
- e. to establish ways of recognition for outstanding managers – through individual and organisational awards;

2) Educational institutions need to recognise that their initiative remains crucial for the cultural management development and cultural policy awareness. Therefore they need to stay alert to changing requirements of the field through:

- a. regular research into training needs in the local environment;
- b. adjusting – within the limitations of the existing system – curricula and methodology of programmes that are currently carried out;
- c. giving more attention to research focusing on issues essential for cultural management;
- d. introducing innovative forms of training, with greater participation of management practitioners as tutors and mentors;
- e. working towards establishing assessment criteria for cultural management education, also through international collaboration within networks such as European Network of Cultural Administration Training Centres.

3) For cultural organisations it is vital to elaborate ways of permanent professional development of their staff. The concept of *learning organisation*, responding to challenges of operating in the complex public sector, competing (but also collaborating) with private and third sector actors, needs to be developed, taking as points of departure:

- a. closer co-operation with educational structures, resulting in developing training options alternative to higher education, more flexible and tailor-made for particular organisations;
- b. developing the positive attitude towards the lifelong learning concept, through encouraging the staff to participate in various forms of training;
- c. strengthening the peer group pressure opportunities – for example through setting up associations of cultural managers that could work towards better recognition of cultural management as a distinct occupation;

It has to be underlined that a close collaboration between the major stakeholders, i.e. governments (national and local), educational and cultural organisations is a decisive factor of success of any policies. Through co-operation the following instruments may be developed:

1. governments and educational institutions
  - a. information instruments: training opportunities databases, online training resources, etc.
2. educational institutions and cultural organisations
  - a. establishing “platforms for knowledge updating” – peer groups/networks serving as information exchange and knowledge sharing forum;
  - b. designing longer internship schemes as well as other forms of practice-based training, alternative to formal academic studies leading to a degree;
3. public authorities, educational institutions and cultural organisations
  - a. tailor-made training sessions;
  - b. initiating/participation in transnationally designed training projects, funded by international sources, such as European Union programmes, European Cultural Foundation, Visegrad Fund, and Central European Initiative.

To sum up, it is worth stressing that as long as the link between capacity building of the public cultural sector, the level and type of education received by its managerial staff and the availability of education and training options is not established and strengthened over years, the sustainable development of the sector remains just wishful thinking. The decision makers should take an advantage of the huge potential and exceptional commitment of people working in the arts and culture, and accept the responsibility for their professional development. Not only a broad inter-sectorial co-operation is needed on the ministries level, but also small and concrete steps on local levels, helping the field to fill in the most visible gaps.

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