

Towards a new Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends: a Road Map

04 May 2017

This is a working paper stimulating the future development of the Compendium for Cultural Policies and Trends. Conceived at the Stakeholders Meeting in Nicosia, Cyprus (March 2017), it was developed by a working group of Compendium experts, including Ulrike Blumenreich (Kulturpolitischen Gesellschaft), Carla Bodo (Associazione per l'Economia della Cultura), Vesna Čopić (ECURES), Jean-Cedric Delvainquière (Ministère de la culture et de la communication, France), Marielle Hendriks (Boekman Foundation), Dorota Ilczuk (SWPS University), Joris Janssens (Flanders Arts Institute), Ritva Mitchell (ECURES), Christoph Weckerle (Zürcher Hochschule der Künste) and Andreas Wiesand (ERICarts Institute). This working group has chosen not to put forward definitive choices about the future development of the Compendium. In the current context of transition, where the role of the different stakeholders changes fundamentally, a vision about the future of Compendium can only be developed through a process of dialogue. This paper will serve as the basis of further discussion about the future development of and strategic opportunities for the Compendium, both within the larger community of Compendium authors and experts, and with possible partners and stakeholders of the future Compendium Consortium.

The Establishment in the Past

Since its start in the 1990's, the Compendium has been run as a joint venture between the Council of Europe and the ERICarts Institute, in partnership with a vigorous 'community of practice', consisting of independent experts, NGO's and national government representatives. The Compendium started because policy makers, funders, academics, students, knowledge centres and broader audiences needed qualitative, reliable, up-to-date and comparable information about cultural policies in different countries. The 'community of practice' not only developed the (online) Compendium database, but also organised annual meetings, stimulated reflection about current trends and played an active role in capacity building of cultural policy in different countries, in Europe and beyond.

Current achievements

Following a pilot version in 1998, the first regular edition of the Compendium (1999) was a loose leaf publication providing information for 14 countries. Since then, the Compendium has been highly successful. There have been meaningful developments on the level of:

- *Content.* Expansion of the country profiles, investments in development of comparable statistics, thematic trend analyses, ad hoc research projects...
- *Technical infrastructure.* From a loose leaf hard-copy publication, the Compendium developed into an elaborate online information system, with tailor-made search opportunities.
- *Geographic expansion within Europe.* Today, interested parties can find more elaborated and qualitative information about cultural policies in 43 countries.
- *Global capacity building.* The Compendium architecture, expertise and network played a leading role in global developments. Thanks to the uniqueness of the Compendium methodology -- and on the initiative of the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA) and with support of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) -- the Compendium is now part of a broader, global community, creating exchanges with strategic partners all over the world.
- *A large community of users.* Surveys with stakeholders and website analytics show that Compendium is regularly used as a source of information by tens of thousands of individuals, governments and NGOs in Europe and worldwide, increasingly also on mobile devices.

Critical Success Factors

It is useful to reflect on the critical factors that played a role in this success:

- The intellectual, social and human capital of the community of practice, organised by ERICarts. We can boast high quality standards and dedication in a geographically expanding network.
- The combination of independent expertise and a direct connection to national governments (member states of Council of Europe) guarantees the combination of methodological rigour and direct access to relevant and up-to-date information.
- The continuous support of Council of Europe has been crucial: not only financial, but also on the level of network development, as a transnational structure acting as a go-between among its member states.

Current challenges

The Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe is currently in a fundamental transition. From 2018, the funding from Council of Europe will discontinue. Recent conferences about the transition of the initiative towards a multi-

stakeholder consortium have already led to a number of decisions, including the choice for a new governance structure and the legal form of an association. However, in order to secure its future, a convincing future-oriented vision on the Compendium will be even more important. This new vision will have to take into account fundamental shifts of a social, political and technical nature. Indeed, not only the Compendium is facing significant challenges. This is true for everybody dealing with cultural policy and transnational collaboration. The value of these seems to be less self-evident than before. Democratic principles are under pressure in a variety of countries, including in the Western world, such as freedom of expression and freedom of press. The political belief in the value of transnational exchange in Europe as a common, democratic space seems to be diminishing. In times as these, which seem to move from evidence-based policy towards post truth politics, there is a dire need for reliable data sources, data analysis and data comparisons. At the same time, technical developments have a profound cultural impact and provide us with new possibilities for the sharing and development of knowledge and interaction and exchange with a globalising cultural policy community.

Towards a future vision for the new Compendium

In this rapidly changing context, we firmly believe the Compendium community can play a crucial role in helping cultural policy makers to understand these challenges and to formulate answers.

Currently, Compendium is the only reliable monitoring system for cultural policies in Europe. In a rapidly changing context, it is the only source of information to cater the growing need of its target groups for independent, in-depth information on cultural policies (country profiles), cultural statistics and thematic trends analysis. More than ever, the future Compendium can play an important role as a community for knowledge exchange and development on cultural policy making in Europe and beyond, and function as a leverage for cultural policy making and democratic governance.

Our intellectual and social capital and accumulated experience is at the disposition of policy makers, scholars, students and general audiences all over the world. However, to make use of its full potential, a fundamental revision of the current instruments and procedures is required. The transition the Compendium in a rapidly changing context can be seen as a historical chance to rejuvenate, reposition and reinvent its role.

A dialogue about strategic options

The start of this transition is a fundamental dialogue with all possible partners about the present needs for information in a rapidly changing context, an open exploration of different strategic options and possible scenarios and the joint development of innovative solutions. Some points to be discussed and paths to be explored might be the following:

1. *Mission, vision & context analysis of the new Compendium.* Re-formulating the value proposition of the Compendium in a rapidly changing context, together with the community of practice, the stakeholders in the consortium and representatives of different target groups. For instance, the Compendium could act as a platform for exchange in a heterogeneous community and as a 'virtual lab space' where speculative approaches towards alternative cultural policies are discussed.
2. *Design of partnerships and definition of the role of stakeholders in the consortium.* What will be the role of the different members and partners in the consortium, such as the Council of Europe, national governments, ASEF, NGO's and expertise centres, ECURES network, IFACCA and the EU? In this transition, the role of the Council of Europe changes fundamentally, but it will remain crucial - on the level of network development and as a go-between on a transnational level - to maintain the continuity that allows the transition.
3. *New business model and funding opportunities.* Points 1 and 2 will have an impact on the development of a new business model for the future Compendium. New funding opportunities should be explored, both in the European Union and beyond, e.g. with innovative businesses such as the worldwide operating TechSoup.
4. *Globalisation.* Based on the Compendium methodology, also outside of Europe country profiles are increasingly developed. This offers a number of opportunities for the new Compendium. For instance, strategic partnerships outside of Europe could be intensified (especially with ASEF). But it also raises fundamental questions with regards to the scope and definition of cultural policies: are cultural differences fundamentally challenging our Western cultural policy notions and concepts?
5. *The 'community of practice' is in constant need of development.* Developing strategies for a rejuvenation of the community are needed. This could be done in different ways, for instance via open calls of interest for the recruitment of new authors and experts within and outside of the existing networks. Also a reflection on the future development of ECURES (the European Association of Cultural Policy Researchers) and its role in relation to the Compendium would be the start.
6. *A more flexible and dynamic content management infrastructure.* Technical opportunities should be developed that allow continuous updates with more lively activity and interaction in the wider community. Direct updates of articles by the authors and other members of the 'community of practice' could be considered, via the redesign of the Compendium content management system, e.g. as a more flexible wiki environment. Editorial checks should, nevertheless, remain in place to secure evidence-based reporting and the high quality standards of the Compendium.

7. *Broadening the scope to other government levels, including regions and cities.* In the past, the Compendium has made first steps towards opening up the information system for regional profiles. Is it interesting to also involve cities? At this moment there is a lively debate in the community about this opportunity. Cities have become more active and ambitious: there is an increasing need for solid information and capacity building. Would it be interesting that the Compendium community caters to this need?