CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS

Swiss Cultural Programme in South Eastern Europe 1999-2012
We wanted to rebuild our lives, that was all. In order to rebuild one’s life one has to be strong and an optimist. So we are very optimistic.

Hannah Arendt
This report describes the development of the Swiss Cultural Programme in Eastern Europe over nearly 15 years. The work touched on in the following pages would not have been possible without the support and trust of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Pro Helvetia and the government and people of the Swiss Confederation. It has also depended on programme staff, freelance consultants and advisors in all the countries where SCP has worked. We thank all of them sincerely for their commitment, skills and belief in the value of culture.

But none of this would mean anything without the exceptional talents and expertise, the passion and courage, of the many thousands of artists and activists who have been our partners since 1999. It is impossible to do justice to the quality of the work, the imagination and energy or the simple tenacity of the people whose creative work it has been an honour to support. This report is respectfully dedicated to everyone who has been part of the Swiss Cultural Programme over the years.

Working together, we have created wonderful events, opened new debates, built skills and confidence, made places look different and changed lives. We have been optimistic and we have been vindicated. We take that optimism forward in the coming years as we continue to work for culture, democracy and human rights in South Eastern Europe.
# CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS

The Swiss Cultural Programme in South Eastern Europe 1999-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>THE SWISS CULTURAL PROGRAMME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Programme development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.1</td>
<td>Origins and purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.2</td>
<td>Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.3</td>
<td>Continuity and change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.4</td>
<td>SCP in the Western Balkans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Delivery mechanisms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1</td>
<td>Small actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.2</td>
<td>National cooperation projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.3</td>
<td>Regional cooperation projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.4</td>
<td>Other activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Why link culture and development?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Personal development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1</td>
<td>Supporting education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2</td>
<td>Skills and employability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Community development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1</td>
<td>Building local capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2</td>
<td>Community renewal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.3</td>
<td>Economic development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Societal development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.1</td>
<td>Inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.2</td>
<td>Intercultural relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.3</td>
<td>Strengthening democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.4</td>
<td>Confronting the past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.5</td>
<td>Freedom of expression and respect for minorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>UNDERSTANDING EXPERIENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Capitalising on experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Successes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Traps and risks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Good practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>A decade and a half of achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Building on success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Hopeful encounters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANNEXES</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Networks, Regional and National Projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Networks, Regional and National Projects - Places and Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Networks, Regional and National Projects - In Numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small Actions, Special Projects, and Swiss Exchange in Numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPRESSUM</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia began to support artistic exchange in South Eastern Europe in 1999 as a joint endeavour, primarily in and among the countries of former Yugoslavia. The two institutions have been collaborating for many years, with the SDC contributing to development and transition processes around the world and Pro Helvetia promoting cultural exchange in Switzerland and abroad.

Their Swiss Cultural Programme in the Western Balkans (SCP) aimed to accompany artistic programmes in a region full of tension and undergoing large-scale changes. The programme was guided by the conviction that art and culture can play a mediating role in social transformation processes and build bridges between separated communities. A challenging enterprise, no doubt, but ultimately a highly successful one. In its 15 years of existence, the SCP was active in nine countries of South Eastern Europe, running eight local offices and realising more than 3,000 projects of different scale and scope. They ranged from small actions and individual grants to national and cross-border collaborative projects, benefiting thousands of artists across the region. SCP has strengthened the development of 68 cultural organisations involved in cooperation projects and empowered another 200 as members of cultural networks. In the three years from 2010 to 2012 alone, over 22,000 people participated in regional cooperation project activities, with more than 5,000 professionals engaged in their realization and exhibitions, performances and other events attracting a total audience of more than 190,000 people.

The specific feature of this long-term programme was therefore the use of art and culture as a key to re-starting dialogues and working out joint perspectives. This said, the intention was never to instrumentalise cultural programmes for social ends. The freedom of creative artists and cultural event organisers was respected at all times.
They are, after all, among the people best suited to reflect and to question the ongoing changes in their society, and to come up with innovative responses.

Both the SDC and Pro Helvetia have a great deal of experience with this approach. Whether in Eastern Europe, in Southern Africa or, currently, in the Arab world, the two institutions have been striving to make culture a driver of dialogue and exchange. From the start, the SDC and Pro Helvetia concentrated their efforts on culture as a means of transformation. The commitment and courage of our collaborators and partners in the field, working in a troubled environment characterized by tensions, political instability and economic weakness, were essential to the development and success of the Swiss Cultural Programme. Our heartfelt thanks go out to them.

The report by François Matarasso, with contributions from Petra Bischof and Bojana Matic-Ostojic, looks back on these years of collaboration, development, implementation, and finally closure. It validates the approach taken by SDC and Pro Helvetia: art and culture are indeed capable not only of triggering a renewal of contacts and a dialogue between communities of post-conflict societies, but also of bestowing hope and confidence for the future - in fact, they are perhaps the best means to achieve this.

1  THE SWISS CULTURAL PROGRAMME

1.1  PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

1.1.1  Origins and purpose

Swiss cultural support for Eastern Europe started as early as 1991, when the Swiss Confederation decided to support the post-Socialist countries in their reform process towards a Europe of shared prosperity and democratic values. Culture was seen as an integral part of this initiative and managed jointly by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Pro Helvetia, the Swiss Arts Council. From 1991-1999, the focus was on the countries of Central Eastern Europe.

The Swiss Cultural Programme (SCP) in South Eastern Europe was established in 1999 after the Balkan wars, in continued partnership between SDC and Pro Helvetia. It extended initially to several countries of former Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine. For Pro Helvetia, this meant a significant expansion of its work in South Eastern Europe, being present with an office in each of the countries. But SDC was already active in programmes to support reform in these former Socialist states and invest in prosperity, democracy, human rights and regional stability.

In keeping with SDC’s mission, the Swiss Cultural Programme’s purpose was to strengthen democracy, respect for minorities and freedom of expression. While this was seen to include artistic freedom and SDC recognised the cultural aspect of its work, the underlying goal was always human and social development. While art was valued
in its own right, it was also seen as an effective, flexible and creative means of achieving human development goals. In the early phase, SCP focussed on cultural development per se, based on the experiences and methods of Pro Helvetia in Central Eastern Europe and in line with the Swiss Arts Council’s core mission of promoting artistic creation and cultural exchange.

The programme initially had four objectives:

- To improve the working and living conditions of artists and cultural organisations by supporting innovative artistic creation and production
- To safeguard and promote cultural diversity and stimulate decentralization
- To enable networking and exchange within the region and with Switzerland
- To ensure efficient and effective management of the operational and strategic programme through local presence in each of the countries.

These have remained consistent over the years, though regular monitoring, evaluation and reviews at project and programme level have led to adjustments in priorities and delivery methods. The most significant of these were first, investment in increasingly large projects, and a focus on the Western Balkans only with involvement of actors in more than one country in the last five years of the programme, from 2008 to 2012.

1.1.2 Management

The establishment of local offices in each of the countries where the programme was operating ensured direct contact with cultural stakeholders. This local presence proved to be a major strength of the Swiss Cultural Programme in comparison with other international donors active in the region. Local ownership and management was further strengthened from 2002 onwards, when national teams were running the SCP offices. The recruitment of local staff not only ensured promotion, delivery and supervision of grants and activities, but also contributed to the programme’s accessibility and its knowledge of the cultural context. At the same time Pro Helvetia’s Zurich office kept in close touch with the work through a regional coordinator based in the region. National and regional directors of the Swiss Development and Cooperation Agency were closely involved in overseeing programme management and ensuring liaison with SDC’s main office in Berne, Switzerland.

National advisory committees were recruited to ensure an open decision-making process. Involving cultural leaders, academics and other experts, these committees have been central to grant allocation and informing strategic priorities. The members have been crucial in raising awareness of SCP’s work and on occasion brokering new partnerships. SDC and Pro Helvetia representatives were also involved in these committees. Pro Helvetia undertook operational management and had joint responsibility with SDC for the strategic oversight of the programme through their representatives in a joint steering group, replaced, in the final programme phase, by a regional steering committee with cultural experts from the Western Balkans.

1.1.3 Continuity and change

The programme goals have remained consistent, but have been pursued differently over time. The most important instance of change was the decision to raise the scale and ambition of projects over the course of a decade. Early grants to a large extent took the form of single investments in local activities (Small Actions) with only a few projects in each country being supported with larger funds over a longer time period. These latter projects aimed to revive the local cultural scene through artistic events and cultural debates, encouraging innovative production and supporting young, emerging artists.

In 2002, larger, national cooperation projects targeting institutional development were introduced. An important feature of this work was orientation towards longer-term positive change and promotion of collaborative approaches in reaching it. They focused on capacity building of grantees and their beneficiaries, and extending access and participation to a wider audience. Alongside the small grants scheme, cooperation projects were the main mechanisms of support until 2007.
1.1.4 SCP in the Western Balkans

In its final phase, when the mission in Ukraine, Romania and Bulgaria had been ended to allow the programme to focus on the successor states of Yugoslavia and Albania, the programme’s goal was described as:

‘To contribute to the promotion of democracy and freedom of expression, to conflict resolution and the respect of minorities through employment of cultural instruments and fostering of regional cooperation, thus facilitating the formation and preservation of independent and diversified cultural landscapes.’

This overall purpose was to be advanced through three areas of activity with the following objectives:

- Work to improve cooperation and partnership between cultural organisations in the Western Balkans through support for networks, joint working and cultural platforms;
- Strengthening and diversifying national cultural ecologies; and
- Encouragement of cultural debate through tailor-made projects and initiatives.

These objectives were to be achieved through the shift to the regional cooperation projects already described. Since this is both the most ambitious and the most recent aspect of the SCP’s work, this report draws most on this regional experience.

The final phase of SCP, between 2008 and 2012, was marked by a new regional approach and grant mechanisms, when the programme restricted itself to the Western Balkans and national cooperation projects were replaced by cross-border regional projects involving cultural organisations from at least two countries. The focus on the Western Balkans was marked by consolidation of management to a single office in Sarajevo (BH), coordinating activities across Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia, with Montenegro as a participating country. This was feasible because of the move to transnational partnership projects bringing together actors in different parts of former Yugoslavia and Albania, and a decision to identify projects through annual open calls. The regionalisation was accompanied by a gradual closure of the local offices and their small actions grant scheme, first in Bosnia Herzegovina (2008), then in Macedonia and Serbia (2009), Albania (2010) and finally in Kosovo (2011). But this new regional approach should be understood as a different way of delivering the original objectives, taking account of the need to strengthen regional collaboration in ways appropriate to the changing situations of culture in each country, and the progress made in earlier work.

The change in methodology was ambitious. Among other challenges, it brought practical problems associated with diverse languages, with travel and visa restrictions, and with different legal and administrative systems in single projects. But underlying this—and in the view of SCP making the work both necessary and valuable—was the post-conflict situation of most of the countries. It is a mark of the strong foundations laid by SCP in earlier phases, and the commitment and skill of the cultural organisations involved, that this change secured a successful programme of international cultural cooperation in the region and contributed to further revitalisation of cultural action within and between the countries involved.
It meant a lot to me to see what Tuzla and Zagreb look like, to meet people in Pristina and learn about their point of view. I think it’s very important and it would be much better for the entire region if all young people had such an opportunity to establish direct communication with people across the border.

In this project, we showed that people who wouldn’t want to talk to a politician from Prishtina had no problem coming to see a play from Pristina. Having seen that the play deals with similar concerns to their own, they overcame an initial prejudice towards people in Kosovo. We learned that people in the region have same problems, including in the field of culture, and the same goal: to be part of Europe. The best way to deal with all this is through joint cooperation.

Personally, I got space through the project to become engaged and see that my activism makes sense. It pointed to some things I still have to learn about and develop in the coming years, but it also gave me an idea about my further education and career development. The Balkans has remained my field of interest and the experiences gained through the project strengthened my conviction that enrolment in interdisciplinary master studies of culture, politics, economy and law in the Balkans represent the right track for my professional development.

Tara Tepavac, Serbia
1.2 DELIVERY MECHANISMS

1.2.1 Small actions

For several years, the small grants programme was the most common way in which artists and cultural organisations in South Eastern and Eastern Europe benefited from the Swiss Cultural Programme. Scores of such grants were distributed for sums ranging from a few hundred to a few thousand Swiss Francs. There were exceptional awards: the Balkan Dance Platform, held in Skopje (MK) 2005, received a grant of CHF 30,000 towards its production costs and Dokufest, the documentary film festival in Prizren (KS), was awarded CHF 16,740 towards production of a 30 minute film. But the CHF 2,000 grant towards an exhibition by Gjovalin Paci in Tirana (AL), CHF 1,500 to the Festival of Alternative Culture in Zajecar (RS), and the CHF 600 for a residency in Germany by Lydia Dimkovska, a leading Macedonian young writer, were more typical of the scheme.

A few hundred Swiss Francs was enough to enable young artists, writers and thinkers from the region to realize their first productions or travel to neighbouring countries or further afield. To be able to go abroad to perform, meet peers or attend conferences in countries such as Switzerland or Germany was a first step in promoting their work. These low cost grants could be of great importance to those who received them, since they often made it possible for early career artists to become known and make contacts. As the Macedonian artist, Danilo Mandic, said in 2009:

‘With the support of the Swiss Cultural Programme I produced my first project—now I am working on my fifth!’

Small actions could also take the form of start-up grants to film and music festivals and contemporary arts biennales, all of which needed to reconnect with their neighbours after the years of conflict. Some of those originally supported through SCP have long grown into national landmarks, like Dokufest Prizren (KS), the Jazz Festival Sarajevo (BA) or the Ring Ring Festival Belgrade (RS). Small actions contributed to renewal of the cultural and artistic landscapes, encouraged cultural diversity and recognised the voices of marginalized groups.

They were also flexible, so as to allow a light touch in addressing important social issues and open debates on some topics often excluded from national funding practices. Love is Love: Skopje Gay Week received the support of SCP as did the theatre production The Lower Depths (Maxim Gorki), in which professional actors and homeless people participated. The documentary photo-exhibition Pollution in Elbasan (AL) was supported, as was the dance performance The Curve for Gauss in Belgrade (RS) staged by Hajde Da which included physically disabled and socially marginalized dancers. This visibility was often very important to those involved, as Sabri Demirovksi, from Macedonia told the team in 2009:

‘The support of the Swiss Cultural Programme meant life and love towards art. Without this support, as a Roma artist from Eastern Macedonia, I would not have been acknowledged in public life.’

Small Actions were valued within the region and there are still regrets that this funding was phased out to make way for the larger and more ambitious cooperation projects. But investing in small-scale artistic creation, innovation and exchange, important as it is, could have only a limited impact on the conditions of cultural production or the engagement of other actors, such as municipalities, in support for culture. The cooperation projects were seen as a way to address that issue.
Irena Sladoje, Bosnia Herzegovina

The project, ‘Individual Utopia Now and Then’, opened some important issues in Bosnia Herzegovina and the region, and it would be good if it could be continued in some way. It had a very high potential to initiate some questions in society and so enable each artist to approach them in their own way.

It would be good if there were more such projects, perhaps implemented over a longer time, or with more people participating. It would allow similar projects to lead to visible results and changes in society.

I was happy that the Sarajevo Center for Contemporary Art had confidence in me and gave me autonomy to work, but at the same time being there for me to give me a technical support if I needed it. The project affected me because when you open one issue, the questions do not stop after the realization of a work—the matter might be treated in different ways and the artist can keep returning to the same topic over and over again.

1.2.2 National cooperation projects

Between 2004 and 2008, SCP began to develop a series of 16 larger scale cooperation projects, aimed at encouraging mutually beneficial work between cultural organisations. Most were in the Western Balkans, with just two each in Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine, partly due to the earlier closure of the programme in these countries. The range of activity was wide, including establishment of a centre for contemporary art in a former Turkish bath in Plovdiv (ATA), creation of the Gramofon music label in Sarajevo, a partnership to revive cultural life and improve interethnic relations in Tetovo (small door), cultural management training in Odessa (CACM) and four artists’ residency centres in Romania (ArtistNe(s)It).

Three of these cooperation projects reached out across the borders of their countries, while one, the regional dance development programme, NOMAD, was specifically designed to enable international collaboration across and beyond the region. Indeed, NOMAD continued in the final phase of SCP when only regional (i.e. cross-border) projects were supported. NOMAD was the pilot regional cooperation project, providing a rich learning experience for SCP’s work in its last phase. NOMAD has developed into an internationally recognised platform for contemporary dance as well as a policy advocate for the independent performing arts scene in the region.
Viktorija Ilioska, Macedonia

I started at the Zodijak dance club when I was 14, and applied for the NOMAD Academy when I was 16, but I was rejected because of my age. So in 2010, when I turned 18, I applied again—I was sure that I’d be part of the Academy. It was my dream and it came true.

I was lucky. As soon as I finished the Nomad Academy it turned out that a new department for ballet pedagogy was opening at the Faculty of Music in Skopje that included contemporary dance. So I quit sociology and enrolled in the Department’s first class in contemporary dance. Looking back, I’m really proud with this decision.

NOMAD helped me find myself in contemporary dance. Everything that wasn’t clear for me until then, everything I wasn’t sure about—NOMAD gave me the answer. It was like a voice telling me, “Yes, it is you; it is your profession; it’s what you should do with your life.” It is like finding yourself. I knew that choosing dance instead of philosophy was the right decision. It was a kind of a revelation for me.

NOMAD brought new friendships, new experiences in dance practice, workshops, lectures, presentations, creative work and research. For four months, I travelled all the time, living in six different cities with 14 students from Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Serbia, Slovenia, Switzerland and Israel. We were together all the time; we shared our creative ideas.

At one point it got too much for me. I felt alone. I was going through an emotional crisis and I needed a break. All that energy was new for me and I needed to go home for a while and calm down. But after a few days I couldn’t wait to go back, see all the students and to do more creative work. I know that I want to do creative work all my life and I hope I’m on the right path for that.
Apart from workshops and lectures, and the writing we were occupied with, we had the chance to meet representatives of local dance scenes, to get to know about infrastructure, institutional frameworks and how it works in each country, so we got a wide picture how contemporary dance was developed as an artistic form in each country of the region. To me it was very important to learn about the regional situation. Since then, I have felt not just a performer from Belgrade or Serbia, but that I belong to the regional scene of the Balkans.

1.2.3 Regional cooperation projects

The final phase of the Swiss Cultural Programme concentrated on 10 large, cross-border regional cooperation projects, linking 35 cultural organisations in countries of former Yugoslavia and Albania. The intention was to build skills and confidence in international work as the final stage of supporting a cultural ecology connecting local actors with larger organisations (and, where possible, state institutions) able to work nationally and with their peers abroad. Although there were new challenges, not least of language and travel restrictions, the selected projects have all produced valuable outcomes as well as raising the level of cooperation significantly.

Again, the range of their work has been remarkably wide, from artistic creation networks (New Politics of Solidarity through Cultural Knowledge Production) and urban renewal campaigns (Revival of City Squares in Balkan Cities) to programmes of radical education (De-schooling Classroom) or working on sites of collective and contested memory (Network for Participative Cultures of Remembrance). Alongside the regional cooperation projects, SCP invested in five cultural development networks dedicated to supporting professional contacts and development among independent artists, performers and other cultural activists.

All this activity raised the scale and reach of SCP’s work. In the three years from 2010 to 2012, programme records indicate that over 22,000 people took part in cooperation
project activities, which were carried out with over 5,000 professional engagements. Exhibitions, performances and other events attracted combined audience of more than 190,000 people. SCP estimated that there were 1,800,000 programme beneficiaries, including the electronic audiences, in this three-year period alone.

A survey undertaken during the final year of the regional cooperation projects revealed very positive attitudes to the experience among most of the partners. They had enjoyed and valued the opportunity to work with colleagues, particularly in learning about neighbouring cultures, innovative practice, and organisational development.

The networking opportunities had forged lasting relationships in many cases and there was a high expectation among the organisations involved that they would work together again in future.

‘Regional projects are very challenging; you can learn and gain a lot from them. But you need to be able to work in partnership, to be collaborative, flexible and find compromise in different approaches. It is very important to have good partners in regional projects, and to establish respectful and open communication and trust.’

Respondent to SCP project partners survey

1.2.4 Other activities

In addition to its support for local, national and international cultural projects through the established grant mechanisms, the Swiss Cultural Programme invested in several other initiatives. These special projects responded to needs or opportunities identified by SCP or its cultural partners. In some cases, SCP initiated the response directly; in others it simply offered financial and technical support to partners. For example, Paradise Lost, the First Roma Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, which was initiated by the Open Society Institute’s Arts and Culture Network Programme, received SCP support in 2007 and again for its second edition in 2011. Independent art centres such as the Press to Exit Project Space in Skopje (MK) and Stacion Centre for Contemporary Arts were funded with special grants for an ongoing programme of exhibitions and debates.

A number of public events were held, such as the ‘Culture makes the difference’ conference in Kyiv, in May 2008, which drew participants from across Europe and Central Asia and led to the drafting of the Kyiv Memorandum for Creative Communities. The programme also supported artistic exchanges between Switzerland and the Balkan region to increase mutual understanding and confidence. This was the case especially in the programme’s early years, when cultural exchange with Switzerland benefitted from a special fund managed by Pro Helvetia and, once again, in its final phase. From 2008 to 2010, Pro Helvetia allocated a yearly fund of CHF 100,000 dedicated to exchange visits between artists from Switzerland and the Balkans. Projects were mainly supported in the fields of music, contemporary dance and visual arts and were organized by SCP partners in small actions and cooperation projects. Pre-Art (CH) and Sonemus (BA) jointly developed and performed new contemporary music from Swiss and Balkan composers; NOMAD invited several dance ensembles from Switzerland for co-productions and tours to Albania, Macedonia and Serbia; and outstanding Swiss visual artists revitalized and redefined former art colonies in Southern Serbia through artists’ residencies.

In 2012 SCP made a specific investment in establishing and strengthening cultural networks: three national and two regional, thematic ones. Through these networks, more than 250 cultural organisations engaged in mutual collaboration and exchange to a degree and in ways that were quite new. At the same time, the networks stimulated a policy dialogue in their countries. The Cultural Forum in Kosovo has been recognised by the Ministry as a partner in formulation of the first national cultural policy, while Municipal Arts Councils have been initiated in Gjilan and Prizren. In Serbia, the independent culture network, Association, and the Ministry of Culture have formed a joint collaboration group to exchange knowledge and experience on strategic topics. The Nucleus network in Macedonia has reversed the exclusion of the independent arts scene from the National Action Plan on Cultural Strategy implementation. The Right to the Village
network has built partnerships with like-minded organisations and networks in EU countries, opening space for learning and funding opportunities.

SCP also collaborated with other international donors and agencies in specific initiatives, including the European Union, the Soros Foundation, the King Baudouin Foundation and the European Cultural Foundation (ECF). As many important supporters withdrew from cultural work during the first decade of the 21st century, SCP found itself an increasingly rare (and valued) supporter, in a fragile domestic funding landscape for cultural actors in the region. The work of its successor body, artAngel—Balkans | Culture | Development, which will also be a partner for the European Cultural Foundation and could from there develop partnership with other international funders, will at least offer some continuity of support, albeit on a reduced scale.

---

**Dino Dzevlan, Bosnia Herzegovina**

I’m a founder member of Holographic Human Element. I play keyboards and compose for the band. Through the E761 project, we got a chance to stay in Travnik and make our first recording, over 20 days in the summer of 2011. It was an amazing, wonderful experience. It was twenty days out of dreams, a beautiful experience that I would wish for everybody.

I thought this would remain a lifetime wish, an unfulfilled dream. I thought I might make some music alone, in my room, but I never expected it to reach these proportions, that something would be moving forward. But then came Darko and everything changed. We’ll release the record in the spring, and play concerts to promote it.

It’s a pity that funds to support this work are gradually disappearing. I don’t think local governments will begin to show more interest in youth and urban culture, especially in small towns. I think that culture is the soul of every city, whether large or small. When you see something like that barely living, you ask yourself whether the city is sick—whether this society is sick.
other policy objectives, starting with recognition that the creative sector was a significant part of the economy. The role of culture in revitalising post-industrial European cities began to excite interest when Glasgow was named European Capital of Culture in 1989. Subsequently, culture has been a driving force in the regeneration of cities from Bilbao to Berlin. And in recent years, its role in education, health services, community cohesion and even criminal justice systems has become clearer, supported by practical experience and academic research.

Cultural actors cannot possibly solve the complex economic, social, demographic and environmental challenges faced by communities across Europe. But they can make a contribution to solving them, alongside politicians, businesspeople, educationalists, economists, environmentalists and everyone else. And what they can also do, in lively and engaging ways, is help people develop the awareness, the confidence, the skills, the shared vision, the mutual respect and ultimately the imagination that will help overcome those challenges. Culture can be a powerful force in democracy, enabling debate and leading to shared action and responsibility. It is too valuable a resource to be neglected, especially where there are fewer other resources.

Because art is so pervasive, and so influential in societies less confident than they were in politics and religion as ways of finding meaning in life, it is simply not realistic to ignore its role in the economy, in regeneration, in tourism, in education and in many other aspects of social life. Art, and the wider culture of which it is a particular facet, is an inescapable dimension of how societies function and consequently of any development policy or programmes. Agencies and policymakers working with out-dated models of social development may ignore the role of culture but it will still affect their work. On the other hand, working in an informed way with cultural actors can greatly advance their work by making the most of culture’s unique contribution.

2 CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

2.1 WHY LINK CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT?

‘Culture is not one of life’s luxuries, it is life itself.’

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

Culture and how we think about it have both changed immensely in the course of the 20th century, partly as people have more education and leisure to pursue cultural interests. What was once defined by elites in narrow, even exclusive terms is now understood much more broadly. While the value of different expressions and aesthetics is passionately debated, there is growing acceptance that culture includes not only the fine arts but also traditional and popular arts, commercial artistic products, amateur work and much more.

Although the Swiss Cultural Programme has focused on contemporary arts practice, it has done so in a wider cultural context that embraces heritage, traditions, the built and natural environment, food, dress and much more. Art itself is far more widely disseminated than it was in the past, both in the availability of artistic products in galleries, performance spaces, the mass media and shops, and in the active involvement of people in its creation, an aspect that received a huge boost with the emergence of personal computers, the internet and, most recently, smartphones.

In the past 30 years, cultural actors, policymakers and researchers have given increasing attention to the influence that cultural programmes can have on a wide range of
2.2 PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

If culture has an effect on social and economic development, it does so because it has effects on individuals. It is only because it gives actual people opportunities to grow, and inspires them with the desire to do so, that culture’s effects can influence wider issues in society. The Swiss Cultural Programme supported projects that had great benefits for those involved, building their skills, capacity and confidence and so enabling them to play new roles in their communities.

Milena Bogavac, Serbia

“To me, that side of self-education was an incredibly useful moment, as I did some things I had never done before and I had believed I was not talented for. Faced with those tasks, a bunch of administrative and organisational jobs, I realised I can and I know how to do that. That was a life changing moment.

There was a sharing knowledge atmosphere in which we interpreted our individual education, knowledge and earlier experience through collective reading. I believe I grew up by several years.

Our group has never stopped working together. But what was even better is that the work we wrote together during the project was recognised by students from the Faculty of Dramatic Arts who invited us to present them there. So you have generations of young students using our texts as something relevant in the politics of art and wanting to talk to us. We transferred the Deschooling Classroom idea to another generation.”


2.2.1 Supporting education

Creative education

The Nomad Dance Academy (NOMAD) has been a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for some of the region’s most talented, committed and ambitious young dancers. The organisation was set up to create a network for contemporary dance within and between the countries of South Eastern Europe with the long term aim of making it possible to study, perform and see dance of as high a standard as anywhere in the continent. NOMAD has worked with scores of young dancers, providing them with unique training opportunities without which they would have been forced to study abroad or, more likely, abandon any hope of becoming a professional dancer. In doing so, they have connected choreographers, venues, municipalities and audiences, laying the foundations of a sustainable dance platform in the region. Some extraordinary performances have taken place, in theatres, streets and public places, creating shared memories and raising expectations of the future.

The value of the arts in education has been recognised since Classical Greece but it is receiving renewed attention as European economies depend more on knowledge and creativity. In countries such as Britain, the Netherlands, Germany and Latvia, governments have piloted new ways of harnessing creative and artistic practice, sometimes drawing inspiration from elsewhere, notably Venezuela’s El Sistema programme. This work is not just about cultural education, important as it is to introduce children to knowledge of their own and other people’s culture. Creative learning goes further in using art and creativity as way to teach the whole school curriculum. An understanding of mathematics or physics, for instance, can be gained through the prism of a creative activity. Research has shown that young people who have experienced creative learning have consistently higher levels of attainment and better standards of behaviour than those who have not.4

In Macedonia, the Different View cooperation project worked with young people to develop photography skills and a critical understanding of the use of photographic imagery in the everyday life. Over three years, the project produced important documentary exhibitions and books highlighting social problems affecting young people in contemporary Macedonian society. Similar work was undertaken in Albania through Projekt 5.6, using a training model for self-taught photographers initially developed in Switzerland.

The challenges facing both young people and education services in many Eastern European countries are familiar: Rapid change, lack of resources, degraded infrastructure, uncertain prospects—these and other difficulties make growing up today a struggle for millions. Although the Swiss Cultural Programme was a minor actor in this landscape, it prioritised work with young people both in schools and universities and, importantly, those with little or no access to education. Its aim was not only to provide good creative learning experiences for those who accessed its projects, but also to show teachers, parents, and politicians the value of art and creativity in learning for the future.

The Delta drama education centre based in Mostar (BH) is a typical example of this approach. Linking theatre workshops and performances in schools with festivals and the work of professional theatre makers, the project has reached out across the city and the surrounding region, involving more than a thousand young people in 2008. It has been so successful that Delta has become the European office of IDEA, the International Drama and Theatre Education Association, as well as hosting the network’s worldwide secretariat. SCP also supported young people’s access to creative learning away from the school environment, notably during holidays through initiatives such as the Artist-en(s)t summer school in Romania.
Goran Jordovic, Serbia

“I see E761 as a voice of youth linked through Bosnia, Serbia to Bulgaria. It was an excellent opportunity for young people in the region to meet, do something together and understand each other better. People who never had an opportunity to speak out were now able to openly say what they think.

When we created Radio Centrala it was being listened to online throughout former Yugoslavia. So eventually, Radio Pozega got interested and asked us to create a youth program that would be broadcast on FM as well. I had a radio show on hip-hop culture and it was the most popular on the station at one point.

Apart from being great fun, working for the radio helped me meet a lot of people and travel to cover concerts as an accredited journalist. That has changed my life for good.

There are kids who spent all their leisure time in game rooms until a year ago. Now they’re members of the youth radio, coming to studio every day, offering to work on something or do interviews. Seeing five or six boys changed like this is evidence to me that I have influenced someone’s life for the better in this town.

That’s cool, bringing the world home. We should improve lives here—bring your friends. It’s always better to make it better at home than to leave—otherwise who would stay?”

Courage

In these projects, participants often showed great personal courage. Sometimes, that was about stretching themselves, trying things they did not know (or sometimes believe) they could do. They had to go to different places, sometimes with a legacy of recent conflict. They had to work with people who might and sometimes did express prejudice towards them. They had to convince their families and friends that this change was a risk worth taking. They had to persuade neighbours, officials or elected representatives to try doing something different too. And it was always the participants who would have to bear the costs of change or failure.
No single person can speak for all these thousands of stories, but Kujtim Pacaku can at least speak for himself, in the Roma language and in Albanian. He is an actor and a poet, in his fifties, who recently gained his MA from Prishtina University. His first book of poetry, published in 2011, has already been translated into 12 languages. He only trained professionally after the Kosovo war and has since been in two productions supported by the New Politics of Solidarity project. Both were about the experience of Roma people, including one that dealt with the Roma genocide in World War Two.

Kujtim Pacaku, Kosovo

"Personally, I benefited a lot from working with professional actors. I had to ask myself if I could do it or not? It was a big challenge for me. It was about deciding whether I could make it in theatre or not. I knew the script by heart and I remember it word for word, to this day. Getting engaged with the play was hard because I had to swallow a lot of abusive content—I had to represent it. It was a challenge for me as an actor because I had to give my best.'

'These theatre performances had a great impact across Europe, particularly, in breaking down the stereotypes of Roma people which were created from movies that represent only the bad sides of Roma people. The performances were important for the community because it showed how non-Roma people treat and are prejudiced towards Roma people.'

The play was a great success when it was performed at the National Theatre in Prishtina, for Roma International Day. The production was then shown in Vienna, Belgrade, Leipzig and Rijeka. For Kujtim, it was an important opportunity to confront prejudice with pride.

Perhaps this is what we mean, when we speak of the courage of artists.
The mentors helped us with the models of work and better understanding of the subject matter - how different outcomes could be used and become a presentation, product or maybe initial models of cooperation. The most important thing was that, with the new knowledge that we all gained, we could create other new abilities and make all that available to everyone interested in the subject matter. We had the opportunity to gain new knowledge that couldn’t be made elsewhere. Those new contacts and future joint engagements can produce different forms of actions in our societies, in building our policies on local, state and regional level.

The experience and knowledge that you gain through the participation in these kinds of projects, workshops and summer schools, gives you additional tools and know-how to act. I’m talking about the changes that can be produced in the models of organising the cultural sector, its financing and support, the changes in the cultural policies. We are the ones who could move that process, as well make this informal education part of formal education, and so be available to more and more people.

Intelligence

The Swiss Cultural Programme has always been willing to support intellectually and artistically challenging projects that offer young artists demanding routes for professional development. There have been many such initiatives among the Small Actions, ranging from artist research projects, like Between Two Churches in Skopje, to public lectures such as those of the 2008 Lectorium Eqerem Cabej on Arts and Sciences in Tirana. Many gave specific support to students of art, urbanism, journalism or philosophy, connecting them with professionals with established careers and enabling international exchanges. The cash-strapped academies of South Eastern Europe can find this type of enrichment difficult to offer, though it should be part of a normal university education.
2.2.2 Skills and employability

Formal and informal training has been key to most projects. What artists, activists and participants may lack in cash they often make up for in time and a hunger to learn, to change, to progress. Lufti Dervishi is an Albanian journalist who was involved in the Balkan’s Initiative for Cultural Cooperation, Exchange and Development (BICCED) media development programme; he valued the training he received highly:

‘I’m a strong believer in training. No doubt, we now have a good school of journalism in our University, but a proper training is a real asset to every participating individual.’

This regional cooperation project aimed to increase the quality of cultural journalism in South East Europe by providing training, support and networking opportunities for accredited journalists. As might be expected, the programme was oversubscribed with applicants, but 23 people were taken on in the first two years, while more public events, such as the conferences, allowed considerably larger numbers to benefit from the project. Donjeta Demolli, from Prishtina, was another participant who got a lot from the training and the opportunities it offered.

Training was central to building capacity at individual and group level in the cooperation projects. The sessions ranged in length from an afternoon to more than a week, and covered a very wide range of subjects. There was a great deal of teaching in creative techniques, workshop practice, use of new technologies and so on—the basic skills of a creative practitioner. The participants were typically unemployed young people, students and early career artists, needing skills and knowledge they could use to make a difference in their own lives and communities. One person involved in Revival of City Squares in the Balkan Cities said:

‘My communication with people in foreign language is better. I have learned to recognise different cultures, different ways of thinking, and to adapt myself to them.’

While many projects, from Liceulice to Rural Communities Culture reached out to people who are marginalised by lack of education, poverty, ethnicity or other causes, it is critical that SCP did not itself marginalise those whose needs were different, especially since many of them have the education, skills and commitment to lead change in their societies on behalf of those with less power and fewer resources.
Donjeta Demolli, Kosovo

“...To be honest I gained a lot personally. The people who provided the training were very professional and passionate: they gave us the enthusiasm for writing and journalism. My intention had been to go back to my studies but, after the training, I was offered a longer term contract and I’m still here.”

There were also opportunities for mid-career professionals, like the journalists supported through BICCED, to raise their practice to a higher level, helping them compete on a more equal basis with their peers elsewhere. A number of projects, including Revival of City Squares in Balkan Cities, also prioritised knowledge development for local government officials and politicians through round table events and conferences.

But equal attention was given to learning less immediately attractive skills: budgeting and bookkeeping, fundraising, project management, media relations and so on. It is these professional skills, which are often harder for artists to access than creative ones, that will help ensure the future both of projects supported by SCP and the new work that participants will start in years to come.

In addition to all the cultural workshops, exhibitions, performances, festivals and research that the projects have produced over the past decade, there have also been publications intended to make new ideas available to others. These varied in aim, audience and approach: examples among Small Actions include a music therapy handbook by Duo Floral, an account of choreography with disabled performers by Zorica Jevremovic, and an introduction to photography criticism by Terry Barrett. Larger scale cooperation projects have also published the outcomes of their work, both in print and online. For example, the Revival of City Squares in Balkan Cities project produced an account of public activities and a ‘Pocket Park Guide’.
Similar handbooks have come from other projects: for instance, E761 produced manuals for young bands, on live sound production and is preparing one on event management. BIRN published ‘Rewarding the Best’, pioneering research about the cultural funding landscape in Bosnia Herzegovina. Culture From/For All engaged regional intellectuals in ‘Rethinking Local Cultural Policy’, while NOMAD is developing an advocacy toolkit. Utopian Box of Ideas, in addition to its online presence, will take the form of an actual box storing the final results from the Individual Utopias Now and Then project in different form and formats.

---

**Rada Cuk, Serbia**

“I remember my first day selling. It was one of the warmest days of the summer. I came to a street festival organised by Liceulice. I was nervous because I wasn’t sure I’d know how to offer the magazine. But then I approached a visitor and smiled, saying:

“I wish you a good day. Would you be interested in a great magazine? By buying it you will help people with developmental difficulties.”

She smiled back and asked to see the magazine. Taking a quick look, she decided to buy it. I was thrilled. One by one, I sold 38 copies that day. I stayed all day long, till evening, but nothing seemed hard any more. Everybody at the festival was happy for me. That felt really good,

Selling Liceulice has changed my life. It’s not only the money, although I can now rent a room, pay my bills and have a settled life. But it is such a good feeling to help those who need it more than me. I’ve also met a lot of people and made new friendships among other vendors.

I like selling the newspaper. That is how I always meet new people and I love people. I am so happy that I am good at it, because that is the way I help children with difficulties, and helping them enriches my life.”
Building people’s capacity to work together, to form associations, to grow and to thrive collectively was at the heart of the SCP process. Even for Small Action grants, applicants had to demonstrate a basic level of professional competence, probity and organisational ability. Where these were lacking, but the quality of the artistic work was high, SCP invested in support to strengthen the relevant areas. Close partnership work with applicants and grantees was key to building professional capacity in the cultural sector.

For the more sophisticated organisations receiving substantial funding for cooperation projects, the professional obligations were naturally greater. Indeed, they sometimes found the nature and extent of reporting required by SCP too onerous.

While there is much to be said for light touch grant systems (and the Small Actions showed their value) there is an unavoidable degree of responsibility associated with larger grants. The unappreciated benefit of working in this way is that it equips grantees with the skills to meet the expectations of other, perhaps more distant, funding bodies, such as the EU.

Secondly, since donors do not impose these project management systems without reason, grantees that use them naturally build organisation and project management skills. The value of this was recognised by many people, including Milena Bogavac, who reported that:

‘The first phase, when I was a participant, enabled me to learn some artistically important things, but the second made me face the reality of what working in culture actually means—how much administration and bureaucracy is involved. It is hard to say now which phase has been more important to me as they both made me create other, new projects as a consequence of the knowledge and skills I had gained.’

As the programme comes to an end, SCP leaves most, if not all, the organisations it has grant-aided better equipped with the skills and knowledge to operate in future. This assessment is vindicated by the survey of the projects involved undertaken on behalf of SCP during the final year, when respondents reported capacity gains in management, fundraising, promotion, intercultural competence and personal learning, among other positive outcomes.

At the same time, of course, most of the cooperation projects were directly involved in helping other smaller, younger or more fragile organisations to develop their organisational capacity. A large number of cultural, community and social groups have benefited over the past decade from training programmes, summer schools, mentoring and other forms of organisational support.

Projects such as Rural Communities Culture have led to the establishment of new NGOs arising from the work that people have come together to do. Among other new organisations emerging from this work are Youth for youth, CED Tercet, and Berecet – (in Macedonia), Shuri i vizionit and RECAN (in Kosovo), and Kravica, Mihaljevici and Dobrun (in Bosnia Herzegovina). Because these new organisations respond directly to local needs and capacities, they have a better than usual chance of long-term viability.

Far from being aspirations in search of need, they are vehicles developed by people to help them achieve immediate, necessary goals.

Another example is the Abrasevic Youth Cultural Centre in Mostar (BH), which was one of the national cooperation projects running between 2004 and 2008. One of its final events, in July 2008, was a presentation of achievements for potential donors, featuring a choir and a light show on the reconstructed building. As a result, the centre secured a commitment of €50,000 from the Ministry of Culture and Sports towards reconstruction and it has continued to become stronger in the subsequent years. As one local government representative said at the time:

‘The Abrasevic programme is of crucial importance for this city. This programme promotes contacts and cooperation between people of the whole city, no matter which type of activity they conduct – artistic, environmental, sport or socio-political.’
Investing in people can be more difficult and time consuming than paying for infrastructure: bricks and mortar, after all, do not answer back. But lasting change and a mature, stable democratic society depends on people who have the capacity to organise and to cooperate. Committed people can work without buildings. Buildings cannot function without committed people.

2.3.2 Community renewal

Urban renewal

Like cities everywhere, the municipalities of South Eastern Europe are experiencing enormous change. But in each geopolitical context, the nature and effects of that change are different. In the post-Socialist, post-conflict world of the Balkans, there are very particular challenges facing national and local government, civic institutions, businesses, NGOs and inhabitants. While Bilbao and Berlin have shown that culture can play an important role in urban regeneration, the financial resources are not available in the Balkans, even if the cities were starting from a similar place.

Instead, the response of cultural activists has been to improvise with the resources they have—people, naturally, but also place, history, culture, memory, lifestyles and so on. They have drawn on their skills and creativity to imagine alternative ways of making a neighbourhood more liveable and pleasant for its residents.

*Creative Cities*, an early and ambitious cooperation project in Albania, drew inspiration from Charles Landry, a British urban theorist, to stimulate experimental cultural activities and open debate about the future of the cities of Shkodra and Pogradec. Lessons learned from this experience were then extended in a second phase of the project that included Lezhe, Puka, Peshkopia, Korca, Gjirokastra, and Saranda in Albania, Ulcinj in Montenegro, and Struga in Macedonia. One of the project leaders described its outcomes for her:

*The Creative Cities project has been a very special experience for me. It is different from other projects because of its philosophy of perceiving problems as opportunities for development and finding solutions in imaginative and innovative ways by using artistic and cultural elements. Pogradec is known as the city of flowers, but the years of transition had left their mark. There were fewer and fewer flowers. The project decided to bring the tradition of flowers back to the city. It organized the festival of flowers and a competition between inhabitants of various streets. The community joined in and, with the help of the project, the main street in Pogradec was redecorated. Today, due to the good care of the municipality, you can find many places with colourful flowers in Pogradec.*

The team behind *Revival of City Squares in Balkan Cities* also aimed to engage municipalities and others in understanding the potential of local improvement actions, especially around underused spaces and waste ground. Much of their effort went into one-to-one briefings with officials and politicians, training events, discussions, meetings and conferences. These were supported by some exemplary artist-led public actions to highlight local opportunities or buildings at risk. The complexity of the urban fabric and of the competing interests involved are what make public spaces, in the words of the group, ‘places for democratic and cultural expression’. Those same things can also make change tortuously slow but sustainable change can only happen when people own it.

In this project, as in others, the process was often as important as the visible outcomes because it was by being part of something, working painstakingly with other people who had different ideas, that the participants could learn and begin to adjust their thinking. It may seem banal to say that places only change when the people who inhabit them change but time after time the SCP projects showed it to be true. The programme delivered many spectacular events and visible products—the ‘quick wins’ that can seem so important—but its real, incalculable value was its influence on the hearts and minds of many thousand of people.
My role in the project was that of an urban planner and I analyzed what I called ‘gaps’ or void spaces between buildings in the city of Tirana and their potential in becoming social places or pocket parks. The end result was a guideline for all to read and understand these gaps and their typologies and facilitate improvements through public, private partnership.

I strongly believe in the saying that: ‘If you want to go fast go alone, but, if you want to go far let’s do it together’. Most problems in the Balkans that are ‘solved’ fast by politicians—often for election day—later on turn out not to have been solved at all.

Projects like the Revival of City Squares in the Balkan Cities take some time to be implemented but once done they become a flagship for future generations because they are done together with the community and not just for the community. These projects turn out to be longer-lived and better maintained by the community than any other project because they have potential to create a sense of belonging.
When the play ends with an invitation to take part in drama workshops with the actors there is a spontaneous cheer. Many students want to take that chance to be an actor and 21 are selected for the course. The greatest prize for them was when they perform their version of the actual play ‘Circus Musaka’ in front of a full crowd of their schoolmates, parents, relatives and neighbours.’

The Rural Communities Culture project was careful to understand local community needs, as articulated by people themselves, and ensure that the cultural initiatives responded directly to these needs. As a result, the work has led to the establishment of sustainable activities, notably events celebrating local traditions, agricultural produce and customs. Some of these have created new income streams through the production of souvenirs or new markets for local wool and timber products. This success reflects the project’s commitment to a genuinely grassroots approach that empowers people as responsible agents in local development.

If the situation of Balkan cities is difficult, that of villages and rural areas is often worse, partly because so many people have migrated to cities or abroad in search of work. This depopulation has left many rural areas with a disproportionate number of the old and the very young, and a decline in local economic activity. Projects supported by SCP have shown how much can be achieved in these often neglected communities through cultural activities that bring people together and create a platform for achievement and confidence building.

The Rural Communities Culture project operated in a hundred villages in Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia and Bosnia Herzegovina, working with local councils, schools, NGOs and other informal groups on new cultural activities. With local and visiting artists, they organized festivals, theatre performances, concerts, film screenings and workshops. The combination of support for local cultural initiatives and opportunities to see work from outside the village helped overcome the isolation that people often experience in these remote communities.

The project achieved an exceptionally high degree of community participation with people of all ages becoming active volunteers in developing festivals, new craft enterprises and events. This partly accounts for the very good audiences for the activities themselves with people often come from neighbouring villages to enjoy the spectacle. Gordan Nikolov, who witnessed a performance of Circus Musaka in Rostuse (MK), vividly captures the atmosphere of the occasion:

There is curiosity in the air as the first kids arrive at the cultural centre in Rostuse, where the play is to be presented. The fun grows when they see that there will be magicians. The show starts even before it starts. Happiness is evident among all those present in the hall. There are around 200 people, mostly from the village, and aged between 7 and 40 years old. The mayor, councillors and head teachers from local primary and secondary schools are obviously enjoying the interaction between the actress and audience.
I have three children; 11 years ago I established the Maya Kravica Women’s Association. Our aim is to reconstruct the community, offer job opportunities through agriculture and empower women.

When I heard about the Rural Communities Culture I wanted to be involved. Our most important activity was making Kravica In Words And Pictures, a book and video that preserves and promotes our traditional customs. They are not the work of one person—all Kravica’s residents gave their contributions, from students who collected the material from villagers going about their everyday tasks, to the elderly who spoke about the customs and dishes prepared for different occasions.

The book and video have become so much in demand among Kravica residents people who have left the village that a second edition will be needed in the near future, perhaps even as early as summer 2013. The project also brought the Maya Association new partnerships in the region and encouraged new initiatives. One of the latest is the organisation of creative workshops producing souvenirs in Kravica that we hope will provide further economic benefits to residents.
2.3.3 Economic development

The arts and culture are now widely recognised as important to modern economies. The creative industries are both creators of content for other sectors (such as fashion or manufacturing) and valuable producers in their own right. The Swiss Cultural Programme provided important support to creative businesses across the region, from Bosnia Herzegovina to Ukraine. This assistance was so useful because local administrations do not always appreciate the value of these new business models, which are often small, fluid and responding to new markets.

A notable example of this was E761 Programme, which supported young practitioners and creative industries in the towns of Bihac, Travnik (BH), Pozega and Uzice (RS). One initiative was Centrala Radio which had, by the end of the second year, 24 staff broadcasting live and recorded shows six evenings a week. Besides the radio station a range of other initiatives was developed, including the Centrala music festival, studio facilities for local musicians, public art and street events, websites, newsletters and multimedia, training and consultancy businesses. The project published directories of creative resources and industries in the area and developed an incubator programme to support young practitioners. A particularly successful initiative was the Svezabend music school whose workshops, tuition and training courses were attended by scores of local young people. One of the project members, Goran Jordovic, says:

‘I see the project as a voice of the youth linked through Bosnia, Serbia to Bulgaria. That was an excellent opportunity for young people in the region to meet and do something together, understand each other better. We have been several times to Bosnia’s towns of Bihac, Travnik, Sarajevo, we’ve organised Centrala music festival both in Pozega and the Bosnian town of Bihac, and also workshops and seminars on event organisation, creative activities, street art etc. The atmosphere was really cool: some long-term friendships have been made.’

Not all of the young people who learnt new creative and business skills through E761 will go on to establish successful creative careers, but nor to all the students graduating each year from art schools. Some will be successful in this respect; others will combine working as a musician or a web designer with other work. And some will take the knowledge and confidence they have gained and apply it to careers in other fields. Goran has established a small creative company with some friends:

‘It’s a place where we implement everything we’ve learned through workshops and seminars, so we make movies, advertisings, placards etc. We invest our creative energy and make something new in a constructive way.’

But whatever road they take from the E761, the hundreds of young people who’ve been involved over the past three years face the future with much greater resources than before.

Sustainable businesses

SCP frequently helped organisations to develop their business plans, as in the case of the Macedonian Centre for Photography, the Centre for Drama Education and Protok Centre for Visual Arts (Bosnia Herzegovina) and Lindart (Albania). In some cases, it also enabled organisations to acquire resources essential to their business development. For example, E761 mentored business plans development for smaller organisations; six of these (three each in Serbia and Bosnia Herzegovina) were supported to start a creative business.

The recording equipment purchased with the SCP grant enabled the Sarajevo-based Gramofon record label to establish a financially sustainable business model that by 2008 had resulted in the release of 21 titles of classical, contemporary and folk music. More than 70 musicians from Bosnia Herzegovina have received a boost to their careers as a result: Gramofon artists gave over 200 concerts abroad during the three years of the SCP support. The label’s sister music agency has become an important promoter and the enterprise is widely recognised as the leading music label in Bosnia Herzegovina. A relatively small investment, backed by professional support in cultural management, has produced an economically viable business that plays an important role in enabling Bosnian musicians to take their work onto a European stage.
Daut Shasivari, Macedonia

I’m the only one that has a job. Some politicians invited me to be part of these elections now but I rejected that. It’s not good for me. I prefer to stay here and contribute to my village.

As you can see, we are doing it all ourselves. We have help from some donors and the Municipality of Tearce, but those little things that make the whole are done because of the good human cohesion.

I’m giving my office and computer to the young people to help with their cultural, ecological and sports programmes. What’s good for them, is good for the community and the village. I see they have good will and that’s why I’m always there for them.

I can do everything with the people’s help—doing projects together is what make this village so beautiful and developed.

Demons Tra ting Value

The Swiss Cultural Programme’s support was often critical to the development of young and emerging cultural organisations. Financial backing was of course essential in providing resources for work. But the confidence and trust represented by this backing was also valuable, internally and externally. It gave confidence to the artists and managers involved and enabled them to show others that they were worthy of support. Consequently, the great majority of organisations were successful in securing funding from other donors, including local and national governments, both during and after their SCP grant.

The Fabric, a Cultural Resource Centre in North Central Bulgaria, secured funds for new projects from the Ministry of Culture, the Open Society Foundation, the PHARE programme and the European Cultural Foundation as the period of SCP support came to an end. Innovative contemporary arts practice is the lifeblood of a society’s culture but since its exploratory nature makes it less popular and commercial, it will always depend on some measure of grant assistance. The experience of the past decade demonstrates that such support can be won, even in countries with great demands on very limited resources. SCP has shown that carefully targeted and well-managed interventions in the cultural sector can have a lasting effect on how culture is seen by local actors and therefore on their much-needed willingness to provide long-term support. Future successes and continuity in this will largely depend on how the culture funding priorities are shaped, given economic instability on one side, and the reducing range of flexible international support available for the region on the other.
2.4 SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT

2.4.1 Inclusion

The projects supported through the Swiss Cultural Programme over the past decade have placed inclusion of marginalised people at the core of their purpose. This is so normal that it can be easily overlooked. But almost every project creates opportunities for people to meet others, to make connections, to go to places or see things that they would not otherwise have had the opportunity to experience. Countless artists, students, volunteers and NGO members have been supported to travel to festivals and conferences or to other towns or countries. These opportunities to take part, to be included in activities that others may take for granted, are a foundation of reducing the everyday marginalisation of people.

Armando Rexepi, Macedonia

“The street is no longer my home: it’s my workplace. People are nice to me, they are smiling—they are not threatening me like some beggar.

I know that I’m doing a good job; I’m not ashamed of this. In the beginning, it was really hard for me. I was used to begging or going through trash cans. Now I’m happy that I got a real job, just like anybody else.

I think my selling tactics will get better and better. I’m going to be part of the third issue and I hope that then I will sell more copies. My friend Ergian got the reward for the best seller last time, but now I believe it is my turn.”

Some projects have prioritised opening cultural venues or performances to people who were not well represented among the existing audience. For example, a 2009 Small Action, Belgrade: Another Gaze, offered introductory talks on the city’s culture to disabled people. But many others were concerned to enable marginalised people to strengthen their distinctive cultural practices and present them publicly—to take, in effect, an equal place in the cultural life of society alongside other, better recognised groups or artists. Again, there were many examples among the Small Actions, such as the 2008 International Festival of Roma Culture at Subotica, in Serbia, or the Differentiated Neighbourhoods of New Belgrade, which looked at integration of refugees and migrants in parts of the modern city.
2.4.2 Intercultural relations

Culture has been used at times and in certain parts of the region if not as a source of division then as a mark of it. In these circumstances it is even more important to articulate a tolerant, open-spirited and democratic approach to arts and culture, and to support those who work for intercultural dialogue and understanding. This has been a theme of much of the work supported by SCP, sometimes implicitly but often overtly.

For instance the Abrasevic and Delta projects, both realised in Mostar (BH) in the period up to 2009, were strongly committed to bringing young people from different parts of the city together through cultural programmes. By providing safe spaces for shared creative practice, they were able to engage people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, developing knowledge, understanding and friendship. The project evaluator, Eni Kurtovic, concluded:

'Besides the significant role that Abrasevic plays in enriching the cultural life of Mostar, it has important part in process of reconciliation in the city. Abrasevic is a meeting point, a space with significant role in pursuing reconciliation and dialogue, and lessening xenophobia.'

The E761 Programme takes its name from a grand project of Tito’s era, to create a highway linking Bosnia with Bulgaria. Never completed, the road was seen by the project’s creators as redolent of underlying unity and the promise of travel and discovery. Using music, video, hip-hop, radio and the Internet as core media to engage young people, they connected groups in different towns and promoted festivals, concerts and training courses. But it was often meeting and making friends with others, with different faiths, cultures and passports, that people valued most. As Goran Jordovic put it:

Armando Rexepi is 16 years old, and lives in the Skopje district of Shuto Orizari, where six people in ten are Roma. He started selling Liceulice in September 2012, when the paper was launched in Macedonia. Each day, he crosses the city on a number 19 bus, politely approaching people he meets with his gentle charm. He is no longer afraid of the police because they now see that he is working.

On a good day, Armando sells 10 copies, normally better than either his mother or his brother. He keeps half the cover price—50 denars—and is saving for some new clothes and maybe a bus ticket to Kumanovo, where his girlfriend lives. He is having second thoughts about his plan of becoming a hairdresser: he can earn as much from a single Liceulice sale as he could from each customer. The money is essential to a family that did not eat every day before they became Liceulice vendors. But being part of a team, having a purpose, getting access to training and support, in short, being included: these are the things that are making a lasting difference in Armando Rexepi’s life.
Intercultural relations are not only a matter of reducing tensions within the existing nation states of South Eastern Europe, vital as that is. It is also important to normalise foreign contacts so that citizens of these countries, including artists, can have similar opportunities to travel, study and work abroad—bearing in mind that, abroad may now mean travelling to a place that was once part of the same country. The international image of the region is still marked by its recent history: only sustained contact, dialogue and, perhaps, the new imagination of artists can help change that.

Artistic exchanges within and beyond the region have been an important aspect of the Swiss Cultural Programme, both through the work of individual organisations and the regional cooperation projects that have been its main focus between 2008 and 2012. The Romanian national cooperation project, ArtistNe(s)t, created opportunities for Romanian artists to work on residencies with artists from Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, South Korea and the USA.

Many had a negative opinion about the other side—until they went there and saw it was completely different from what they expected or thought. Those friendships and acquaintances will not fade out; we will all certainly continue to work together. There have already been plenty ideas of how to continue cooperation. I feel great when I go to Sarajevo, Zagreb or Skopje and always have friends there to rely on.’

Because respect for all was a fundamental value both of SCP and of the individual projects it supported, many of the everyday actions supported had positive effects on interethnic relations at a community level. Thus a group of Roma people decided to become involved in an event organised by CO-Plan in Tirana and went onto to take part in an architectonic project for a possible development of a public space in the city. In Tearce, on the Macedonian side of the border with Kosovo, former members of the UKK (Albanian Liberation Army) cooked food with members of the Macedonian Police Reserve to celebrate the Bean Day Festival. The Rural Communities Culture project, which supported this event, repeatedly used people’s shared enthusiasms for fishing, hunting, football or pigeons to build common ground between people of different cultures, ethnicities or political parties.

Meeting, learning about and working with people of different cultures was a necessary experience for the young people and professionals involved in regional cooperation projects. The effects were positive and often profound, as illustrated by this comment from a student who took part in a regional workshop organised by Revival of City Squares in the Balkan Cities:

‘Thank you for giving us opportunity to meet and see that young people from Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia don’t have tails and horns, and that young people from Albania are not “primitive savages”. Learning about each other helps us to overcome prejudices and stereotypes that come from our ignorance.’
Elma Selman, Bosnia Herzegovina

NOMAD Dance Academy shook my foundations. Until then I was always working in fields that I was familiar with and I had been pretty good in. For the first time I was doing something I was not really good at, because it was completely new.

Back then I thought the biggest problem was that we were totally different in the group. And maybe the problem really lay in that we had to work together and to fit in. However, such a group brought me a lot. I came from another field, and here I was able to learn from different people. I learned to work in a group that was completely heterogeneous, to collaborate creatively with a group of people who were so different. That was one of these wonderful things—and back then I thought it was a problem.

I don’t know what changed in me, but after taking part in the project I continued visiting festivals, workshops, and everything that was available—especially because it cannot be found in Sarajevo where I live. I started to gather experience and information, in fact everything I could get hold of, because I liked it more and more.
Agim Mustafai, Macedonia

Gostivar doesn’t have a rich cultural heritage. We have to build new artistic works, buildings and creative programs to make it. At this point, all we have is human resources.

Through discussions and the work groups we decided that the first thing that we need is a cultural infrastructure—a big multipurpose arts centre would do the job. Then, because Gostivar is surrounded with natural beauty, we have to manage that well. The river Vardar with its streams in the village of Vrutok is really a big touristic asset, and it would be easy to bring out its cultural values.

We have great artists but they don’t have anywhere to work. This has to be changed, and we are on the right path with the new Cultural Development Strategy for the Municipality of Gostivar.

We have this document and its goals are sustainable. Since it was created through cooperation between all the important stakeholders, I hope that no matter which party comes to power, we will follow the action plan and ensure cultural activities happen.

2.4.3 Strengthening democracy

Engaging government

Democracy is not only a matter of choosing a representative or even a government. It requires a strong civil society that can enable local debate and engage government and public institutions in genuine dialogue. It requires a public space, literally and metaphorically, in which all citizens are able to speak without fear. So much of the work that SCP projects have done, in pursuing their artistic, social or developmental goals, is also a way of contributing to fulfilling these basic democratic functions. In bringing people together around a festival, an exhibition or a seminar, they make connections across social, economic, political and ethnic divides. Crucially, they often link ordinary citizens with powerful officials and politicians and help them build the relationships of trust so important to local democracy.

Several of the regional cooperation projects did this by involving people from the municipal administrations directly in their activities, as was the case with Culture For/From All. Working across Macedonia and Kosovo, the project aimed to engage towns and cities in the creation of plans to use culture in local development.
Cultural policy and planning

The relationship between the independent cultural sector and government (local and national) can be difficult in the region. Elected politicians and officials often have little understanding of and less interest in culture, especially those aspects of it that are outside the state institutions. Since this autonomous cultural activity can also be critical of existing norms and values, there is plenty of scope for misunderstanding. On the other hand there can be too much political interest in culture: for instance, some artists complain of political interference in theatre and a project like New Politics of Solidarity Through Knowledge and Art Production aimed directly to challenge these old patterns among its other activities.

In this context, the everyday work of SCP projects, and the continuing contact with municipal administrations, can be understood as an enactment of normalisation in the field of cultural policy and management. The process of working in an open and professional way to achieve good results in audiences, events and products demonstrates that artists have a worthwhile place in local development and that they are not so difficult to work with. SCP projects have consistently achieved successes in towns and villages across the regions and people do want to be associated with success.

Skender Boshtrakaj, Kosovo

“This kind of work is important to me because for all social sectors we do have some kind of strategy; we are driven by certain aims and objectives, no matter how simple or complicated they are. In culture we need the same.

I think it is important because without cultural strategy in our society we won’t be able to know each other. It’s like a pact, an agreement on value exchanges...as in other areas of social well-being, like welfare, health, education.

Cultural policy development therefore ought to involve many stakeholders and sectors, including the independent cultural sector, individuals and the business sector. It cannot be managed and created by one institution only.”
At a basic level, SCP projects have consistently made local officials and municipal politicians aware of culture’s potential in itself and in relation to wider goals of sustainable development. SCP’s effect on local cultural planning has sometimes been significant, as it has contributed to the development both of the arts sector’s capacity to create good work and of an audience interested in that work. This virtuous circle of supply and demand partly explains the steady growth of autonomous cultural activity in recent years. Although public bodies have uneven knowledge of and commitment to culture, especially in its innovative and independent forms, there is growing expectation on them both from producers and consumers. As the Albanian journalist, Lufti Dervishi, observes:

Lufti Dervishi, Albania

“When the authorities speak about culture, they say that it is a priority but, if you look at the state budget allocated to culture, that is not the case. But if we consider culture from the public point of view, we see a shift. The audience has become more interested in shows, in cultural tourism, in real quality performances, though the attention of the media and politics is not running in the same direction.”

There is reason to expect that, as has happened over the past 20 or 30 years in many Western European countries, this growth of cultural activity will stimulate more attention and support from government, if only because of its increasing social and economic significance. At local level, there is good evidence that this is happening as municipalities adopt cultural policies and plans, raise standards of management and become more willing to invest in the cultural sector.

One foundation of this work is the information gathered through the activities of many SCP projects. For example, Liceulice, has built databases of creative practitioners and their activist work, both to help them network and learn from one another and to raise
their profile among potential clients. Other projects have undertaken formal mapping and research to identify human and physical cultural resources—all data that is an essential starting point for a local cultural strategy.

Such open engagement of different actors and interests is not always easy, but bringing people together to talk is important. As Tomislav Zegura, who was involved in the Re-vival of City Squares in Balkan Cities, explained:

‘Attending a round table held at the Drago Palace in Kotor in summer 2012 I was thrilled that the inter-sectoral dialogue about the city square’s life was finally initiated, but I was equally disappointed about the low level of knowledge and awareness among the people of the importance of squares that were built to be gathering places pulsating with the life of citizens.’

The team was not daunted by the lack of comprehension however, seeing the opportunity to discuss possibilities as a key part of the development process. Through initiative such as the Kotor Children’s Theatre Festival they intervened creatively in neglected spaces, hanging Gulliver’s trousers on a line at Parilo, suspending open umbrellas at Skaljari Square and flying brooms near St. Paul’s church. The combination of dialogue and demonstration has begun to change attitudes among local people.

There have been many examples of projects that have aimed to stimulate local cultural planning and debate alongside new activity. In South Eastern Serbia, the Re-Opening a Gold Mine project connected Nis and four smaller cities in a network to strengthen the capacity of cultural actors to create work and that of the local government to support that work in a consistent way. By providing resources for small scale cultural projects, the team were able to help local groups delivering them to gain knowledge of planning, management, fundraising and cultural policy, in a joint programme with the Ministry. The project resulted in adoption of a Strategy for the Cultural Development of the City of Nis, and in Strategic Plans for five cultural institutions from South-East Serbia. One project participant observed that:

‘For the first time, culture is approached in a systematic manner. I think that, thanks to the Reopening a Goldmine project, cultural institutions and operators are better equipped for changes in the future.’

A similar process underpinned the Culture for/From All project in Macedonia and Kosovo, which connected all relevant cultural actors and municipalities in three cities in each country. All the municipalities involved, Tetovo, Gostivar and Kichevo in Macedonia and Prizren, Novoberda and Gjilan in Kosovo have all formally adopted local cultural strategies and committed themselves to continue with implementation. The importance of this achievement, the first of its kind in Kosovo, should not be underestimated, especially as the cultural network there has gone on to apply the same model in other municipalities, including Prishtina and Mitrovica.
Tomislav Zegura, Montenegro

When we find in ourselves the desire to improve our public spaces, we will know we are good inhabitants of our city and interesting hosts to our visitors.

On the one hand, the busiest and most popular squares are overcrowded, while, on the other, whole parts of the city languish in silence and unused. It’s not all about money. Much depends on the willingness of citizens to see the city and urban spaces as their own, as the place where they live—not as something left to the care of somebody else.

Through the local radio, citizens were invited to lend their lamps, chandeliers and torches to light up and decorate one of the public spaces near St. Tryphon’s cathedral, at least for one night. This time people of Kotor were not lazy: they searched their houses and brought the lamps they did not need, and together with the guests from Ljubljana and children attending the Kotor Acting School contributed to ‘bringing a new light’ to one beautiful space under the Old City vault.

Drinking tea and listening to poetry, we had a nice time, told jokes and inspired passers-by to stop and join us, which was more than enough to start experiencing one open city space as our own, intimate and homely space, if only for an hour or two.
2.4.4 Confronting the past

“The Swiss Cultural Programme started supporting projects which could not easily be described by a designated style or genre, but what they had in common was that they eroded the stereotypical image of the Balkans predominant in the Serbian public not only as a consequence of constructed medialization, but also through works of art and their regressive influence on identity and the perception of reality. The Balkans of exaggeration, blood, violence, vulgarity, crudity—the Balkans of prose, turbo-folk, and visual arts depicting the ‘Serbian vertical’, was gradually replaced by a different image of the Balkans as a genre—the Balkans as polyphony of possibilities...”

Milena Dragicevic–Sesic, Serbia

The disintegration of Yugoslavia and the conflicts that ensued have left wounds beyond measure. They have not healed just because the wars have stopped; it can take a lifetime to overcome the damage of a moment, if it can be done at all. There is an understandable reluctance to dwell on past horrors, whether or not they touched us directly. We look to the future, towards better times. There are new countries, new societies, to be built. But reconstruction is hard and complex. Sometimes it requires people to look back, to try to understand what has happened, and to understand also how it might have shaped the views of others, today. Intercultural dialogue can be difficult. When it is layered with conflicting memories, it may become almost unbearable. So one can only respect the commitment of those who choose to work in this painful and controversial field, where identity, culture and memory intersect so sharply. Their activities are often unpopular because of what they recall but also simply for the act of recalling it at all.

The Swiss Cultural Programme has consistently supported cultural projects that acknowledge and speak about the recent past, in text, performance, sound and image. The sideways look that art can bring, the immediacy of its experiences, and the ambiguity of interpretation—these are all assets that make it easier to bear the raw past. As we can look at the sun’s reflection in water, but not directly, so we can see in the mirror of art what would be too hard to confront head on.

This work was never more challenging than in the regional cooperation project that, by their very nature, required people in different post-conflict states to work together. Fortunately there are many who have the courage and the will to use culture in the process of healing. The Network for Participative Cultures of Remembrance brought together art organisations in Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia in a two year project of reflection, learning and creation. Many of those involved were too young to have had much direct experience of war, though sometimes its echoes had been powerful influences in their childhood. Through a range of events and presentations in different cities, the partners were able to create a new platform for dialogue and recognition of alternative perspectives through art. As Zeljko Stanetic from Serbia remembers:

‘We produced an exhibition at Belgrade’s Centre for Cultural Decontamination, where some 50 photos taken either during the war or more recently—even during the project—were exhibited and accompanied with personal stories. You see the exhibition and understand that we cannot reach the truth about the past until we hear 50 or even 100 different stories.’

Following this experience, he decided to produce a radio show entitled ‘A look into the past is a step into the future’ to bring the voices of young people from across former Yugoslavia into a more public space. The show will be broadcast by Vojvodina public radio in 2013 and provide a platform for discussion among young people about the meanings of recent history and their influence on the present and future. The partners do not see this work as a purely cultural or social activity. They believe also that being able to talk about the recent past is a necessary aspect of democratisation and that only by achieving such a space for dialogue can genuine democratic values become normal to everyone.
I was a child then, and the most interesting part for me while filming was how the other young people, who were also children then, see this past, see what happened to us all. The real situation is that this conflict stole their childhood. This was the first time that I discovered some feeling about the situation and that was most impressive for me.

I wasn’t aware until then that the situation in 2001 had made a significant mark on my childhood. I heard other people’s memories and emotions, but I wasn’t aware that I had them too. I hadn’t talked to anybody about my impressions of the war, from my perspective as a child.

I joined the project, because I was interested in discovering and exploring more on this subject. When you hear someone’s perception of someone else, you are seeing it through your own perception. You put all the information in your head and you build your own story. You remember only the parts of the story that you want to remember, not the whole story.

It was about time the masks fall down. We don’t need the culture of a victim. We need a culture of remembrance—to hear someone else’s life story and to be reconciled with it. Stories are there to be told, not to be locked inside you. They want to get out. If you keep them inside, they will have to erupt.
2.4.5 Freedom of expression and respect for minorities

Visibility is an important but easily overlooked aspect of the actions supported by the Swiss Cultural Programme. The festivals, exhibitions, performances, street events and other public presentations of cultural work are a statement about the right of a group of people to express themselves in a public space. At its simplest—most innocent, perhaps—a performance by young people in a public square is a way of celebrating their work before the community. But such an event also implicitly claims a right for those young people to be recognised and heard. This becomes more important, and sometimes more controversial, when the group expressing themselves in a public space is marginalised to some degree, whether by indifference or by actual hostility.

Artists whose practice and ideas are unusual can struggle for recognition by state cultural institutions, so SCP’s support in giving them resources to create and present their work publicly is an important validation of alternative values. In some circumstances, a show or publication that brings together groups that are seen to be mutually hostile can also be an enacted statement of the possibility of cooperation.

The Liceulice magazine, based in Serbia but extending to Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia, has become a valuable public space for different ideas about art and society. But in developing a model for street sales by homeless, people with disabilities, and Roma people, it also recognises them as members of society, participating in its economic life and connected to its culture. While no one can determine how this may be read, it is both a symbolic statement of inclusion and an everyday process of relationship building between people.

Finally, all the projects supported by SCP made concerted and often very successful efforts to present their work through the media, including local press, radio, TV and—a growing support for democracy and freedom of expression—the Internet. Each of these outlets naturally reaches different audiences, from the very local to the global, and none should be thought of as being of greater importance. A positive article about an intercultural festival in a local newspaper may be of great value in helping to shift attitudes. Equally a blog that creates a forum for discussion among young artists from across the region may play a key role in normalising cultural exchange. The Culture Watch pages on the Balkan Insight website illustrates the value and need for such platforms. Developed to support cultural journalism by the BICCED training programme, they have achieved an average of 4,000 page views per quarter and substantial republication of its content.

What matters in all these cases is the consistent effort to reach out to people who are not involved and who feel that art is not for them, while simultaneously maintaining or improving the standards of work. The commitment to engage others without condescension, and so to build the dialogue that is the lifeblood of democracy, was one of the most admirable qualities of all the projects enabled through SCP.
If you asked me would I want my child to grow up here, I would definitely say no, because we cannot move on until we deal with our past. There is no European future for any of us in the Balkans unless we deal with it. Otherwise, we only make space for some new conflict.

If we try to narrow our memory even to one single event, we all recall it differently. But there is no problem in having different truths about what had happened—as long as we are willing to talk about them. If we do not even talk on what we disagree about, we make space for a new conflict in the future. That is what the project had taught me.

It changed me as a person. I began to take personally everything that had happened in the past, which was strange, as I have had no reason for that. My parents are from Bosnia, and I have relatives there, but compared to many others we did not suffer much as a family. We were lucky to have no loss. But I have met so many people who were personally touched by the war, who lost someone. Some of the participants felt direct consequences of the war. Eventually as they become your friends, you start to care about it at a very personal level, realising that the problem will only grow if you don’t tackle it.

It looks like tilting at windmills, but there is no alternative. It is up to us, the young people of the region to do it. Only then we can hope for a prosperous future in the Balkans.
3 UNDERSTANDING EXPERIENCE

3.1 CAPITALISING ON EXPERIENCE

Experience capitalization is a method to learn from own and others’ experience. It is the formalization of a natural human behaviour: looking back before embarking on something new.

Experience Capitalisation, SDC 2011

The outstanding work and results achieved by projects supported since 1999 has been vital for the cultural sector in South and Eastern Europe. It has contributed directly to the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation’s aims of supporting democracy, freedom of expression and human rights. Thousands of professional and semi-professional artists have had life-changing opportunities that would never have been possible otherwise. Tens of thousands of young people, adults, local politicians, students, local government managers, business people and audience members have taken part in experiences that have built trust, opened imaginations and united people in the common purpose of improving their communities.

SDC is committed to learning from its experience and sharing the results of that learning with grantees, partners and others. Therefore, in the final months of the Swiss Cultural Programme, an extensive review process was undertaken to deepen knowledge of what had taken place, its results and, most importantly in the present context, what lessons might be taken forward. Its elements included an online survey of existing grantees, seminars involving all the regional cooperation projects and the regional support committee and a review of past reports and evaluations. This report is one result, though it can offer no more than a brief overview of 15 years’ engagement and investment in South East Europe. Detailed internal reporting and reflection will help disseminate management, administrative and other lessons learned. A regional conference in Sarajevo in April 2013 is a further public opportunity to reflect on and recognise what has been done.

‘Transfer of the knowledge and experiences of organizations working in different contexts leads to better understanding of the potential role in the regional context.’

Respondent to SCP project partners survey

This section of the report looks at some of the broad learning that has emerged through the programme and the review. Clearly, given the scale and diversity of the work, the enormous differences to be found within and between countries, and the constantly changing nature of creative practice, it would be unwise to be prescriptive about cultural development. Instead, we offer some broad guidance drawn from the review process that we believe will repay the attention of cultural organisations, local government, ministries of culture and international donors. If some of these ideas are familiar, or even sound simple, it is because the core principles of cultural practice and community development do not change so much from year to year. Although there is an understandable tendency towards policy innovation, sometimes the answer is simply to do what has been shown to work—but to do it better.
3.2 Successes

Both the projects and SCP shared a fundamental belief that excellent artistic work is compatible with social engagement and community benefits. Indeed, the projects collectively show that positive outcomes are closely connected with the quality of the artistic work. For example, the success of Liceulice in providing a small but sustainable income to its street vendors is entirely dependent on the quality of the magazine and its interest for a particular section of the reading public. This unwillingness to compromise expectations of quality was a key at both project and programme level. All the partners avoided the trap of lowering expectations in the face of the real difficulties faced by cultural actors in the region. Instead, a common clarity of purpose and optimism about what could be achieved encouraged consistently high standards. Milena Dragicevic-Sesic put it like this:

‘Thanks to the Swiss Cultural Programme, those artists fostering a feeling of responsibility towards their community were given the opportunity to work with programmes for social activism, political consciousness raising and fight against nationalism, chauvinism and xenophobia. Through its continued support of artists and independent organizations with high artistic accomplishments and equally high ethical standards, the Swiss Cultural Program has made a significant contribution to the democratization of the society and the development of civil awareness in Serbia in the first decade of the XXI century.’

Clarity of purpose

Although SCP had quite a complex mission—to strengthen democracy, respect for minorities and freedom of expression through cultural programmes—it was able to retain a consistent clarity about its mission. This meant never losing sight of the balance between radical or innovative artistic practice on the one hand and social engagement and benefit on the other. Some projects, like De-schooling Classroom, were more focused on the former than, say, Rural Communities Culture, which had a mission to engage remote village communities. But this was only a matter of degree and all the projects maintained an unwavering commitment to promoting freedom of expression by marginalised voices—whether those voices belonged to women, Roma people, children or contemporary artists.

Both the projects and SCP shared a fundamental belief that excellent artistic work is compatible with social engagement and community benefits. Indeed, the projects collectively show that positive outcomes are closely connected with the quality of the artistic work. For example, the success of Liceulice in providing a small but sustainable income to its street vendors is entirely dependent on the quality of the magazine and its interest for a particular section of the reading public. This unwillingness to compromise expectations of quality was a key at both project and programme level. All the partners avoided the trap of lowering expectations in the face of the real difficulties faced by cultural actors in the region. Instead, a common clarity of purpose and optimism about what could be achieved encouraged consistently high standards. Milena Dragicevic-Sesic put it like this:

‘Thanks to the Swiss Cultural Programme, those artists fostering a feeling of responsibility towards their community were given the opportunity to work with programmes for social activism, political consciousness raising and fight against nationalism, chauvinism and xenophobia. Through its continued support of artists and independent organizations with high artistic accomplishments and equally high ethical standards, the Swiss Cultural Program has made a significant contribution to the democratization of the society and the development of civil awareness in Serbia in the first decade of the XXI century.’
former and build on the latter. Projects like E761 and Creative Cities, which were supported for a second phase of work following an evaluation, were not unusual.

This long-term consistency was, of course, matched by the supported organisations, which are equally committed to the places where they work. They take a long term view and are not discouraged by occasional setbacks as they work to improve conditions for creative, cultural life and positive social change.

**FLEXIBILITY**

While maintaining consistency, both the programme and the individual projects avoided becoming rigid. SCP used different tools at different times, from the small actions through to national and regional cooperation projects. Consequently it was often able to provide the right kind of support in a particular situation, and to allow ambitious organisations to build on success by developing larger projects. The logic of moving from small scale seed funding to large three year programmes was sound and achieved good results. Crucially, the kind of support that had been given through the small actions was now available through the cooperation projects. But even within this structure, SCP responded imaginatively to opportunities that arose, avoiding structure getting in the way of support.

Again, the same was true at project and organisational level, where people often had to adapt their plans in the face of unexpected problems or opportunities. The resilience of the people concerned and their ability to reorganise quickly was an impressive quality of their work.

**HUMAN RESOURCES AND MANAGEMENT**

The final success factor that must be understood is the experience, skills and personal qualities of so many of the people involved. Anyone who has spent time with the artists, trainers, managers and other creative people who have led so many outstanding projects cannot fail to be impressed by the professional and human qualities. Like any funding programme, SCP has only been able to achieve such good results because it has worked in partnership with such people.

At the same time SCP was also able to recruit high calibre staff to work with grantees, regionally and locally. Here, the long experience of the two partner agencies was clearly crucial: both had run effective grant aid programmes for many years—SDC in international development and cooperation, Pro Helvetia in arts promotion and cultural exchange—and were able to draw on that experience in establishing SCP. This is worth saying because the municipalities and ministries of culture in the region who are to become more involved in providing support to independent cultural initiatives do not always have this experience to draw upon. It may be that SDC’s support in helping establish good management processes will be needed in future as local government becomes more engaged in cultural planning.

Over 15 years, a huge body of knowledge, experience and organisational memory has been built up and it is fortunate that the programme leadership have decided to take their work forward through the independent structure artangle. This will ensure the continued presence of a strategic partner in the region working with the cultural sector, SDC, ECF and others who remain committed to the cultural vitality of South Eastern Europe.
Elmedina Shafi, Macedonia

I wanted to be part of the Network for Participative Cultures of Remembrance project because I wanted to explore. Through the process of work, we talked about everything that we didn’t talk about before.

We have such important questions left without answers because until now, we talked only about ‘big’ issues that seemed so important. So, we left those ‘little’ themes on the side. We didn’t know that those little things have their influence on the ‘bigger’ subjects.

The documentary we made as part of this project gave us answers about how things were before 2001, in 2001 and afterwards. Everyone we interviewed in the film had the same thoughts. No one is looking for someone to blame. It was more important that we started to open this subject and to talk to each other about it.

It was about time we laid out the cards: 10 years have passed. We should have done this much sooner. People told me that it was important for them to go back in time. We’re used to thinking only about the future, but for this kind of issues, we have to look back.

And the most important thing is that we’ve done it together, because we have the same history. Looking back is what reconciles us, and that is all we need.
3.3 TRAPS AND RISKS

It would be naïve to expect that a programme operating in the rapidly changing and often troubled societies of Eastern Europe, with the specific aim of supporting marginalised activities and groups, would not encounter problems, disappointments and, sometimes, outright failures.

Finance

Financial matters were a fairly common source of problems, particularly where grantees had neither the expertise nor experience of the kind of record keeping expected in Switzerland. Usually this was no more than a matter of learning, and indeed such professional development was both a purpose and outcome of SCP’s grants programme. As a result many organisations have become much better able to meet the accounting requirements of other donors, a change that has strengthened their capacity to secure grant aid and manage their businesses in internationally acceptable ways.

In a handful of cases, the financial problems were more serious and did lead to the premature termination of a few grant relationships. However, thanks to the diligence of SCP staff, such problems were rare and had quite limited effects when they did occur. The worst results were the loss of opportunity that the project beneficiaries experienced as a result of a project’s under-achievement.

Human factors

While the passion, commitment, skills, knowledge and courage of the people involved were the foundation of all the projects’ successes, those qualities are not without their drawbacks, not least when people are passionately committed to differing visions of culture and society. It takes self-belief to lead a project for which few in the local area see a need. The need to build partnerships between people and agencies with different interests, within and beyond the cultural sector, is not always easy. And underlying everything are the usual differences of education, culture, ethnicity, politics, gender and class that exist everywhere but can be especially raw in a period of post-conflict change.

Other difficulties were external to the project itself, as the people involved tried to work with other individuals and institutions in the local area. City officials, politicians, the managers of other cultural bodies, university rectors and head teachers—these and many others were able to affect projects for all sorts of reasons. If such a person felt threatened by the new ideas of the arts project, or envious of its resources and external support, or was simply uncomfortable with change, they were often in a position to obstruct it, if only by ignoring it.

Was this avoidable? Probably not, given that the Swiss Cultural Programme was dedicated to working with people living in situations of economic, social and cultural precarity. That, after all, was the reason why the programme was needed and worth doing. Indeed, it is arguable that the negotiation and resolution of these human difficulties was not just a means of delivering the SCP’s objectives but also an enactment of those objectives in everyday reality.
**Bureaucracy**

The most straightforward, though in itself often Byzantine and deeply frustrating, problem faced by the individual grantees was the bureaucracy currently operating in so many aspects of local and national government. For example, regional cooperation projects were often made much more difficult by the need to obtain visas and then to travel via third countries in the absence of direct flights. This added greatly to project management costs in both cash and time. International cultural cooperation, to say nothing of reconciliation and normalisation of contacts between different peoples, will be slow in coming while such bureaucratic restrictions remain in place.

While travel was a particular problem to SCP staff working on regional cooperation projects and bringing people together to share experiences, the people actually managing projects in cities and villages across the region faced a continual series of challenges enshrined in out-dated legislation or more commonly in the entrenched habits of local administrations. In some instances, partners had to change the chosen project region or the country of implementation of an activity to avoid political instrumentalisation. There is, unfortunately, little to learn from such experiences except, perhaps, patience. The challenge of bureaucratic inertia is far larger than can be tackled by a cultural programme, although it can perhaps show what can be achieved by speed, imagination and a light touch. That so many of the projects achieved so much, despite these challenges, is both a vindication of their style of working and, one might hope, an example to others.

**Living with difficulties**

Such difficulties were inevitable in the context of the Swiss Cultural Programme as they are in the daily lives of most cultural actors in the region. Indeed, it might be argued that a programme that avoided them was playing safe and failing to reach those people who were most in need of its support. The critical question, in such initiatives, must be the reasons for failure, when it occurs. If a project is well conceived, has a realistic chance of success and will lead to valuable, sustained outcomes, there is every reason to support it, even in the knowledge that there are unknown and uncontrollable risks. Good evaluation—and SCP has put much effort into effective evaluation of its work—distinguishes between competent and incompetent failure. There is much that can be gained from a competent failure, in terms of organisational and personal learning. It is not something of which development agencies working in difficult contexts should ever be afraid. The greater danger is being unwilling to take appropriate risks.
The title of the project, ‘Utopia now and then’, caught my interest. I spent most of my youth in a utopian system—Communism. We came out of it with high hopes that the new system would be really pragmatic, very concrete. It promised quick solutions to problems at that time. I believe everyone in my generation now understands that this system bears its own utopias.

I worked on two 30-minute films for the project: Black Cats and Beans and Rice. In the first are two human figures, two women, who are generally looked down on by public opinion. I was attracted to learning who these people were, what they did, what they had in common with us and what they didn’t. What was their individual utopia?

Beans and Rice was inspired by an old abandoned factory in Shkodra. The Chinese built the place at the time of famous Albania-China friendship. But in 2012 I met some Chinese men working there who knew nothing about who built the factory. Positions got altered: the Chinese who were once the owners or managers of the building were now ‘slaves’ of modern times, exploited by an Albanian businessman for his own interests. It used the symbolism of Albanian beans and Chinese rice, because that was their daily meal.

The films were shown in Albania, Sarajevo, and Belgrade. They don’t have a screenplay. The directing and script are mixed. There is no storyteller. They are very conceptual films.

The project was important because it allowed Serbian, Albanian and Bosnian artists who had no contact before artists to collaborate in a workshop. But it was also important because it was built on a new mentality, much closer to the aesthetics of contemporary arts. It does so through a minute, intelligent and essential monitoring of post-Communist Balkan realities. It dealt with the sometimes fruitless attempts of these societies to detach themselves from their past, which make one feel like someone trying to pull his arm out of an old jacket with a ripped lining.
3.4 Good Practice

The survey of regional cooperation project partners, the workshops and the documentary review produced valuable insights into the practice of running community-oriented cultural projects. Many of these have already influenced the future development of individual projects and of the organisations involved. But we set out here some key points of good practice that may help in future, organised under themes. Not all are applicable to every situation, but the checklist is intended to help project leaders to think through and test their work.

Cultural Work

- Raise awareness of the contribution and needs of culture workers
- Use alternative spaces and share community space (e.g. by renting in schools)
- Work where people are (e.g. site specific performances)
- Understand that the process (how things are done) is as important as what is done
- Test ideas in pilot activities before extending them once lessons have been learned
- Always have an alternative plan, and a contingency line in the budget

Working with People

- Recognise that lasting change comes from involving local people
- Prioritise involving people through building good relationships
- Value people who become involved and show them that they are valued
- Establish support systems for long term volunteering
- Offer training and professional development to both groups and individuals
- Try to build long term partnerships
- Help young associations and informal groups become NGOs

Policy and Administration and Policy Issues

- Wherever possible use community leaders as advocates, not cultural figures
- Involve local decision-makers directly in the project
- Providing useful tools for decision-makers (guidelines/policy papers etc.)
- Build confidence and trust through relationships with officials and politicians
- Help project participants connect with their local representatives

Partnership Working

- Prioritise good coordination meetings between partners
- Work closely and systematically, with defined structures and processes
- Recognise the need to work differently and test new models of collaboration
- Negotiate, agree and, when necessary, re-negotiate
- Plan together, but remain flexible and be willing to reschedule
- Invest time and effort in communication: be honest and reliable
The past decade has seen important progress in the normalisation of cultural life in the region. Many institutions and individuals have played a part in that achievement. Pro Helvetia and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation have been reliable and considerate investors, alongside other international donors such as the Soros Foundation, the European Cultural Foundation, the King Baudouin Foundation, the European Union and many more. But none of them can do anything without activists on the ground, NGOs and state bodies who are willing to work together, to apply their knowledge and creativity and to guarantee the delivery of good services for people.

The gradual ending of this intensive period of international assistance over recent years is one measure of the progress that has been made. There is not the need in the region that there was, and not the need that exists in some other, currently more troubled parts of the world. At the same time, artists and cultural organisations whose situation remains fragile will feel the loss of funds, expertise and moral support. It is essential that relationships built between the stable and prosperous European nations and those still emerging from conflict, political change and economic crisis are maintained and even deepened, albeit on a more equal footing in future. Happily, SDC remains committed to the region, and though its investment in culture will be less than it has been, its presence and its support will continue.

4.2 BUILdINg ON SUCCESS

The agenda for future action in the cultural field should and will be defined by others: ministries of culture, municipal councils, cultural organisations, individual artists, creative businesses, NGOs and, not least, by the people who make up the cultural sector’s audiences, customers and visitors. Nonetheless, it is possible to draw on SCP’s experience over more than a decade of success cultural development to suggest some broad principles for future discussion. Therefore we conclude by summarising some core values that have underpinned SCP’s work in the region and are vital to a successful cultural sector in a modern democratic society.
CULTURE NEEDS INDEPENDENCE

SCP has ensured that its funding and support for cultural organisations, large and small, does not undermine the autonomy of grantees because it recognises that they are always in the best position to make choices about their work and interests.

Culture is so rich because it is created by the endless variety of people who make up any society. Some are more gifted and creative than others. Some cultural creations are more powerful than others. In the end, the value ascribed to culture by individuals, groups or a nation as a whole cannot be predicted or controlled. Nor does it follow that if only a few people like something it is worse or less important than something that is popular or widely admired. Only states and commercial corporations can have much control over culture, though even that control is far more limited than they might wish. But neither should be encouraged to exercise that power, for two reasons. First, it can be antidemocratic to allow some cultural voices or values to be promoted and others to be suppressed, and secondly because culture that is controlled rapidly loses its vitality. Artists and audiences, creators and consumers, lose interest and turn instead to alternative, freer, more independent spaces in which to pursue their cultural lives. And the more creative they are, the sooner they will go. The challenge for government is to recognise that an independent culture is always stronger and more beneficial than a managed one and therefore to intervene only where it would be demonstrably worse not to do so.

CULTURE NEEDS THE SUPPORT OF GOVERNMENT

None of that is to suggest that there is no role for government in culture. On the contrary, European states have generally turned their backs on the laissez-faire attitude to the arts displayed in America, which has produced limited diversity beneath the shade of the impressive but rather monotonous artistic trees cultivated by businesspeople.

SCP has encouraged the development of cultural policy, strategy and planning at both national and local levels, recognising the unique role of government in strengthening the environment in which culture can thrive. Good policies can encourage people to invest time and money into cultural production, from large commercial organisations to the volunteers behind a village festival. A stable situation, in which their efforts are valued, is a critical background against which cultural activity can flourish. Resources for culture, including investment in infrastructure, support for public services and grant aid for independent organisations are also vital. This spending is increasingly termed investment both because it can be used to earn additional money from other donors or the market and because culture is recognised for its contribution to tourism, the creative economy, education and social development.

CULTURE BENEFITS SOCIETY

Anyone who doubts that culture has always been important to society need only spend an hour or two in a museum of antiquities to appreciate how much human beings have always invested in creating works that reflect their values. European governments paid increasing attention to culture in the second half of the 20th century as its economic importance grew and as they understood better its influence on so many aspects of social life. Culture and creativity are key engines of competitiveness in a European economy increasingly based on the added value they can bring to manufacturing and service industries. They are equally central in helping diverse communities face the complex challenges of the 21st century. As this report has shown, cultural programmes can make a contribution to social cohesion, intercultural dialogue, and even post-conflict reconciliation. They enable people to work together, to build skills, knowledge and confidence, and to establish local associations that are so important to sustainable community life. They engage young people and have much to offer those who, for whatever reason, are not in school or work. In short, everyone can benefit from a rich, successful and diverse cultural ecology.
4.3 HOPEFUL ENCOUNTERS

International development work is founded on hope. It believes that situations can be improved. It believes that people want to work together to bring about positive changes. It believes that, with resources and help and time, communities are capable of helping themselves. And, as a host of global indicators show, that belief is well founded, even in these difficult times.

Art and culture has often seemed of secondary importance in the past, both to international development agencies and to national administrations. There is always so much to do in terms of the economy, housing, education or health. On that basis, we will never come to culture, since there will always be things to do elsewhere.

But in recent years, the idea has grown that culture, in addition to its creative and imaginative power or its restorative pleasures, can also be a way of contributing to some of those goals. That was the hopeful belief of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation when it established SCP in partnership with Pro Helvetia. And, over ten years of festivals, concerts, plays and publications, of recording, training and presenting, of cultural encounters large and small, it has shown this hope to be well founded. This report would have to be twice as long as it is to do justice to the quantity and quality of this work, undertaken in nine countries by thousands of people, and shared with tens of thousands more. And it would have to be much longer still to trace the positive effects on people’s skills, knowledge, understanding and confidence as a result of their participation, to say nothing of societal change in cohesion, community development, local economies and more.

But all this starts and comes back to a hopeful encounter between individuals, enabled by an artistic experience. It is a picture or a story that brings them together, a film, a tune, a dance, a shared attraction to some form of creative expression capable of making a bond as simple and complex as human beings themselves. So much can come from these encounters. So much does, as this report shows. But they start in hope, uncertain of what will happen but confident that it will be worthwhile.
In 1999 offices were opened in Bucharest, Kiev, Sarajevo, Skopje, Sofia and Tirana, in 2002 in Belgrade and in 2004 in Pristina.

Research for the European Commission shows that in 2003 the Creative and Cultural sector had a turnover of more than €654 billion (twice that of car manufacturing); contributed to 2.6% of EU GDP (slightly more than the chemicals, rubber and plastic products industry); achieved growth that was 12.3% higher than the growth of the general economy between 1999-2003; and employed 5.8 million people (3.1% of total employed population in EU25) and saw employment grow by 1.85% at a time of rising unemployment. (KEA European Affairs, 2006 *The Economy of Culture In Europe*, http://www.keanet.eu/en/ecoculturepage.html)


## Cultural Network Development Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Network name, duration and countries of implementation</th>
<th>PARTNER ORGANISATION / membership</th>
<th>About the project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Association “Independent Cultural Scene of Serbia” (AICSS) National Network Serbia 2012</td>
<td>Association “Independent Cultural Scene of Serbia” (SR) 80 members</td>
<td>AICSS is a joint platform of organisations, initiatives and individuals in the fields of culture and arts in Serbia. By implementation and exchange of programmes in Serbia and abroad, by activities that build capacities of the Association as well as its members, and by dialogue with decision makers at all levels, the Association aspires to promote the development of innovative and critical art practices, impact cultural policy and other related public policies, contribute to decentralisation of culture in Serbia and establish regional cooperation in Southeast Europe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Forum National Network Kosovo 2012</td>
<td>NGO RTV (KSH) 30 members</td>
<td>Cultural Forum is a joint initiative of the organizations of the independent cultural scene in Kosovo at a more prosperous, diversified, proactive, and influential sector. It is recognized as vehicle for articulation of the needs of the cultural scene aimed to increase capacities for lobbying and advocacy in local and national level, raise awareness of policy makers about the situation in culture and to establish strong mechanisms of communication between cultural scene and relevant institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOMAD Dance Academy (NDA) Regional Network Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey 2012</td>
<td>Lokomotiva – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture (MK) 22 members &amp; 100 non-formal members</td>
<td>As on-going initiative for contemporary dance NDA is aimed on improving advocacy for regional contemporary performing arts and reaching more support for the regional cooperation. Within this period, the main focus was in development of community and territory-specific advocacy modules which NDA, as advocacy agent, will share among the networks and neighboring countries with similar cultural environments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JADRO (Nucleus) National Network Macedonia 2012</td>
<td>press to exit (MK) 28 members</td>
<td>JADRO (Nucleus) is a national advocacy platform that joins and represents the actors of the Macedonian independent culture sector. Network aims to change the existing exclusive and retrograde cultural policies by implementing progressive, inclusive and democratic policies and causes in the field of culture and in civil society in general.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right to the Village (RTV) Regional Network Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo, Germany, Greece, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia 2012</td>
<td>Program for Rural Development of Contemporary Art Center (MK) 70 members</td>
<td>RTV is a regional alliance and a network that is building a regional movement for collaboration, rural cultural development, rural urbanism and human rights and democracy seeking to create local and regional impacts and positive changes in the fields of culture, rural and community development. The idea for creating the network originated from the needs of local communities and organizations dealing with issues of different forms of rural development, striving to initiate cultural development of rural and small communities in Western Balkans.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Regional Cooperation Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional PROJECT name, duration and countries of implementation</th>
<th>PARTNER ORGANISATIONS</th>
<th>About the project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>De-schooling Classroom (DSC) 2009-2012 Serbia, Macedonia</td>
<td>Toorijkojahoda / Walking Theory (RS) Kontrapunkt (MK)</td>
<td>Deschooling Classroom project has addressed the contemporary independent cultural scenes in the region, through research and offering alternative, unorthodox models of education in the art and culture. Methodologically, the project has advocated open collective educational structures - in these the self-organised communities facilitate horizontal production, exchange and distribution of knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Communities Culture (RCC) 2009-2012 Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia</td>
<td>Contemporary Art Centre – Programme for Rural Development (MK) Mozaiik Foundation (BH) Academy For Training &amp; Technical Assistance (KS) To Schools on the Margin of Existence (RS)</td>
<td>RCC project offered opportunities for local artists, creative practitioners, cultural organizations, civil sector and interested individuals in rural areas to implement cultural and artistic projects and to build capacities of local communities for further local development. In their striving toward cultural and social development, RCC reached more than 100 rural communities in four countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture from/for All (CFPA) 2009-2012 Kosovo, Macedonia</td>
<td>ODA Theatre (KS) Performing Arts Centre Multimedia (MK)</td>
<td>CFPA project was based on a presumption that culture is an essential component of social cohesion, and necessary in improving the quality of life. The adopted local cultural policies in six municipalities (three in each country) resulted from a collective effort of relevant municipal departments, and with active participation of concerned stakeholders. Participatory model of policy formulation applied served to inform similar processes in other municipalities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Utopias Now and Then (IndUt) 2009-2012 Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia</td>
<td>Sarajevo Centre for Contemporary Arts (BH) Tirana Institute for Contemporary Arts (AL) kuda.org (RS)</td>
<td>IndUt has been designed as a long term research and production project with multidisciplinary and multimedia approaches. Socio-political images of transition in three countries, and related inter-generational experiences, were the starting point for the project, which in a broad sense attempts to encompass past, present and future situations in community, transitional transformations of individual and collective identities in general, critically observing the Balkans’ position towards Europe and vice versa.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Balkan’s Initiative for Cultural Cooperation, Exchange and Development (BICCED)
**2010-2012**
Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia

**Balkan Investigative Regional Reporting Network**
(AL, BH, MK, RS, KS)
SEECult (RS)

**BICCED** worked to improve journalists’ skills in analytical reporting on cultural policy: over the course of the three-year project, 30 journalists were trained to produce high quality analytical news reports on cultural policy issues. The project contributed to cross-regional cooperation and exchange of information between journalists, media, culture professionals and civil society organizations. Raising awareness on the importance of cultural policies development in the region was an important aspect of the BICCED.

### E-761 Programme (E-761)
**2010-2012**
Bosnia Herzegovina, Serbia

**Academia - akademska grupa (RS)**
Youth Information Agency OIA (BH)
Association Forum of Civic Actions/ FORCA (RS)
Alter art, Kultivator, and Nove Nade (BH)

Cooperation Programme E761 aimed at building creative capacities of four towns in Bosnia Herzegovina and Serbia. More than 3000 young people were involved, trained, and mutually connected through activities in creative industries. A platform was created through capacity building and networking of young musicians, producers, production and event managers, project managers, audio & video engineers, graphic and web designers and internet marketing professionals. A Centre for Creative Economy Research has been supported, equally as a start-up fund for support of initiatives in creative sector. In the same time, partner organisations have increased their visibility as service providers, and in initiating benchmark events and products, Centrala platform with its radio station and a music label being one amongst.

### New Politics of Solidarity through Cultural Knowledge Production (NEWPOLIS)
**2011-2012**
Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia

**Centre for Cultural Decontamination (RS)**
Centre for research, art, and civic engagement GRAD (BH)
Multimedia Centre (KS)

Twenty years after the collapse of Yugoslavia, the political class of the newly-formed states has continued to promote social values inherent to the violent nationalistic ideology. This code of oppression has marginalized the influence of individuals and groups who believe in culture of otherness and are committed to values of equality and solidarity. The intention of the project was to strengthen new agents of social change in activating public space for knowledge and art production, which fosters solidarity and community.

### Revival of City Squares in Balkan Cities (RCSCB)
**2011-2012**
Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro

**CO-PLAN, Polis University (AL)**
Centre for Sustainable Development (MK)
Expeditio, MNE

BSCDB aimed to contribute to the revival of city squares as viable public places that foster cultural identity and promote diversity through enforcement of public policies and active community participation. The action aimed at promoting national and regional policy discourse on how city squares can be transformed into pulsating community places and at developing a platform for transforming open public spaces into vibrant places that serve community needs.

### Liceulice
**Platform of Activism (LuL)**
**2011-2012**
Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia

**YUSTAT Centre, Heartefact and Dokukino (RS)**
Youth Initiative for Human Rights (BH)
Culturist (KS)
CMA (MK)

LuL project is committed to creation of regional coalition of organisations, groups (formal and informal ones), business and public institutions, experts, and researchers, dedicated to the values of societal changes. This project establishes and promotes art activism practices as sustainable, participative and influential mechanisms of social advancement in the Western Balkans. Project particularly invested into empowerment of marginalised groups and their inclusion in influencing own quality of life.

### Network for Participative Cultures of Remembrance (NPCR)
**2011-2012**
Bosnia Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia

**LOJA Centre for Balkan Cooperation (MK)**
Youth Initiative for Human Rights (RS)
MESS (BH)

Arts can be of crucial importance in process of reconciliation, as art creates a special sense of sensitivity. NPCR project aimed to establish a dialogue in the societies of the former Yugoslavia about the past and one’s own responsibility in it. In this, an inclusive form of reflecting on recent history has been selected, in which citizens are involved.

### NOMAD (NDA)
**Contemporary Dance in the Balkans**
**2007-2010**
Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia Herzegovina

**Lokomotiva (MK)**
Station (RS)
Tanzelarija (BH)

NOMAD aimed to contribute to improvement and professionalization of contemporary dance in the Balkans, as well as at establishing a regional educational system for contemporary dance in the Balkans, with special support to Bosnia Herzegovina, Macedonia and Serbia. It is part of a larger project, the Nomadic Dance Academy. The NOMAD Dance Academy program consists of three programme lines with a different focus on education, research programmes and regional creative cooperation and regional productions and co-productions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cooperation PROJECT name, duration, and country of implementation</th>
<th>PARTNER ORGANISATION(S)</th>
<th>About the project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix 05 New Models for Cultural Houses in Romania 2003-2005 Romania</td>
<td>Center for Rural Assistance (Timisoara, RO)</td>
<td>Phoenix 05 aimed at developing new models for lively cultural houses, which corresponded to the actual socio-cultural needs of their community, though supporting the persons in charge in elaborating new, contemporary models for cultural houses. Staff from 30 cultural houses from rural areas participated at training courses in cultural management and developed a project for their house of culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confluent Margins (CMs) 2003-2006 Macedonia</td>
<td>NGO Kontrapunkt (Skopje, MK)</td>
<td>CMs aimed at intensifying cultural production and exchange between towns in Macedonia and their creative groups and individuals. The project was especially focused on young and innovative artists and intellectuals of different social and ethnic background. Closed cultural identities were de-constructed; decentralization and de-monopolisation were fostered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center for Contemporary Art Plovdiv (CCA) 2004-2006 Bulgaria</td>
<td>Arts Today Association (Plovdiv, BG)</td>
<td>CCA aimed at establishing a well-functioning and vibrating centre for contemporary art in the former Turkish bath that was put by the City Council at the disposal of the artists association ATA. ATA set up a regional and international center for contemporary art, and a multimedia lab enabled young artists to gain new techniques in artistic production and learn new methods of socially engaged art.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishment of a CD-Label in Bosnia Herzegovina (ECD) 2004-2006 Bosnia Herzegovina</td>
<td>Gramofon (Sarajevo, BH)</td>
<td>ECD aimed at establishing and developing an independent CD-label. The project consisted of capacity building activities for the staff in label management, production planning and distribution in order to permit the label to establish itself successfully on the international music-market as well as in the music-market in Bosnia Herzegovina. The label publishes innovative, urban, and authentic music. Gramofon also endeavours to preserve and document Bosnian music heritage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Horizons, European Cultural Youth House (ECYH) 2004-2007 Bulgaria</td>
<td>KRUG, Youth Center Foundation (Kardjali / Sofia, BG)</td>
<td>ECYH aimed at revitalizing the marginalized region of Kardjali with cultural programmes and to create the grounds for an active cultural and artistic exchange between young creators and artists. Local communities were invited to join this process – and an international network with other youth cultural organisations was formed. The youth cultural centre consists of two “zones”: a “professional zone” based in the gallery in the city of Kardjali, and the “live zone” in the neighbouring village of Duzhdovnitsa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cARTier 2004-2007 Romania</td>
<td>VECTOR Cultural Association (Iasi, RO)</td>
<td>cARTier aimed to create a community cultural space in Tatarasi district in Iasi, as a place for rebuilding the social connections and for encouraging the active involvement of the inhabitants in the community’s cultural life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity building of Youth Cultural Centre Abrasevic (YCC) 2004-2007 Bosnia Herzegovina</td>
<td>Youth Cultural Centre Abrasevic (Mostar, BH)</td>
<td>YCC concentrated on the organizational development and the capacity building of the young people in charge of the YCC Abrasevic, with the objectives to strengthen the organization and the abilities of the young people in implementing projects and developing best usage of their resources. YCC Abrasevic was established as an open network of NGOs, informal groups and individuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center for Applied Cultural Management (CACM) 2004-2007 Ukraine</td>
<td>Center for Applied Curricula (Odessa, UA)</td>
<td>CACM aimed at the organizational development and the development of the curricula of the Centre, as well as to establish a regional network of professionals involved in cultural management and to coordinate efforts of nongovernment and government organisations in this field, thus influencing cultural policy on different levels of the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Cities (CCs) 2004-2007 Albania</td>
<td>Rozafa Expression (Shkodra, AL) Turizmi dhe Mjedis/Tourism and Environment (Pogradec, AL)</td>
<td>City development begins with the people recognizing the specific potentials of their city and creatively using these resources. In Shkodra and Pogradec a group of cultural practitioners, artists, municipality representatives and business people have developed a project for turning their city into a creative city. Goal of the CCs project was to develop conditions which allow people in their cities to think, plan and act creatively, based on the specific resources, potential needs of their city. Creative thinking fosters a dynamic that makes the city lively and more attractive and goes beyond the cultural sector only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>small door / Community Culture Initiatives 2004-2007 Macedonia</td>
<td>LoJA, Center for Balkan Cooperation (Tetovo, MK) CAC, Contemporary Arts Center (Skopje, MK)</td>
<td>small door aimed at reinforcing social and cultural life as well as multi-ethnic relations in the city of Tetovo and in the region of western Macedonia by development of a cultural infrastructure in Tetovo and the region, improving cultural production and cultural animation of the public, involving the different ethnic communities into a discourse on joint social issues, triggered by cultural events, and developing a best practice model for community-based cooperation in Macedonia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 21: Cultural transformers</td>
<td>Democracy through Culture</td>
<td>Model 21 aims to activate and democratize five communities through culture and thus develop, share and promote inspiring models for creative cities and creative rural regions in the Ukraine. The project provided a toolkit for developing local core groups, which become a meeting point for partnerships at different levels, promoted the elaboration of a local development strategy and dynamised the cultural life in the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Highway E-761 (E-761)</td>
<td>supported four cities in central Serbia, along the highway E-761 – Užice, Požega, Čačak, and Kraljevo – in developing their capacities and in realizing local and regional cultural initiatives and artistic production within a regional cultural network established in the course of the project implementation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The FabriC</td>
<td>Fabric Association (Gabrovo, BG)</td>
<td>The Regional Cultural Resource Centre was founded by a number of experienced artists and cultural actors in the city of Gabrovo, in North Central Bulgaria. It offers a wide range of services to cultural organizations and professional artists in order to dynamise and diversify the cultural life in the region. FabriC supported institutional building of the Centre and provided the funds for the small grants scheme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>Centre for Drama Education</td>
<td>The main goal of Delta is to transform the Centre into a regional resource centre for drama education, contributing to the promotion and spreading of drama education in the region, with an emphasis on the work with young people. The project comprises of several segments: institutional building; development and promotion of the methodology; activities of drama in education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artists Nest</td>
<td>Cultural Centre “Rosetti Tescanu – George Enescu” (Tescani, RO)</td>
<td>Artists Nest aimed to create four residence centres for artists in Romania, as creative spaces open and favourable to innovation and co-operation in contemporary arts, connected to national and international networks. The four Cultural Centres are public cultural institutions. The project was a great opportunity for the cultural centres to become more professional, to diversify their cultural offer, to concentrate more on experiment and innovation, and to better know and fulfill the cultural needs of the local communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNITED EXPERTS ® (UE)</td>
<td>SCP Romania / United Experts (Bucarest, RO)</td>
<td>UE aimed to build up a successful brand of cultural services owned by the label United Experts ®. Organized as a pool of cultural experts, with seven representatives from Romania, two from the Ukraine and one each from Bulgaria and Moldova, United Experts offer coaching and cultural expertise to institutions, organizations and private companies in Romania and in the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Office</td>
<td>Art Office Foundation (Sofia, BG)</td>
<td>Art Office aimed to create a Competence Centre for Promotion and Circulation of Performing Arts’ Production in Bulgaria. The objective of the new agency was to support individual artists and artistic organizations in showing their artwork to a broader audience throughout the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projekt 5.6</td>
<td>Lindart Cultural Center (Tirana, AL)</td>
<td>Projekt 5.6 aimed to introduce modern technologies to the local scene and to open spaces and create platforms for young artists to develop their potential through the introduction of modern technologies to the local scene and interactive educational methodologies. This was done through educational activities, exhibitions, and providing organizational support to young artists in realization of their creative ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-opening a Gold Mine II (RGM)</td>
<td>Committee for Civic Initiative (Nis, RS)</td>
<td>RGM was a sociocultural regeneration of south-eastern Serbia and contribution to decentralisation in Serbia. The aim of the project was to create conditions for a sustainable improvement of cultural life and initiate the process of re-animation of five regional cities of south-eastern Serbia: Nis, Leskovac, Vranje, Pirot, and Zaječar, through trainings, support to small actions, research and development of cultural policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revival of the Local Art Scene (RELAS)</td>
<td>Association of Artists Protok (Banja Luka, BH)</td>
<td>The goal of RELAS was to stimulate the cultural life in the city and the region and to open spaces and create platforms for young artists to develop their potential through the introduction of modern technologies to the local scene and interactive educational methodologies. This was done through educational activities, exhibitions, and providing organizational support to young artists in realization of their creative ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Cities II (CCx2)</td>
<td>ANTAREC – Albanian National Training and Technical Assistance Recourse Centre (Tirana, AL)</td>
<td>The motto behind this regional project was „maximizing the potential of the smaller cities“. CCx2 aimed to provide a strategy for developing and improving cultural life of empowerment of society by strengthening peoples’ confidence in their own creative abilities based on their unique local cultural context. The project was implemented in the following towns: Lezhe, Puka, Pejshopia, Korca, Gjirokastra, and Saranda in Albania, Ucic in Montenegro, and Struga in Macedonia.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Networks, Regional and National Projects in Numbers

Cooperation Projects (2003-2010)
Number of Projects: 22
Granted Amount: 6.871.059 CHF

Regional Cooperation Projects (2009-2012)
Number of Projects / Organizations: 10/36
Granted Amount: 3.461.942 CHF

Culture Network Development Projects (2012)
Number of Projects: 5 (3 national + 2 regional)
Granted Amount: 280.950 CHF

Small Actions, Special Projects and Swiss Exchange in Numbers

Swiss-Balkan Cultural Exchange
1999-2002 / SDC
Number of Projects: 36
Granted Amount: 326.018 CHF

2008-2013 / Pro Helvetia
Number of Projects: 29
Granted Amount: 600.000 CHF

Ukraine
2008 / SDC
Number of Projects: 3
Granted Amount: 780.047 CHF

Ukraine
2000-2006
Number of Projects / Duration: 8 / 2000-2006
Granted Amount: 47 / 707.884 CHF

Small Actions
Including Regional Small Actions:
Number of Years / Duration: 12 / 1999-2010
Number of Supported Projects: 2,980
Granted Amount: 8,965,736 CHF

Special Projects
Number of Projects: 34
Granted Amount: 2,019,719 CHF

Networks, Regional and National Projects in Numbers
Acknowledgements

SCP would especially like to thank all individuals who shared their stories in the interviews and thus enriched this publication:


We would equally wish to thank our project-partners for their participation and generous contributions to the Programme review:


This report is drawing from their professional engagement, as well as from that of thousands of other individuals with whom we have had the pleasure and privilege to collaborate with over the past years. Our sincere thanks go to all of them.

And finally, we are very happy for the opportunity to express our genuine gratitude and appreciation to all the people who were involved in the development and implementation of the Swiss Cultural Programme from 1999 to 2012, both in the region and in Switzerland, working in the SCP offices and as members of our advisory boards, with Pro Helvetia and with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation - it is thanks to their professionalism, dedication, flexibility and personal conviction that this Programme has lived and proved the power of culture for over a decade: