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CULTURELINK NETWORK'S TWENTY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE*

This report, commissioned by the UNESCO Secretariat, provides an overview of Culturelink network's 20 years of experience in the context of Article 19 of the Convention. Furthermore, the report highlights the main difficulties and challenges in maintaining and developing network activities as well as the lessons learned from Culturelink.

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Introduction

The UNESCO *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* aims to reinforce the links between culture and development; it encourages cultural interaction and dialogue and establishes innovative approaches to international cooperation and solidarity. It promotes openness towards other cultures of the world and recognizes the distinctive nature of cultural activities, goods and services as vehicles of identity, values and meaning. One of the key preoccupations of the Convention is to protect diversity from being pushed aside by the market forces. The Convention expresses what we all need – to build bridges and promote innovative partnerships in the era of globalization.

In the context of this interpretation, Article 19 holds major importance. *Exchange, analysis and dissemination of information* is a prerequisite to successful implementation of the overall Convention goals and aims. Exchange and dissemination of information are essential tools for promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions that create concrete pathways to establishing intercultural dialogue, communication and cooperation. Apart from Article 19, Article 7 outlines the relevance of the distribution of and access to respective cultural expressions (...*to create, produce, disseminate, distribute and have access to their own cultural expressions...*), sharing information, data and best practices. Also, Article 9 (paragraph c) calls upon all Parties to *share and exchange information relating to the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions*.

According to the paragraph 2 of Article 19, the facilitation of the information collection, analysis, exchange and dissemination, should be done through the existing communication mechanisms. Best practices of the exchange and dissemination of information have introduced cultural networking as effective means for fostering communication between professionals, institutions, organizations and individual artists in the cultural sector and public administrators working in the different fields of the cultural sector throughout the globe¹.

Cultural Networks and Convention

In the past two decades cultural networks have proved to be one of the most important mechanisms that have contributed to cultural development, affirmation of cultural identities, communication of cultural diversities, and promotion of cultural cooperation. Main traits of the cultural networks are the openness, transparency, horizontal modes of coordination/management and flexibility. Networks try to solve concrete problems that members are facing, they bring together people in common pursuit of an interest, bonding them together around common projects, and providing efficient communication channels. Due to these characteristics that are in parallel to the *Guiding principles* in Article 2 of the Convention (*Principle of equitable access* and *Principle of openness and balance*), cultural networks have assumed accessible position that is applicable to all. Their role in exchange, analysis and dissemination of information related to all aspects of culture, areas of cultural expression and different cultural sectors has been crucial.

¹ See the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. Briefing Note for National Arts Funding Agencies, by Danielle Cliche, IFACCA, August 2009.

Culturelink Network's 20 years and Article 19

Recognising the importance of cultural networks and the need to facilitate cultural cooperation, UNESCO and the Council of Europe have established Culturelink – the Network of Networks for Research and Cooperation in Cultural Development, following the Recommendation adopted at International Consultation of Representatives of Regional and Sub-regional Networks for Cultural Development Research and Cooperation in 1989 in Paris². UNESCO proposed that the Institute for International Relations (IMO) in Zagreb, Croatia would take role of the network's focal point. Initially, the network has been supported through the framework of activities of the UNESCO World Decade for Cultural Development (1988-1997). The Culturelink Team members (the operational group that coordinates the network) were, and still are, members of staff from the IMO's Department of Culture and Communication.

Establishing a network required an elaboration of the methodology that would be used in the network operation and serve as basis of its activities. Sixteen years prior to the Convention, Culturelink inaugurated following set of objectives, aims and activities that are still universal and in parallel to the objectives from Article 1 of the Convention and corresponding the title and contents in the paragraphs of Article 19:

- Strengthening and promoting continuous exchange of information and communication among the members of the Network, including information on their work and activities,
- Collecting, analysing and disseminating information on cultural development, cultural policies and trends in the Network members' countries,
- Encouraging joint research projects and other activities enabling better information flow among developed and developing countries.

In order to meet the proposed objectives, the Network had to establish various communication channels and information collections. These were accomplished through the regular activities like:

- initiating international research projects on cultural development and cultural policies,
- creating a series of the Culturelink publications,
- development of documentation centre and Cultural Development Databank.

Culturelink's operational approaches to Article 19 – Putting Article 19 to Work

UNESCO shall facilitate, through the use of existing mechanisms within the Secretariat, the collection, analysis and dissemination of all relevant information, statistics and best practices (Paragraph 2, Article 19)

During the past twenty years, Culturelink Network has primarily been serving as a platform for collection, analysis, exchange and dissemination of all relevant information and knowledge gained through the research in the field of cultural development, cultural policies and international cultural cooperation.

² CC/CSP/CP/89

Culturelink's channels of information collection and analysis

The principal topics of Culturelink's research projects have been focusing on the new context of culture in networked society, including issues represented in the Article 4 of the Convention such as cultural identity, *cultural diversity*, *cultural policies*, *interculturality*, digital culture, *cultural industries*, as well as cultural and media transitions in the context of democratic changes and globalisation processes.

One of the first major research projects undertaken by Culturelink at its very outset, in 1991 and 1992, was the Current State and Trends in Cultural Policy and Life in the UNESCO Member States, covering all world regions (Europe, Arab States, Africa, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific). This project was the first systematic research on cultural policies in the world and it opened new ways of capacity building and exchange of expertise for Culturelink's team members and members of cooperating organizations. The research gathered experts on cultural policy from all continents which continued to be a regular practice for all subsequent and current Culturelink's research projects and research activities that can serve as example practices in relation to the paragraph 4 of Article 19. The project has provided general insight into changes happening in the field of cultural policies internationally (decentralisation of decision making, intensive development of cultural industries, coordination of cultural activities, private and civil initiatives, and regional cooperation) and proposed new approaches to cultural policies.

The subsequent research projects undertaken by Culturelink have included global and interregional cultural projects that have significantly contributed to better understanding and gaining new knowledge on the topics like cultural transition processes and development of digital culture. In the period of the last five years, Culturelink's research activities have been focused on cultural industries, ICT and digital culture, cultural tourism and local cultural development. Research projects undertaken by Culturelink have offered an opportunity to collect information on a specific topic from all continents, analyse it with research partners and disseminate it world-wide in the form of new knowledge, thus enforcing activities as stated in the paragraph c of Article 9.

Findings of Culturelink's regional, interregional and international research projects are continually announced through monthly electronic bulletin and published through editions of Culturelink publications, made freely available online in PDF format and consulted regularly several thousand times a month. Also, the research results are largely presented and verified at conferences and seminars organized by the Network.

Culturelink's channels of information dissemination

Culturelink publications

Since its inception, the Network has been editing and publishing regular issues of Culturelink's publications. From 1990 to 2004, forty-four regular issues of *Culturelink Review* were published along with twelve *Culturelink Special Issues*. Each Special Issue was dedicated to a specific topic in the domain of cultural development. Each regular issue brought series of information from diverse cultural sectors and was complemented by a Dossier that covered analytically a particular topic (e.g., *Artistic Expression in a Corporate World*, 2004; *Conference Omnibus in Opatija: Why Does Cultural Diversity Matter?*, 2003; etc.).

Following on *Culturelink Review*, in 2004, Culturelink has started to publish its e-newsletter called *C-News*, aiming at regularly keeping its members up-to-date with information about research, networking, international meetings, publications and documentations. 45 issues have

appeared in this period, distributed to currently over 1.500 members and subscribers worldwide, up from some 800 at the start of the newsletters distribution in 2004.

Today *C-News* is communication backbone of the Network that allows members to discuss issues related to cultural development and cultural policies, obtaining information about cultural cooperation projects, research and conferences and other activities in the international context. The *Culturelink Joint Publications Series* that publishes studies and proceedings from conferences organized by the Network, were introduced in 1997 and have since been published in 13 editions, ranging in topics from cultural industries and creative cities, digital culture and dynamics of communication, cultural diversity and sustainable development, cultural transitions in Southeast Europe, cultural tourism, etc³.

The selection and the elaboration of the topics discussed in Culturelink's publications show that they have pursued the new challenges in culture, initiating their discussion and contributing to scientific research of cultural phenomena. The publications, that have been distributed to all continents of the globe in the past two decades, feature articles and contributions from numerous renowned authors and scholars. Articles published in Culturelink's publications are regularly cited and referenced in relevant international publications.

Thirteen books that have been published over the years as paper editions in the series of expert papers and research results on specific topics have been made fully available online as free e-publications in PDF format. On the average, they are downloaded some 10.000 times a month.

Culturelink Conferences and Seminars

The international conferences and seminars have been important forums for the presentation and exchange of opinions and information among network members and significant support for the network research projects. By organizing such events, the Network has accomplished stronger communication and cooperation between its members and secured a platform for the generation and exchange of information and new knowledge. The topics of *cultural diversity*, *cultural identity*, *interculturality*, *cultural policies*, as well as networks and digital culture have been discussed⁴.

³ **Culturelink Joint Publications Series**

- Cultural Tourism Goes Virtual. Audience Development in Southeast European Countries (2009)
- Digital Culture: The Changing Dynamics (2008)
- The Creative City: Crossing Visions and New Realities in the Region (2007)
- Dynamics of Communication: New Ways and New Actors (2006)
- UNESCO's Convention on the Protection and the Promotion of Diversity of Cultural Expressions: Making it Work (2006)
- The Emerging Creative Industries in Southeastern Europe (2005)
- eCulture: The European Perspective - Cultural Policy, Creative Industries, Information Lag (2005)
- Cultural Transitions in Southeastern Europe (2004)
- Culture: A Driving Force for Urban Tourism - Application of Experiences to Countries in Transition (2002)
- Redefining Cultural Identities: Southeastern Europe (2001)
- Redefining Cultural Identities: The Multicultural Contexts of the Central European and Mediterranean Regions (2001)
- The Mediterranean: Cultural Identity and Intercultural Dialogue (1999)
- The Cultural Identity of Central Europe (1997)

⁴ **Culturelink Network's Conferences (1995 – 2009)**

Intercultural Dialogue and Digital Culture. 2008.

Virtual Culture and Its Impact on Cultural Tourism: Experiences from South-East Europe. 2007.

Cultural Portals: A New Era of Cooperation, Culture.mondo and Culturelink, 2006.

The Creative City: Crossing Visions and New Realities in the Region, 2006.

Second World Culturelink Conference - Dynamics of Communication: New Ways and New Actors, 2005.

Cultural Cooperation in Southeastern Europe - Managing Cultural Transitions in Southeastern Europe: The Impact of Creative Industries, 2005.

Cultural Policies and Cultural Development in Southeastern Europe: New Realities and Challenges, 2004.

UNESCO shall also establish and update a data bank on different sectors and governmental, private and non-profit organizations involved in the area of cultural expressions (Paragraph 3, Article 19)

Culturelink Information System

In the course of organizational development, Culturelink had to organise its information system in a way that would provide efficient support for the networking activities⁵. The Network has been set up before the introduction of Internet, so in the first years of the Network operation, communication with members was maintained via postal mail, telephone and fax services. In the initial period, development of the Cultural Development Databank (including Cultural Policy Database and Cultural Development Database) was of the crucial importance as the information flows, access and availability were scarced and scattered. Thus, systematic information systems or data banks in culture were one of the first activities that have been developed in order to monitor trends related to cultural development and cultural policy and provide relevant analytic information support to the Network members and wider cultural community. These initial offline databases were later integrated within framework of Culturelink WWW Resource Centre.

a) The Cultural Policy Database⁶ was developed as a textual database that formed an integral part of the research project entitled Current State and Trends in Cultural Policy and Life in the UNESCO Member States. It has provided insight into changes taking place in the cultural policy field internationally, by developing a common grid through which cultural policies of all countries have been described (which included bibliographical and referral data on the direction of cultural policies, administrative and institutional structures, financing and legislation, cultural industries, etc.). This was the first Culturelink resource that has been developed - first as an offline database and also first to be made available on-line through Gopher service in 1994. The lack of financing for this project limited the possibilities of its development and updating and this database has been discontinued after the end of the World Decade for Cultural Development.

Managing Cultural Transitions: Southeastern Europe, 2004.

Fourth Annual Conference of the International Network for Cultural Diversity (INCD), in partnership with the Culturelink Network - Advancing Cultural Diversity Globally: The Role of Civil Society Movements, 2003.

E-Culture: The European Perspective, CIRCLE and Culturelink, 2003.

Redefining Cultural Identities: Cultural Industries and Technological Convergence, 2002.

Culture: A Driving Force for Urban Tourism - Application of Experiences to Countries in Transition, 2001.

Redefining Cultural Identities: Southeastern Europe, 2001.

Redefining Cultural Identities: The Multicultural Contexts of the Central European and Mediterranean Regions, 2000.

The Mediterranean: Cultural Identity and Prospects for Intercultural Dialogue. Dubrovnik, 1997.

Europe of Cultures: Cultural Identity of Central Europe, 1996.

First World Culturelink Conference - Dynamics of Communication and Cultural Change: The Role of Networks, 1995.

⁵ In order to provide knowledge support and establish such information system, UNESCO and IMO jointly organised the Expert Meeting on Information Systems in Culture, held in September 1990 in Zagreb. The meeting brought together experts from 7 countries of Africa, Europe and North America. (UNESCO, CLT-91/WS-2).

⁶ Culturelink's database on cultural policies provided conceptual framework and informed the establishment of current best practice in cultural policies database, the Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe as founded and managed by the Council of Europe and ERICarts Research Institute. The other best example of databases that contribute to information exchange in the cultural policies remit is ConnectCP developed by International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA). While Compendium offers web-based and permanently updated information and monitoring system on national cultural policies in Europe, ConnectCP is database of cultural policy experts based around the globe.

b) The Cultural Development Database has been developed to fulfil the need for an efficient tool for collecting, organising and disseminating the information about cultural organisations from around the world. It allowed searching by various criteria, and facilitating printouts of selected data to be published in the form of a *Directory of cultural institutions*. The database was first set up as a local database maintained and updated by the Culturelink team, but as the amount of information flowing into the Culturelink Network has grown continuously, it has become increasingly difficult to maintain it and the on-line version has been developed and made accessible through the Culturelink Web pages. Developing the on-line version of this database has enabled the users to have direct access and make use of it. This database also preceded the era of Internet, so the initial scope of this database has included a wide array of cultural organisations worldwide. As in the meantime WWW has provided abundance of information about cultural organisations worldwide, there was no need to maintain such a wide scope of profiles in the database. Therefore, it has been decided that this database maintains its focus on the members of the Culturelink Network.

c) Culturelink WWW Resource Centre

One of the objectives of the Culturelink Network has been the development of a world-wide information system for the study of cultural development and cooperation, not only providing information and allowing the use of online databases⁷ but also making possible the interactive participation. The main emphasis on the referral information support (contacts and addresses) in the early years has been substituted by more analytic sources of information aimed at monitoring the trends in culture, cultural development, cultural diversity, etc. While in the initial period stand alone database have been developed, with the opportunities that were brought about with the use of Internet, the network information support has been restructured as an online resource centre that has unified different information sources into one platform.

Culturelink set up its website containing comprehensive online information and database services in 1996. Up to date, this information system has been developing and continues to give access to the Culturelink Members and Partners Database⁸, to results of joint research projects and proceedings from conferences and seminars it organizes, to relevant networking and members' news, a chronological diary of currently announced international events (meetings, conferences, round table discussions and courses), reviews of recent publications and links to just under 400 selected cultural e-resources.

The current Culturelink WWW information service consists of the following major components that can be applied to all five paragraphs of Article 19:

- news and announcements of current international events, calls and deadlines,
- research projects (joint regional, interregional and international),
- Culturelink international conferences, seminars and courses on cultural and communication issues,
- online Culturelink Members Database,

⁷ Some of the databases that have been available online Culturelink website (Culturelink Policy Database) have been archived but are still available for access as such.

⁸ Culturelink's interactively searchable Members and Partners Database offers up-to-date and easily accessible information about international networks, cultural and scientific institutions, cultural centres, international organizations, foundations, and professionals. It is maintained regularly and consulted around 500 times a month, providing cultural researcher, policy makers or administrators, cultural workers, artists or students with relevant contact information.

- Culturelink electronic library (C-News, C-Books⁹).

All electronic content is produced as a result of Culturelink project activities and in response to the emerging trends and changes in the global cultural field.

Through its continued content development in the most recent period (2003-2009), the number of pages of the Resource Centre has grown from 450 to currently over 1.200 static web pages. The Culturelink website presently registers on the average over 130.000 pageviews from around 26.000 visitors a month¹⁰, while the search mechanism is employed for some 2.500 enquiries a month. In the period under review, the site was visited by users from over 170 countries worldwide, generating a data transfer of up to 10 GB a month¹¹.

Capacity building and networking

To facilitate the collection of data, UNESCO shall pay particular attention to capacity-building and the strengthening of expertise for Parties that submit a request for such assistance (Paragraph4, Article 19)

Systematic approach to capacity building and strengthening of the expertise undertaken by Culturelink has been carried through research projects and Culturelink international conferences, seminars, round-tables and workshops. The nature of Culturelink's activities intrinsically involves capacity building and expertise strengthening which is also evident in the number and scope of Culturelink members' base. The interdisciplinarity of the networks' core interests is the greatest asset to the capacity building potentials but also a difficulty in regular network's operation.

The diversity of Culturelink's members'¹² geographical backgrounds and organizational scopes (world-wide cultural community encompassing scientific and cultural institutions, governmental and independent organizations, non-governmental initiatives, independent cultural professionals and practitioners, artists, private and public, non-profit organizations), areas (cultural diversity, cultural policies and measures, cultural industries, interculturality, etc) and activities (data collection, information dissemination, capacity building, publishing, creating paths to new knowledge, organization of seminars, conferences and training sessions, advisory and consultancy capacity etc.) provide distinctive opportunities for cross-sectoral capacity building. This implies that the projects are performed through mutual communication and free sharing of information, while the results bring indication of socially relevant and valid standards.

Culturelink's action has always been geared towards transcontinental networking activities connecting various cultural institutions (museums, libraries, music, theatres and other arts organisations to name a few), cultural centres, universities, ministries of culture, non-governmental organizations, artists and professionals in the cultural field. Network assisted further capacity building among cultural networks by establishing links between existing

⁹ C-Books are books from Culturelink Joint Publications Series available for free downloads online Culturelink website (<http://www.culturelink.org/publics/joint/index.html>)

¹⁰ Owing to its long-term continuity, the Culturelink website reaches exceptionally high rankings in search results from major search engines such as Google and Yahoo!, making a top-ten rank among hundreds of thousands of results for general expressions such as 'cultural transitions' or 'cultural policy'.

¹¹ Through the newsletter and via the website, between 2003 and 2009 on the average some 30 members' activities and over 70 other networking news have been announced yearly, around 35 new publications and well over 100 scientific conferences and seminars are announced and presented a year.

¹² In the past 20 years, Culturelink Network's community has grown from initial 25 members to over 1500 members coming from 105 countries world-wide, encompassing a wide range of members who have participated in Culturelink's activities.

international networks on all continents and supporting the development of new networks. For example, in November 1997 the Asia-Pacific Regional Centre of the Culturelink Network - APRCCN has been established as an integral part of Culturelink. The initiative for this venture came from the Korean National Commission for UNESCO, which offered to host the headquarters of the regional centre. In 2002, Culturelink also endorsed the establishment of the Observatory of Cultural Policies in Africa (OCPA), located in Mozambique and hosted online at Culturelink's web server. The significance of branching out and establishing firm partnerships in Asia and Africa contributed to creating independent regional platforms for capacity building and strengthening of expertise. OCPA was the first organization of its kind in Africa that initiated numerous projects concerning cultural policies development in the African countries. Additionally, Culturelink supported the establishment of the International Network for Cultural Diversity (INCD) in Canada and is represented in the boards of leading cultural organizations like Observatoire des Politiques Culturelles, Regional Observatory on Financing Culture in East-Central Europe, Culture.mondo, LabforCulture etc.

Main difficulties and challenges in maintaining and developing productive networking activities

Although proven track record over the past 20 years implies that the Network has been operating successfully; Culturelink has faced many difficulties and challenges in its work. The fast pace of contemporary changes affects the context of Culturelink Network's operational environment and circumstances. Culturelink has been perpetually changing and adapting to these new conditions as it actively searches for sustainable modes of operation.

From imagining information to managing information

Culturelink has been forerunner of innovative systems and forms of cultural communication and cooperation through collecting, analysing and disseminating information and new knowledge. In this process many issues had to be resolved. One of the important questions was setting the conceptual framework, posing priorities in the network operation and positioning network in global cultural arena.

Culturelink's main feature is heterogeneity of members and wide scope of topics that it covers. Culturelink's heterogeneity has been visible in many aspects: members include public administrators, policy makers, private, non-governmental and non-profit organizations, researchers, artists, different cultural practitioners and activists, working in diverse cultural fields in different countries, regions and continents. They have diverse needs and expectations. This was challenge that Network has been facing from the very beginning. The particular importance of Culturelink lies in the fact that it has maintained and developed a process of dialogue and intercultural exchange that magnified the specificities and diversities among the heterogeneous members and thus increased understanding of and respect for the diversity of cultures.

Managing information has been one of the main challenges for Culturelink. It implies information collection, organization and regular updating of electronic collections (stand alone databases or web portal). In designing the information flow, it had to be considered how much information should be available through it, how frequently should new information be posted, what percentage of information is original content and how much information is available at other web sources, who are the information providers, and what kind of information members need.

Another difficult issue is related to the changes in the size of the network and viable ways of information exchange and dissemination among the members. Initial 25 members have grown to the present 1500. While at the beginning it was easy to maintain 'personal' information flow

among 25 members, as the number has grown more efficient communicational channels had to be developed. The development of new technologies set the pace of information production and increased the speed of information dissemination. It was no longer possible to maintain the previous regularity of publishing activities. This difficulty has been partly overcome with the introduction of Culturelink WWW Resource Centre and new electronic format of regular publications. This has extended the Network outreach and more users have established links with the Network. Information collected and distributed through the network is sourced from a wide scope of cultural community and is disseminated to even larger circle of members and users. As much as the diversity of members poses as Network's advantage, it sets difficulties defined by the information gap and inequality to online access among all members. This means that Culturelink has to constantly take into consideration ICT realities and differences between for example Africa and America.

In line with this, one of the difficulties was the intent to reorganise Network and establishment of the regional networks. Even though the initial plans included establishing the regional centres in Latin America, Africa, Arab states and Asia, the only realised centre has been the one in Asia (APRCCN). The delay in establishing other regional centres is still one of the main challenges for Culturelink and indicates that such endeavour requires support of the members from the region, but also the financial assistance of the regional authorities.

Still, the main challenge and difficulty for Culturelink Network has been constant throughout the twenty years and it involves the issues of balancing the continuity of activities, investment and funding.

Investment and Financing

Twenty years of Culturelink's existence have been marked by short-term and project-based investments and funding. Culturelink Network raises funds for each and individual project while the regular activities are supported by the Institute for International Relations (IMO) that covers the overhead and material expenses as well staff costs. As stated on the page 2 of this paper, Culturelink Network's focal point is the Institute for International Relations; hence the Network is coordinated from the offices of IMO by the Culturelink Team members that are employed by IMO. This implies that Culturelink Network's budget does not include staff, rent and overhead costs, but it includes all project costs as IMO does not support Culturelink through direct project financing. Moreover, Culturelink subsidises IMO's support with 20% from all project budgets. Apart from this financial contribution, the Institute for International Relations receives all the benefits from hosting a global network that engages in activities of international and intercultural significance. This partnership between the Institute for International Relations and Culturelink has been one of the main reasons behind the Network's continuity and sustainability.

At the very outset, the Network's activities were co-financed by the founders (UNESCO and the Council of Europe) and this arrangement lasted for 10 years (especially through UNESCO's Participation Programme). The financing ceased over time, and the Network has been since receiving project-based annual support from Croatian governmental bodies¹³ and municipal administration¹⁴ which covers up to 50% of annual project expenses. It has to be noted that Culturelink Network is based in non-EU European country which sets limitations to the European funding opportunities. Also, Croatia was in conflict for the first part of the 1990's and the

¹³ Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Science, Education and Sports and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

¹⁴ City of Zagreb, City of Rijeka and City of Dubrovnik.

consequences of these conditions decreased funding potentials of national and local bodies. During this period, many private foundations have assisted Culturelink's activities¹⁵.

Culturelink receives some income from the membership's fee¹⁶ and book sales but this only contributes to the 2% of the overall annual budget.

The central investment principle for Culturelink Network has remained the same throughout the 20 years. This includes activities that are consistent with the Convention activities and priorities defined in Article 19 – exchange, analysis and dissemination of information, fostering of communication and data collection between different sectors that will further enable capacity building and strengthening of expertise. Although Culturelink started some 15 years before the Convention was adopted, it identified and included the key principles of intercultural communication and networking of cultural diversities and expressions. By investing in exchange and dissemination of information, Culturelink assured intercultural communication about the problems which all the cultures face. The twenty years of experience of such approach has proven that cultural networks can be put into practice in all the regions of the world, regardless of the degree of the regions' development and the existing imbalances in the international exchange.

The first Culturelink's decade was marked by investing funds into publishing *Culturelink Review*, creating and developing databases and organizing thematic conferences, seminars and workshops. The *Culturelink Review*, as quarterly publication on 120 pages that was distributed postally to over 1000 addresses worldwide, took 70% of the annual budget. Since *Culturelink Review* was substituted by *C-News* in 2004 (paper edition was substituted by electronic edition¹⁷), the 70% of the funds was re-allocated to the publishing of *Culturelink Joint Publication Series* and annual conferences. The rest 30% of the budget is allocated towards the development of Culturelink WWW Resource Centre.

Although the cultural networks have proven to be quite cost-effective in the context of exchange, analysis and dissemination of information, they are yet to receive appropriate support: While the networks have no limitations in facilitating collection, exchange and dissemination of information, available funding repeatedly imposes limits and thematic frameworks that networks have to oblige in order to receive the needed financial support. The overall attitude and the recognition of the capacities and capabilities that cultural networks have in reference to the implementation of Article 19 should be further developed.

20 years of experience in exchange, analysis and dissemination of information – Culturelink's Lessons Learned

The example of Culturelink's experience clearly demonstrates that cultural networks can be effective mechanisms for implementation of Article 19. The main objectives of cultural networks correspond to the Convention's *Objectives* and *Guiding principles (to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions, to encourage dialogue among cultures, to foster interculturality, to reaffirm the importance of the link between culture and development for all countries followed by Principle of equitable access, Principle of openness and balance, Principle of international solidarity and cooperation)*.

¹⁵ European Cultural Foundation, Pro Helvetia, Kulturkontakt Austria, Japan Foundation, Soros Open Society Croatia etc.

¹⁶ Membership fees are listed in the Culturelink Membership Application and Subscription Form available online at <http://www.culturelink.hr/network/form.html>

¹⁷ Culturelink Network started publishing electronic bulletin quite late comparing to the other cultural networks and portals. This was due to the fact that some 40% of Culturelink members come from developing countries and it had to be ensure they had access to online services before Culturelink made a complete changeover.

Past two decades have been marked by the intensive cultural networking and most activities that have defined that period indicate that the core issues of Article 19 have already been tackled by existing cultural networks. Hence, there is substantial capacity for supporting implementation of Article 19 within the existing number of cultural networks. The States Parties should consider providing greater support to the cultural networks that have a previous experience in promoting exchange, analysis and dissemination of information that reflects respective cultural realities and engages in intercultural communication and cooperation.

Experience shows that cultural networks are one of the most important mechanisms that have contributed to cultural development, cultural communication, and affirmation of cultural identities and promotion of cultural diversities. Their activities can be interpreted as one of the outcomes of committed and persistent engagement in exchange, collection and dissemination of information. Different analytical and rational approaches to cultural development and cultural policies have been introduced through these processes. The exchange that takes place through the network activities results in a number of intercultural contacts and cooperations, that have contributed to the better communication and affirmation of diverse cultural identities and information collection and dissemination on those diversities. As scopes of networks can be very wide, this poses difficulties for maintaining supporting information systems.

Culturelink Network's methods for collection and dissemination of information, especially in the domain of cultural policy data collection, can be used as a reference to the evidence whether members operate in accordance to the required standards from the Convention and how they operate in terms of cultural policies, cultural practices, collection of data related to their practices, methodologies and methods applied to data analysis and dissemination of findings.

Culturelink's experience shows that there is a continual need for communication of all cultural sectors' representatives including cultural institutions, individuals, non-governmental and private organizations which will actively participate in collection, exchange and dissemination of relevant data through networking. These practices contribute to the free flow of information and add to critical debate which can improve the activities of cultural networks relevant to the Convention principles.

Cultural networks can be useful in terms of indicating changes and/or inconsistencies in cultural policies and practices. These can be useful for the implementation of Article 19 in order to provide information to the States Parties on the approaches to their policies, funding criteria and information on the principles of protecting and promoting cultural expressions, as well as distinguishing the real needs and methodologies of preserving, maintaining and supporting cultural expressions in all its diversity.