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Korean National Commission for UNESCO



WorldCP-Asia: Experts' Meeting on Cultural Policy

SUMMARY REPORT

Organised by
International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies
Asia-Europe Foundation
Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Republic of Korea
Korean National Commission for UNESCO

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SUMMARY REPORT

The inaugural *WorldCP-Asia: Experts' Meeting on Cultural Policy* brought together a group of 20 policymakers, researchers and commentators from Asia and Europe to provide a bi-regional perspective on arts and cultural policy research and information systems.

The gathering was organised in the framework of the [WorldCP-Asia](#), a major new initiative to document the arts and cultural policies of Asia. The initiative is a central component in the development of [WorldCP – International Database of Cultural Policies](#), an international version of the highly-regarded *Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe* (www.culturalpolicies.net)

The engagement served as the “first action meeting” of the *WorldCP-Asia* project and marked the launch of a series of annual *Experts' Meetings on Cultural Policy*. It was jointly organised by the [International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies](#) (IFACCA), the lead partner of the *WorldCP* project and the regional secretariat for *WorldCP-Asia* comprising of the [Asia-Europe Foundation](#) (ASEF), the [Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism](#), Republic of Korea and the [Korean National Commission for UNESCO](#).

The partners of the *WorldCP* stressed the importance of the project as an opportunity for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue in Asia.

While the understanding of culture remains complex in various countries and regions, participating experts agreed that articulated or implied priorities do exist for national governments. In Asia, such priorities exist at the national level and variously include the protection and promotion of cultural heritage; the development of independent infrastructure for the arts; and, capacity building for arts management. In Europe, key policy priorities at the regional level include the promotion of multiculturalism, diversity and social cohesion.



Partners and experts at the first meeting of *WorldCP-Asia* in Seoul

There was consensus that, in addition to governments, civil society actors also play a key role in arts and culture both at the national and international levels. Opportunities for dialogue between governments and civil society actors vary across Asian countries. Similarly, documentation of national arts and cultural policies is not uniform across Asia. In Europe, the highly-regarded *European Compendium of Cultural Policies*, available online at www.culturalpolicies.net, has been developed over a decade as a comparative information system on European cultural policies. The *WorldCP* project aims to facilitate the building of information systems, similar to the European Compendium, in other continents including Asia. The opportunities and challenges in adapting the European Compendium model to the Asian context were actively debated by the participants.

The main points of the discussion are summarised below.

WorldCP-Asia: An opportunity for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue in Asia

In his welcome remarks, Mr. Taek-soo Chun, Secretary General, Korean National Commission for UNESCO underlined the importance of *WorldCP-Asia* as a 'new opportunity for intercultural dialogue' and expressed his hope that the project would foster co-operation among Asian countries. The idea was seconded by Mr. Hoseok Shin, Director, Asian Culture Complex Operational Team, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Republic of Korea when he acknowledged the Experts' Meeting as an 'important step in the promotion of information sharing and expertise among Asian countries'.

WorldCP-Asia can enable systematic engagement with governments and civil society actors, stressed Katelijn Verstraete, Assistant Director, Cultural Exchange, Asia-Europe Foundation. She also emphasised the possibilities afforded by the project to stimulate 'dialogue platforms at the national and regional levels'.

The Asia chapter of the *WorldCP* will serve as a precedent for other regions, noted Sarah Gardner, Executive Director, IFACCA.

Arts and culture in Asia-Europe: Issues, priorities and trends

Policy dialogue on culture has been increasingly acquiring strategic importance in Asia. In December 2010, the European Union (EU) and India signed a joint declaration to strengthen policy dialogue on culture. A similar agreement was concluded between the EU and China in 2007. In November 2009, the Korean Ministry of Culture (MCST) organised the *Culturelink Asia-Pacific Cultural Policy Conference* with the Korean National Commission for UNESCO. MCST, which boasts of an Asian arts community comprising of five regions, five projects and 51 Asian countries, also organises an annual *Cultural Resources Conference* for each region. These developments mark the growing importance of culture in international relations, in particular since the adoption of the [2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions](#).

A *Roundtable on Cultural Policy Issues and Trends*, chaired by Anupama Sekhar, Project Manager, Cultural Exchange, Asia-Europe Foundation facilitated reflection on the above-mentioned trends and sought a deeper understanding of the realities of and priorities in arts and culture in select Asian countries.

The very term 'culture', it emerged from the deliberations, is variously understood across Asia. In India, 'culture' is not formally defined, pointed out Mr. Anmol Vellani, Executive Director, India

Foundation for the Arts (IFA), but is generally understood to include the arts (traditional and contemporary), creativity and heritage (tangible and intangible). In the case of Thailand, definitions are vastly different, explained Ms. Savithri Suwansathit, Advisor to the Ministry of Culture, Thailand. Here, notions of culture expand beyond the arts, cultural expressions and creativity to include pride and dignity in a unique Thai identity that encompasses certain ethical and moral principles and values social cohesion. The multiplicity of connotations with respect to culture was reaffirmed by Mr. Bui Hoai Son, Head of Division of PhD training, Vien Van Hoa Nghe Thuat Viet Nam (Vietnam Institute of Culture and Arts Studies), who spoke of the two distinct meanings of 'culture' that existed in his country. While politicians interpreted 'culture' ideologically, the working definition employed by the arts sector includes heritage, performing arts, fine arts, film, television etc.

Similarly, the meanings of and politics governing the term 'cultural policy' were investigated. In India, the term appears not to be favoured by the government as it is generally understood to be synonymous with 'managing culture and determining what it should be'. The recently-formed Ministry of Culture is keen to avoid being seen as promoting any kind of cultural homogenisation.

The understanding of culture is as complex in Europe as elsewhere, Ms. Ritva Mitchell, Director of Research, CUPORE, the Finnish Foundation for Cultural Policy Research, reminded the participants. She explained that culture in Europe is not managed, only facilitated by the State. In the European context, national ministries of culture set the agenda, but frameworks exist at the continental level to discuss and debate important issues in culture, with UNESCO, the Council of Europe (COE) and the European Union all dealing with policies in this field.

Despite issues of definition, it was generally agreed that national priorities for arts and culture exist in most Asian countries. In Vietnam, the Ministry of Culture aims to develop a 'good cultural environment for all Vietnamese citizens', which in turn translates into government-run programmes for the development of libraries, cinemas and cultural houses in the provinces. With the introduction of the market economy, priorities have been changing in recent times to include capacity building in cultural policy and arts management.

In India, a recent shift towards the development of independent infrastructure for the arts is being witnessed. Other areas of focus for the government include public-private partnerships in the field of culture; arts education in schools; creative industries and mega festivals. Thailand is prioritising the protection and promotion of core national social and cultural institutions as well as effective management of cultural heritage including traditional knowledge as key missions of its current five-year plan. The recognition of culture as a national asset and the need to build upon it so as to enhance the quality of life of Thai people is also a priority. In the case of South Korea, cultural policy targets have been clearly articulated by the government to include equal access to culture for all Korean people and support to artists and creative industries. The protection of Mongolia's cultural heritage and its promotion at the international level is a priority in that country.

In Europe, cultural policies aim, in general, at the promotion of creativity, participation and identity. Key policy priorities include the promotion of multiculturalism, diversity and social cohesion. Arts education, creative industries and decentralisation of the arts sector remain high on the agenda. It was acknowledged that the continent has witnessed 'great transformations' since the 1990's particularly in Eastern Europe.

Clearly documented arts and cultural policies exist in countries such as Thailand, wherein the Ministry of Culture is presently preparing and updating a policy document for the consideration of the new government. In Vietnam, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) is currently working on a report on cultural policies in the country. In addition, there exists the National Report on the Real Situation of Vietnam Culture from 1990 to 2002, published in 2003 as part of a process of national review of cultural policies following the shift to market economy. In a separate presentation, Mr. Nguyen Van Tinh, Director General, International Co-operation Department, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Vietnam presented the outline of this report, which relates to nine topics, namely human development, cultural environment, development of literature and the arts, preservation and promotion of heritage, promotion of education; mass media; minority groups; cultural co-operation; and, cultural institutions. The methodology of the report includes the use of statistics, questionnaires, social surveys, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and text analysis. Key challenges faced in the preparation of the report include linguistic problems such as translation and lack of data for private sector activities in the arts. The Arts Council Mongolia is strengthening its partnership with the national Ministry of Education, Culture and Science within the Civil Society Council to assist the formulation of state cultural policies and a master plan for Cultural Development up to 2020. A Report on Mongolia's Cultural Policy, structured along the lines of the Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe, was published in 2005. It is expected to be revised and updated as part of the *WorldCP-Asia* project.

The role of culture in international co-operation was also discussed. Culture has been acquiring growing importance in international relations, in particular since the adoption of the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. At the Asian level, UNESCO, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), SEAMEO-SPAFA (the Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts, a project of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation) and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)¹ were cited as active channels of multilateral co-operation. Korea cited the Hub City of Asian Culture project in Gwangju as a facilitator of cultural co-operation among Asian countries.

It was shared that countries variously prioritise multilateral and bilateral co-operation. India, for instance, focuses mainly on bilateral arrangements, while Vietnam stresses both. International co-operation remains a key priority area for the Vietnamese government.

Outside the realm of intergovernmental co-operation, it was acknowledged that civil society actors in the arts continue to promote 'their own international relations' with or without governmental support.

The role of civil society in the arts at the local, national and regional levels revealed the key role played by European cultural networks. Such networks are currently emerging in India in the areas of contemporary dance, theatre and philanthropy. In Thailand, the non-profit sector in the arts is thriving at the national and international levels, with or without government support. The presence of an active civil society in culture was acknowledged by the Koreans. In Vietnam,

¹ ASEM now brings together 46 member states (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Indonesia, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, Vietnam) plus the European Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat. www.aseminfoboard.org

associations of artists require more support for their development, including from the private sector.

With regard to dialogue between civil society and government, situations differ across Asia. For example, Korea boasts of good communication between the two stakeholders including through consultative bodies. The government is fully supportive of civil society working in the arts and has a separate fund for their activities. Alternatively in India, there appears to be little voice for the arts sector within the government. When the government calls for public inputs towards policy formulation, it is usually through online consultations.

WorldCP-Asia: Adapting the European Compendium model

The highly-regarded *European Compendium of Cultural Policies* (available online at www.culturalpolicies.net) is a comparative information system on European cultural policies. It was developed as a knowledge database and tool. It started as a collaborative project led by the Council of Europe (COE) and managed by the European Institute for Comparative Cultural Research (EricArts). The European Compendium currently includes 42 profiles in a common structure that enables comparative analysis. Denmark, the Netherlands and Canada (which enjoys Observer status at the COE) were highlighted as 'good examples' of country profiles in the Compendium. The structure or 'grid' of the profiles is not static and has expanded over the years to include themes of shared interest, such as, for example, social cohesion.

While it was acknowledged that the European Compendium, which boasts of approximately 30,000 online users annually, is widely used by journalists, researchers, students, university lecturers and government agencies, it was also agreed that the documentary evidence of the impact of the Compendium needs to be collected.

The *WorldCP* project aims to facilitate the building of information systems, similar to the European Compendium, in other continents, each with a separate website/database under the Creative Commons licence. The *WorldCP* global database is scheduled to be launched on 3 October 2011 at the General Assembly of IFACCA, alongside the 5th World Summit on Arts and Culture (Melbourne, 3-6 October 2011). Some national cultural policy profiles are already under construction, e.g. Australia and in Africa. Eight Arab profiles have been developed with the support of the European Cultural Foundation, Culture Resource (Al Mawred Al Thaqafy) and Boekmanstichting.²

The Asia chapter of *WorldCP* will set a precedent for other regions. *WorldCP-Asia* also builds on ASEM initiatives such as the mapping, Cultural Heritage Preservation and Management Policies in the ASEM Countries, undertaken in connection with the 4th ASEM Culture Ministers' Meeting (Poland, 2010). *WorldCP-Asia* specifically carries forward the recommendation of the ASEM Workshop on Enhancing ASEM Visibility through Cultural Activities (Vietnam, 2010) to build up an 'open and transparent analysis of national cultural policies for the benefit of decision makers, the media and the cultural sector in the format of initiatives such as the Open Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends'. The viability of developing *WorldCP-Asia* was investigated by the partners in 2010. The report on the research, *Towards Cultural Policy Profiles in Asia* (commissioned by the Hub City of Asian Culture, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Republic of Korea and written by IFACCA) suggests that there is a solid basis for commissioning several profiles of countries in Asia over the next two years.

² *Cultural Policies in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia: An Introduction* (2010)

For *WorldCP* to be functional, it was argued that all regions will need to use the same 'grid' as a base for the documentation of information. However, it was agreed that as some parts of the grid do not have the same relevance for Asia, it is important to be able to have input to the way the grid develops in the future. Certain concepts such as 'intercultural dialogue' (included in the grid due to the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue Year, 2008) are understood differently in countries outside Europe. Other categories such as cultural/creative industries may need to be redefined in the Asian context. For instance, crafts may be included in this category in some countries. Certain sub-categories in the grid may not be universally applicable, such as national artistic companies. Certain issues, such as censorship, may also be sensitive for certain regions. Further, the post-colonial nature of many Asian states needs to be taken into consideration in the discussion of certain topics.

As with the European Compendium, the subsections in the grid may be retained in their present form to enable entry into a common global/regional database and enable comparative analysis. However, the right to interpretation on different points may be reserved by the researcher/s.

It was suggested that the questions currently included within the subsections of the European grid may need to be approached differently in Asia, given that the original ones were developed by Europeans for a uniquely European Compendium. These questions, it was agreed, serve as guidelines on what the chapter/section could potentially include and enable comparisons across profiles. However, these questions do not stipulate the requirements of content. Researchers in Asia could develop some sections and subsections based on their own understanding of the topic in their national context.

Definitions and concepts mentioned in the grid may need to be redefined to widen the European definition to a broader international one. For instance, 'cultural consumption' and 'cultural citizenship' may not be relevant in Asia. Participation statistics may also be difficult to obtain in Asia, where culture is not institutionalised, as in Europe. Whole villages in India, for instance, take part in cultural festivals, pointed out Mr. Anmol Vellani of IFA.

It was argued that grid should not be a 'straightjacket', but should allow some flexibility in response to the situation at hand. The adaptation of the grid for the Asian policy profiles could be further discussed at the annual meetings of Asian researchers, it was agreed. The process of revising the grid would be undertaken as part of the annual meeting of *WorldCP* partners.

The importance of the availability of profiles in local languages was underlined.

The selection of researchers to author the profile as well as the form of the profile were keenly discussed. In Europe, independent researchers were appointed. In the Asian context, it was anticipated that some governments may seek to play a role in the selection process. It was suggested that approaching national governments with names of reputed researchers/research institutes may instil greater confidence on their part in the *WorldCP* process. Sarah Gardner, Executive Director, IFACCA concluded that the researchers must fulfil certain criteria (including demonstrated experience in cultural policy analysis; reputation as a skilled person in the field of arts and culture; and, excellence of research and linguistic skills).

It was also agreed that the cultural policy profiles created should neither be purely academic studies nor documents promoting the government.

The role of governments in endorsing the completed profiles was also discussed. Situations wherein no procedures or processes for governmental approval or review exist were considered.

It was suggested that governments should not be able to approve or oppose the information in the profiles. The independence and integrity of the research and researcher must be maintained.

WorldCP-Asia: Partners and participation process

IFACCA serves as the facilitator of the *WorldCP* project and as the connector between the different participating regions. In Asia, the regional secretariat will help forge national partnerships; monitor the research process at the regional and sub-regional levels; and, co-organise an annual meeting of Asian researchers that would include a component of Asia-Europe dialogue with the managers and authors of the European Compendium.

Ms. Katelijn Verstraete of the Asia-Europe Foundation outlined the process of national participation in *WorldCP-Asia*:

- Discussion with national governments on selection of researcher/s
- Negotiation with national governments on financial engagement (including selection and support of researchers; the cost per country is estimated at USD 20,000)
- Organisation of annual researchers' meeting at the regional level by the Asia-Europe Foundation in collaboration with IFACCA and national governments
- Translation and editing of the profiles
- Input into the global database (regional databases will be set up at a later stage)
- Communication of the *WorldCP-Asia* project in the region

This Summary Report was written by Anupama Sekhar, Project Manager, Cultural Exchange, Asia-Europe Foundation based on the detailed Report of the *WorldCP-Asia: Experts' Meeting on Cultural Policy* prepared by Annamari Laaksonen, Research Manager, IFACCA.

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