

A community of cultures

The European Union and the arts



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A community of cultures

'Marking a new stage in the process of European integration undertaken with the establishment of the European Communities'. 'Creating an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe'. The words may be a bit dry (these are taken from the preamble to the Treaty on European Union, signed in Maastricht in 1992), but the intention is to create a 'Europe of the peoples'. And that means using culture as a vehicle. For the first time, the Treaty gave the European Union powers of its own in this sphere.

The Treaty on European Union also created 'European citizenship' – to supplement, but not replace, national citizenship. This idea of European citizenship reflects the fundamental values that people throughout Europe share and on which European integration is based. Its strength lies in Europe's immense cultural heritage. Transcending all manner of geographical, religious and political divides, artistic, scientific and philosophical currents have influenced and enriched one another over the centuries, laying down a common heritage for the many cultures of today's European Union. Different as they are, the peoples of Europe share a history

which gives Europe its place in the world and which makes it so special.

The 'European cultural model' has its place in this scheme of things: it involves respect for each people's culture and for the interplay between them, but at the same time encouraging forms of cooperation which can nurture and enrich each culture.

The aims of the EU's cultural policy are to bring out the common aspects of Europe's heritage, enhance the feeling of belonging to one and the same community, while recognising and respecting cultural, national and regional diversity, and helping cultures to develop and become more widely known.

The Maastricht Treaty was not just about making culture a fully-fledged aspect of European action. It also made it incumbent on the EU to take cultural matters into account in all its policies. The financial assistance which the EU makes available under its social and regional policies (amounting to at least EUR 500 million per year) means that Europe is a highly significant player in terms of cultural development.

Over and above the financial aspect, though, the EU's role is to encourage cultural exchanges and cooperation and to ensure that works of art can circulate within Europe. More specifically, the point is to involve the public at large, and artists and culture professionals in particular, in European projects and networks, to make all sides aware of how the cultural and creative process works, and to encourage all the peoples of the EU in developing different forms of cultural expression. The projects described in this brochure are just a few examples among many.

Since 2000, and drawing on earlier pioneering programmes on the heritage, translation and artistic cooperation, the EU has had its first framework programme devoted entirely to cultural matters: 'Culture 2000'. This is the cornerstone of the EU's cultural activity. With a budget of EUR 167 million over four years, it may seem somewhat modest in terms of the EU's overall expenditure, but in fact a large number of other EU policies touch on culture in a broader sense: regional and social policies, education and training, scientific research programmes, measures to enhance the status of European lan-

guages, and so on. All these initiatives produce effects on the ground and promote the idea of a plural Europe with a common heritage.

What we have, then, is a plural Europe, but a Europe which is prepared to carry its values of cultural diversity and dialogue beyond its own frontiers. This concern is at the heart of the agreements the EU has with non-member countries, on such matters as conserving the world heritage, better mutual knowledge of works of art, support for local cultural activities, and exchanges between regions and countries. These are all ways and means of enhancing social development and producing greater understanding between the peoples of Europe.

Shared cultures

To bring the peoples of Europe closer together and to deepen awareness of their common history, the European Union encourages all manner of meetings and exchange schemes between Europeans. Although its goal is to develop a feeling of belonging to a shared culture, the EU is also keen to preserve the specific aspects of Europe's many cultures, e.g. minority languages.

Each year, the Council of Ministers of Culture selects a number of 'European cities of culture'. Athens, Avignon, Berlin and Helsinki among many others have all received EU support to help them to organise concerts, cultural events, exhibitions and European-scale conferences, bringing together artists from all over Europe. Under an EU town-twinning scheme, thousands of towns, cities and villages have created lasting links. And, throughout Europe, special 'Heritage days' regularly invite the public at large to discover or rediscover the artistic riches of the ages, and are always a great success.

The Netd@ys Europe initiative encourages people to use the new media for education and culture and, more especially, encourages people to take an active part in cultural life. Once a year, there is a Europe-wide Netd@ys week when schools, youth organisations, cultural centres and the like are invited to display and circulate the results of their work, with the technology underpinning the real human achievements – multimedia storytelling, articles by schools on culture and history, workshops on image engineering in advertising, multimedia performances and virtual exhibitions.

In addition to funding events intended to bring the people together across Europe and encourage them to work together, the EU finances a wide range of projects designed to give the general public more 'democratic' access to culture and their heritage. The Debora project (digital access to books of the Renaissance) is working on ways of giving Internet users access to digitalised collections of documents from the 16th century, lodged in libraries throughout Europe. Debora is one of many examples of the kind of support the EU is giving to museums, libraries and other cultural institutions which are keen on making their collections more accessible to the wider public.

Getting into culture is also an educational issue: learning about contemporary culture as well as discovering the links between generations and peoples. On a social level, integration is the key issue. In its support for education systems, the EU encourages the kind of teaching and learning which values and enhances heritage and cultural diversity. On an economic level, it is all about making and keeping Europe competitive. More recently, the very concept of education has been redefined in European policies. It is widely recognised that learning is not just something that happens in schools, but also after school and outside school. Concepts such as 'lifelong learning', 'informal education' and 'eLearning' now stand alongside the traditional forms of teaching in EU programmes.

Getting about to find out

The EU has a number of programmes to encourage people from the Member States, the applicant countries and other countries of the world to visit new places. It may be a Swedish architect learning his trade in Bologna; a young Frenchman discovering the cultures of northern Africa; or someone spending six months in the United Kingdom to learn English. The figures speak for themselves: since 1987, more than a million students have spent a period abroad under the Socrates programme, while the 'Youth' programme has mobilised more than 400 000 young people since 1995. Exchanges are a pathway to a different culture. But the stay may itself be focused on cultural matters. One project under the 'Youth' programme brought together young people from four Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Greece, Italy and Tunisia) for an exchange scheme centred on art and culture in the Mediterranean.

MASTERPIECES AT THE CLICK OF A MOUSE

Museums and art galleries throughout Europe are full of hidden treasures. Unfortunately, access via the Internet is often limited. For lack of archiving resources or organisation, the result is all too often the same: masterpieces which you can only view by travelling hundreds of kilometres. Nowadays, though, the technology needed to give high-quality, long-distance access to collections is available. The 'Artiste' project is in the process of putting the concept into practice. It brings together four of Europe's leading art museums (the Uffizi in Florence, the National Gallery and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, and the Louvre in Paris), in conjunction with private-sector partners from publishing and the new information technologies. Launched in 2000, it will take two and a half years to complete the digitalisation, filing and networking of very high-quality reproductions of paintings. Once finished, it will be an enormous boon for researchers, art students, publishers and the media alike.

'Artiste' is more than just a project for digitalising works of art. It will give students, researchers and historians access to a particularly useful range of tools. The very high definition of the images will make it possible to compare painters and époques in terms of the use of colour, style, and even brushstrokes. Just take the case of a museum curator who wants to illustrate a catalogue on the different styles of painting. All he will have to do is specify the style, and 'Artiste' will carry out a search for all the appropriate paintings which are available in the database. And this is just one of many examples of what the project might mean for lovers and professionals of the fine arts.

The project is funded under the European Union's fifth research and technological development framework programme.



Languages — the pillars of culture

2001 was the 'European Year of Languages'. It is a key year in a long-term policy to encourage people in Europe to learn and use two languages in addition to their mother tongue. It found practical expression in a campaign which celebrated all the languages spoken in Europe. Seldom have Europe's cities, towns and villages been so multilingual!

Language learning is a basic element in European action on the education and training front. If it is a fact that languages open the door to other cultures, it is just as true to say that not knowing languages makes life very difficult within Europe and beyond. This is why the EU is using its framework programme for research and technological development and the 'eContent' programme (European digital content on world networks) to produce language-engineering resources which can, for instance, produce automatic translations or carry out Internet documentary searches in a variety of languages.

The EU is also keen to help readers discover foreign authors in the readers' own tongues. Initiatives such as the International Poetry Festival in Stockholm or the 'N.E.W. Theatre' network help to make authors better known internationally and give their works wider circulation in translation. Some of the budget for cultural cooperation in Europe goes to helping to provide translations of literary works and giving them wider circulation. More than 800 books have been translated in this way since 1986, including Hans Magnus Enzensberger's *Der Zehnteufel* from German to Greek; Jordan Radickov's *Smokove Vlivadite* from Bulgarian to Italian; Peter Burke's *The European Renaissance* from English to French and Italian; and Fernando Pessoa's *Barão de Teive: Educação do Estóico* from Portuguese to Norwegian.

The EU is also active in helping to preserve regional and minority languages. There are reckoned to be some 40 million people in Europe whose native language — say, Catalan, Breton or Welsh — is not the official language of their country of origin. Maintaining linguistic diversity is one of the fundamental aspects of the EU.



IMAGEBANK

MONS AND BABEL

Between 17 and 26 September 2001, the town of Mons, in Belgium, did a Tower of Babel imitation by organising a public festival of languages.

The point of the exercise was to make as many people as possible aware of the importance and cultural richness of knowing foreign languages, whether for professional reasons, for personal development or to connect to other individuals. The public at large was encouraged to get into language-learning, whatever their motives, age or social background.

There were plenty of opportunities for all this. Restaurants organised conversations in Danish, English and even Greek, run by language teachers. There was a festival of song, mime and sketches given by teachers and their pupils. There was a multilingual competition run with the help of local shopkeepers. And thanks to the Internet, the people of Mons were able to pass the time of day and exchange views with people from all over the European Union.

For the 10 days of the festival, German, English, Spanish, Danish, Greek, Italian and Dutch, and even sign language, became the local currency in Mons. The project was one of many under the European Year of Languages banner.

Stimulating the creative instinct

Little by little, we are seeing the emergence of a 'cultural Europe' as artists discover the need to work together and get their works known beyond national frontiers. However, what is also needed, if we are to encourage artists to be creative and see to it that their books, films and performances are widely circulated, is a proper European legal framework. From the very first flash of inspiration right up to the public performance, Europe's works and the artists who produce them are at the focal point of EU cultural action. Dance, theatre, the visual and plastic arts, cinema, literature, music – all forms of creative activity are encouraged.

A touring theatre festival. An online network of newly composed music. A work of literature translated into a variety of languages. These are all examples of the kind of things that receive support under the 'Culture 2000' programme. Whether limited in time (covering particular events or festivals) or ongoing (e.g. cooperative networks), these projects encourage people to exchange points of view, swap ideas, get to know works and their creators. For the artists, the chance of working in unusual settings and enriching their vision of the world can be a great source of inspiration. And Europe is a wonderful echo chamber!

The culture professionals

The European Union has some seven million people professionally active in the cultural sector. Whether running projects, teaching artistic disciplines, or producing, all of them are entitled to take part in multiannual cooperative projects or in European or international-scale events under the 'Culture 2000' programme. New learning software for architecture schools, or a festival of Nordic literature run by Danish, Swedish and British partners are just two examples of such European-scale projects.



EKA

TOSCANINI V UNEMPLOYMENT

Many people are discouraged from pursuing an artistic career by the lack of employment opportunities and the problem of reconciling the freedom to be creative with the need to earn enough to live on. Since the mid-1990s, the Arturo Toscanini Foundation has been providing training for unemployed musicians. Its first project provided high-level training with a symphony orchestra for 80 jobless musicians. Divided into three sections (brass, wind and strings), the courses were given by experienced teachers, orchestral musicians and soloists from well-known orchestras or from top-ranking European and American music schools. Today, the Mythos project is pursuing the same line of immersing people in professional life by using the new technologies and virtual reality in a distance-training programme which is targeted specifically at soloists, choral singers, musicians and technical people from the world of opera.

Over and above musical skills, the courses provided by the Toscanini Foundation feature a very down-to-earth approach to the world of work. They stress organisational skills and how to succeed on the recording market. They give trainees an idea of what employment opportunities exist in the music environment. Taking part in mixed groups made up of students and old hands from the Arturo Toscanini symphony orchestra, one of Italy's most prestigious, is the most gratifying aspect of this project as far as musicians are concerned. Right from the outset, Toscanini Foundation courses have received support from the European Social Fund.

Like any other sector, culture enjoys freedom of movement under the Treaty on European Union. But, again, like any other sector, it has specific needs in terms of worker training and placement. For students and professionals in the cultural sector, it is not unusual for opportunities to study, train or work to come up abroad. The European education and vocational training programmes, Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci, feature cultural, artistic and artisanal aspects, from initial training right up to advanced tuition. They encourage mobility among people at school or undergoing training, offering international

placement projects, exchanges of experience, study trips, etc. One project which receives support under Leonardo da Vinci, the Cortex project, gives professionals, trainers and job-seekers a platform for meetings and exchanges on the Internet. The system supplies information on courses and cultural jobs in Europe, and has search and selection facilities by academic and individual skills. In addition, the European Social Fund, which is the main instrument for the Community's social policy, helps fight unemployment and gets people back into work by a variety of means, including theatre and writing.

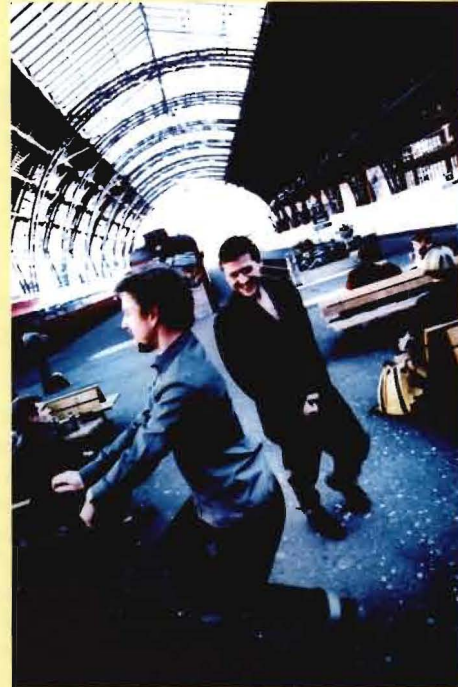
COPYRIGHT ISSUES: ENCOURAGING CREATIVITY

Copyright provisions and neighbouring rights are the currency which enable works of art to be circulated in our societies. They provide financial recompense for authors and other stakeholders (artists and performers, producers and broadcasters). Copyright provides protection for the creative artist who can, for example, make sure that proper use is made of his or her work and that it is not illicitly tampered with. With the advent of the digital age, music, films and books, devoid of any material support medium, can be reproduced and circulate like never before. These new technical resources have opened up an increasingly important sector of goods and services protected by copyright and neighbouring rights; at the same time, works are being exposed to illicit use on a huge scale. Since the early 1990s, the European Union has had a common legal framework which harmonises copyright protection rules. In May 2001, a new directive on protection of copyright in the information society was added to this corpus. It provides a European regulatory framework geared to the virtual and globalised context of computer networks; it creates a balance between protecting people's rights, on the one hand, and giving people access to works under clearly defined conditions, on the other. The Member States have until the end of 2002 to put the directive into practice under national law.

NOMADIC DANCERS

In 2000, nine cities were selected by the European Union to be 'European cities of culture'. 'Trans Danse', an itinerant festival which is supported by the 'Culture 2000' programme, took advantage of this event to visit seven of the nine cities and take stock of the state of contemporary dance in Europe. It also provided an opportunity to see how quickly things are changing in the dance world: increasingly, European choreographers are bringing in other forms of artistic expression – theatre, music and the multimedia.

'Trans Danse' brings together seven organisations based in Avignon, Bergen, Prague, Bologna, Helsinki, Reykjavik and Brussels. Spending a week in each city, choreographers employed by the companies involved in the project put on performances and organised training sessions for professional dancers, amateurs and artists from other disciplines. Having completed its travels the length and breadth of Europe, the 'Trans Danse' network has now identified the strong and weak points of the general environment within which contemporary dance is developing in Europe. These will, in turn, give us important pointers to future European action.



BLOOM FERRIS ARTIST

Audiovisual policy is a particularly important aspect of the European Union's cultural policy. There is a special programme, known as MEDIA, with a wide range of objectives: to ensure that products are circulated; to encourage the learning of writing techniques; to enable audiovisual professionals to broaden their financial and commercial skills and get to know the new technologies. The MEDIA programme also provides support for

cinema workshops (screenwriting, production and animation) and European film festivals, like Marseilles (the international documentary film festival), Osnabrück (the European Media Art Festival) and Thessaloniki (the international film festival).

Heritage conservation

The European Union's work on conserving and enhancing the cultural environment nowadays covers the built heritage, the environment, artistic objects and works, and the non-material heritage. Traditions, social customs, knowledge and know-how are taken fully into account in a broad definition of what kind of heritage is common to the peoples of Europe. Roman remains or a site of exceptional natural beauty are important not just for the people who live nearby, but for all the people of Europe.

Restoring a historic townscape or rescuing a folk tradition from oblivion are important as far as the tourist trade is concerned, but they have the added advantage of restoring to the local community some of its dynamism and identity. Conserving the cultural heritage of the peoples of Europe is a prime concern of the Euroregion association in Belgium, along with its French, Greek and Italian partners. Whether the subject be archaeology, ethnography or folk traditions, Euroregion collects filmed documents which it then makes available to national and regional television channels, research centres and other players from the world of education. The 'Culture 2000' programme devotes a third of its budget to such conservation projects with a view to making the peoples of Europe aware of their common heritage. Projects may involve training for professionals, exchanges of experience or the creation of multimedia resources.

Besides 'Culture 2000', the European Union has a wide range of other instruments for use in its heritage conservation work. The European Regional

Development Fund supplies substantial amounts of money for regional development aid projects. In some cases, these projects include a 'heritage restoration and enhancement' dimension. Greece, for instance, has launched an ambitious EUR 605 million cultural programme covering the period 2000–06, two thirds funded by the EU, one of its aspects being the preservation and enhancement of the archaeological heritage, more especially by modernising museums and museum outreach services.

The EU's environment work can also be used to support projects which have a cultural dimension. Carnac, in France, is the most important site in Europe for megaliths. Highly attractive to tourists, the site has become a victim of its own success and the flow of visitors has grown into a flood. With the help of the LIFE environment programme, a project for conserving and enhancing the Carnac site ran from July 1994 to January 1999, its aim being to make tourists more aware of the damage they themselves might be causing.

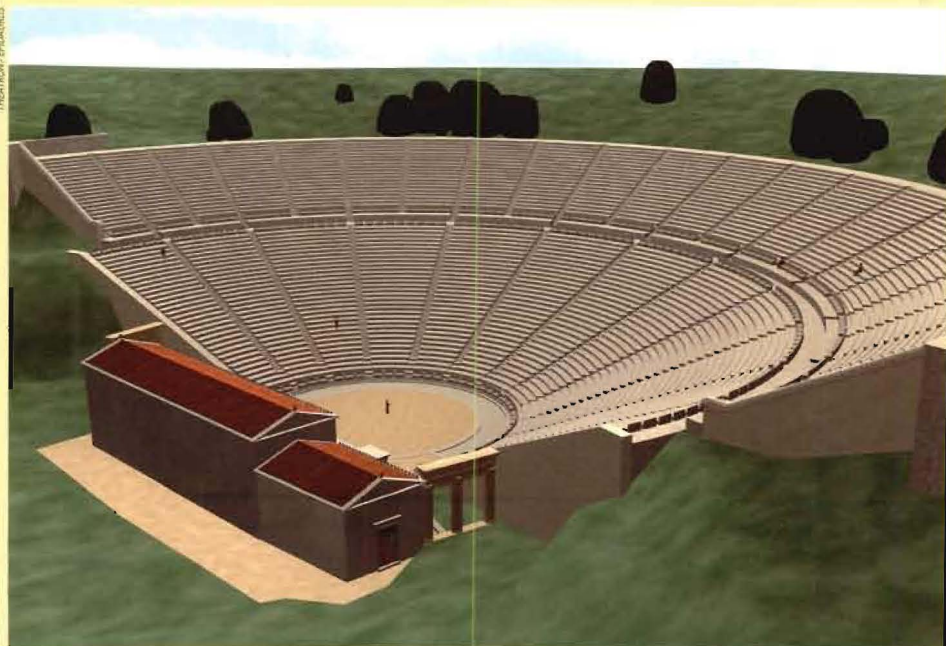
THE THEATRE – A MULTIMEDIA DISCIPLINE

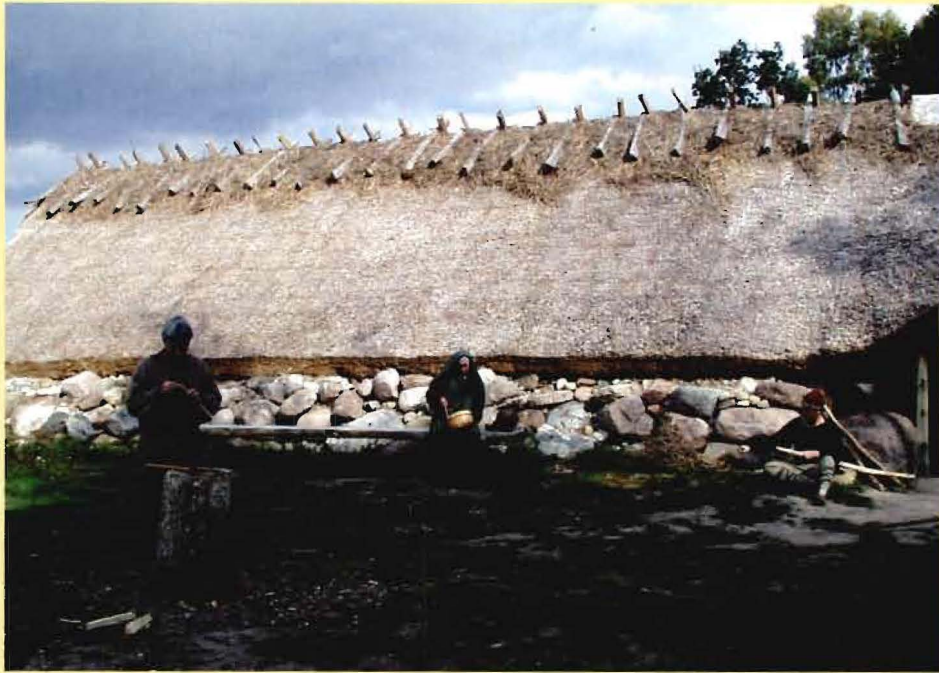
What was it like to go to the theatre in Pompeii or Dyonisos, both of which venues have now long since disappeared? To get a real idea, a reconstruction, in virtual reality and in 3D, is much more effective than any wordy description. Especially when, with the right sound effects and the right lighting, viewers can truly feel 'I was there'.

Thanks to the know-how of specialists, architects and archaeologists, and the talents of computer programmers and multimedia artists, the 'Theatron' project makes it possible for today's viewers to relive the kind of atmosphere that audiences experienced in historical times. This gives an entirely new and dynamic perspective to art history – a neat closing of the circle for theatre which, ever since its infancy, has gone in for multimedia.

The aim of the project is to make these innovative tools available to teachers, students and researchers interested in the history of theatre practice in ancient Greece. They take a multitude of forms: modelled architectural structures, animation techniques, graphic and textual databases, and VRML (virtual reality); they are accessible on CD-ROM and via the Internet.

The project received EU support between 1994 and 1998 under the fifth research and technological development framework programme. It brings together a number of partners from all parts of Europe – Germany, Greece, France, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.





ÖLAND CONSERVES ITS PAST

On the Swedish island of Öland, the government's announcement of the sale of the Skäftekärr estate led to the immediate creation of an association called 'Vision Skäftekärr'. The association has 600 members from the northern part of the island, who were determined that one of the finest architectural examples of their historic heritage should not just disappear like that. With help from the European Union's Structural Funds between 1994 and 1999, the association managed to purchase the estate and save the main building on it, which dates from 1860 and was built to house a forestry school. The building now houses a museum, an exhibition room, a room for special functions and a cafeteria. Vocational training courses designed to underpin the local economy have also been held there. The surrounding park has 140 varieties of century-old trees, some of them very rare. The park's avenues have remains of buildings dating from the third to the eighth century, and which are used as the backdrop for historical reconstructions, living tableaux with figures in period costume. These events in turn provide a backcloth for exhibitions of traditional methods of producing tools and utensils. Upwards of 40 000 visitors have already discovered the charms of the Skäftekärr estate.

European research is also heavily engaged on the heritage front. The fifth European technological research framework programme is concerned with the sustainable development of European towns and cities, including the cultural dimension. Projects now receiving support are concerned with conservation strategies, the deleterious effects of tourism, and the possibilities for integrating ancient monuments into new urban settings. The work includes studies into the way buildings deteriorate, developing tools and methods for heritage restoration, and back-up measures such as special conferences, research exchanges, etc.

Digital technology and heritage work


Information and communication technologies can do a great deal for Europe's cultural heritage, both in terms of conservation work and on the commercial side.

Many films dating from the early years of cinema are conserved on celluloid, which is a particularly fragile medium, and many have already been partly or completely lost. A lot of those remaining are now being transferred to the supposedly indestructible digital media, adding a further element to classic conservation and restoration techniques. Given the time and resources needed for a task of this scale, the MEDIA programme provides valuable financial support to partnerships made up of experts from digital technology and Europe's film libraries, and to special training programmes.

With a view to developing the information society in Europe, the EU research and technological development framework programme encourages the multimedia industries, cultural institutions and universities to form collaborative partnerships. Building on the experience and resources of the private sector, libraries, museums and archives are developing new types of products and services and are realising their potential in the 'e-culture' environment. This is the backdrop to the '3D-Murale' research project, which brings together partners from Austria, Belgium, the UK and Switzerland, and which provides professionals with multimedia tools to archive and reconstitute (virtually) archaeological remains and sites. Once the project has been completed, in 2003, the general public will be able to use the Internet to gain access to this reconstituted heritage.

Projects can also be designed and run through European programmes which provide linkage between innovation and the market. The 'TEN-Telecom' programme encourages providers to make their services available on European and global computer networks. The 'Chance' project is a particularly good example of this, giving cultural tourists and art historians access to an online database to find out which museum or private collection houses a particular painting, sculpture or historical artefact. The 'eContent' programme, on the other hand, focuses on the commercial potential of European digital material, and helps firms to adapt their products and services to the cultures of foreign markets.

A very special economic sector



Culture is an important sector of the economy and, as such, is subject to the principles and rules set out in the Treaty on European Union, more especially the provisions concerning freedom of movement and freedom of competition in the internal market. Nonetheless, the EU does bear in mind the special aspects of culture, both in its European policies, and in its relations with the rest of the world.

By opening up their shared borders and encouraging trade and free competition, the EU countries have set out to stimulate the economic development of Europe and make Europe's industries more competitive. But cultural works have a special status: they are both economic goods and services, which have high potential for creating wealth and jobs; and they are the vehicles for our cultural identities, which in turn reflect and condition our societies.

That is why the cultural sector is not submitted to market forces alone, and why the EU takes account of this factor in all its policies. There are normally restrictions on government subsidies to private firms, but this is a sector where public aid plays a major role in maintaining and encouraging cultural diversity. And cultural diversity, which is a requirement enshrined in the Treaty itself, has proved to be an important element in the way European competition rules are applied. The Treaty also recognises the importance of the cultural, social and democratic role of a public broadcasting service.

However, there are also limits to the principle of the free movement of goods in the internal market as far as

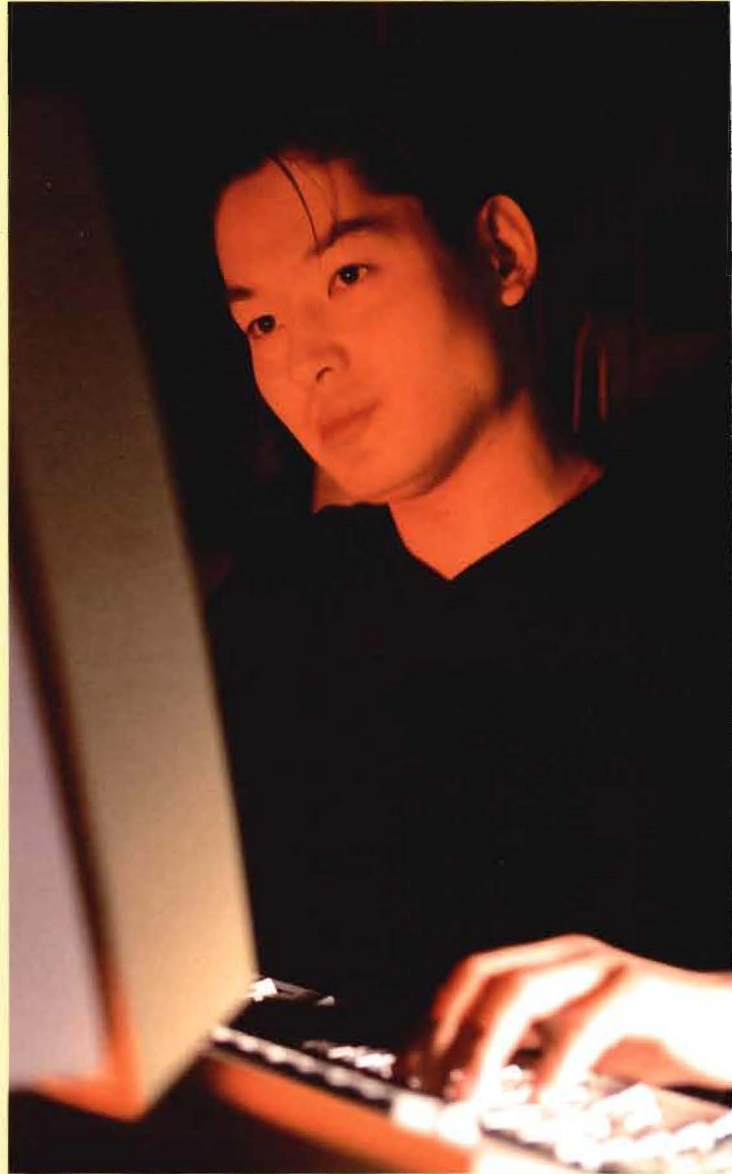
cultural goods are concerned: the Treaty authorises the Member States to maintain restrictive measures in matters concerning national treasures which have an artistic, historic or archaeological value.

At world level, the commercial rules applying are the result of negotiations between members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The EU has entered into no commitment to liberalise the audiovisual market, so as to retain its freedom of action in terms of preserving and promoting cultural diversity. There is no inherent contradiction here with a very substantial opening of the European market: although the European Union produces more films than the United States, the fact remains that 75 % of European cinemas' income comes from American films.

SELLING CULTURE ON THE INTERNET

What if a tourist wants to acquire cultural artefacts in a region he has visited? What if a museum wants to publish a catalogue in CD-ROM format and is seeking the help of a multimedia producer? What if an art collector wants to get as many people as possible interested in buying one of his masterpieces via the Internet?

Where culture interfaces with the world of electronic commerce, the Regnet project can provide a useful service for all parties involved in this vibrant market. 'The idea of a digital bookshop doesn't just mean helping people to access digitalised material. We need to introduce new forms of cooperation between the various parties (cultural organisations, industries, public administrations etc.).' With this in mind, Regnet brings together museums, libraries and computer experts from 10 European countries, including Bulgaria and Russia, to set up a common platform for electronic commerce in cultural goods and services, based on leading-edge technology. Backed by the research and technological development framework programme, the project will run until mid-2003. The organisers hope to get some 3 000 museums involved.



European films run into distribution problems anywhere other than in their country of origin. Quite apart from a film's intrinsic qualities, the financial resources available at the production and distribution stages will very largely condition its success or failure. This is where the MEDIA programme comes in, both upstream and downstream of production proper, the aim being to encourage the circulation of films and other European audiovisual products throughout Europe.

Quite apart from the economic aspects, having European films shown and circulated within the Community makes people more aware of other people's cultures. Examples of films which have been widely shown throughout the EU thanks to the MEDIA programme are the Dardenne brothers' *Rosetta*, Silvio Soldini's *Pane e tulipani*, Pedro Almodovar's *All about my mother*, and Jean-Pierre Jeunet's *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain*.

Still in the audiovisual sector, the 'Television without frontiers' directive has created a legal framework so that European programmes can be freely shown throughout the EU and a majority of viewing time is given over, on TV channels, to European-made programmes. Finally, the EU and the European Investment Bank are providing assistance to Europe's audiovisual industry in order to give it a stronger financial base and speed up the changeover to digital technology.

As far as taxation is concerned, cultural goods are subject to VAT although, with a view to encouraging artistic creation and giving more people more access to culture, some of these goods are subject only to a reduced rate of taxation, especially books. In addition, it is possible at national level to impose fixed-price systems for books (in a bid to preserve literary diversity), provided that such systems do not restrict the free movement of goods between Member States.

The European Union and the world

By opening up its Community programmes to non-member countries, by entering into partnerships with countries from other continents, and by reaching out to eastern Europe in the context of enlargement, the European Union is bringing a cultural dimension to its external relations. Between the EU and the rest of the world, just as between the Member States of the EU, the watchwords are cultural exchange and dialogue.

In certain cases, the EU allows non-member countries to take part in programmes which are really designed for the Member States, and which have a cultural dimension. They may be candidate countries, or they may be the countries of the European Economic Area (Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein), or indeed other countries which are linked to the EU by association or cooperation agreements.

Following the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the EU set up two new programmes to help countries from the ex-Communist block to make the transition to the market economy. Phare prepares the countries of central and eastern Europe for membership of the EU, while Tacis provides funding for cooperation and assistance projects involving the EU and the countries of the ex-Soviet Union. Partner countries are encouraged to cooperate with each other, and the selected projects may touch upon cultural matters.

Throughout the 1990s, relations between the EU and its partners in the Mediterranean, Africa, Latin America and Asia included a cultural element, and considerable importance was given to cultural dialogue at regional level and with the EU.

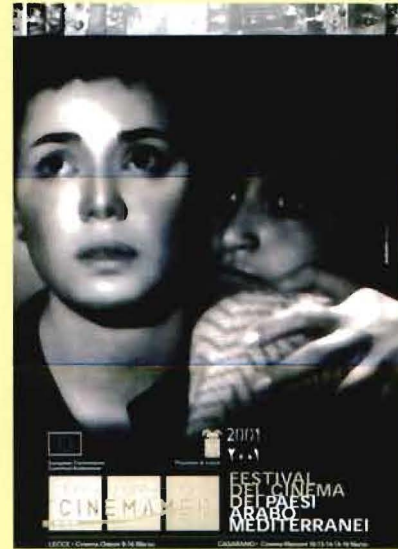
This is true of the Cotonou Agreement, which links the EU and 77 countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, and which does a lot to preserve the national heritage, values and identities of the participating countries. The EU supports the development of local film industries, helps organise cultural events and provides material resources. To take one example, the EU is setting aside EUR 4.8 million, between 2000 and 2003, for cultural policy in Mali, focusing on the refurbishment of the national museum in Bamako and the opening of three regional museums. It is also helping to finance films, theatre work and photography exhibitions.

MUCH ADO ON EITHER SHORE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

Though its sources of inspiration may be diverse, its language is a universal one. Cinema is one of the most important factors in terms of cultural outreach. And yet, Europeans are not closely acquainted with great names in the world of cinema, like Youssef Chahine or Salah Abou Seif. European filmgoers on the northern rim of the Mediterranean and Arab movie-goers on the southern edge are rarely aware of each other's film output. With effect from March 2000, 'Cinema Med', a three-year project based on cooperation between the European Union and the Arab/Mediterranean world, has been trying to bridge that gap.

'Cinema Med' has a threefold structure:

- **2000/2001:** a festival of cinema from the Arab-Mediterranean countries visited seven European cities, from Palermo to Edinburgh. Acting as a showcase for the southern rim of the Mediterranean, and providing opportunities for filmmakers to meet their public, its aim is to facilitate the distribution of Arab films in Europe;
- **2001/2002:** a workshop arrangement whereby two European authors will give classes in scriptwriting in two Arab universities (in Marrakesh and Beirut);
- **2002:** a project to safeguard the filmmaking work of Salah Abou Seif, one of the great Egyptian directors. As part of this retrospective, 'Cinema Med' will bring together European and Arab archive services in a project for restoring and conserving the director's films.



'Cinema Med' forms part of the 'Euromed audiovisuel' programme, which sets up collaborative work between European and Mediterranean operators in the audiovisual sector. 'Euromed audiovisuel' comes under the third aspect (social, cultural and human) of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership agreement.

Mutual respect and understanding over and above cultural and religious differences underpin the partnership between the European Union and 12 countries from the southern edge of the Mediterranean, taking in collaborative projects in the audiovisual industry, the cultural heritage and issues concerning young people.

Finally, the EU and its Member States are actively cooperating with other international organisations in the field of culture, e.g. Unesco and the Council of Europe. In many cases, these are one-off events, concerned with meetings of mutual interest and shared awareness campaigns, or the joint funding of projects. Nonetheless, the growing international importance of the debate on cultural diversity lends such collaborative efforts an increasingly political tone.

Further reading

- You can access documents, news and other information on all the subjects dealt with in this brochure on the European Commission's web portal 'Europe and culture':
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/culture/>



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A community of cultures
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By giving the European Union a say in cultural matters, the Member States' governments set out to create a 'Europe of the peoples', the idea being to make people in Europe aware of their shared history and values, to make them more aware of European culture and Europe's heritage, but at the same time to cultivate their awareness of local and regional cultures. More specifically, the point was to foster cultural exchanges within Europe, enable the public at large – and artists and culture professionals in particular – to get involved in European projects, to encourage creativity and to make culture accessible to the greatest possible number of people.

Other information on the European Union

Information in all the official languages of the European Union is available on the Internet. It can be accessed through the Europa server (<http://europa.eu.int>)

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