

Culture Council

2005 Annual Report

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Preface

For the second time the Culture Council is presenting a detailed annual report.

We feel this is our obligation, especially now that the Council, which has only recently been established, is already to be abolished again. The reason for this is that within the framework of the general reorganisation of the Flemish administration a smaller, co-ordinating strategic advisory council will be established in the Culture, Youth, Sport and Media policy domain, which will be more embedded in the policy preparation of the competent ministers. We consider it important to leave a touchstone which will allow the workability of the new system to be weighed against the previous one. Methodological elements may be derived from this in order to have this new system function optimally.

The Council decided to introduce a multi-stage system for its advisory function. Some advisory opinions are merely ritual, legally compulsory acts. Although it may be useful to test a sector-specific implementing order against the broader field, as a platform the Culture Council usually can do nothing but endorse the sector-specific advice, if it does not wish to redo all the work.

In addition it is opted to provide a number of advisory opinions on the merits that are prepared by ad hoc working groups. After all, the Council is a large group and serves more as a discussion forum and a sounding board than as a platform for the production of texts.

Furthermore, an even more elaborated work method was chosen for two advisory opinions, already involving external expertise in the working groups. Each time, the Council also organised a closed mini-colloquium, allowing about four experts to explain their opinions on the basis of the working group's first provisional note.

With these advisory opinions on the merits the Council meets its task to provide independent expert advisory opinions and recommendations on cultural developments and an inclusive, inter-sectoral cultural policy within the framework of policy preparation and policy evaluation. The more specific tasks also featured in this (the promotion of cultural participation, international cultural co-operation, the promotion of the creation, production and preservation of cultural products).

Only this year did the Council succeed convincingly in reorientating the various questions to these basic tasks laid down by Flemish Parliament Act. There are various reasons for this.

First of all, the Council currently has an extensive secretariat at its disposal which is indeed still small, but performs well and is highly motivated. Secondly, the Council decided itself which advisory opinions would be discussed in depth and it introduced a written procedure, allowing for unnecessary meetings to be avoided. Thirdly, the Flemish Parliament asked a number of principal questions, deploying the Council for tasks which were provided for by Flemish Parliament Act, but which were not put into practice in day-to-day policy.

However, a correct functioning of the Council continues to be hindered by the great uncertainty about the division of tasks between the various actors involved in policy

preparation. The Council therefore decided to interpellate the competent minister and the chairman of the parliamentary Committee for Culture, Youth, Sports and Media about this matter.

In 2005, the Council gave 5 advisory opinions at the request of the Flemish Government (4 from the Minister for Culture, Youth, Sport and Brussels Affairs and 1 from the Minister for Finance, Budget and Spatial Planning), 7 at the request of the Flemish Parliament Committee for Culture, Youth, Sports and Media and 1 at its own initiative.

The advisory opinion on cultural diversity which it provided at its own initiative was an elaboration of the principal advisory opinions requested by the Parliament, but also fits in with one of the specific tasks that were laid down by Flemish Parliament Act, namely the promotion of cultural participation and the elimination of cultural deprivation. The Council was pleased that this commitment also meshed with one of the main points of concern in the Minister's participation policy. The Council is of the opinion that this long process at an early stage in the policy development corresponds better to the nature of the Council's function than advice given at the end – or even after the completion – of a policy process.

The advisory opinions provided by the Council in 2005 were very well received, not just because attention was sometimes paid to them even by the mass media, but also because involved actors referred to them, such as Aimé Van Hecke with regard to the advisory opinion on culture on the VRT, or support centres which included the advisory opinion on diversity on their web site. In addition, all advisory opinions which the Council gave to the Parliament were not only submitted by the chairman of parliament to the competent committee, but were also included in official parliamentary documents. The *2005 Annual Report* is available both in French and in English. In this way this Flemish policy preparation can also be referred to internationally.

The Culture Council is determined to continue to carry out its tasks, laid down by Flemish Parliament Act, in 2006. Points that will be of particular interest to the Council in the coming year are listed later on in this annual report.



Bart De Baere
Chairman of the Culture Council

I. Background

1. Meetings

The Culture Council met five times in 2005. The full reports of these meetings are available at the web site www.raadvoorcultuur.be.

Report of 17 February 2005 (first part)

1. Adoption of the report of the meeting and the info session on creative industries of 2 December 2004;
2. Agreements about the meeting in March and the preparatory phase for fundamental advisory opinions requested by the parliamentary Committee for Culture, Youth, Sports and Media:
 - view on the Culture Pact,
 - ‘appreciating commercial initiatives by policymakers, which does not mean subsidising them...’
 - entrance fees for culture in Flanders, discounts, as opposed to personal culture cash card with differentiated entrance fees,
 - view on administrative burden,
 - position of VRT vis-à-vis the arts,
 - advisory opinion on international cultural policy,
 - views on strategies for increasing "cultural competence",
 - view on structure of federal cultural institutions;
3. Agreements on the advisory opinion on the UNESCO Conventions regarding the import and export of cultural property and intangible heritage;
4. Advisory opinion on the 2005 Draft Regulation for the Subsidisation of Participatory, Experimental, Exceptional and Special Projects, and Hobby Associations;
5. Process of advisory memorandum on the VRT;
6. Any other business

Report of 17 February 2005 (second part): mini-colloquium “Culture on the VRT”

The chairman welcomes the experts who, one after the other, give their view on culture and art on the VRT.

Report of 15 March 2005

1. Adoption of the report of the 17 February 2005 meeting and colloquium on culture and art on the VRT;
2. Reporting on contacts with the VRT top;
3. Discussion of the draft advisory opinion on the VRT vis-à-vis arts and culture;
4. Reporting by the coaches, if necessary provision of advice and/or further agreements with regard to questions from the parliamentary Committee for Culture, Youth, Sports and Media: view on the Culture Pact,

- 'appreciating commercial initiatives by policymakers, which does not mean subsidising them...'
 - entrance fees for culture in Flanders, discounts, as opposed to personal culture cash card with differentiated entrance fees,
 - view on administrative burden,
 - advisory opinion on international cultural policy,
 - views on strategies for increasing "cultural competence",
 - view on structure of federal cultural institutions;
5. Advisory opinion on the UNESCO Conventions regarding the import and export of cultural property and intangible heritage;
 6. Any other business

Report of 26 May 2005

1. Approval of the report of the 15 March 2005 meeting
2. Communication about the state of affairs of the completed advisory opinions
3. Proposal to formalise relation between written procedure and meeting
4. Advisory opinion on diversity
 - Mini-colloquium, reflections of experts from different angles
 - Plenary discussion
5. Advisory opinion on administrative burden
6. Advisory opinion on entrance fees
7. Evaluation of the Incentive Fund
8. Any other business

Report of 27 October 2005

1. Diversity
2. Planning and agreements on the requests for advice from the Flemish Parliament which have not yet been dealt with
3. Advisory opinion on the 2006 Programme Flemish Parliament Act – Draft Flemish Parliament Act containing provisions to accompany the 2006 budget

Report of 8 December 2005

1. Adoption of the reports of 15 March 2005 and 26 May 2005 (it concerns a formal confirmation of the approval through written procedure) and of 27 October 2005.
2. Cultural industry

The work group prepared a draft advisory opinion which will be submitted to the meeting for discussion and approval. Mr Stefaan De Ruyck, Head of the Minister's Office, is present to answer questions from members.
3. Federal Cultural and Scientific Institutions

The work group prepared a draft advisory opinion which will be submitted to the meeting for discussion and approval.
4. 2005 Annual Report

Is submitted to the members for approval.
5. Cultural competence

The work group prepared a draft advisory opinion which will be submitted to the meeting for discussion and approval.

2. Advisory Opinions

The advisory opinions are divided in accordance with the procedure followed by the Culture Council. For most topics a working group was composed with a coach who steered everything in the right direction. A more extensive procedure was used for a number of advisory opinions, calling on experts who discussed the topics and entered into debate with the Culture Council at a mini-colloquium. The advisory opinions that were developed through the extensive procedure were entered in this annual report in their entirety. As far as the advisory opinion on the administrative burden is concerned, the Council took its time to learn through the support centres what is going on in the cultural field. Other advisory opinions were provided through a short procedure, which means on the basis of a debate in plenary session. The advisory opinions have been summarized below (with the exception of the two complete texts); the full texts can be consulted at www.raadvoorcultuur.be.

Seven advisory opinions were requested by the Flemish Parliament. It concerns advisory opinions on the repeal of the Culture Pact, culture on the VRT, an international cultural policy, entrance fees for cultural activities and the culture cash card, the administrative burden, cultural industry and the federal cultural institutions. Four out of the thirteen advisory opinions were requested by the Minister for Culture: it concerns the advisory opinions regarding the ratification of the UNESCO 1970 Convention, the regulation for the subsidisation of projects and hobby associations, the evaluation of the Limburg Incentive Fund and the advisory opinion on intangible cultural heritage. One advisory opinion, concerning the preliminary draft Flemish Parliament Act containing provisions to accompany the budget, was requested by the Minister responsible for budget. One advisory opinion, the one on cultural diversity, was provided by the Council on its own initiative.

2.1 Advisory opinions on the merits, steered by a working group

2.1.1 Repeal of the Culture Pact. A Plea for Diversity, Openness, Participation and Involvement (15 March 2005)

Comments on the Culture Pact (the legislation on the Culture Pact), and especially on its application, have repeatedly received great attention by society at large in the past decade. Whereas the Pact initially wanted to contribute to the protection of ideological and philosophical minorities, it has soon degenerated into an instrument of (party) politicization in the cultural landscape. This conclusion has not left the political world unmoved either. In the past decade a different approach towards the Culture Pact has been advocated at regular intervals. Whereas some (political) parties resolutely argued in favour of the Culture Pact being modified, or even repealed, other social organisations at the same time demanded enforceable guarantees for the participation of minority groups in cultural policy.

Against this background the Culture Council makes the following suggestion with regard to the updating of the legislation on the Culture Pact:

1. For the time being, the legislation on the Culture Pact is still a federal matter. This is an anachronism, as in our State system cultural matters belong

exclusively to the responsibility of the Communities. At federal level the competence for the Culture Pact should be assigned to the Flemish, French and German-speaking Communities. This is a first prerequisite.

2. Once this has been realised, the original legal framework can be replaced by an adapted regulation (by means of Acts). We argue in favour of creating a new regulatory framework which incorporates a number of concerns from the old Culture Pact in a new form.
3. This regulation is to clarify a number of essential democratic options which are aimed at our society ensuring openness, diversity, participation and involvement. These principles in particular are fleshed out dynamically in all social fields, especially in the field of cultural policy. We describe the new principles, whilst continuing to endorse the non-discrimination of ideological and philosophical minorities as well as the fact that the government is to involve the citizens in cultural policy through participation and (co)management.
4. The (socio) cultural provision which the government organises or subsidises must aim at openness and diversity and promote participation and involvement in order for all population groups and individuals to have access to it.
5. Strategic policy issues around cultural policy are submitted to the proper advisory bodies for the various policy levels. These advisory bodies are composed of representatives of the civil society, when necessary complemented with representatives of other cultural actors and engaged experts. Diversity, quality and expertise are pursued in the composition of advisory bodies. Representatives are not inquired after their party political commitment.
6. The management of cultural institutions should be imbued with diversity, quality and expertise.
7. In case of non-compliance with the rules, (alleged) duped people can turn to an easily accessible mediation and reconciliation body, in short an appropriate Flemish successor to the Permanent National Committee for the Culture Pact.

2.1.2 Towards a coherent international cultural policy (15 March 2005)

In the past, several governments made sporadic efforts at taking action in the context of a possible international cultural policy. However, as these initiatives were not co-ordinated in any way and were not based on a clear view which could result in a coherent process, we can say that, as far as its international cultural policy is concerned, Flanders is still in its infancy. The Council attaches great importance to the international component in the cultural policy and is therefore pleased that the current Minister for Culture regards the development of an international cultural policy as a priority.

It is obvious to everyone that Flemish culture enjoys great prestige abroad in several domains. The fact that foreign countries have been able to discover our artistic and cultural expressions in the past 20 years is not really due to a sound international cultural

policy, but to developments from the bottom up, brought about by the strength and perseverance of the cultural actors themselves. However, this does not mean that policymakers no longer have any work to do - quite the opposite actually. After all those years during which our plastic artists, musicians and composers, theatre makers and choreographers, authors, curators, programme makers and other cultural workers have won their spurs abroad, which is in the first place thanks to their own qualities and commitment, the artistic and socio-cultural fields can only be pleased with the interest policymakers are showing today in shaping the international cultural policy, giving it sufficient support and co-ordinating it efficiently.

The Council wishes to put forward four issues that are essential for a sound future international cultural policy.

First of all, the Council considers the position of the international cultural policy within the general cultural policy to be a priority. To this end it is important to develop an international cultural policy in the narrow sense, a policy 'niche' in which exchange is the goal itself. This interpretation of international cultural policy is the subject in the following points. The second point concerns the position of an international cultural policy within a broader foreign policy. The lines of action indicated within the Culture Department must be attuned to other levels and departments and should be based on a clear agenda. It should also be considered how, where and when Flemish and Belgian culture respectively are promoted abroad. Consultation between the cultural and tourist sectors is essential. Thirdly, the Flemish cultural presence abroad should be better co-ordinated. Policymakers must be able to make choices: there is not enough time, nor are there sufficient means to permanently export all cultural expressions. The key words in this respect are better co-ordination, harmonisation and continuity. Finally, it is essential that the importance of exchange and networking within an international cultural policy is correctly assessed and that corresponding action is taken.

2.1.3 Entrance Fees for Cultural Activities and the Culture Cash Card (26 May 2005)

The Culture Council advances this advisory opinion against the background of tearing down the participation thresholds in socially vulnerable target groups. First it formulates a number of remarks about the possible added value of a culture cash card, and then it provides an advisory opinion on the merits.

1. The culture cash card:

This is an interesting line of thinking, but before it is introduced it has to be thoroughly considered and examined by both the sector and the target groups. In first instance the Culture Council argues in favour of a bottom-up approach, gearing local and interlocal initiatives to one another. It would be advisable for the Flemish Community to monitor and promote this process, mapping existing initiatives and making best practices known.

2. Entrance fees:

- The Council argues in favour of giving autonomy to the different authorities (cities/municipalities), institutions and organisations to develop initiatives to

promote the participation of certain groups, proceeding from their specific context.

- The Council is in favour of aiming at better communication about the existing entrance fees and discount systems. This is necessary for every actor. It must be done in an appropriate way and should reach each (potential) user/interested party.
- The Council argues in favour of thorough research into the effects of discounts on the participation in culture in the broadest sense. In this respect not only outdoor (in theatres, cultural centres, etc.) participation in culture should be considered, but also the entire range of (commercial) special offers in newspapers and magazines for CDs, DVDs, concerts and so on. In addition, participation should not only be thought of in terms of consumption, but also in terms of significance attached to cultural events.
- The Council advocates a reduction in the VAT rate for new CDs and DVDs from 21 to 6%, an exemption from copyright for public non-commercial purposes and a right to copy CDs and DVDs for educational and socio-cultural activities.

2.1.4 Advisory Opinion on a Flemish policy for Cultural Industry (8 December 2005)

The Culture Council is in favour of conducting a flexible yet efficient policy: providing incentives whenever opportunities present themselves, making adjustments whenever the open market and international systems are becoming intimidating. The current coalition agreement contains every potential to make “cultural industry” an action line.

The Council wishes to highlight the following points of interest in view of the further development of a Flemish policy.

- (1) Investing in cultural industry cannot be one simple policy effort. The pursuit of an inherent interdepartmental policy and co-operation will be of decisive importance for the actual chances of success. The sectors of culture, economy, media and education are all involved in this process and are partially responsible for a comprehensive policy around culture and economy.
- (2) A policy to support the cultural industry must first and foremost be based on good practices and expertise from (home and) abroad, and be tailored to Flanders’ needs. In addition, it is not necessary to establish new support centres, institutes and the like for all functions of this policy; it should rather be examined which existing government initiatives can already assume these functions either entirely or partially. The Culture Council attaches great importance to the policy preparation work which was already done with regard to the cultural industry and stresses the importance of good down-up information from the various sectors with an eye to developing an efficient and firm policy that is tailored to the needs of the Flemish cultural market. Generally speaking, the policy should be aimed at 2 core activities of cultural industry: the production (investment capital) and marketing, visibility, distribution. To this end the government should develop a set of financing types for new enterprises and cultural entrepreneurs in the following fields: investments, loans, provision of starting capital. The development of public private partnerships is also

one of the possibilities. An investment or incentive fund (with return on investment) can be set up to meet the needs of young and small cultural enterprises which have a hard time attracting capital on the market. Someone should also assume the role of adviser, monitor and coach for contacts and networks.

The policy on cultural industry as well as the investment in it (on the investment budget of the Flemish Government and not on the operating budget for culture) imply a necessary supplement to the existing subsidisation policy and constitute at the same time an important potential added value for Flanders in the field of employment, specialisation, etc.

An investment policy is intended to give *productions*/products the opportunity to become practicable and (in time) yield economic profit. Advice from an investment fund is always given on the basis of a business plan; the final logic of the cultural industry is to create high-quality, sustainable self-supporting projects. In other words, the economic principles of supply and demand are used within the cultural sector, either in a corrected form or not. However, given this predominance of the economic principles over the logic of cultural production, the Culture Council wishes to warn for an advanced sectoral way of thinking. The policy on cultural industry should also depart from a cultural finality. In other words, cultural quality rather than the economic factor should always be the driving force behind the policy on cultural industry. Finally, the Council stresses the importance of good communication and of a continued long-term policy.

2.1.5 The Significance of Federal Cultural Institutions to Cultural Policy in Flanders. View on a Workable Structure (8 December 2005)

The development of the status of federal cultural and scientific institutions to a certain extent reflects the development of the Belgian state structures and the transition from the unitary to the federal State. Their current specific status was laid down in the Special Act of 8 August 1980 (consolidated legislation).¹

The starting point of the Culture Council is that these institutions may be of vital importance for the cultural policy of Flanders. Federal cultural and scientific institutions play an important role in the artistic, museological and bibliographical heritage as well as in the fields of lifelong learning, scientific research, leisure activities and tourism. They belong to the top institutions at European level.

However, there is a lack of structural co-operation between the Communities. There clearly is a difference in dynamics between the policy of the Communities regarding arts and heritage and the policy of the federal government regarding cultural and scientific institutions. Today, co-operation too often remains limited to public-oriented activities. As a result, opportunities are lost, and hardly any action is taken in the field of research, inventorisation, conservation and management. There is hardly any mutual influence and co-operation in this context. This may lead to situations in which initiatives that

¹ Art. 6bis, § 2. However, the federal government is responsible for:

4° federal scientific and cultural institutions, including their research activities and their activities of public service provision. The King designates these institutions by decree, which has been deliberated upon in the Ministerial Council. The unanimous advisory opinion of the Community and Regional Governments is required for any future changes to be made to this decree.

were set up in Flanders remain unknown at the federal level. Or even worse, which are later on started afresh by the federal level.

In the memorandum the Council argues explicitly in favour of a cultural agreement between the Communities so as to enable co-operation in the field of cultural initiatives that belong exclusively to the responsibility of the Communities due to their activities. With the same urgency the Council now also pleads for a cultural co-operation agreement between the State and the Communities. The Council points out that this is possible through an explicit legal framework. It concerns the Special Act of 8 August 1980², Article 92bis §1. At the same time the Council advocates that consultation bodies of the federal institutions (the Administrative Committees) admit representatives of the Communities, so as to allow the debate to be institutionalised.

2.2 Advisory Opinions on the merits with the contribution of external experts

2.2.1 Democracy, Culture, Art and the VRT (15 March 2005)

Advice of the Council for Culture with regard to the management agreement of the VRT

The president of the Flemish Parliament, Norbert De Batselier, requested the Council for Culture for advice concerning the new management agreement of the VRT on behalf of the Commission for Culture, Sport, Youth and Media of the Flemish Parliament.

The council strives to give operational advice, which, at the same time, can be supportive to the social discussion. In this respect, the council's starting point was the common interests of the VRT and the cultural sector. The preparatory process for this advice based on a traditional communication schedule in which the message lies between the sender and the recipient in relation to the context and the code. (1) The council organized a closed mini-colloquium, during which the framework for this advice was further developed.

In its advice the council starts from the basic demand for a public character of the public broadcasting services. In this respect, the council proceeds on the basis of the desirability of a permanent authoritative position of the VRT. With its proposals the council particularly hopes to ensure that the next management agreement adopts a wider range of strategic objectives which will formulate the public character and the democratic approach of the VRT more accurately.

According to the council, these strategic objectives should also reflect the nature of the medium itself. Using, for example, various result indicators, can stimulate this sort of extension. This sort of essential democratic approach not only makes the position of art

² Consolidated legislation: Special Act of 8 August 1980 on institutional reform <W 1988-08-08/30, Art. 15, 002; Entry into effect: 1989-01-01> and <W 1993-07-16/30, Art.61, 006; Entry into effect: 1993-07-30>

and culture on the VRT more interesting and more obvious, but also reveals how they can give added appreciation to the VRT.

SYNOPSIS

In response to the question of the Flemish Parliament President, Norbert De Batselier, and the Commission for Culture, Sport, Youth and Media, the Council for Culture formulated an advice for the new management agreement of the VRT. For this purpose the council started from the democratic strategic objectives of a public broadcasting service and on the basis of the insight that the cultural world and public broadcasting services are both to defend the place of culture in the democratic system. Finally, the council would like to see the VRT maintaining its strong, leading position.

However, the council's starting point is critical: it cannot accept the argument that the VRT is obliged to work according to the laws of the medium itself, and that these laws are aimed at attracting the largest possible public. The council considers that a medium can be used in many creative ways and that the viewing figures should not be an absolute objective, although good marketers are certainly important. The VRT is a cultural institution because it consciously deals with the meanings with which people live.

Concretely the council would like the following objectives to be achieved:

- the recording of important moments in our society with the additional objective of storing these in an archive, an objective which is independent of the broadcasting function
- more attention for living culture in depth, in which the VRT itself will develop the required formats with the efforts of cultural actors
- more attention to living culture widthways, by allowing culture to emerge in programmes in all sorts of different ways and at all times
- special attention for the arts: the VRT should follow this when it is interesting, but also be creative itself and be inspired by the insights of artists
- the digital possibilities are yet of secondary importance for the democratic objectives, although the VRT should prepare for a rapidly evolving future

In order to measure these objectives the council finds it necessary to diversify the results indicators, in which the "multidimensional categorisation is a good instrument for a discussion. This can take place, for example, by expanding the categories with qualitative objectives, by focusing more on assessing quality and by working with audience reference groups as well as with target groups. The council would also like to see all the objectives being spread across all the broadcasters (admittedly in stages), and not divided. Objectives should not be exclusive to one broadcaster or another.

FULL TEXT

1. The culture of a public broadcasting service

In the first place, the Council for Culture expresses its appreciation for the strong position which the VRT has developed in comparison with public broadcasting services in other European countries. The council considers that it is essential for this position to be safeguarded and that the VRT can and should continue to aim for a broad scope in order to realise its democratic approach.

Nevertheless, the Council for Culture does not accept the idea that a public broadcasting service should operate according to the laws of the medium which it represents. According to this all too general view, these laws determine the schedule of programmes and broadcasting, and also the primary objective: to attract as many viewers as possible. In accordance with this vision, the philosopher Bart Verschaffel says that “the democratic task of the VRT is to ensure that as many Flemish people are doing the same thing at any time”.

Other aims are also important. The public broadcasting service should allow different views to be expressed and different groups should be addressed. According to Verschaffel: “The democratic approach also lies in the freedom of ways in which the medium can be used, in the differences in the ways in which it can be used, in the freedom with which the possibilities of the medium can be tested. It is not (only) concerned with who and what, but in the first place with how things are expressed”. It is now possible to speak about anything, but only “in accordance with the laws of the medium”, with the “professionals of the medium” as censors.

Can the VRT therefore be aware of the market in a competitive media landscape and at the same time avoid becoming a slave of that market? Being dictated to by the marketers would make the VRT into a hollow vessel, but good marketers are essential for the success of a public broadcasting service.

For the council it is essential that the medium can be used in different, contradictory, new ways. The council asks professionals to ensure that the democratic aspect of the message is guaranteed as far as possible. They must provide a broad and diverse range, reflect complex information in an understandable way without undermining its complexity, and continue to look creatively for different ways of using the medium.

The council hopes that this active professionalism which guarantees the democratic use of the message as far as possible will be incorporated in the new management agreement.

2. Democratic objectives

The council would like the management agreement to contain general qualitative objectives. Therefore these are strategic objectives that promote the democratic content of the public broadcasting service, from the nature of the medium itself. A distinction is being made between objectives concerning the content (the message and the context), and concerning the form (the code).

A. The content

The council points out how invaluable the VRT's images and sounds' archive is for the collective memory of our society. The VRT succeeded, at least in the past, in recording crucial moments in our society in a penetrating way. This should continue to be one of the main objectives in future, both with a view to the present and with a view to the future. This question concerns both the moments that are broadcast themselves as well as the broader context in which they are placed.

How can this quality be evaluated? Two criteria are relevant in this context: to what extent is the intrinsic aspect of a subject shown, and does the complexity of the context adequately come into its own?

If a particular event must be captured very quickly at a particular moment, the VRT should still be challenged to capture the diverse messages and contexts as accurately as possible within this short time. A short quote can have the ambition to become a soundbite in television, but should at the same time contain the essence of a message.

The combination of these two ambitions is desirable, but above all, the first ambition should not predominate. The democratic content of a broadcaster would be reduced if it only presented content which fits easily into the code.

We need more than merely "good" (in the sense of informative) television moments. The VRT can only carry out its task of providing information effectively if it presents the important moments in a broad context.

If it subsequently becomes clear that the VRT has not recorded important moments in society in a penetrating way, it has failed in its democratic task. The council fears that this has happened recently because of the competitive spirit of recent years, during which the VRT has sometimes too easily ignored the difficult tensions between the what (content) and the how (codes). Likewise, the BRT once had the tendency to do the opposite.

B. Form

The second democratic strategic objective consists of consciously devoting attention to the range of codes incorporated in the operations. If the "laws" are more flexible, a powerful format can be found for more challenges more quickly. Therefore the council expressly argues that the VRT should intentionally take up the commitment in the management agreement to keep the codes of its medium diverse and continue to broaden them. The VRT should be given the necessary space for this, for example by being able to make certain programmes with ample funds, without these necessarily having to be the programmes with the highest ratings. So as to leave no doubt, the council is not arguing for inaccessibility here but for constantly increasing an "enriched accessibility".

3. More scope for the VRT

In order to enable the VRT to achieve its democratic objectives as fully as possible, the council proposes to continue the broadening of the scope and possibilities of the VRT. Specific results indicators could be developed for this, but the council questions whether this should be done in an exhaustive way. Would it not be better to work partly with

statements of intent rather than obligations in terms of results? More important than a system of results indicators, the council considers that the VRT should report on this itself and carry out its own self-evaluation. Subsequently a public debate and public awareness can develop around this.

Nevertheless, the question of output measurement is relevant because it firmly establishes patterns of expectation. The council distinguishes two methodologies.

A. The measurement of results

According to the council, a good starting point for this discussion is the approach of the VRT study department with its multidimensional categorisation. (2) This can serve as a model to reveal the relationship between policy and the VRT, but should probably be radicalised and extended. For example, the intentions can be diversified in terms of more concrete strategic objectives. A separate category with strategic objectives desired by the government could be added. This particularly requires a conscious choice of the responsible political parties. They should help to think about the categorisation and relate their expectations of results to these and install the necessary instruments. This could be done by diversifying the range of results indicators and linking the schedule of programmes and broadcasting to these different indicators in a differentiated way.

In order to continue to guarantee the present broad basis, it is logical that the viewing figures remain the determining indicator for many of the programmes, to start with, for news broadcasts and entertainment programmes. However, the council also argues for quality control and quality assessment – and therefore not only the present evaluation figures – to sometimes consciously play a major role in the new management agreement.

B. Target groups and reference groups in the public

The council argues that in the management agreement, target groups should no longer be described as sectors of consumers. Obviously the VRT can continue to do so for its marketing. However, in the management agreement, a sectoral approach to the public could actually become a way of giving the VRT more room to achieve strategic objectives without an unjustified coercion on the viewing figures.

The council argues for providing room in the management agreement to work with target groups in this sense for some programmes, or with reference audiences. The council defines target groups as particular demographic groups with special needs or to which can be devoted special attention. The council interprets reference groups as certain sectors of the public who can be assumed to form a touchstone in terms of quality.

The council can imagine that the VRT could put forward certain niche objectives and only wishes these to be partly achieved to the extent to which reference groups value a programme or to the extent to which target groups watch it. In this way the VRT can have some of its efforts valued on the basis of factors other than viewing figures but equivalent to these. It can also require additional appreciation for emphases which it wishes to introduce.

The council can also imagine the government imposing certain priorities and to a certain extent providing focused objectives. For example, if the government once again wished to devote specific attention to farmers and horticulturalists, the VRT would succeed in this specific task if a certain percentage of this demographic group to be determined in the management agreement watched and sufficiently appreciated the programmes concerned. The minister of Media, who concludes the agreement, concludes it for the entire government. Therefore the council does not wish the VRT to be pressurised by all sorts of concrete tasks. However, he would consider that it was beneficial for the democratic content of the public broadcasting service if essential points of attention could be formulated based on mutual agreement during the preparation of the management agreement.

4. The challenge of a comprehensive coverage

Because of its fragmented character our democracy requires a comprehensive approach (which can create communities in a new way). This is an approach which is based on the idea that a public initiative in principle applies for the whole population. A public broadcasting service that does not adopt this principled approach ceases to be a public broadcaster. The alternative is segregation or the installation of a dual system.

The government sometimes refers to this cultural-social ambition with the term “increasing the cultural competence”, and Tony Mary refers to “ennoblement of the public”. The Council for Culture does not aim as high: it is necessary for all segments of the population to continue to come into direct contact with the whole range of media codes, contents and contexts as much as possible. This seems an achievable starting ambition which can be translated in concrete terms in the structure of a management agreement. In order to achieve this, the codes must be broadened and the range of contents and contexts must be approached comprehensively, but at the same time, sufficient high viewing figures must be achieved. This combination is not an obvious one, but examples prove that it can be done.

A. The open network: Één and Canvas³

With regard to the broadcasters on the open network, the council emphatically argues that the difference in profiling should not be extended into a separation of the strategic objectives and other aims. These objectives and intentions should demonstrably play a role for each of the broadcasters. Obviously this can apply to varying degrees and in different ways, with diverse operational ambitions and therefore also with different results indicators.

Therefore in the management agreement the VRT must be formally evaluated when it spreads the objectives across the schedule of programmes and broadcasting. For example, according to Censydiam, Het Eiland has a Canvas profile, but still has a high score on Één which is only possible because Één is a strong brand. The flexibility of the schedule of programmes and broadcasting can be a way of carrying out the educational

³ The public broadcasting service operates with two channels. Één is the general channel for a broad public; Canvas is a channel that profiles itself for the ‘value searcher’, who is interested to go deeper into a subject. (note of the translator)

task of the public broadcasting service which consists of giving as many viewers as possible as many different contents and codes possible. It is equally valuable that the VRT provides a place for a different sort of section in a popular programme, (e.g., “De Laatste show”) and that the broadcaster places a longer radical programme outside the normal viewing hours. This debate should not be an either/or debate, but should become an and/and debate.

B. Digital television

Because of the importance of a comprehensive approach, the council considers that at this moment in time, digital developments are not (yet) mean a replacement or even a supplement of the essential democratic tasks of the VRT. The digital possibilities do not (yet) constitute the core of the public space represented by the VRT. Because of their partly paying character and even more because of the fragmentation resulting from them, the council sees them rather on the sidelines as regards the implementation of democratic tasks. Therefore at the moment, they rather constitute a desirable subsidiary area.

However, it is to be expected that this area will continue to be developed and that therefore a correct public approach will be sought in a later management agreement with regard to these digital developments. The council considers it essential for the VRT to acquire a relevant position in this, also with regards to the paying channels resulting from this. In this way the VRT can maintain the broadest possible range of instruments and can keep a finger on the pulse in a rapidly evolving environment. Therefore the public broadcasting service must be present and effective in this field, with a view to the future.

This means that the government must give the VRT both financial and adequate decision making powers. At the moment, the VRT should arrange this additional space itself and then use it in accordance with its own demands and insights. Obviously, it will reflect as far as possible the democratic content of the rest of the management agreement.

However, as regards specific strategic objectives (such as those regarding culture and art), the council argues to focus on the open network in the current management agreement.

5. The public broadcasting service and culture

What is culture? In very broad terms, culture is “all the meanings that people live with”. In political terms, the concept of culture is approached in a more targeted way as “all forms of expression in which a conscious relationship is sought with those meanings”. Our democratic system is attached to this and supports these forms of expression. Also in this approach the VRT is a cultural institution. Every individual part of the cultural sector can justly state that the VRT forms part of its individual culture or cultural field. The VRT is a social-cultural institution. It is an institution for the presentation of art and it is a producer of art. It is an institution of the cultural heritage with the weight of a large museum. In short, one could say that everything the VRT does is culture.

Because of this importance of the VRT as a cultural institution, the Council for Culture asks that the VRT is given sufficient funds to achieve these tasks as presented in this advice, in the field of both the open networks of television and radio and in digital developments. These should be accompanied by more precisely defined and more diverse strategic objectives. These sorts of objectives mean that the whole of the VRT is covered by the cultural exclusion clause which is one of the basic foundations of a fully fledged European Community. This means that the whole of the VRT can be subsidised.

Concerning living culture, the council finds it important that the VRT adheres to this both in depth and widthways. In our social-democratic society, culture is an autonomous strategic objective. Our democratic system has created a frame of reference for culture by developing a policy in the form of decrees and by making a minister responsible for this policy. In its memorandum, the council already argued for using the views on the cultural field – including the non-subsidised field – as the basis for further policy. The council finds it obvious that this parliamentary and ministerial policy should be the reference for culture in the management agreement.

In this respect, the council is thinking in the first place of the organization of the cultural field as determined by decree, with which our democratic system encourages the development of socially relevant cultural significance. Secondly the council is thinking of the acts of competent ministers. Cultural prizes or subsidies or other values attributed by our democratic system certainly have a democratic weight. In simple terms, for the public broadcasting services every artist should not be equal before the Media Act.

A. Policy in depth

According to the council, the first major challenge of the VRT with regard to living culture lies in its operation in depth. As for other messages, it is the task of the VRT to show the intrinsic value of cultural expressions, i.e., their value as perceived by the actors themselves. The intrinsic use of cultural expressions is clearer than that of other messages because culture in the sense in which the term is used here is actually looking for a conscious relationship with meaning.

It is the task of the VRT to reflect the broad range which politics has outlined and to do so in such a way that the possible important points of significance are revealed in this context. In addition the programme makers should take into account the complexity of the contexts. They must find the required formats with a view to the programmes or parts of programmes.

Therefore good public television is convinced of the intrinsic value of cultural topics and translates this conviction into appropriate television formats. In order to achieve this, television must sometimes lean on culture so closely that it forms a cultural and intellectual workspace itself. The council believes that it is desirable that for at least part of these programmes success is determined by appreciation, and that it is possible to consciously target reference groups. In this way, television can again directly connect with producers focusing on development who do not use consumer logic as their starting point.

After all, it is out of proportion for every moment in television to have to attract more viewers than the daily circulation of our broadsheet newspapers or the total cinema-going audience for successful Flemish films. Ample financial means should also be provided in the management agreement for programmes which have an in-depth approach. These require a special effort from the VRT. If this is not reflected correctly in concrete funds, the viewing figures implicitly remain the only determining criteria.

B. Policy in width

According to the council, the second big challenge for the VRT with regard to culture concerns the breadth. Culture should be embedded in a broad range of the schedule of programmes and broadcasts of the broadcasters on the open network. The council believes that it is up to the VRT to outline the modalities for this. To some extent it gives the VRT the possibility of increasing the diversity of contents and formats. Obviously, this will be done differently in entertainment programmes from the way in which it is done in the news, Terzake or De Rode Loper. The council believes that a comprehensive approach is crucial in this respect. Attention should be devoted to culture on Één, just as much as on Canvas, and both broadcasters should devote attention to culture in as many different ways as possible.

Roughly it can be said that culture can appear on the public broadcasting service in three different ways. It can be referred to without exploring the content (a name in a quiz question, an award ceremony for a prize that is transmitted directly). Reference can be made where the content is central but remains subordinate to the code of the medium and is seamlessly inserted (an item in a cultural programme, a three-minute item in the news)

Finally culture can be presented in its full glory (own content, own form): with an excerpt from a theatre production, a thorough and detailed interview, a short insight into an intervention of a media artist. The last possibility is the least obvious and this is where form and content can achieve a balance in new formats.

6. The public broadcasting service and the arts

The arts are a specific part of culture. Critically questioning the medium in its relation to meanings is an aim in itself in the arts. Our democratic system supports these work forms as such. Therefore they are part of the range of tasks of the VRT. The council distinguishes between three tasks in this.

A. Serving as a counter

The documentary function is very important because it provides the possibility of presenting artistic products in which society invests a great deal and to which it attaches great and sometimes lasting importance. As such, the arts constitute a winning area for the VRT in the future. As such they cannot be distinguished from the rest of the cultural landscape but they do form a zone of greater density.

B. Stage

The VRT also has a specific responsibility and opportunity as regards the arts. After all, the VRT itself is manager of a medium. This medium can be a direct transmitter of art. One of the starting point of international video art was the “television gallery” created by Gery Schum for SWF/ARD. Today there are also such opportunities and there is media art. It is up to the VRT to voluntarily provide a free place for this, an artistic workroom, and not to exclude this from its scope. Furthermore, a comprehensive approach means that the VRT will allow for the possibility of extending the codes of the medium particularly in a radical way on Canvas, but that the public broadcasting service will not refrain from looking for exciting and effective possibilities for this on Één.

Outside the audiovisual arts the medium can also be a primary carrier. Flemish contemporary dance owes its worldwide success to some extent to the recordings which did not so much document the productions as translate them into the recorded medium.

C. Ideas

The council hopes that in future, the energy and insight of artists will not only be presented on the public broadcasting service in themselves, but that these broadcasters will also see it as a possibility to use their insights for their own purposes just like those of other creators of culture, or intellectuals and motivated organizers.

The council considers that for this it is necessary to be mutually prepared to do this and that there must be a readiness to act and negotiate on the part of the artistic and cultural sector. The council believes that the opportunities for this will prove to be greater in the next few years than in the last ten years when everyone tended to lock themselves away in their own laws.

7. The VRT as an institution for the cultural heritage

The council would like to make great efforts on behalf of the unsurpassed VRT images and sounds’ archive. As indicated earlier, the VRT has the importance and responsibility of a medium-sized museum. This task is a purely cultural function, apart from its public broadcasting function. It is a documenting and archiving function. The VRT is one of the most important memories of society in Flanders.

In our social-democratic system, politics govern the key cultural institutions and their heritage in the public domain and guarantees them public accessibility and democratic use. The VRT sounds and images’ archive is without any doubt the most important of its sort in Flanders. Although it is the result of its broadcasting task, the importance also applies outside the issue of broadcasting and also outside the public broadcasting function as it is now transforming into a digital media function.

The council greatly appreciates the fact that the VRT recently made important efforts with regard to preserving this archive. However, it is crucial for this function to be incorporated in the new management agreement as an individual cultural responsibility separate from other functions. In this capacity, the VRT must comply with the prevailing norms in this field. Further modalities must be laid down. At the least, a quality framework should be created. The points for attention in this are not only preservation as such, but also a high quality inventory and identification, the differentiation of the quality of the preservation – in which the important cultural

heritage must be protected in accordance with the highest norms of archiving – and a broad public accessibility and the related question of rights. Logically, the minister of Culture should take responsibility for this.

The council considers that the management agreement should ensure both the preservation of this archive for the public domain, and its public accessibility in principle. On the basis of its conviction that the VRT will in the future particularly need to be flexible with regard to digital developments, the council can certainly imagine that the archive will form part of the paid digital provision, as long as this does not become exclusive and as long as the VRT also continues to encourage other, non-commercial methods of providing access. On the basis of the function in relation to the cultural heritage, this digital media function is only an instrument for providing access, with the secondary advantage that it is profitable.

These documentation tasks should also be continued in the present. The VRT is a living archive. The council is convinced that it is worth devoting specific attention to this important long-term social effect, even if only because this will also stimulate the VRT in its task of providing information. It will encourage the VRT to reveal the intrinsic contribution of a subject with even greater attention.

Notes

1. The framework of Roman Jakobson, one of the many possibilities of structuring this debate, is derived from linguistics, but can also be applied to communication in the audio-visual language system. Every audio-visual message is constructed by a sender with certain intentions (e.g., to express emotions, to encourage the recipient to act), and can be interpreted in different ways by the recipient(s). An audio-visual message is a representation of a reality, and in this respect refers to the social, political, economic and philosophical context in which the message was created. The place of the audio-visual creation in the evolution of the audio-visual culture (e.g., as a response to a particular style, movement, genre, etc.) also belongs to the context component.

The shape of the audio-visual message is determined by a code related to the framework, depth/background, rhythm, colour, light, sound/music, editing ...

In order to exchange a message, this in the first place requires contact between the sender and the recipient. The basic components of the communication scheme cannot be separated from each other.

2. In particular, ESCORT 2.4. Classifying programmes into categories is always a delicate and often also an arbitrary affair. Therefore the VRT study department uses this multidimensional categorisation with a number of dimensions which are often seen as being fundamental: intention, format, content and target. An animation film which deals with sport (e.g., baseball) with the aim of teaching the rules of the game has:

- content (what is the programme about?): sport/baseball
- target (for which target group is it made?): children
- format (animation film)
- aim (what is the aim of the programme?): education

2.2.2 Administrative Burden (26 May 2005)

The Council has taken no chances when formulating this advisory opinion. A consultation round was organised with the advisory councils and committees and with the support centres in the policy domain. The Council takes for granted that the desirability of a transparent democratic action, such as a justifiable use of public means, a good planning and the possibility to evaluate the use of these means, cannot result in a decrease in performance when the means are used.

The absolute conviction of the need for planning, justification and inspection, however, does not mean that the way in which matters are dealt with by the Flemish government through its regulation is not open to improvement and above all to simplification. The Council insists that the simplification of the administrative burden never be used as an alibi to cut back on funds. The Council, on the other hand, expects the resources that will thus be saved, to benefit the social task for which they have been made available.

The Council in any case already has four options in mind to curb excess regulation.

A first possibility concerns the municipal policy plans and covenants. Too much planning has to be done at municipal level. There clearly is a need for deregulation at this level. The idea to group all resources in the municipal fund holds the risk of there being insufficient consultation with the sector concerned.

The second option concerns the policy plans for organisations. Policy plans and the policy planning cycle must be kept simple.

A separate procedure needs to be developed for vulnerable, experimental, individual and new initiatives, as it is mainly starting smaller initiatives and beginning individual artists that are weighed down by the administrative burden.

The fourth option is the regulation which is not intended for our sectors, but (involuntarily) still has an effect on them. The Council argues in favour of mapping such regulations.

2.2.3 Cultural Life in Europe: Awareness of Diversity (27 October 2005)

How can Europe consciously deal with diversity?

The Council for Culture offers advice on cultural diversity. This advice is based on various advices which were requested by the Flemish Parliament. It is also in line with the intentions of the Minister of Culture, Bert Anciaux, who gives priority to this problem.

Starting point: the danger of multiculturalism

Multicultural, monocultural ... Since the 1990s these sorts of terms have been used in all sorts of justified and unjustified ways. Are they justified?

Protecting and maintaining as many possible species and ecosystems is considered important for life in general. In the 1990s a similar argument was developed with regard to the “cultures of the world”. In this respect, it was assumed that “cultural diversity” is crucial for the survival of mankind. As this vision was strongly influenced by ideas about

biodiversity, connections were readily made with physical characteristics (the differences in gender, skin colour, disabilities, etc.) and locations.

In this sort of concept, culture is seen as a natural, static, and therefore unchanging system (based on the “essence” vision). This leads to a sort of cultural fundamentalism. This vision entails an important problem. The term “cultural diversity” is narrowed to a container for problem issues. There is a search for certain forms of ethnic and cultural deprivation and an attempt to find a solution for them. These activities appear to be aimed at integration, but actually result in the opposite, i.e., segregation. After all, cultures are conceived as sealed entities, and a policy can easily be based on counting up the colours that are represented. For example, this gives priority to non-dominant groups so that they can find themselves in even greater social isolation. This is a paradox.

This sort of starting point based on the “essence” does not devote enough attention to group cultures and group dynamics, easily leads to aggression and exclusion, and then to fear. This view is opposed to the principles as drawn up by UNESCO. After all, UNESCO makes a link between creativity and diversity. The political answer to the actual diversity in society is “cultural pluralism”. This sort of pluralism is inextricably linked to a democratic framework.

The key words: inclusive, relations, cultural

What is culture?

Since the Enlightenment, “cultural life” in Europe has meant the ambition to achieve awareness and for this awareness to play a role in the public domain. By seeing cultural aspects as a separate dimension, it became an aspect which could be considered and reconsidered. Society can impose explicit expectations on its citizens in this context. The citizens can then question these expectations.

Since the end of the 19th century this attitude has led to an emancipatory movement which gave rise to a public cultural sector. This served to ensure that, on the one hand, the values of society could grow through culture, from the bottom up (the socio-cultural effect), and on the other hand, clear benchmarking points could be established, serving as beacons.

To some extent, it was the success of this process of emancipation, to which the public cultural sector contributed, which has caused the problems in recent decades. The sector withdrew into itself and was less and less an area for the development of and for that society.

Nevertheless, this public cultural sector continues to base its right to exist on a cultural ambition in society: society must attach importance to forms of expression in which there is a conscious search in relating to meanings, and in which there is an attempt to bring the whole population into contact with this range as far as possible.

This is the description of “culture” which the Council uses nowadays: cultural issues comprise “the systems of shared meaning, views and values, and the symbolic forms in which these are expressed or embodied.” Culture is a reservoir of resources which people can appropriate. It creates room for exchanges, but is also an arena for conflicts. Therefore culture is not an area free of

power. Culture is the dimension in society which looks for a way of relating to diversity: with everything which cannot be contained, systematised or managed.

Inclusive

For this reason the Council argues for an inclusive vision which addresses the actual diverse population in all its diversity. Interculturalisation is the starting point in this: this is the process in which the skill to relate to different cultures has a central place. Reflecting is a precondition for this. The government must support innovative, open initiatives and leave the confirmation of culture to the market.

Relationships

Is it enough to build bridges between people? The Council thinks not. Bridges also have to be built within people themselves. All in all, diversity not only exists between, but also in people and groups. And after all, it always comes from people too.

What is diversity in people? Increasingly and emphatically we are a composition of individual identities, gender profiles, philosophical views, forms of society, methods of education, choices of work and leisure, historical and geographical movements, future perspectives... Groups and communities are also dynamic entities which are interwoven and in which different basic principles play a role, side by side. Groups which are formed become a field of reference as an extension of this, from which people can take up and continue cultural traditions.

However, diversity is also a process which more or less develops as a result of how it comes from people and groups. People do not “represent” traditions or other possible identifications; they either assume them or not. Groups are not only a field of reference, but also a field for development: they can continue the tradition by transforming it.

Both individuals and communities can achieve diversity within each other, between each other and from each other. This is the relationist view of diversity advocated by the Council.

Questions and advisory opinions

In view of the great challenge that, according to the Council, is posed by cultural diversity in our society, the council asks the Flemish Parliament to introduce a clear framework of concepts about the basic ambitions of our democracy, based on cultivating diversity in and from people and groups. The impetus for this could be a discussion on modernisation in relation to the cultural pact.

The Council has asked the Minister of Culture to continue his ambitions with regard to cultural diversity radically and at every level. The Council would regret the Minister restricting himself to a manoeuvre to catch up with regard to certain forms of ethnic and cultural deprivation, and suggests that this specific manoeuvre should be turned into a clearly defined policy of incentives, and in addition to combat the symptoms in a fundamental way.

The Council gives several advisory opinions for this purpose:
- special attention to the practices which already exist in the cultural landscape, and which can contribute to a shift in understanding,

- a formulation of the possible contribution from individual cultural sectors with regard to cultural diversity,
- an inviting policy focusing on diversity for groups which formulates clear expectations with a respect for the own dynamics of these groups,
- a radical choice for the implementation of a cultural policy which responds to declarations of intent and critical monitoring and which suppresses the standardisation of expectations resulting from the economy,
- a broad debate with the aim of achieving an increase in self-reflection in the public cultural sector.

0. Introduction

The Flemish Parliament has asked the Council for Culture for various advisory opinions in which a vision of diversity in culture is necessary as a basis. This applies, inter alia, for the request for the legislation regarding the cultural pact. In addition, there is a practical urgency: during his term, the Minister of Culture, Bert Anciaux, wants to concentrate on cultural diversity. The stimulus for this text was the Minister's intention to draw up an action plan for Cultural Diversity for the Culture, Youth and Sport sectors by February 2006. This action plan will be drawn up on the basis of the "Guideline for drawing up a description of the situation with regard to cultural diversity in the Culture, Youth and Sport sectors". This advice will not examine the current policy process, as the Minister and his office have already introduced a detailed discussion with the cultural field for this purpose. The advice is expressly aimed at the broader efforts made by the Minister and the priority he justifiably wants to give to the challenge of cultural diversity.

There is a danger of a paradox with regard to the political approach to cultural diversity. While the aim is to achieve integration and social cohesion and this is to be achieved with the help of policy, this aim in practice results in differentiation, permanence and segregation, the opposite of the desired result. This was the conclusion of Sandra Trienekens in her thesis "*Urban paradoxes. Lived citizenship and the location of diversity in the arts*".¹

With the current advice, the Council hopes to propose a framework which connects the concept of diversity with culture and democracy in a contemporary way. In this text, the Council, on the one hand, tries to discover the causes which have led the efforts to promote social cohesion resulting in far-reaching segregation. For this purpose, the definition of the concept of "cultural diversity" is critically analysed. In addition, the Council formulates a broad framework on how diversity can be viewed democratically. In this respect, the Council proposes a notion of diversity which is not based on the problematic elements, but on the social possibilities. He does not formulate diversity as a blockade between people and groups but as a reality *in* and *from* people and groups which can be cultivated.

Minister Anciaux touches the sore spot when he detects a problem based on the deprivation of certain ethnic and cultural groups. The Council also supports a policy on incentives defined in terms of time, which is aimed at remedying this deprivation. However, the Council believes that this does not affect the basis of the situation, and

¹ University of Tilburg, 2004. Promoters: Prof. Dr. Ir. J.T. Mommaas and Prof. Dr. R.S. Gowricharn.

that such a policy can only be productive if it is part of a broader effort with a different orientation in which the aim is for a comprehensive culture of diversity in this society.

The Council sees the desirable role of the public cultural sector in the policy as a breeding ground for awareness about the problems and possibilities in contemporary society and for cultural activities which achieve this. In this memorandum the Council therefore not only addresses the legislative and executive dimension of politics, but also the public cultural sector ² as the outer layer of policy, a range of instruments that was created by our democracy in order to strengthen the cultural dimension of society.

Therefore the Council wishes to oppose the narrowing of the concept of “cultural diversity” to merely detecting and remedying certain forms of ethnic and cultural deprivation. This restricts the concept to a container for problem issues with an exclusive focus on deprivation, without incorporating these in a broader, proactive, socio-cultural project. This means that the debate on cultural diversity is often reduced to the relationship between a number of monolithic blocks; the thinking is from different isolated cultures. Monoculturalism and multiculturalism are not opposites, but two versions of the same debate, according to the Council in its memorandum. Both the monocultural and the multicultural vision are inadequate when it comes to conceptualisation or putting forward so-called solutions. The debate loses sight of the possibility of thinking in terms of society as a whole. For this reason, the Council is now formulating a fundamental advisory opinion. ³

1. The paradox in the debate on (cultural) diversity

This chapter describes the position and the problem of thinking in terms of essences which is often the basis for thinking about “cultural diversity”.

This chapter explores the meanings this term has acquired and the interpretations that have been given. Cultural diversity is sometimes used as an alternative for phenomena such as pluralism, cultural openness, a policy on minorities and equal opportunities, or it is used in debates on discrimination (which may or may not be positive discrimination).

⁴ However, the concept also contains the traces of a debate rooted in a concept of

² The term ‘public cultural sector’ refers to all the government organizations or initiatives, or those supported by the government in the context of its policy on culture.

³ This advice was prepared by a working group, which consisted of members of the Council: Bart De Baere, Rik Pinxten, Jorijn Neyrinck, Joannes Van Heddeghem; assisted by some external experts: Marc Jacobs (director of the Flemish Centre for Popular Culture, Jos Pauwels (coordinator of Advanced Teacher Training, Antwerp Institute of Higher Education, department of business studies, teacher training and social work), and An van Dienderen (visual anthropologist, University of Ghent), who was in charge of the final editing of the preliminary draft advice. This preliminary draft advice was discussed after a closed mini-colloquium to which four other external experts made a contribution: Eric Corijn (cultural philosopher and social scientist, Free University of Brussels, Geography faculty), Zana Aziza Etambala (collaborator at the Catholic University of Leuven, Department of History, History of the New Age), Dieter Lesage, (philosopher and lecturer, Erasmushogeschool) and Vivian Liska, (Professor of German Literature, Director of the Institute for Jewish studies, University of Antwerp). Bart De Baere was in charge of the final editing of the draft advice which was approved by the Council during its meeting of 27 October 2005.

⁴ Other debates focus particularly on the relationship with processes of economic globalisation. For example, a new UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the “Diversity of Cultural Contents and Artistic Expressions” focuses on the question whether it is actually possible to protect cultural diversity in a globalised world. Does cultural diversity flourish best in the ‘freedom’ of the globalised economy, or are protective measures and the national policy on culture important? There is a crucial discussion about

culture based on essence. With this analysis, the Council for Culture wishes to devote attention to the pernicious consequences of this debate.

Since the end of the 20th century, the concept of cultural diversity has been at the top of the agenda both in Flanders and internationally. In the first place, the relationship with the term **biodiversity** should be mentioned. This became widely used internationally in the 1980s by biologists, environmental activists, politicians and others. Amongst other things, it was used to formulate answers to the growing concern about the extinction of species in nature at the end of the 20th century. Biodiversity was a bridge between scientific research and policy, and a growing environmental awareness. It was and is still argued that biodiversity is vital for the long-term survival of “life” on earth. Protecting and maintaining as many species and ecosystems as possible is considered important for life in general.

The Convention on Biological Diversity of the United Nations took up the definition which was given at the United Nations Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992: “*The variability among living organisms from all sources, including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part: this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.*”⁵

A similar argument was developed in the 1990s about the cultural world, in this case literally about the “cultures of the world”. For example, it was argued that cultural diversity is critical for the long-term survival of mankind. It follows from this that maintaining endogenous cultures (endangered languages, rituals, ideas, etc.) is just as important for mankind as the conservation of species and ecosystems is for life in general. Although attention for all sorts of (endangered) cultural phenomena on the planet is certainly positive, the **biological analogies** themselves were strongly criticised. The “overall” basic position cannot really be proved. The application of biological models to cultural/scientific and policy-related phenomena is rarely a good idea.

The aspects which were included in the debate on cultural diversity as a result of this analogy include the increased attention and positive value given to **variety**. It also increased the sensitivity to all sorts of effects of globalisation. Debates about heritage are strongly influenced by thinking about biodiversity and about “world heritage”, in this case the focus on maintaining traditions in relation to maintaining variety.

In the wake of this debate influenced by biodiversity, the connection with **physical characteristics** is often made (often not even “under the skin”): man/woman, disabled or not, different skin colour, etc. In negative arguments they are often used as exclusion mechanisms. In positive debates focusing on inclusion, they are linked to the concern that the categories differentiated in this way are presented in sufficient numbers or have access to certain cultural phenomena. This fits with broader initiatives of policies on

whether or not culture falls wholly in the field of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). In this context “cultural diversity” refers to the notion of “cultural exception”. What is at stake is the possibility for national states and communities to implement a cultural policy, how this should be legitimised and how far this should go.

⁵ UNESCO, *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* (adopted by 31st Session of the General Conference of UNESCO, Paris, 2 November 2001), can be viewed online at: <http://www.vti.be/pdf/UniverseleVerklaringCultureleDiversiteit.pdf>.

minorities and equal opportunities ⁶ and is also reflected in the texts of the Minister of Culture (“*Policy Memorandum on Culture, Anciaux, 2004-2009*”, “*The proposal for a process for an action plan on Cultural Diversity*” and the “*Guideline for drawing up a description of the situation with regard to cultural diversity in the Culture, Youth and Sport sectors*”). The memorandum with the proposal for the process focuses straightaway in the “description of the problem and its position”, on deprived groups and ethnic and cultural minorities. This is particularly clear in the questions with regard to the supply side, where the first two questions relate to “immigrants” – i.e., “strangers” – and therefore also an implied individual character. A broader approach is only used in the third question: “How can we work on a culturally diverse provision of Culture, Youth and Sport?” The Council for Culture considers that this is the Minister’s key question for an emancipated globalised Flemish society in 2005.

The Council for Culture devotes a great deal of attention to the vision on and the efforts made with regard to interculturalism, as shown in the Minister’s texts. It is precisely for that reason, that the Council for Culture wishes to give a warning with regard to the problematical aspects of (bio)diversity, for a number of different reasons:

1. The focus on ethnic and cultural minorities and the attention to physical characteristics which arise from the debate on biodiversity reveal a concept of culture which can be described as being based on **essences** or **being culturally fundamentalist**. The term *cultural fundamentalism* is used in anthropology to describe an attitude which replaces the racism of the past. The term “race” is no longer used in the debate, which is now about culture and cultural individuality or essences. Leaving “cultures” to crystallise into a stable essence on the basis of physical characteristics or on the basis of a location is seen as a problem. The relationship with a “local environment” has come under strong pressure as a result of the processes of globalisation, inter alia, in the field of communication. Anthropologists refer to “cultural fundamentalism” because of the structural similarities in terms of attitude between religious fundamentalists and this sort of “own culture first”, and because of its appeal. Culture is seen here as a closed system which must be used to design the political process without compromise. These developments of the last two decades are relevant to understand the use of “culture” and “cultural diversity” in the world today. In fact, culture and religion are used here in terms of essences. This means that culture is seen as an unchanging, closed system and a defensive way to exist in society. This view of culture, which certainly does reveal diversity – in the sense that there are many separate cultures – prevents freedom, equality and the recognition of a policy of diversity. The view of diversity as cultures X, Y and Z existing side by side quickly becomes a late remnant of an old nationalist or regionalist way of thinking and feeling, which becomes a handicap in the context of worldwide influences and accessibility, the networking society, and more importantly reduces the possibilities of attention being devoted to group cultures and group dynamics.
2. This essence-based view of culture also gives rise to a narrowing of the term “cultural diversity” to detect and remedy certain forms of ethnic and cultural deprivation. This narrowing confirms a general trend which restricts “cultural diversity” to a **container for problem issues**, with an exclusive focus on social

⁶ Such as the “*Strategic Plan on Policy regarding Minorities 2004-2010*”.

deprivation without incorporating this in a broader, pro-active, socio-cultural project. Therefore it is a container term for problematical dividing lines. Even if this does not happen, terms are often used for reference which imply problematical dividing lines. For example, this applies for the notion of “tolerance”, which is often seen as a positive democratic concept, while, on the other side, it is a form of the rights of the strongest. If diversity is seen from the point of view of trying to remedy the dividing lines, this immediately implies an agenda. This means that countless other dimensions of diversity – which are not experienced as being problematical – are snowed under. Seeing these issues as problems becomes dominant and no attention is devoted to the possibilities. The many different possibilities are not sufficiently valued, let alone used as a basis for the experience of contemporary society as a result of the emancipation project of the 20th century, which was successful to a great extent. Nevertheless, this is the reality, though this reality is not seen in a positive framework. If you pay attention, you will see that our society consists more of a multiplicity of different types of groups and of differentiations within these, rather than of simple groups. These group formations provide social images and images of the self, which leads to a feeling of interrelationship, or, on the contrary, to a differentiating communication. They articulate an endless multiplicity and comprehend this.

3. This sort of debate also leads to diversity being experienced as a **threat**. According to Eric Corijn, in the colloquium for the preparation of this advice: “This is related to an increasing level of aggression and exclusion in society.” In his opinion, difference leads to exclusion. As a media critic, he sees this evolution confirmed on a daily basis on most TV programmes. “Whether it concerns so-called reality TV or games, in every case, excluding members of the group has a central place. Winners versus losers in the group, the foreign body in the own group (the mole). This creates a hotbed for the fear of being excluded and fans the flames of exclusion, and the “politics of fear”. “It is important not to base cohesion on fear. Living together in diversity on the basis of fear is completely impossible.”, according to Corijn.
4. A policy on cultural diversity seen from this perspective aims to remedy certain forms of **exclusion**, but at the same time encourages others. After all, merely by having a policy of “identified” minorities, these will exist. “Attention must be devoted to the relationship between the real society and the represented society”. Eric Corijn went on to say: “There is a big discrepancy, and some cultures, communities and lifestyles are hardly documented and barely shown on the public forum.”
5. This debate on cultural diversity focusing on essences leads to a **quantitative** approach to diversity. As cultures are conceived as closed entities, which have no relationship with others, we are not far from a policy focused on counting people with a particular colour, from a particular cultural or ethnic origin. However, this is an extremely unfortunate consequence and takes us closer to the paradox which is characteristic of the debate on cultural diversity. According to Hans Beerekamp,⁷ it soon leads to even greater social isolation via artificial judgements, quota restrictions, or levelling off the privileged, non-dominant groups.

⁷ Hans BEEREKAMP, 2003. *De kunst van het kiezen*, published by: Rotterdamse Kunststichting, the Phenix Foundation and the Boekmanstichting.

In this sense, this essence-based view of culture is in conflict with the principles on which the draft UNESCO convention is based. The cultural organization of the United Nations, UNESCO, published an influential report of the world commission on culture and development entitled *Our creative diversity*.⁸ It makes an interesting link between “**creativity**” and “diversity”. In November 2001, in the wake of 9/11, UNESCO launched a Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. This Declaration is based on principles and links between diversity and basic rights, democracy, dialogue and development. The Declaration is based on the concept of “diversity”. It confirms that plurality is the necessary reservoir for freedoms; that cultural pluralism is the political answer to the diversity which exists in society, but that this sort of pluralism is inseparable from a democratic framework: freedom of expression, media pluralism, multilingualism, equality of access for all cultures to artistic expression, scientific and technological knowledge and the possibility of being represented in the means of expression.

The UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) published a report in 2004 entitled *Cultural liberty in today's diverse world*, under the leadership of Sakiko Fukuda-Parr.⁹ The title of the report refers to a broad definition of culture and diversity. According to the report, everyone should have the freedom to experience his/her own culture (i.e., language, religion, philosophies etc.), and be respected in these: “*Cultural liberty is a vital part of human development, because being able to choose one's identity – who one is – without losing the respect of others or being excluded from other choices is important in leading a full life. People want the freedom to practice their religion openly, to speak their language, to celebrate their ethnic or religious heritage without fear of ridicule or punishment or diminished opportunity.*”

However, the paradox with regard to cultural diversity is also expressed in this study: the report states that diversity can only be a source for sustainable development in a context in which diversity is permanently nourished and tested by a constant intercultural exchange. However, simply permitting or even promoting interaction is not sufficient. Because of the inequality of power in society, the rich will obviously be able to make more of their cultural development than the poor, even at the expense of the poor. This is the crux of the paradox with regard to (cultural) diversity. It is precisely by incorporating this inequality of power in the debate on diversity that the Council for Culture proposes formulating an alternative to a possible essence-related recuperation of the (well-intentioned) debate on cultural diversity. The Council therefore advises that the concept of **diversity** should be placed in a broad and inclusive framework on **culture and democracy**. According to the Council, this broad framework forms the only grounds for a culturally diverse policy on culture. Therefore this advice expressly is not concerned with how ethnic and cultural aspects are removed from society as a unit. It poses the question about a comprehensive way of thinking on cultural diversity as the basic ambition for a democratic policy. It sees the public cultural sector as the outer layer of a policy, as a range of instruments of and for democracy which has an essential task in this. It proposes a contemporary vision on comprehensive diversity which could be the main challenge for this public cultural sector.

⁸ UNESCO, *Our creative diversity*, Paris, 1995.

⁹ United Nations Development Programme, *Cultural liberty in today's diverse world*, 2004.

It was Einstein who said: “*You can’t solve a problem with the same thinking that created the problem.*” If we want to live together in a “better” way we will, above all, have to find a “new mental model”, by constantly asking ourselves what the steering principles could be in a social order which aims to provide every opportunity for the diversity which exists in our society.

2. Culture in Europe as a dynamic relationship with meaning

This chapter explores the concept of “culture” and “cultural aspects” in more detail, contextualised in the European field.

A study recently conducted by the faculty of comparative cultural sciences at the University of Ghent ¹⁰ provided a number of angles which can form the basis for avoiding a rigid multiculturalism. For example, this study states that the “exoticisation” of the artistic creation and experience of the “other” is a form of “musealisation”: the artistic production is taken from the contemporary context and presented in an exotic light. For example, the term “Black Theatre” is a collective term for different ethnicities. However, most theatre productions which are described in this way do not explicitly lead to the experience of an “ethnic” culture; there may be a possible confrontation between old memories and the “modern” conurbation. These sorts of adjectives (“Black” art, “ethnic” art, etc.) actually unjustifiably place these artistic productions in a context which reduces their history. Having real “respect for the other” means more than simply being “open” to this: it implies that one considers the other capable of behaving in a dynamic and innovative way.

The study uses another context than that of “multiculturalism”. While multiculturalism means that different cultures live side by side, interculturalisation refers to the skill of being able to relate to different cultures. The study opts for this approach as a key. It considers it as a learning process, and this is emphasised by the use of a verb: **interculturalising**. It refers to establishing and stimulating processes in organizations, departments, artistic practices in which diversity fully comes into its own. Interculturalisation encourages working on the basis of a clear vision of diversity, which is based on detailed and constant observation of the region, the concern for interaction with and the contribution of various groups in the operational programmes, products and services. Interculturalisation in this sense consciously introduces diversity into the organization because it has added value, it values the diversity and attempts to reflect this in activities, productions, the team and management.

As a result of globalisation, this learning process of interculturalising is intensified and traditionally assumed points of orientation disappear as certainties. According to the study in Ghent, globalisation generates certain processes of uniformity, but also undermines the self-evident character of cultural densities that were institutionalised at some point, such as the nation state. Consequently there is a restructuring of *relationships of involvement and distance between social groups. This applies both at the new (inter)national and at the old regional level of scale.* For the researchers, interculturalising is precisely this process, which learns to relate to diversity at the local and global level with a concern for interaction.

¹⁰ De Krook, Kunstenforum (Arts forum) of the Flemish Community
Study report commissioned by the VZW Forum, by the Faculty of Comparative Cultural Sciences, Prof. Dr. Rik Pinxten, 2001.

By adopting this notion, a tentative answer also is formulated to the ideas put forward by Zana Aziza Etambala at the colloquium for the preparation of this advice, as the challenge for the West, in which increasingly diverse cultural communities are becoming established. In colonial society there was no common community. There were two communities, that of a small dominant white minority, and that of a large dominated black majority, who lived in a “super position”, but also in a “juxtaposition”. Etambala asked “How can these relationships now be transcended?”, and in this respect he sees the first step as being a greater interest in and more understanding of mutual ideas.

Pierre Bourdieu ¹¹ states that culture does not exist in a power-free space. In the world of arts and culture, preferences with regard to taste are also the result of social, economic and societal structures, and there are mechanisms of exclusion, power and suppression at work. According to Bourdieu, it is through culture that dominant groups determine and strengthen their positions of power in our society. Whether or not you have “good taste” is not something you can acquire, but which circulates in certain environments through education: therefore this concerns an invisible power. Bourdieu particularly emphasises the artistic and cultural dominance of the higher middle class over workers, but the same analysis could be applied to gender or ethnic dominance. Factors such as political and economic power and access to networks can be determining factors in the choices for certain artists and works of art. The Council for Culture takes this critical attitude with regard to the balance of power and conceptualisation into account in its description of culture.

There are hundreds of definitions of **culture**. According to the historian Peter Burke, culture could be described as “a system of shared meanings, attitudes and values, and the symbolic forms (performances, artefacts) in which they are expressed or embodied.” ¹² The more detailed definition which E.P. Thompson gives in his book *Customs in Common* is interesting because he tries to avoid visions of culture which could be too rosy or aesthetically inclined. ¹³ He suggests a vision of culture as a reservoir of various resources and exchanges, but also as arenas for conflicts which are strongly subject to all sorts of external pressure. In this way, he argues, amongst other things, for approaching cultural phenomena “in context”, for example, in a socio-economic context of the processes of power, conflicts and inequality. At the same time he also emphasises the potential for discovering answers or opposing the negative effects of these processes because of the presence of many alternatives. Again the scale is important to see how “cultural diversity” and everything related to it operates, and whether these conflicts are approached with a global, European, national or local frame of reference, or with a combination of the above.

The Council for Culture approaches **cultural aspects** as a dimension of society in this respect. It is important to emphasise this, because since the middle of the 20th century, the term culture has increasingly appeared in our language to refer to a “separate category” which seems to crystallise into an essence or a unity, as a softer version of nationalism. Therefore we must be careful about this interpretation of culture (in the sense of “a culture”, “X cultures”, etc.). Therefore we prefer to use the term cultural

¹¹ Pierre BOURDIEU, *La distinction. Critique sociale du jugement*. Paris, Ed. de Minuit., 1979.

¹² Peter BURKE, *Volkscultuur in Europa 1500-1800*, Amsterdam: Agon, 1990 (translation).

¹³ E.P. THOMPSON, *Customs in common*, The New Press, New York, 1993.

aspects as a qualification, indicating significant aspects of human existence in a social context, not in the sense of “a culture”. In Flanders, the democratically designed social structure is that of a population living in two Regions – everyone in Flanders and the inhabitants of the Brussels Capital Region registered on the Dutch language role – within a federal state. The democratically elected government of the Flemish Community is responsible for the cultural policy for this population. For Brussels it has responsibility only for a Flemish cultural policy, in Flanders it is concerned with a cultural policy for Flanders. This is the frame of reference on the basis of which we build up our arguments, wholly aware that “cultural aspects” can be approached from various perspectives, on different scales, and referring to different configurations (from local communities to the world community).

These aspects that provide meaning do not exist as an irrefutable fact. They are created, continued and remade by people interacting with each other. This relationship leads to the creation and constant reconfirmation of groups and communities. Cultural aspects exist in a changing interaction between the creation of a consensus and a dissensus with regard to meaning and values, an interaction between how people interrelate because of their different ways of assigning meaning or by looking for a common way of assigning meaning. Cultural aspects are preferable to culture to emphasise this dynamic search for assigning meaning.

In this way, cultural aspects form the dimension in society that relates with diversity and which cannot be contained, systematised and managed. Cultural aspects cover both religious and private matters, and the approach to experiences in their specific nature. In Europe this cultural aspect has, since the Enlightenment, supported the ambition to want to understand, and make this the basis for the public domain.

The actual distinction between the different dimensions in society, of which the cultural aspect is one, in addition to the political and economic aspects, is a European construction. These distinctions are part of the social ambition to acquire a greater insight, which is the core of the “Enlightenment”.

This gave European societies the possibility of starting to see cultural aspects as a relative fact which can be thought about separately from circumstances. Culture became something that can be *created*. It could be reorganised, as happened after the French Revolution, it could delve into its own resources as was attempted at the end of the 19th century with neo-styles and eclecticism, when increasingly conscious attempts were made to use other forms of cultural expression. It could deliberately deviate from traditions or recoup and vary them. It could also develop projects to rethink culture from the ground up. Cultural aspects were no longer a given fact, but a space which could be thought about and reconsidered, a space in which diversity is a basic element. Society imposed expectations on its citizens and citizens on their society. The process of emancipation in modern times had become a reality.

It is on the basis of this ambition in the European tradition that the Council for Culture proceeds; interculturalisation must be based on cultural aspects such as the ambition to understand and respond to diversity. Therefore, *culturalisation* can be seen as the main objective giving rise to the rest.

3. The public cultural sector as a democratic process of emancipation

This chapter places the public cultural sector in the context of the development of European democracies

In the movement of **emancipation** in cultural life in Europe, our society has considered the public cultural sector to be important since the end of the 19th century. This public cultural sector was expected to relate in a conscious way to the values in this society and to re-evaluate culture. This critical attitude went hand in hand with the desire for operationalisation: the creation of a consensus and a dissensus were complementary poles in the search for meaning. On the one hand, this public sector anticipated a socio-cultural effect which aims to incorporate culture from the bottom up, as promoted by colleges for adult education, while on the other hand, it wanted reference institutions which were seen as beacons for the population, as places where culture could “refuel”.

In the aim of emancipation – in the years following the turbulent 1960s – the main processes which had for a long time served as an ideological foundation for the development of society were undermined and the public cultural sector did not succeed in taking this up in a practical way. Good things continued to happen, but the ambition of serving as a key for the field of action which could really change society was lost. The “established” cultural sector became increasingly introverted and provided less room for development in and for society. On the margins, it could still work on this, though often it was then reabsorbed by the established sector.

The socio-cultural sector was less able than before to believe in the emancipatory spearhead function of its social activities and at the same time lost its link with the finger on the pulse of developments. The beacons turned into tall ivory towers which rotated around their own activities without much attention for their actual impact.

The aim for autonomy in modern times imploded to become a reference to the self in post-modernism, no matter how much the context became the theme in this. The social drive which became the engine of modernity was considered suspiciously naive and the idea of creating culture became a cliché and was chucked into the wastepaper basket. The exaltation of the people, the increasing cultural competence and emancipatory efforts were rejected as being paternalistic. This meant that the strongest impulses to remain socially proactive also disappeared. At best the masses could still take spontaneous initiatives from the bottom up, as in the new social movements.

In its advice on the management agreement of the VRT (Flemish Public Broadcasting Company), the Council for Culture made a distinction between the **broad concept of culture and its more narrow use**, which is often made in cultural political terms: culture as all the forms of expression in which a deliberate attempt is made to relate to meanings. It is in the second, more narrow use that the public cultural sector can be identified. Traditionally our democratic system is attached to this characteristic of “increasing awareness” and supports these forms of expression. The cultural and social ambition which is often labelled by policy as “increasing cultural competence” was formulated by the Council in this advice in a rather minimal but realistic ambition, viz. to continue to bring the whole population into direct contact with the whole range of

possible codes, contents and contexts as much as possible. If we give up on this minimal ambition, we give up on society and choose for a dual system.

Therefore we advocate a policy which encourages the promotion of an **inclusive** view and practice in the cultural sector. This means that the policy encourages points of view and practices aimed at the existing diverse population in all its diversity. In our European, post-colonial and Flemish tradition, this implies we work in a **reflective** way, i.e., that we are self-aware and always think in an open or innovative way, in a historical, local or geopolitical context and that we change our strategies on this basis. In that case, cultural initiatives cannot simply confirm or continue developments, but must be examined in terms of their ambition to relate consciously and with an awareness of gender, religion, time and context to the world of experience. The government has an important duty in this respect to support the initiatives which are taken from this perspective, and on the other hand, it can leave to the market the cultural initiatives offered with a low level of awareness. If the government does not promote these efforts aimed at awareness and reflecting, the market culture with its tendency to confirm becomes the only provider of public cultural initiatives.

4. Diversity as a social reality and cultural political desirability

In this section the notion of diversity is formulated in a contemporary democratic reality, by approaching the concept in an inclusive, relational and cultural way.

To some extent emancipation has been successful. People can now – at least in principle – make more choices in more fields than they ever could before. People claim diversity for themselves. Monoculturalism is a fiction which is experienced from very specific perspectives in which the most diverse philosophies and patterns of behaviour exist side by side and use themselves as a reference. The possible gender profiles, philosophical views, ways of living together, parenting methods, choices for work and leisure, historical and geographical positions, future prospects... all the aspects of life have opened up as far as possible.

- The individual is a dynamic factor with many links. Diversity can no longer be understood as the co-existence of people and groups with a cultural identity or “essence”. Diversity must first and foremost be understood in the idea of “**diversity IN each of us**”. We are all in an increasingly emphatic manner a composition of many identities which we express, inter alia, in cultural forms and initiatives: food, clothing, interior design, media experience, historical and geographical position, future prospects ... The composition is different for each of us and also changes throughout our lives. For example, the UNDP study *Cultural liberty in today's diverse world*¹⁴ very efficiently destroys a number of myths which circulate about the so-called pernicious consequences of promoting diversity in society. One example: the myth which states that the ethnic identity of people is in competition with their relationship to the State and that therefore there could be a tension between the recognition of diversity in society and the cohesion of the State. The UNDP report concludes that this is nonsense: each individual can identify with many different groups because he/she has identity

¹⁴ United Nations Development Programme, *Cultural liberty in today's diverse world*, 2004.

of citizenship, gender, language, politics, religion, historical and geographical position, future prospects, etc. Furthermore, identity contains the element of choice. Within these different individual identities, individuals can choose their priorities.

- The views on inclusion and “diversity IN each of us” reflect a way of thinking that is starting to crystallise internationally. The anthropologist Clifford Geertz¹⁵ and Canadian political philosopher on multiculturalism and modernity, Charles Taylor,¹⁶ advocate complementing the term “diversity BETWEEN people and groups” with “diversity IN people and groups”. In this way, **groups** are also often characterised as vital dynamic elements. They can mobilise. Maximum attention is given to the interconnections between groups. The diversity between people and groups is complemented with all sorts of partial possibilities for community action.

In a **community** this multiplicity is certainly a fact in any case. In a community different value systems exist side by side, as revealed by the French sociologists Boltanski and Thevenot in their work “*De la justification. Les économies de la grandeur*”.¹⁷ A distinction is made between six different “common worlds”: that of inspiration, domesticity, opinion, civil life, trade and industry. On the basis of the common basic principles in each of these worlds – for example, “competition” for trade – similarities are identified. In each of these “worlds” there are different criteria which make something “big” or valuable”, different ways in which an opinion can be expressed, different sorts of relationships which are important, etc.

- According to the Council, it is important in terms of cultural politics to not only think of diversity IN people, but also in terms of **diversity FROM people**. In this way, diversity is not only a constant factor, but also a wanted form of respect for the individual character which people contribute to a society. One easy way to encourage this is to never see people as representatives of a group, in principle, but to leave it to them to take on any commitment to traditions or other possibilities of identifying themselves as individuals (cultural, religious, gender, historical and geographical position, future prospects...). They do this in their own way and both continue the traditions and contribute a wealth of new aspects to society.

To start with, is it not above all a matter of approaching the autonomy, which people claim for themselves, more symmetrically with once again more attention to the relationships that refer to the other in terms of quality? “Curiosity” or “openness” are diametrically opposed to the passive idea of “tolerance”. By understanding diversity not only IN people but also aiming for this diversity FROM people, we break away from a government which imposes criteria for

¹⁵ Clifford GEERTZ (2000). *Available Light. Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton-New Jersey.

¹⁶ Charles TAYLOR, *Two Theories of Modernity. Alternative Modernities*. D. P. Gaonkar (ed.). Durham, NC, and London, Duke University Press (2001 [1995]): pp. 172-196.

¹⁷ Luc BOLTANSKI & Laurent THEVENOT. *De la justification. Les économies de la grandeur*, Paris, Galimard, 1991.

classification. We aim for a way of thinking about the ways in which people design their interrelationships and determine their position in these. This quality of diversity FROM people can be encouraged in every aspect of cultural activity. For example, the diversity FROM people can also be confirmed in the relationship with cultural objects.

- By extension, it is also possible to value and stimulate **diversity FROM groups** towards society. The vital dynamics represented by groups are not problems which should be given a place; they are possibilities for enriching society. They decide themselves whether and how they wish to do this, but to start with they can be invited. In this respect the creation of groups and communities becomes an opportunity for strengthening this diversity. They are a frame of reference in which people can take up cultural expressions. They enable people to strengthen the diversity in themselves and express this.

Diversity is increased by responding to many non-exclusive groups which are created. The fruitless either/or discussions should be replaced by cultivating and/or projects. In Flanders for example, the Flemish Community is the level at which our democracy assigned responsibility for culture. If the Region wholly takes up this responsibility, it not only articulates itself, but also the regional developments which complement it, from the urban or provincial characteristics of “Belgium” or the special links with the Catholic south of the Netherlands or French Flanders, to the language community with the Netherlands, the Benelux or the Burgundian Kreitz, to Europe. In this sort of multiregional environment, people can feel at home in many different ways.

Similarly, we experience ourselves as a member of many groups (family, profession, church, sport etc.) and these links are seen less than in the past in one community which structures them, whether this is the village or town community, or the nation state.

Therefore diversity becomes an intrinsic fact and groups and communities can articulate and strengthen this fact as a frame of reference. Groups and communities can show that they are aware of this, and therefore become both a frame of reference and a field of development.

In this way diversity has not become either a division of society into individual groups, or an arbitrary variation. It becomes a way in which a democratic society seeks to make and accept distinctions, without these being played off against each other in a balance of power. Diversity is then not something that must be “tolerated”, but an adventure that society can engage in. A cultural approach as advocated by the Council for Culture aims to increase awareness of aspects of human existence that give meaning in an inclusive way: it is not a matter of how “they” can improve their position of deprivation, but of how “we” develop a society in which we look for meaningful interaction in a dynamic way.

5. Advice and questions for the Flemish Parliament

Because the Council sees the contemporary relationship with cultural diversity as one of the greatest challenges facing our community, it first and foremost addresses Parliament. It asks the Flemish Parliament to create a basis for a relationship with diversity between, in and from people and groups as a possibility for our society. The Council sees the debate with a view to updating the cultural pact as a stimulus, but advocates that this debate should be conducted within a broader horizon.

The Council for Culture asks the Flemish Parliament to initiate a lengthy discussion on cultural activities in our society. The Council considers that a clear and constructive conceptual framework for the basic ambitions of our democracy is required and that the Flemish Parliament is the right place for this, as culture in Belgium has been federalised. According to the Council for Culture, these democratic ambitions are not only political and economic, but can also be cultural with a strong emphasis on inclusion and diversity.

The question about an approach to the legislation on the cultural pact can serve as an impulse for this. The Council for Culture considers that it is desirable not to wait until the legislation on the cultural pact has been federalised, but to discuss and approve a debate on updating this and a new conceptual framework in Parliament now.

6. Advice and questions for the Minister of Culture

The Council for Culture does not agree with the Minister's position that "the small presence of ethnic and cultural minorities in the government, support centres and the subsidised field requires ... a focus on the process on ethnic-cultural diversity in the first stage. This merely combats the symptoms, one symptom after another. The Council values the Minister's focus on ethnic-cultural diversity, but considers that at the start this special focus and the broader aims of policy are still confusingly mixed up. The attention for "diversity" as such, "all groups in society", "interculturalism", and "a policy for minorities" are in danger of getting in each other's way. The Council therefore suggests formulating the policy with regard to ethnic and cultural diversity separately as an impulse policy and establishing a separate process with clear operational objectives and a limited time frame. The Council also suggests correctly describing this as an impulse policy for ethnic and cultural deprivation.

The Council asks the Minister to continue this process immediately. The most important conclusion of the justified description of the issue by the Minister could be that the policy on culture and the public cultural sector are not sufficiently proactively aimed at diversity while they should be, and that both the public cultural sector and the policy are basically failing in their core tasks. Therefore the Council asks the Minister to immediately start on an image of us which focuses wholly on diversity. This means that cultural diversity can be the basis for the policy of participation aimed for by the Minister. This can be the reason for rethinking both the policy and the sector.

The Council for Culture asks the Minister to continue its essential ambition on cultural diversity very powerfully straightaway. The Council applauds the Minister's initiative to seek the most inspirational people both in this country and abroad to enter into the discussion and debate, and asks that this should happen now, at the same time as

looking for concrete policy recommendations on ethnic and cultural diversity based on the situation in the sectors.

The Council also proposes immediately looking for the start of a policy reorientation in order to redirect the policy to give priority to cultural diversity.

6.1. Special practices:

A policy which really focuses on cultural diversity is best if it begins by paying attention to the practices in the cultural landscape. Various innovative initiatives are being worked out, but they have not yet been sufficiently explained and analysed. Constant research, focusing on the analysis of methods, procedures and strategies in the field of the makers of culture and artists is to be recommended according to the Council, in order to highlight practices and translate their expertise into an enthusiastic debate for the field.

These special practices can concern both groups that not only form a frame of reference, but also a field of development for their members, as well as artists who express their different individual identities in their own way, as institutions which encourage diversity in their organization.

A policy could particularly encourage those initiatives which provide support in this way for new mental models and a change in the use of terms.

6.2. Cultural diversity formulated on the basis of the actual efforts of the individual sectors:

It is desirable for the Minister to encourage the various individual sectors to indicate how their field is developing with regard to diversity. This is the only way in which far-reaching questions can then be posed about their current organizational mechanisms and think about greater cultural effects.

The Minister justifiably mentioned working on diversity as one of the specific tasks for the support centres. The Council for Culture asks the Minister to encourage more initiatives so that the main function of the different support centres will be to monitor, stimulate and reveal the attention for diversity in all the aspects of their individual sector, including those dimensions of diversity which are not aimed at ethnic or cultural minorities, but which determine the intrinsic cultural quality of the sector itself.

6.3. An inviting policy for groups focusing on diversity:

In a policy on cultural diversity, it is not a matter of adopting as many different perspectives as possible, because this results in a loss of a social context. A pro-active policy for various groups is desirable because groups provide crucial possibilities for identification, and can hold our society together in a tight fabric of partially shared possibilities for identification. As such, the creation of groups is crucial for diversity in a cultural sense, for the creation of society. They can also have a segregating effect, for example, as a result of ethnic and cultural initiatives which place people or force people into a monolithic position. Nevertheless it is always up to groups themselves to determine their own internal structure and the way they react. A proactive policy for groups is not necessarily in conflict with respect for these groups.

However, this sort of policy must then be very careful and adopt a position as a questioning partner and not as a decision maker. When cultural communities have the feeling that their own decision-making powers are affected, they adopt a defensive attitude and become rigid. In that case the policy will not achieve standardisation, but become inviting. It will also formulate its aims and arguments. Therefore it is important to establish a policy, regardless of what type of group it is meant for, in broader policy options, such as an effort for inclusion, openness, and being prepared to change and adapt. This policy can assume a different form from a traditional subsidy policy. It can formulate policy convictions for groups and value them with these convictions; that groups can be both a frame of reference and a field for development and that they can enrich society.

6.6. A radical choice for the implementation of a cultural policy:

The Council for Culture argues for completely rethinking the relationship between politics and the public cultural field, in which procedures which were derived from economic management mechanisms are replaced by relationships which are based on dialogue, negotiation and shared efforts.

A policy which is serious about cultural diversity will fully support this approach in its activities. Therefore a policy on culture will aim to be a cultural policy.

This sort of cultural policy on culture will give absolute priority to a radical way of thinking on diversity in all the activities of public cultural initiatives.

This also means that it is aware that the expectations cannot be formulated in advance in terms of standardised expectations and output indicators, as they are in economics. Innovative initiatives are now valued in theory, but are handicapped in practice because they do not fit with the rules.

The policy on culture can work with declarations of intent which are subsequently critically monitored, so that the policy works in a stimulating and evaluating way rather than being aimed to direct and control. It can demand public cultural organizations to provide their own interpretation with regard to the way in which they increase diversity in their organizational schemes, organization, effects, public scope and even quality control.

This is an approach which is essentially different from the historical growth of the Flemish policy on culture which was concerned with equality – subsidy criteria – as the basis for subsidies and the implementation of a policy-related objective approach.

6.7 A broad debate with a view to self-reflection by the public cultural sector:

Following the first conference which is planned in February, the Council for Culture is asking the Minister for Culture to start a sectoral debate about culture as diversity, and the public cultural sector as a sector which has established democracy in order to stimulate awareness in the relationship with this diversity. The question in Antwerp 93 was very clear: “Can Art save the world?” Perhaps it is time to take up this question again and translate it into more operational questions. For example, is the possibility still

a cliché or is it actually the statement of the problem that has become the cliché? Can there really be any commitment if this is not demonstrated by the approach itself? Does the acceptance of public money also entail the specific democratic commitment of the parties concerned? If this is the case, what efforts are being made? If democracy subsidises a public cultural field, to consciously relate to cultural aspects, i.e., with the values of a society, can it expect this field to re-evaluate the whole broad range of values? Should the public cultural sector, as part of the government, not see itself as part of policy, not one of the three forces, but a function in this policy? If so, which one? How can the experience of the possible meanings of art and culture be translated into the horizons for an acceptable way of life?

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2.3 Advisory opinions in accordance with a short procedure

2.3.1 Advisory Opinion on the draft Regulation for the Subsidisation of Participatory, Experimental, Exceptional and Special Projects, and Hobby Associations (24 February 2005)

The Culture Council expresses its appreciation for the advisory opinion of the Council for Adult Education and Cultural Dissemination and for the advisory opinion K 01/05 of 23 February 2005 of the Arts Council on the draft Regulation for the Subsidisation of Participatory, Experimental, Exceptional and Special Projects, and Hobby Associations. The Culture Council agrees with these advisory opinions.

2.3.2 Ratification of UNESCO 1970 Convention (15 March 2005)

The Culture Council was asked to advise on the draft Flemish Parliament Act on the adoption of the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, adopted by the UNESCO General Conference at its sixteenth session on 14 November 1970 in Paris.

The Council advises positively on the draft Flemish Parliament Act which provides for the ratification of the Convention, provided the matters covered by the Convention (definition of cultural property) are brought into line with the European legislation on the export of cultural property by interpretative declaration. This harmonisation of matters covered results in the creation of a number of categories of cultural property that are defined in terms of content and that are recognised as 'special' cultural property under both European and international law. In this way it is made clear to traders, collectors and museums that the necessary heed is to be taken of the acquisition of cultural property falling under one of these categories and that it may concern cultural property which is protected and is therefore subject to claims for return to the country

of origin. With the proposed interpretative declaration the example of France and Great Britain, countries which already signed this Convention, is followed.

2.3.3 Evaluation of the System of 'Incentive Subsidies' (26 May 2005)

The Culture Council adopts a positive attitude towards incentive subsidies as policy instrument, provided that

- preliminary exploratory research is carried out and
- operational objectives and measurable indicators are defined.

2.3.4 Ratification of UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (18 October 2005)

The Council advises positively with regard to the draft Flemish Parliament Act which provides for the adoption of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, as done in Paris on 17 October 2003.

2.3.5 Advisory Opinion on the Preliminary Draft Flemish Parliament Act containing Provisions to accompany the Budget (27 October 2005)

Chapter II Flemish Parliament Act on Archives (Art. 2-4)

As for the first amendment:

It is about a clear relief of the administrative burden and a functional improvement. The Council is in favour of the proposal to extend the first policy period by one year. The fact that the archives offices now have an additional year to carry out the current policy plans logically results from the fact that the Flemish Parliament Act was adopted later than planned.

As for the second amendment:

This is about administrative simplification and an extension of the institutions' autonomy. Apart from the 'regular' subsidy they are directly paid an additional specific subsidy to implement the 2000-2005 Flemish Intersectoral Agreement. This work method implies that there are no longer any guarantees that the funds are used for employment.

The Council advises to add the following paragraph to Article 3: "The thus divided subsidy is granted as an annual allocation subsidy to the archives and documentation centre. The organisation is to prove each year that the subsidy will be spent on employment."

In this way continued attention to employment is guaranteed.

Chapter XVIII. Flemish Youth Information Point (Art. 35)

The Council is of the opinion that the preliminary draft Programme Flemish Parliament Act insufficiently clarifies the objectives and tasks of the Flemish Youth Information Point in order to be able to provide advice. It is more advisable to regulate such a new initiative through a Flemish Parliament Act within the framework of youth policy than

through a Programme Flemish Parliament Act. Secondly, the Council advises to replace the phrase 'vereniging zonder winstgevend doel' (association without profitable goal) by 'vereniging zonder winstoogmerk' (non-profit organisation) which is both linguistically and legally more correct.

3. Reactions and Feedback

3.1 Press Excerpts

De Standaard 15.04.2005 – Culture on all networks

In its advisory opinion to the Flemish Parliament the Culture Council argues in favour of programming art and culture on all networks of the VRT. Digital television is merely a 'desirable subsidiary area'. [...] The Council, composed of experts from the cultural field, does not accept the widely used thesis that the public broadcaster can only operate in accordance with the so-called 'laws of the medium'.

De Tijd 15.04.2005 – Advisory opinion on the mission of the VRT

The VRT must register important cultural moments, pay more attention to culture in depth and across the range, and must do so on all its networks. Ratings should not be a goal in themselves. These are a number of advisory opinions which the Culture Council submitted to the Flemish Parliament in the build-up to the new management agreement.

De Morgen 22.06.2005 – Flanders versus the Netherlands

In her study Van der Hoeven describes the Netherlands as a 'mirror palace' where a small incrowd has been defining the cultural policy for years, whereas Flanders is a 'house of windows'. [...] "In Flanders there is a Council for Culture, one for Arts and one for Adult Education, which already results in a wider provision of advice."

De Standaard 06.07.2005 – Reply to the memorandum on culture of the public broadcaster

Bart De Bare, Director of MuHKA and Chairman of the Culture Council: "Our position is well-known. The Culture Council does not interfere in the further debate. Personally, I advocate an integrated approach. I fear that if the VRT uses different options, there will be a cascade of referrals."

De Tijd 26.07.2005 – Public broadcaster: a cultural institution

The Culture Council regards the VRT above all as a cultural institution which should not in any case consider ratings to be absolute. The Council is of the opinion that the public broadcaster should present culture both in specific formats and in general programmes.

De Tijd 06.09.2005 – Doubts about the memorandum on culture of the VRT

Bart De Baere, Director of the Antwerp Museum for Contemporary Art (MuHKA) is also Chairman of the Culture Council. In the spring this advisory body still argued in favour of the VRT presenting culture 'in depth and across the range' on all its networks.

De Morgen 24.11.2005 – Culture Council provides advice on cultural diversity to Minister Anciaux

The Culture Council, a think tank under the chairmanship of MuHKA Director, Bart De Baere, submitted an advisory opinion on this matter to both Anciaux and the Flemish Parliament. "Cultural diversity may be the most urgent challenge our society is facing", according to the Council. Yet a policy in this respect also holds risks.

MuHKA Director, Bart De Baere considers it "incredibly important and good" that Anciaux is working on a catch-up movement for underprivileged groups which will open up the landscape. "However, such a policy of incentives must be temporary", says De Baere. "In the long term it will be harmful if we continue to focus on certain groups. By treating them as closed entities and favouring them, you isolate them. However, people and groups are not closed barrels. We can never just be reduced to Flemings or Moroccans, as we are always so much more. So when you are talking about diversity, you are not talking about diversity between people and groups, but about diversity in people and groups. And the richness of our society originates from these people. If this thought gets through, it will bring about a completely new and liberating dynamics. As government you will then no longer count heads or introduce quotas, but draw up a proactive policy. Institutions will no longer hire Moussem to simply assume a multicultural aura, but will review their entire policy."

3.2 Parliamentary Documents

The advisory opinions given by the Culture Council in the past year at the request of the Flemish Parliament have been transposed into parliamentary documents.

Document 50 (2005-2006) – No. 1. Advisory Opinion of the Culture Council on Culture in Europe: Awareness of Diversity (18 November 2005)

Document 50-A (2004-2005) – No.1 Advisory Opinion of the Culture Council on the Repeal of the Culture Pact. A Plea for Diversity, Openness, Participation and Involvement. (13 April 2005)

Document 50-B (2004-2005) – No.1 Advisory Opinion of the Culture Council on a Coherent International Flemish Cultural Policy. (13 April 2005)

Document 50-C (2004-2005) – No.1 Advisory Opinion of the Culture Council on Democracy, Culture, Art and the VRT. (13 April 2005)

Document 50-F (2004-2005) – No.1 Advisory Opinion of the Culture Council on Entrance Fees for Cultural Activities and the Culture Cash Card. (16 June 2005)

Document 50-G (2004-2005) – No.1 Advisory Opinion of the Culture Council on the Administrative Burden. (16 June 2005)

The proposal of Flemish Parliament Act amending the 13 July 2001 Flemish Parliament Act on the promotion of a high-quality integrated local cultural policy (17 November 2005) refers to the advisory opinion of the Culture Council on the Administrative

3.3 Response from Support Centres and Interest Groups

The Culture Council aims to make its positions known in the cultural field as well. With regard to advisory opinions on the merits, support centres and interest groups are asked to make their positions known through their own channels.

The Vlaams Theater Instituut (VTi) made www.vti.be/cafecasa, a web site on cultural diversity with a link to an e-version of the advisory opinion given by the Culture Council on this matter. CultuurNet Vlaanderen set up the web site www.culturelediversiteit.be, including a link to the advisory opinion on diversity. The Vlaams Centrum voor Volkscultuur, Socius, Initiatief Beeldende Kunst (IBK) and Kunst en Democratie refer to these web sites through their own channels. The Vlaams Fonds voor de Letteren used the advisory opinion on diversity as one of their sources for their 2006-2007 action plan on cultural diversity.

CultuurNet Vlaanderen also produced news items on positions of the Council with regard to cultural diversity and culture on the VRT. The advisory opinion on culture on the VRT was also published and was included in the folders of the participants in the fair organised by CultuurNet on 8 October 2005. The advisory opinion which the Council gave on entrance fees and the culture cash card also features on the web site of CultuurNet. VTi also reported on the advisory opinion on the administrative burden on its web site and in its newspaper.

Culturele Biografie Vlaanderen in its turn mentions the Council's advisory opinion on the administrative burden and provides access to it. Recently, a link has also been made to all advisory opinions. This was also done by the Vlaams Centrum voor Amateurkunsten. The Federatie van Organisaties voor Volksontwikkelingswerk (FOV) includes the full text of the Council's advisory opinion on the repeal of the Culture Pact.

The digital platform of the IAK and IBK support centres has used the advisory opinion of the Council entitled "Democracy, Culture, Art and the VRT" for the preparation and debate during the first round table discussion on the theme 'culture and broadcasting', which was organised in co-operation with CultuurNet Vlaanderen. The study entitled 'Breedband voor cultuur' which was drawn up by these support centres also refers to this advisory opinion.

The Vlaams Architectuurinstituut (VAi) has mentioned the advisory opinion on the draft regulation for the subsidisation of projects and hobby associations on its site.

3.4 Miscellaneous Items

In 2005, the *Memorandum 2004 voor de nieuwe Vlaamse regering. De toekomst van Vlaanderen: vragen voor een Vlaams Cultuurbeleid* which the Culture Council presented to the Minister in 2004 was applied for 19 times. The *2004 Annual Report* was applied for 25 times.

During the presentation entitled “Haalbaarheidsstudie voor een crossmediaal cultuur aanbod van de VRT” on Wednesday 30 November 2005 in the VRT press room Aimé Van Hecke referred in his speech to the advisory opinion which the Culture Council provided on this matter.

On Monday 19 December 2005, an explanation was given at the Office of the Minister for Culture on the advisory opinion on cultural diversity by representatives of the Culture Council and a number of experts who were involved in the preparation of this advisory opinion.

II. Preview

4. Points of Interest for 2006

The previous annual report in 2004 mentioned points of interest which the Culture Council wished to focus on in the next year.

The Council has not been able to deal with all issues. Naturally, the questions from the Flemish Parliament and the Government were given priority.

In 2006, the Council intends to implement yet some of the planned points, insofar as the timing of the expected establishment of a Strategic Advisory Council for Culture, Youth, Sport and Media will allow this. This includes:

- the draft Flemish Parliament Act establishing the Council for Culture, Youth, Sport and Media
- the reorganisation (academisation) of Higher Arts Education
- transversal initiatives between the culture, education and welfare sectors
- flexibility of instruments or making available new instruments for transversal initiatives.

The Council also hopes to treat the following issues:

- the flows of funds in the culture sector
- the cultural agreement between Flanders and the French Community
- the relation between volunteers and professionals with a view to the cultural summer season
- the policy on leisure time activities, from the perspective of the experiments with leisure shops in four cities.

The Council will also finalize the advisory opinion on strategies to increase the cultural competence.

5. Interview with policymakers

The publication of the Culture Council's annual report seemed like an excellent opportunity to us to sound out some policymakers about how the activities of the Council are experienced and how far the transformation of the Culture Council, the Sports Council, the Media Council, the Arts Council and the Council for Adult Education and Cultural Dissemination into one strategic advisory council for the Culture, Youth, Sport and Media policy domain has progressed. This is what we found out.

5.1 Interview with Bert Anciaux, Flemish Minister for Culture, Youth, Sport and Brussels Affairs

Culture Council:

In 2006, the Culture Council will be transformed into a Strategic Advisory Council. Why is that? Which elements would you like to focus on; what are your main wishes in this respect?

Minister Bert Anciaux:

The transformation of the Council into a Strategic Advisory Council is not one of my decisions as competent Minister, but fits in with the overall reform of the administration, also known as better administrative policy. In 2006, we will enter the

operational phase: first the administration itself will be reformed, and then the advisory bodies will be reorganised as well. The transformation is thus to be situated in this context.

These past years the quality of the activities of the current Culture Council has strongly improved. This is, among other things, due to a better framework, which allowed for more professionalisation and more well-founded advisory opinions. I would certainly like to continue on the same course.

The people who sit on the various advisory councils are not doing this by virtue of their profession. Their commitment as advisers is a type of service to the community. I greatly respect and appreciate this. Naturally, you cannot expect them to invest an unlimited amount of time in this. The previous work method, without sufficient framework, did not exactly lead to sustainable results. However, this is the case now and this should be continued in the future.

Another positive element of the Strategic Advisory Council is the idea of a central council with sub-councils for the sub-domains. A wider framework, with sub-councils, as alternative for one comprehensive council.

Culture Council:

When will the Strategic Advisory Council be established and what effects will it have for the "resigning" councils?

Minister Anciaux:

We want to establish the Strategic Advisory Council as soon as possible, focussing however on a balanced composition so that it reflects the field well. We want to take the necessary time for this. The people in the field should be given the necessary time to deliberate on the composition. Meanwhile, the current Culture Council can continue its work.

Culture Council:

There are quite a number of parties who all have tasks or at least ambitions in the field of policy preparation and evaluation (the Policy and Information Point, expertise centres, support centres, interest groups, the people in the field, the Culture Council...). What is the role of a strategic advisory council vis-à-vis these other players?

Minister Anciaux:

The interest groups define their strategy autonomously. I asked the support centres to think about how they can flesh out their activities efficiently. The real discussion about their role and mission will only be held in a few months, but today they are practising self-reflection and evaluation. The ultimate goal should be to achieve a good synergy. In addition, I attach much importance to good communication between the Minister's office, the administration and the other actors. Communication is a tricky business in our society. There will always be gaps, this is inevitable. The best solution is to make good agreements and maintain good relations between the different actors. The Strategic Advisory Council is by definition an advisory council and is to advise the Minister and his policy council on strategic issues. In my opinion, this is of vital

importance in policymaking, as the policy council consists of representatives of the sector.

Culture Council:

Can you tell us, from your own experience, which is the best time for the Council to give advice? Do you situate the right moment in the preparatory phase, as was the case for the advisory opinion on cultural diversity, or rather when the proposal is already on the table, as was the case for the advisory opinion on cultural industries?

Minister Anciaux:

I think there is no general rule for this. A different work method will result in a different time of consultation. On the one hand, as Minister I have the opportunity to develop a view which is either in line with the view held by the people working in the field or not. This was the case, for instance, for the cultural industries. On the other hand, I can try to reach a conclusion through wide consultation. I believe these two methods can perfectly exist next to each other.

Culture Council:

The Culture Council has just completed its second year of operation. How do you experience its activities? Do you think there are dossiers or issues in which the Council can play a role?

Minister Anciaux:

The Culture Council still has its role to play. A number of dossiers are currently being dealt with or will be on the table in the near future. I refer in this context, for instance, to the development of a policy on semi-professional arts, which will be incorporated into the Flemish Parliament Act on Amateur Arts.

When considering the 2004-2009 memorandum on culture one finds that, apart from the traditional subsidisation, alternative policy instruments are being developed: I am referring in this case to the cultural industry on the one hand and the support of the semi-professional sector on the other. That Flanders has a great and diverse cultural life is nothing new. What really matters is to ensure sufficient variation and diversification in the policy.

Culture Council:

Is it, in your opinion, useful to also take account of representatives of the non-subsidised sector, namely the cultural industry, in the composition of the Strategic Advisory Council?

Minister Anciaux:

The entire field must agree with the composition of the Strategic Advisory Council, so also the cultural industry component. As the number of mandates in the Strategic Advisory Council is limited, we will have to look for members with a wide spectrum. At the level of the sub-councils there is some more room for the representation of very specific sub-sectors.

Culture Council:

Finally: What impact do you think our advisory opinions have on policy?

Minister Anciaux:

The Council's advisory opinions are always read and studied with great interest. They naturally have an impact. They are an important criterion and represent the interface we have with the sectors.

5.2 Interview with Dany Vandebossche, Chairman of the Committee for Culture, Youth, Sports and Media of the Flemish Parliament

Culture Council:

This past year the parliamentary committee asked for advice nine times, whereas the Culture Council used to be consulted mainly during the hearings. Why this change in work method?

Dany Vandebossche:

Up till now the relation between the Committee for Culture, Youth, Sports and Media and the Culture Council has been a formal one, with a hearing taking place now and then. There were reasons for this. Firstly, it was the advisory councils and assessment committees which assessed the dossiers in terms of content, whereas the political aspect was rather strictly separated from that. The Committee rarely held discussions about dossiers. At the beginning of this term of office it has been tried to consult as many people from the sectors as possible and in addition there was the annual ritual around the management agreement of the VRT.

Secondly, the Committee has been more occupied with media than with culture; simply check the agenda. There have been an increasing number of questions and discussions about media matters. My guess is, however, that this will diminish after June.

However, in this way there was little contact between the Council and the Committee. Hence the idea to do more than just organising hearings. We reasoned that as the Council is there to give advice, we were actually going to ask for its advice. In the past there was no structural consultation, which we tried to change this term of office. I believe that the mutual contact is interesting for both parties. For instance, the Council's advice on reducing the administrative burden was included in the discussions.

Culture Council:

You just mentioned the advisory opinion on the administrative burden. In your opinion, to what extent do other advisory opinions also contribute to policy?

Vandebossche:

Well, the advisory opinion on culture on the VRT will definitely be further discussed; it has in fact already been transposed into resolutions and the like. Other advisory opinions will certainly also be subject of discussion, such as the one on cultural industry. This advisory opinion is very interesting due to the division between a subsidised and a non-subsidised sector. In the future, the Culture Council will increasingly have to deal with the non-subsidised sector. In fact, that sector is also demanding party in this respect.

Culture Council:

There is also a new development in the pipeline, namely a Strategic Advisory Council. Should the composition of this council pay regard to this division?

Vandenbossche:

This is almost obvious, as we are also dealing with this more and more. The budget for culture has increased enormously in the past year: it will no longer rise in 2006 - and will probably never grow to such an extent anymore. That is why we must look for new possibilities for funding and must use the economic instruments for the cultural sector. Personally, I think this is a good evolution: one only has to subsidise that which cannot continue to exist without subsidies.

It is just a pity that the discussion is now especially grafted onto the sector of musicals. After the implementation of the Arts Flemish Parliament Act they were somewhat abandoned. There was also a discussion about this matter in the parliamentary committee and now a resolution on this sector is in the pipeline. It is strange, however, that not one single project application has been submitted. I suspect the organisations dreaded the amount of paperwork? We are actually trying to find a solution for this amount of paperwork during the phases of subsidisation. A reduction in the administrative burden is currently out of the question. We are currently discussing whether or not restrictions can be imposed.

Culture Council:

The draft Flemish Parliament Act establishing a strategic advisory council is nearly ready. What does the parliament expect from this?

Vandenbossche:

The establishment of a strategic council is the result of the better administrative policy, which I think is a good project in itself. However, the one-on-one relationship of a minister per policy domain will not work in practice: ministers do not depart from a construction in the administration in the division of competences.

I think the system of sub-councils in this umbrella strategic council is a good principle. There are too large differences between the sectors. The Committee has not yet received the draft Flemish Parliament Act. The framework Flemish Parliament Act has also been dealt with in another committee. As a result, it has not been discussed yet: the question has not yet been raised.

Naturally, the cultural sector is but a small segment of this entire operation. Let me give two examples that have to do with culture. Flanders Opera will not be transformed into an EAA - externally autonomous agency - but will be an npo again. The Opera did not function well as a Flemish public institution. Secondly, the VRT will continue to be a public limited company.

Culture Council:

There are quite a number of parties which all have tasks or at least ambitions in the field of policy preparation and evaluation (the Policy and Information Point, expertise

centres, support centres, interest groups, the people in the field, the Culture Council...). How do you reconcile all these parties? What is the relation between them?

Vandenbossche:

This is one of the matters which the legislator will have to deal with. Support centres and interest groups are sometimes referred to as a ‘Mexican army’: too many generals and too few soldiers. People in the field sometimes ask questions about what exactly is the role of support centres, interest groups, advisory councils, etc. This already resulted in vehement discussions during the previous term of office. It will be a question which the Culture Council will have to advise on!

The task description and the role of the support centres are not clear: everyone is in the dark about this. The reason for this is that we started with one support centre in one specific sector – and then support centres had to be established in other sectors as well. Now we have a whole bunch of support centres, although one does not like to hear this. Yet, a good division is both necessary and possible between support centres and interest groups: just look at the socio-cultural sector. Between the FOV and Socius there is a good division of tasks which they each keep. They also have a long tradition in this respect, and moreover they have the biggest ‘meeting addicts’. This also illustrates the importance of strong characters in organisations.

The problem is that both the cultural and welfare sectors are difficult to reorganise like in the better administrative policy. On paper, everything is well defined, but this is not at all the case in practice. For instance, the demarcation between the department and the advisory council will also be under discussion in the committee – without wanting to reverse the better administrative policy. The relation between all ‘partners’ is food for a thorough debate, which may involve the advisory council.

The saying “policymakers have little interest in culture” also goes for the civil service. The Flemish Parliament Act on better administrative policy and its effects (new structures) cannot simply be copied to all sectors. Work behind the scenes has in any case not started yet. The Committee can do nothing but wait for a draft Flemish Parliament Act.

III. Administrative Framework and Composition

6. Legal Framework

The Culture Council has been established by the 19 December 1997 Flemish Parliament Act (Belgian Official Gazette of 11 April 1998), modified by the Flemish Parliament Acts of 30 March 1999 (Belgian Official Gazette of 27 August 1999), 18 May 1999 (Belgian Official Gazette of 15 July 1999), 2 April 2004 (Belgian Official Gazette of 6 July 2004) and 7 May (Belgian Official Gazette of 9 July 2004).

Flemish Government Decree of 5 May 1998 (Belgian Official Gazette of 25 June 1998), modified by the Flemish Government Decrees of 20 October 1998 (Belgian Official

Gazette of 5 December 1998) and of 15 December 2000 (Belgian Official Gazette of 1 February 2001).

6.1. Mission

The Culture Council provides independent and expert advisory opinions and recommendations on cultural developments and the coherence and efficiency of cultural policy at its own initiative or at the request of the Flemish Government or the Flemish Parliament

The mission of the Culture Council is laid down in Article 5 of the 19 December 1997 Flemish Parliament Act and goes as follows:

“The mission of the Culture Council within the framework of policy preparation and policy evaluation is:

1° to provide, at its own initiative, or at the request of the Government or the Flemish Parliament, independent and expert advisory opinions and recommendations regarding:

- a) cultural developments in the Flemish Community;
- b) an inclusive cultural policy, aimed at promoting the quality of cultural life from many social angles;
- c) the intersectoral cultural policy in all matters specified in Article 2 (reference to cultural matters);
- d) the promotion of cultural participation and the elimination of the cultural deprivation;
- e) the evaluation and provision of advice on international cultural co-operation;
- f) the promotion of the creation, production and preservation of cultural products;
- g) the possibly direct or indirect effects of policy proposals and their connection with the entire cultural policy;
- h) the coherence and effectiveness of cultural policy as such.

2° to organise debates and workshops on policy-relevant themes in co-operation with the Government.

6.2. Advisory Deadline

If the Flemish Government asks for advice, the Culture Council is to provide advice within the deadline set by the Government.

The Culture Council has at least 30 days to provide advice requested by the Flemish Parliament.

6.3. Public nature

Five days after the advisory opinions and reports have been submitted to the Flemish Government or the Flemish Parliament they shall be made public.

6.4. Rules of Procedure

The functioning of the Culture Council is laid down in rules of procedure. It was adopted by the Flemish Government on 12 March 2004.

7. Constitution

On Friday 12 December 2003, the Flemish Government appointed the new members of the Culture Council (Belgian Official Gazette of 14 January 2004 – Ed. 2).

On Friday 14 May 2004, the Flemish Government appointed three members, representatives of the Council for Adult Education and Cultural Dissemination and of the Flemish Media Council as members of the Culture Council (Belgian Official Gazette of 7 June 2004 - Ed. 2).

The Culture Council is composed as follows:

13 members who are experts in cultural matters;

7 members of the Arts Council: chairman + 6 chairpeople of committees;

7 members of the Council for Adult Education and Cultural Dissemination: chairman + 4 chairpeople of committees + 2 members;

2 members of each of the following councils:

the Youth Council for the Flemish Community;

the Flemish High Council for Sport;

the Flemish Media Council;

the Flemish Council for Tourism.

The current members are in alphabetical order:

1. Mr Patrick Allegaert, curator for temporary exhibitions at the Dr. Guislain Museum, Ghent, in charge of communication
2. Mr Herman Baeten, Director of Musica vzw, Impulscentrum voor Muziek
3. Mrs Hasina Benchelabi, artistic core of the Dito-Dito theatre company, author; resigning on 28 November 2005
4. Mrs Sigrid Bousset, Vice-Chairwoman of Culture Council, programme maker of Het Beschrijf
5. Mrs Moniek Bucquoye, exhibition maker, author Design en Architectuur
6. Mr Bart De Baere, Chairman of Culture Council, Director of MuHKA
7. Mr Jan De Braekeleer, Director of Wisper
8. Mr Piet De Gryse, curator of the Royal Army and Military History Museum, Brussels
9. Mrs Chantal De Smet, Head of Culture Department, Hogeschool Gent
10. Mr Hugo De Vos, Director of the Federatie van Organisaties voor Volksontwikkelingswerk
11. Mr Bart Doucet, cultural policy co-ordinator of the City of Ghent
12. Mr Eddy Frans, General Manager of vzw De Rand
13. Mrs Anjes Goris, Chairwoman of the Cultural Centres and Community Centres Committee of the Council for Adult Education and Cultural Dissemination
14. Mr Frank Herman, co-ordinator of heritage policy, Antwerp Heritage Unit
15. Mr Gi Mateusen, founder-partner of PICS bvba, audio-visual production company
16. Mrs Jorijn Neyrinck, Tapis Plein vzw
17. Mr Johan Notte, Director of Vermeylen Fund

18. Mr Rik Pinxten, professor at University of Ghent
19. Mrs Marleen Platteau, Chairwoman of the Council for Adult Education and Cultural Dissemination, Ternat cultural policy co-ordinator
20. Mr Harold Polis, publishing editor with Meulenhoff/Manteau
21. Mr Geert Puype, General Chairman of VVBAD, librarian at the Public Library in Menin
22. Mr Johan Swinnen, senior lecturer at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, professor at Hogeschool Antwerpen, Chairman of the Vlaamse Dienst voor Filmcultuur
23. Mr Johan Thielemans, Chairman of the Arts Council, lecturer at Hogeschool Gent
24. Mrs Leen Thielemans, co-ordinator of Kunst in Zicht
25. Mr Julien Van Borm, chief librarian at Antwerp University; resigning on 31 December 2005
26. Mrs Leen Vanderhulst, Chairwoman of the Flemish Youth Council
27. Mr Joannes Van Heddegem, Director-General of Hogeschool Sint-Lukas Brussel (until 31 January 2005), honorary director at Hogeschool Sint-Lukas Brussel (since 1 February 2005)
28. Mr Bart Vanreusel, Chairman of the Flemish Sports Council, professor in sport sociology at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
29. Mr Peter Vantuyghem, Head of Culture and Media with De Standaard
30. Mr Jan Van Vaerenbergh, Director of Public Libraries in Antwerp
31. Mrs Martine Verheyen, sports-technical co-ordinator of FROS, Amateursportfederatie vzw
32. Mr Luk Verschuere, Chairman of the Centrum voor Arbeidersvorming en Cultuur, the cultural umbrella organisation of the ACW
33. Mr Steven Wouters, Secretary of the Flemish Youth Council (as of November 2005 replaced by: Pepijn Deboscher, co-ordinator of the Flemish Youth Council).

8. Secretariat

The Secretariat of the Culture Council is held by the Unit for Strategic Advisory Councils of the Directorate-General of the Culture Administration of the Ministry of the Flemish Community. This Unit supports as well as provides a framework for the activities of the Arts Council and the Advisory Appeal Committee on Cultural Matters.

Composition of the Unit for Strategic Advisory Councils:

Iris Van Riet, as of 1 January 2004, Secretary of the Culture Council
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Hanne Schuermans, as of 1 September 2005, Policy Assistant
 02 553 41 71
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 (in substitution of Isabel Paeme, Policy Assistant)

Viviane Petré, as of 1 March 2004, Executive Secretary
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Grieta De Ruyter, as of 28 September 2005, Assistant
02 553 41 34
grieta.deruyter@wvc.vlaanderen.be
(in substitution of Myriame Debroeck, Administrative Assistant)

The aforementioned staff members are employed as Director, Assistant to the Director, Expert and Chief Assistant to the Directorate-General respectively.

The Secretariat has many tasks. In this respect we can refer to the tasks of the Culture Council as specified in Article 5 of the 19 December 1997 Flemish Parliament Act. It concerns more specifically: co-ordinating activities, preparing discussion notes and (draft) advisory opinions, following the progress of projects and work groups, carrying out limited study contracts, monitoring the field, establishing contacts, taking care of external communication, reporting and all related administrative tasks,...

9. Information about the Council

Information about the mission, composition and activities of the Culture Council can be found at www.raadvoorcultuur.be. All reports, advisory opinions, viewpoints and publications of the Culture Council are available here as well.

The publications of the Culture Council are also available through the electronic order counter at the www.vlaanderen.be portal site or on working days from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. on the free telephone number of the Flemish Infoline 0800/3 02 01.

Colophon

Editing

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