THE NEED TO REVIEW CULTURAL POLICIES IN BULGARIA

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Abstract: Cultural policy guarantees freedom of expression, creates conditions for equal participation in the cultural life of the country, preserves and promotes the culture of different ethnic groups and religions, supports education, intercultural exchange and expands intercultural communication. In this context, the influence of European cultural policies on national ones is of particular importance for the development of art and the preservation of cultural values. The choice of priorities, goals and tasks, a good set of measures, funding mechanisms, accessibility to citizens, their recognition by society are of particular importance and favors the development of culture. In the context of the social isolation caused by COVID-19, cultural policies need to be updated. This report is based on an analysis of statistics relating to the expenditure on culture and the arts at the European and national level, a comparative analysis of European cultural policies and their impact on national ones. The obtained results outline guidelines for the development of cultural policies at the regional level and can be a basis for practical application and further research in this direction.

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Introduction

The crisis caused by COVID-19 and the closure of economies and public life has had a strong impact on the daily lives of each of us. Professionally, the people working in the field of culture and art in Bulgaria were among the most affected. Social isolation cut off the opportunity for professional expression and their creative impulses were also stopped.

The crisis has affected the economy on the one hand, and people's physical and mental health on the other. Responses to tackling the crisis have been made at the national, European and global levels. There was a need to revise policies, include emergency measures and up-to-date policies aimed at dealing with the situation.

According to Ivanova (2020) in a situation of social isolation, many changes had to be made, strategies for future development of the activities of art organizations had to be reconsidered so that the artists could survive and develop in the conditions of global crisis. Concerts were cancelled, galleries closed, and art fundraising campaigns were "frozen".

An analysis by Stoeva (2020) from Sofia University, published by the Bulgarian Music Company, reflects a survey conducted in March and April 2020, and published in May 2020, presenting the losses of the sector. These data were collected through the survey "Independent Cultural Sector in Bulgaria". Respondents totalled 1067 people, of which 70% were individuals and 30% were representing organizations in the sector. According to the study, the losses amount to 2.7 million EUR. EUR, 16.9 thousand for one natural person and 3.3 thousand for an individual.

In this context, it is clear that serious changes are needed in the work of organizations in the field of culture and art - creating new audiences, a new approach to product presentation and the creation of new types of content. The period in which culture and art find themselves requires more current cultural policies, upgrading of the existing ones, as well as their rapid implementation, so that the artist can develop his potential and feel supported in finding non-standard and unpopular solutions so as not to lose contact with the audience.

On the other hand, the audience in conditions of social isolation seeks physical and mental stability and integrity through creative performances and products.

According to a study conducted by Vesela Kazashka in April 2020, social isolation provoked an increased demand for creativity in people. Communication and dialogue with art is carried out through the Internet and in social networks and in conditions of social isolation, the respondents express the need for contact with creative products - concerts, theaters, books, music, design, etc. Respondents declare that performing creative activities turns out to be therapy for them to deal with the crisis.

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The connection between culture, art and mental health has been around for centuries, but today new opportunities have been proposed that reveal the inner horizons of human preservation and self-development. From the study "Internal Horizons and Social Isolation. Therapeutic practices based on creative attitudes" by Vesela Kazashka it becomes clear that the global crisis caused by social isolation brings to the fore the desire and demand for creative activities in people, creates the feeling of creating "own" creative product and this reduces anxiety and increases self-esteem.

Respondents indicated that reading books, painting, cooking, music, design, yoga and others as their preferred creative activities (Kazashka, 2020).

In this context, the preservation and development of art and culture are not only a matter of national or European policy, but a matter of preserving civilization and its messages to generations.

The main goal of the article is to outline the gaps and needs at the national level by analyzing European and national documents related to the cultural policy of Europe and Bulgaria, to stimulate the decision to adopt measures for timely, effective and efficient implementation of the policies' taken obligations for the development of culture in Bulgaria and, if necessary, to suggest areas which could be updated. On the one hand, the cultural policy of the country must link the funding with the results obtained and vice versa, on the other hand, the policies, in addition to being announced, must be followed and implemented, finally, from a third point of view, the cultural policy should be constantly updated depending on the changes of the greater situation.

The concept of cultural policy combines two constructs "culture" and "politics". There are many definitions of the term "culture", Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) list over 200 definitions.

The Latin origin of a word and its etymology are initially associated with upbringing, development, and the cultivation of land, but undoubtedly among the scientific community there is an established understanding that culture is one of the brightest manifestations of human civilization.

One of the largest encyclopaedic dictionaries in English is the Online Etymology Dictionary by Harper and Douglas for culture, and they write: "It was not a common concept in the sense of caring for the spirit before the 19th century, except with a strong awareness of metaphor" (Online Etymology Dictionary).

As a result of researching the concept of "culture", Kruber and Klukhon synthesize it into three main meanings:

- refined taste, in the field of fine arts and humanities, which are also called "high culture", this taste is nurtured, developed and cultivated;
- knowledge, belief and behaviour, which depend on the ability to think, and social education, which depends on education;
- shared values, goals, and practices that are specific to a particular group or organization.

UNESCO's definition of culture is: "This diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities of the groups and societies making up humankind. As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations."

The definition of the concept is also given by the Law on Protection and Development of Culture: "the activity of creating, researching, disseminating and preserving cultural values, as well as the results of this activity".

The report of the European Expert Team on Cultural Policy in Bulgaria describes culture as follows: "Culture is an elusive matter - the more you define it, the more it escapes you" (Landry, 1998).

In this context, Barkalova and Kazashka (2010) formulate five directions of the evolutionary and emotional development of man and society: art - application of creative teachings and human imagination to create beauty and emotions; science - reason, theory, technology and innovation as creatures of the human intellect; education - training, inheritance of knowledge, transfer of experience and knowledge, creating an attitude towards learning; culture - the sense of identity and belonging. Last but not least - the personal development of man as a person and as part of society, which includes together science, art, education and culture.

In the "Strategy for the Development of Bulgarian Culture 2019-2029" it is written that: „culture is a collection of material and spiritual values created in different years and eras, as well as at the moment by and for man. It is his creation and is the product of human thought and human effort“.

The term "policy" was first introduced by Aristotle and presents a variety of views and perspectives for the appropriate means of providing support to citizens and society. The meaning of the term "politics" can be reduced on the one hand to maintaining a certain direction and course of action, tactics and strategies to achieve a certain goal, and on the other hand to unite large social groups to defend their interests. In this sense, values are particularly important and form the basis of politics. The classification of policies can be at different levels, according to the sector, territory, scope, method of creation and participants in them.

Landry (1998) and team in the report on the Cultural Policy of Bulgaria under politics have in mind the set of rules, measures and mechanisms through which certain goals related to cultural development are achieved. The first step for a policy, according to them, is to organize a political debate, then derive a strategy and formulate priorities and ways to achieve goals and analyse the results. According to Landry: "Politics does not happen in a vacuum, it is based on judgments about needs, aspirations and power."

Cultural policy - reflects the sector, unites the people who work in this sector and those who use its products, creating rules, strategies and approaches to cultural development.

The aim of cultural policy is to guarantee freedom of expression, to create conditions for equal participation in the cultural life of the country, to preserve and promote the culture of different ethnic groups and religions, to support education, intercultural exchange and to expand intercultural communication. Charles Landry proposes a definition of a specific sectorial policy in the field of culture, as a set of rules, measures and mechanisms that are aimed at achieving the goals of cultural development (Landry 1998).

Data and methodology

The proposed methodology is based on documents prepared at the national and European levels, concerning cultural policies and their impact on national ones. This approach is combined with an analysis of Eurostat statistics relating to expenditure on culture and the arts at the European and national levels. We assume that the good combination of these two alternatives will be the basis for creating an effective and efficient report outlining guidelines for the development of cultural policies at national and regional levels, as well as for further research in this area.

Results and Discussion

European cultural policies are characterized by fostering the "unity of diversity" of EU member states. According to Monika Mokre (2012), "EU cultural activities can rather be seen as a cautious repetition of the construction of a national identity, without prejudice to the national interests of the Member States".

Nevena Dobрева (2018) presents the connection between strategic planning with the search for the best positioning in relation to the external environment and proposes process management by achieving goals that are set in the future.

At the national level, responsibility for the formulation and implementation of cultural policies is shared between the legislature (the National Assembly) and the executive (the Council of Ministers). The supreme central executive body with the right to initiate legislation in the sphere of culture and formulate the main principles of national cultural policy is the Ministry of Culture.

The goals described in the Strategy for Development of Bulgarian Culture 2019-2029 harmonize with European principles of cultural development:

- Creating conditions for support and the development of cultural processes, creative industries and innovations, both in the context of European and world trends, and in terms of preserving Bulgarian traditions and the Bulgarian national identity.
- Transformation of the artist into an active participant in the creation of contemporary culture.
- Creating new cultural spaces to which everyone has access in order to meet their cultural needs.
- Establishing Bulgarian culture as part of the common European and the world culture of mankind.

- Transformation of culture into a strategic resource for sustainable social and economic development.

Due to urbanisation, cultural national policy, related activities and strategies became more focused on the major cities and some municipalities. In 2013, the Sofia Strategy for Culture 2013-2023 was published, followed by the Cultural Strategy of Plovdiv Municipality 2014-2024. In 2014, Sofia was selected by UNESCO as the City of Film and became a member of the Creative Cities Network by UNESCO. In 2015, Plovdiv was selected for European Capital of Culture 2019. In 2019, a Draft National Strategy for the Development of Culture 2019-2029 was published.

The Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe is a unique public information and monitoring service. It is a database currently consisting of 43 European cultural policy profiles, as well as short profiles. All profiles have the same chapter structure to which filters can be applied in order to search more thoroughly or make comparisons between countries (The Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends).

The statistics below are General government expenditure by function (COFOG), last updated 04.03.2021 (source of data EUROSTAT). Based on data received from EUROSTAT an analysis of the Sector Cultural services was developed with total general government expenditure in million EUR shown in Table 1.

Leading countries who are financing culture are: France - 16,816 million EUR, Germany (until 1990 former territory of the FRG) – 13,870 mil. EUR, United Kingdom - 5,560.70 mil. EUR, Spain – 5,535.00 mil. EUR, and Italy – 5,029.0 million EUR. Bulgaria ranks fifth from last with 266.6 million EUR (Eurostat Data Browser).

Table 1: Sector Cultural services, total general government expenditure in million Euro		
	COUNTRY	2019
	France	16 816.0
	Germany (until 1990 former territory of the FRG)	13 870.0
	United Kingdom	5 560.7
	Spain	5 535.0
	Italy	5 029.0
	Bulgaria	266.6
	Greece	262.0
	Iceland	231.4
	Malta	95.5
	Cyprus	53.2

Source: Authors

The financing of culture in Bulgaria for the period 2017 - 2019 in millions of euros looks like this: In 2017, the state funds for culture amounted to 290.1 million EUR, for 2018 - 268.10 million EUR, and for 2019 - 266.6 million EUR.

Figure 1 shows about a 9% reduction in funding for culture, even before the closure of cultural events, festivals, theatres, cinemas and others due to COVID-19.

Source: Authors

Figure 2 presents the budget expenditures for culture, which decreased from 1.6 to 1.2 in the period 2017-2019. The percentage of budget expenditures is respectively for: 2017 - 1.6, for 2018 - 1.3, for 2019 - 1.2.

Figure 2: Total general government expenditure, Percentage of total 2017-2019

Based on Eurostat statistics for the period 2017-2019, Figure 3 is presented, which reflects the General government, Cultural services, the total government expenditure, Percentage of gross domestic product (GDP). For Bulgaria for 2017 it is 0.6%, for 2018 - 0.5%, and for 2019 - 0.4%.

Before the global crisis caused by COVID-19, in Bulgaria we see a decrease in funding for the sector. Over three years the decrease is by 0.2%.

Figure 3: Percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) 2017-2019

A large number of artists, managers, technical support worker work in the field of culture and art. Funds are also needed for their activity, in addition for the dissemination and preservation of culture and art. That is why we are looking at a comparison of economic indicators for a period of more than 1 year. The funds provide material support for culture, exchange of ideas and creative products, in addition to remuneration for the people working in the field of culture and art. In this context, the first is necessary but not sufficient a condition for success in the field of culture and the arts funding. Financial resources are the basis for the existence of an organization, including an art organization. Expressed in a mathematical way, through a formula, the relationship between the existence of an art organization would look like this: The existence of the organization = f (funding) and F (funding) = f (results)

Participants in the creative process are derivatives of the amount of funds invested per unit of time or put another way, the more funds for culture and art an art organization has for a certain period of time, the greater the increase in success will be in this area. Of course, it is imperative that the artist has talent. The development of this talent is also a function of funding. The more resources the artist has, the more he will develop his talent and skills and successes will be more tangible. On the other hand, the success of the artist per unit time (t) directly determines the prestige of the profession "artist".

$$\text{Prestige of the profession "artist"} = \frac{d(\text{successes})}{dt} = \frac{d^2(\text{funding})}{d^2t}$$

The indicated statistical data show that the funds for culture and art in Bulgaria are insufficient. The National "Strategy for the Development of Bulgarian Culture" 2019-2029 declares the readiness of the state to create conditions for supporting the development of cultural processes and the creative industries in the context of European and global trends. Of particular importance is the transformation of the artist into an active participant in the creation of contemporary culture, the creation of new spaces, the establishment of Bulgarian culture as part of European and world culture and the transformation of culture as a strategic resource for sustainable economic development.

The transformation of the artist into an active participant in the creation of contemporary culture, the creation of new spaces, the establishment of Bulgarian culture as part of European and world culture, and the transformation of culture as a strategic resource for sustainable economic development. Adequate funding, current policies with specific goals, deadlines and contractors are the basis for the successful functioning of the sector. In this context, it is necessary to adopt and implement the "Strategy for the Development of Bulgarian Culture".

According to information posted on the Information Portal, which is the official source of information on measures to combat the spread of COVID-19 in Bulgaria, including the health, economic and social consequences of the pandemic, it shows that they have been granted by the government 7.7 million EUR for 2020 and 14 million EUR for 2021 with a decree of the Council of Ministers for approval of additional expenditure under the budget of the Ministry of Culture for 2020 (Single Information Portal Official source of information on measures to combat the spread of COVID-19 in Bulgaria, including the health, economic and social consequences of the epidemic).

These funds are for the creation of independent projects by artists, under the program "Creative Initiatives", in support of private cultural organizations in the field of culture, under the program "Socially engaged arts", program "Audiences", co-financing of projects under the program "Creative Europe", as well as to strengthen the expert capacity.

By Decree № 121 of the Council of Ministers of 12 June 2020 for financial support of programs and projects of private cultural organizations, activists and creators, carrying out freelance activities in the conditions of an emergency epidemic situation, another 2.6 million EUR were allocated for programs. The funds will be spent on the Creative Development program, on projects of freelance artists with an income of over 511 EUR, on a new program supporting private cultural organizations in the field of arts, a program for new theatre projects, a program for new music projects, a program for new dance projects, a program for the distribution of finished creative products, and for projects in the audio-visual arts.

With these actions, the government expresses its readiness to support the cultural sector, but the question of a unified and consistent and long-term policy regarding culture remains. The amount of funding is far from European standards for an artist or an art organization.

Conclusion

Priority development of current forms and policies related to culture and art, analysis of cultural processes and updating of goals is needed. Improving the state of culture and art in Bulgaria requires support for strategically important initiatives, preservation of cultural heritage, finding modern forms of cultural representation and expression, creating new audiences, and the development of education in the field of culture and art.

The creation of a good bottom-up legislative and administrative environment is at the heart of the development, preservation and sustainability of the arts and culture. The need for a new type of financial mechanism to support the cultural sector is tangible and can be achieved by updating the legislative and administrative environment in favor of culture as a long-term national priority. It is necessary to improve the conditions and measures for additional alternative funds for culture and art, through an interdisciplinary approach and view of culture with opportunities for cross-financing, and the real implementation of funds provided in the budget.

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