

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURE

ASSESSMENT OF FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

Context

Purpose of this document: This document must be established for all interim and ex-post evaluations in the Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) to provide an objective overall assessment of the evaluation and the validity of its results, as well as a general description of how the evaluation results will be used by DG EAC.

The document shall be published together with the Evaluation Report on Europa:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/evalreports/index_en.htm

Definitions: Evaluation in the Commission is defined as a “judgement of interventions according to their results, impacts and the needs they aim to satisfy”. It is an information tool that supports the preparation and implementation of public interventions, and reports on the corresponding results to the public and stakeholders. Information about the evaluation framework of the European Commission can be obtained at:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/secretariat_general/evaluation/index_en.htm

Organisation of the evaluation process: In DG EAC evaluations must be independent and shall be led and carried out by external resources. The operational management of the EAC policy areas is responsible for the identification of evaluation subjects, the organisation of evaluations, and the follow-up of evaluation results. A central Evaluation Cell, detached from the operational activities evaluated, has as a major role in ensuring quality, objectivity and an element of independence to the process, by having a close involvement in all steps of the evaluation. An evaluation Steering Group is appointed to prepare the evaluation, supervise the execution, and support the evaluator on the basis of the members' specific knowledge and expertise of the evaluation subject.

Basic data about the specific evaluation

Evaluation: Evaluation of the Open Method of Coordination and the Structured Dialogue, as the Agenda for Culture's implementing tools at European Union level

Purpose of the evaluation: Inputs for decision-making

Evaluator: ECORYS

Budget of the evaluation: 149,200 EUR

Time period of execution: 06.08.2012 – 07.08.2013

Assessment

Carried out by: The Evaluation Cell of DG EAC (Unit R2)

Date: 20.08.2013

1. Evaluation subject

The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) and the Structured Dialogue process (SD) are the implementing tools of the European Union's European Agenda for Culture in a globalizing world¹ ("the Agenda"). The tools are intended to help bring together the various actors at EU and Member State (MS) level to take action in pursuit of shared objectives and to address cultural challenges of a European dimension.

This first evaluation of the Agenda comes in a period of reflection and future planning, such as those on Creative Europe and the preparation of the Culture Work Plan which will succeed to the current one.

2. Scope of evaluation

The evaluation assesses the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the two implementing tools (working methods) of the Agenda at EU level since their start in 2008.

3. Methodology applied for the evaluation

The following research tools were used: desk research, two online surveys, qualitative and quantitative interviews, a focus group and four country case studies.

4. Results of the evaluation

In terms of the **Open Method of Coordination** the conclusions were:

- The Culture OMC process is relevant to the Agenda for Culture's policy objectives and the Work Plan for Culture 2011-2014 provides an improved and more integrated guiding framework and better defined objectives, compared with the previous generation of the process (2008-2010).
- Changes made under the second generation of OMC working groups have provided clearer direction, better quality outputs and have helped to focus activity better, although there remains potential for further improvements in outputs, for example through an evidence-based approach.
- Benefits and impacts mainly concern mutual learning, best practice exchange and the building of knowledge networks, rather than any far-reaching effects on national policies.
- There is potential to achieve greater impacts, through stronger connectivity and dissemination channels between OMC participants and key decision-makers at national level.

The conclusions concerning **Structured Dialogue** were:

- The objectives set have been achieved in relation to bringing the sector closer together, increasing the capacity to undertake advocacy work at EU level, and opening up new opportunities for exchanges between civil society and the Commission.
- The benefits of the SD process started to reduce after the first phase, especially in relation to the dialogue with the Commission.

¹ Commission Communication on a European Agenda for Culture in a globalizing world; COM(2007) 242 final.

- The work of the Platforms would have benefited from better alignment with the Council Work Plan for Culture and the OMC groups.
- European Culture Forums have played a valuable role in increasing awareness of European culture policies and in improving cooperation among sector organisations.

The **recommendations** were:

- Further, incremental improvements could be made to the Culture OMC, while keeping the fundamental structure and process intact: continue and reinforce the focus on concrete outputs in the OMC working groups, and retain and further develop the use of dissemination plans for OMC outputs.
- Dialogue between civil society and the Commission should continue, but the way the Platforms are organised needs to be revised: contribution of civil society needs to be open, inclusive and flexible, and national level organisations should also have better access and connection to the Platforms.
- Platforms' work should be aligned to the Council Work Plan and future funding needs to focus on specific initiatives and projects with minimal support for administrative functions.
- European Culture Forums should continue to be organised by the Commission.

5. Follow-up of the evaluation results

The results of this evaluation will mostly be used to feed the following key processes: the Mid-term review of the 2011-2014 Work Plan for Culture, the fine-tuning of the preparation of the 2013 European Culture Forum and reflection on the Structured Dialogue and the finalisation of the implementing rules of the Creative Europe programme. An action plan will be established to address the recommendations.

6. Conclusions of the assessment of the Evaluation Report

The evaluation methodology and data collected was sufficient to develop robust conclusions. The main limitation is that the majority of interviewees were the people directly involved in the OMC working groups and the SD process. This has provided significant insights on the functioning and the work of each of the tools; but the views of those who are beyond the direct sphere of interest are represented to a smaller extent.

Altogether, the evaluation is considered to be reliable and giving a true and complete picture of the results of the intervention.