



EUROPEAN
CULTURAL
FOUNDATION

LABORATORY OF EUROPEAN CULTURAL COOPERATION – THE LAB

The point of reference for cross-border cultural cooperation in Europe

A PAPER BY THE ECF ON THE LAB'S STATE OF THE ART, OCTOBER 2004

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1. WHAT IS 'THE LAB', WHOM WILL IT SERVE, AND WHAT ARE ITS COMPONENTS?

In a European Union of 450 million citizens, cultural cooperation is needed more than ever. Recognizing this, a private-public consortium led by the independent European Cultural Foundation (ECF) has launched an innovative project called the 'Laboratory of European Cultural Cooperation' – or, simply, 'the LAB'.

The LAB will:

- *serve* the European cultural field – artists, organizations, experts, networks and the media – and inform and support policymakers at all levels;
- *provide* comprehensive, expertly coordinated information, knowledge and services in the interests of cultural cooperation in Europe;
- *generate new knowledge* and enhance collaborative artistic practices in Europe;
- *support* the cultural sector's voice in Europe and worldwide, helping to put culture high on the political agenda.

The LAB is being launched as an *initial four-year pilot project (2004-2008)* based on a broad partnership platform, networking structure, and shared ownership with Europe's cultural stakeholders. The intention is to finance it through an alliance of public and private partners. Several independent organisations have committed themselves to the project, and a number of public authorities have declared an interest in supporting it. The ECF successfully started the G2CC project (an element of the LAB) in December 2004, funded by the European Union - Directorate General Education and Culture (DG E&C). It is envisaged that, following the pilot phase, the LAB project could become a structural element of a European cultural strategy. The LAB project was officially presented at the ECF 'Sharing Cultures' conference and to the European Ministers of Culture at their informal Council meeting in Rotterdam on 13 July 2004. The LAB implementation started in December 2004.

1.1. The Portal - a shared virtual cultural space

The LAB will develop a unique Internet Portal to European Cultural Cooperation, based on the Gateway to Cultural Cooperation (G2CC). G2CC was submitted to the European Commission in September 2004 and was successful in securing funds for a two year period (December 2004 - December 2006).

The Portal will *connect and promote* existing initiatives, projects, organizations and websites in Europe, while generating 'hot' new topics and fresh perspectives to encourage cross-border cultural vitality. It will provide *services* and *access to information*, and *generate knowledge* of cross-border cultural cooperation, artistic dynamics and creativity. It will thus act as a tool for the sharing of cultural expertise, experience and practice between Europe's cultural operators, organizations, as well as between countries, regions and cities.

In recent months a development team began developing the content and structure of the Portal and its sub-project, G2CC. This involved conducting in-depth studies, consultations, interviews and dialogues with cultural networks and professionals throughout Europe (See Annexes 1 and 2 for further details).

Without aiming to cover everything, the Portal will provide orientation and give access to the experience of a wide range of cultural initiatives and organisations in its role as a 'Gateway'. There will be grouped links to various types of organizations, funding bodies, cultural networks and observatories, resource and information centres, databases, and regional and national organizations dealing with cross-border cooperation. The Portal will also improve visibility for non-European users.

Initially, three main priorities have been identified, and these will be developed in partnership with specialised networks and organisations. The priorities are: mobility and funding opportunities for cross-border cultural cooperation; the collection, analysis and presentation of practices and case studies on cross-border cultural cooperation; the provision of a virtual library (resource collection), and critical views and news (online newsletter about European cultural cooperation).

The Portal will help its users to *identify partners* and to *understand* cultural cooperation terms. Later, *online guidelines* and consultation concerning legal requirements, copyright, project proposal writing, sponsorship requests etc. will be developed through *training modules*, *e-learning*, and *handbooks*. This will be useful to 'newcomers' and emerging artists and operators who are setting up cross-border cooperation projects. Some longer-term components of the Portal include: *career opportunities and job search*; and *interactive modes* (moderated virtual conferences and online debates and knowledge exchange boards, integrating input, user feedback and advice).

The Portal's *analytical component* will provide 'packaged and orchestrated' information, and will be a proactive tool for the dynamic exchange of knowledge, reflection, vision and opinion. This component will help practitioners, artists and experts working in the field to 'recharge', exposing them to fresh thinking on European cultural cooperation trends and priorities. It will contribute to the intellectual debate surrounding key issues of European cultural cooperation and stimulate *critical thinking*, helping to outline problems and offer solutions.

The Portal's modular structure will be built by developing the various elements and pieces one by one, starting with the basic, most needed dimensions.

1.2. The Gateway to Cultural Cooperation (G2CC) – preparing the background

The G2CC project will serve the ‘field’ in a very practical way, by preparing the background for the Portal to European Cultural Cooperation. In so doing, it will incorporate the most advanced information technologies. On the basis of the most analytically, conceptually and technically appropriate framework, it will first of all analyse and federate information and generate knowledge; it will then provide access to services, and disseminate crucial information to artists, cultural operators and other stakeholders. G2CC will aim for maximum user-friendliness. This implies a systematic approach, which will:

- Create and coordinate synergies between stakeholders in the field, making compatible and coherent the existing online resources that provide information on cultural cooperation;
- Reduce and avoid duplication by means of a federated search and navigation technology that will make sources as accessible and visible as possible;
- Disseminate findings to a wide audience
- Prepare the further application of specialised technology, agreed standardisation and thoroughly investigated classification schemes and search criteria;
- Develop a conceptual framework for cultural cooperation, intercultural dialogue and mobility, thus paving the way for new research and recommendations based on the analysis of European cultural cooperation;
- Provide practical, relevant, well-structured and comprehensive information and services to cultural practitioners, making the latest trends and findings accessible, and enabling mutual learning in a federated exchange of experience;
- Ensure participation by widely harvesting and disseminating the results (of, for example, case studies), by improving existing information strategies, and by providing the analytical and logistic framework for a ‘community of practice’.

The G2CC project partners are: the Amsterdam-based European Cultural Foundation; Turin’s Fitzcarraldo Foundation; On-The-Move Association, Brussels; and the ERICarts Institute in Bonn. An *Editorial Board* consisting of experts from these four co-organisers will review, analyse, advise and approve the information and analytical results before dissemination. *Work will mainly be carried out online, through an electronic discussion platform* and planning/steering/consultation meetings. A *matrix structure of cooperation* will secure the realisation and facilitate a new environment for European cultural cooperation. The inclusion of *associated partners* will guarantee a decentralised means of gathering, analysing and disseminating information.

This federating manner of enhancing the knowledge base and technology of European cultural cooperation is unprecedented. G2CC’s input to the Portal will increase access to information and services for artists, cultural operators and stakeholders alike. It will have a clear focus on cross-border

and trans-national cooperation, complementing national/regional strategies, and encouraging cultural professionals in Europe to share knowledge and resources.

(For further details about the G2CC project, see Annex 3)

1.3 Beneficiaries of the Portal

The Portal will provide easy access for different target groups, according to variously complex levels of demands. Due to its participatory structure, beneficiaries can become contributors and vice-versa. The main beneficiaries are expected to be: 'newcomers' in the cultural field (artists and cultural operators who have little experience as yet, but strong ambitions for European cooperation); experienced practitioners who are ready and willing to participate in a federating approach; cultural administrators, arts managers of public and private organisations; resource/documentation centres, and national and regional observatories; cultural networks; cultural practitioners outside Europe who require orientation as to who does what in European cultural cooperation. The Portal will also be useful to young journalists who need to know more about the landscape and trends of European cultural mobility and exchange. Academics, researchers and students could benefit from the collection of resources and debates on various aspects of European cultural cooperation. Cultural policymakers and the general public will benefit from the Portal at a later stage.

1.4. The Public European Space – project (PES)

The PES project will also be part of the LAB and will provide a platform for pan-European debate and cross-border media cooperation. It will stimulate and enhance cross-border debate on European topics, allowing multilingual access to current European media debates and topical articles; facilitate media cooperation; offer practical support for the mobility of young journalists; and provide relevant information. The project is being developed by the BPB – Bundeszentrale fuer Politische Bildung (Federal Agency for Civic Education) in Bonn – in consultation with the ECF and the LAB team. The BPB has vast experience in the production, publication and dissemination of topical media contributions to civil society building, and in working with new media and internet-based online magazines. The ECF runs media programmes (e.g. 'New European Deal'), supports mobility and Euro-Med journalistic exchange (e.g. 'Mediterranean Meeting Points'): these will indirectly feed into PES.

The PES project was developed in response to the following urgent needs:

- The need for action in the field of cross-border journalism
- The need to create a platform which makes the respective national debates more transparent, accessible and comparable
- The need for an instrument which will collect and disseminate articles of European relevance

- The need to consider how intellectual European discourses can be translated into comprehensible, attractive information/texts/debates for a wide audience (including young people)
- The need to stimulate and support the translation of articles into different languages.

The project will start in full in 2005. It will be managed by the project's steering committee (two representatives from BPB, two from the LAB, and two individual experts) and by the BPB. It will mainly be financed by the BPB. Preparations are underway and the first modules will be tendered across Europe in autumn 2004. In view of the project's wider European dimension, it could be opened to new partners in the future.

1.5. Applied Research Projects

During the pilot phase of the LAB, applied research projects will be commissioned (two or three per year) with the aim of supporting the reflection and development process in new areas of cultural cooperation in Europe. An additional aim will be to stimulate new, preferably trans-disciplinary R&D that uncovers new trends and technologies for the improvement of trans-national cultural cooperation. Research projects in the following years will be selected on the basis of an ongoing needs assessment in the cultural field, conducted by the LAB team as well as by LAB stakeholders, and adopted by the Steering Committee. Research project proposals submitted to the LAB will be evaluated in order to secure a coherent research policy. For 2004/2005, two topical proposals have been identified:

- *'Mobility: Dynamics, Causes and Consequences in European Arts and Culture.'*
- *'Cultural Components of European Foreign Policies'*

(For further details, see Annex 4)

2. GOVERNANCE OF THE LAB

The guiding principles behind the LAB's future governance are: a clear division of responsibilities; a balanced composition of the Steering Committee and Stakeholders' Forum; clearly defined roles and functions for the people and organizations involved; transparent and coherent decision-making processes and activities; autonomy from the ECF's ongoing core activities; clear accountability.

For the first phase, the LAB will be within the existing legal framework and ultimate responsibility of the European Cultural Foundation (ECF). The ECF will create an independent financial circuit for the LAB, *separating the ECF's activities from the LAB's activities*.

The governance structure is 'light', the management structure lean. The LAB Assembly meets once a year and are invited interested parties in the development of the LAB. The Steering Committee will provide information to the Assembly. The LAB had its first Assembly on the 21st January 2005 electing the Steering Committee who will govern the LAB. The members of the Steering Committee are composed of representatives of the main private/public funders as well as two representatives of the open Stakeholders' Forum (the main content-providers and representatives of the target groups, who meet 2-3 times a year). Members of the elected Steering Committee are listed below.

A representative from each of the following bodies: the Cultural Ministry of Poland, Kulturstiftung des Bundes, Germany, The Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation (Mats Rolén, Chair) and Compagnia di San Paolo, Italy. Two representatives from the Stakeholders Forum (Carla Delfos, ELIA – Co-Chair; Peter Inkei, Budapest Observatory). Two representatives from the ECF (Kathinka Dittrich van Weringh, Gottfried Wagner) as well as Gerard Kalff, Treasurer of ECF, as observer. The associated (non-voting) member for the "Public European Space" project is the Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung.

The first Stakeholders Forum was held before the EFAH General Assembly in Lille on 28 October 2004, ensuring that a range of trans-national stakeholders have the opportunity to offer advice and contribute substantially to the development process, the content and coherence of the work, and the LAB's networking mode. The Stakeholder's Forum role is to discuss, collect and communicate opinions, needs and recommendations, and Forum representatives will advise the Steering Committee and the LAB team. Stakeholders will also contribute to and profit from the technological solutions developed within G2CC and the Portal. The Stakeholders Forum will meet two times a year and these meeting are noted on the LAB's section on the ECF website. The LAB manager (with a small core team) will coordinate and manage the activities, will execute the decisions, and will develop the LAB components. Such a structure should ensure visibility, communication, networking and partnership.

3. SUPPORT STRUCTURE FOR THE LAB – A PRIVATE-PUBLIC PARTNERSHIP

Foundations and expertise organisations have been asked to contribute to the four-year pilot phase as project partners, offering support financially and/or in terms of expertise and functions provided (e.g. good practice, nodal points in national environments). Some have contributed structurally, others to particular projects; some fully, others with a more flexible financing.

Financial Partnerships:

- Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung (Germany) – *Financial and content partnership with respect to the Public European Space project (PES) of the LAB*
- Compagnia di San Paolo (Italy)
- Deutsche Bundeskulturstiftung (Germany) – *Confirmed; will be announced after joint approach with the German IZK has been finalised*
- European Cultural Foundation (seat: Netherlands)
- Migros-Genossenschaftsbund (Switzerland)
- Norwegian Foundation for the Freedom of Expression (Fritt Ord Foundation) (Norway)
- The Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation, (Sweden)
- European Union - Directorate General Education and Culture
- Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences (The Netherlands)
- The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Portugal)
- Polish Ministry of Culture (Poland)
- Robert Bosch Foundation (Germany)

Cultural ministries in all EU member states have been asked to support the project by contributing financially and facilitating partnerships. Feedback at the Rotterdam meeting with the informal Council – at which the ECF, on the invitation of the Dutch Ministry of Culture (in the context of the Dutch EU Presidency) presented the LAB plans – was very positive. The written feedback received so far comprises:

- *Letters of Interest:* Cyprus, Czech Republic, Greece, Malta, Norway, Sweden, UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport
- *Letters of Support:* Hungary; Poland, Slovenia
- *Contacts with other ministries as well,* including Austria, Germany, France and the Netherlands.

As mentioned, in December 2004 the ECF – along with three co-organising partners (On-the-Move Association, Fitzcarraldo Foundation, and ERICarts) and a wide range of associated partners –started

the project 'Gateway to Cultural Cooperation (G2CC) – Analysis and Dissemination of Information on Cultural Cooperation in Europe', funded by the EU Directorate-General for Education & Culture.

Many cultural networks, organisations and institutions from the cultural field have also confirmed their willingness to work closely with the LAB, supporting its activities and providing advice. Such *shared input* in the LAB's development is crucial, and the success of the project depends on the mutual benefits it will bring.

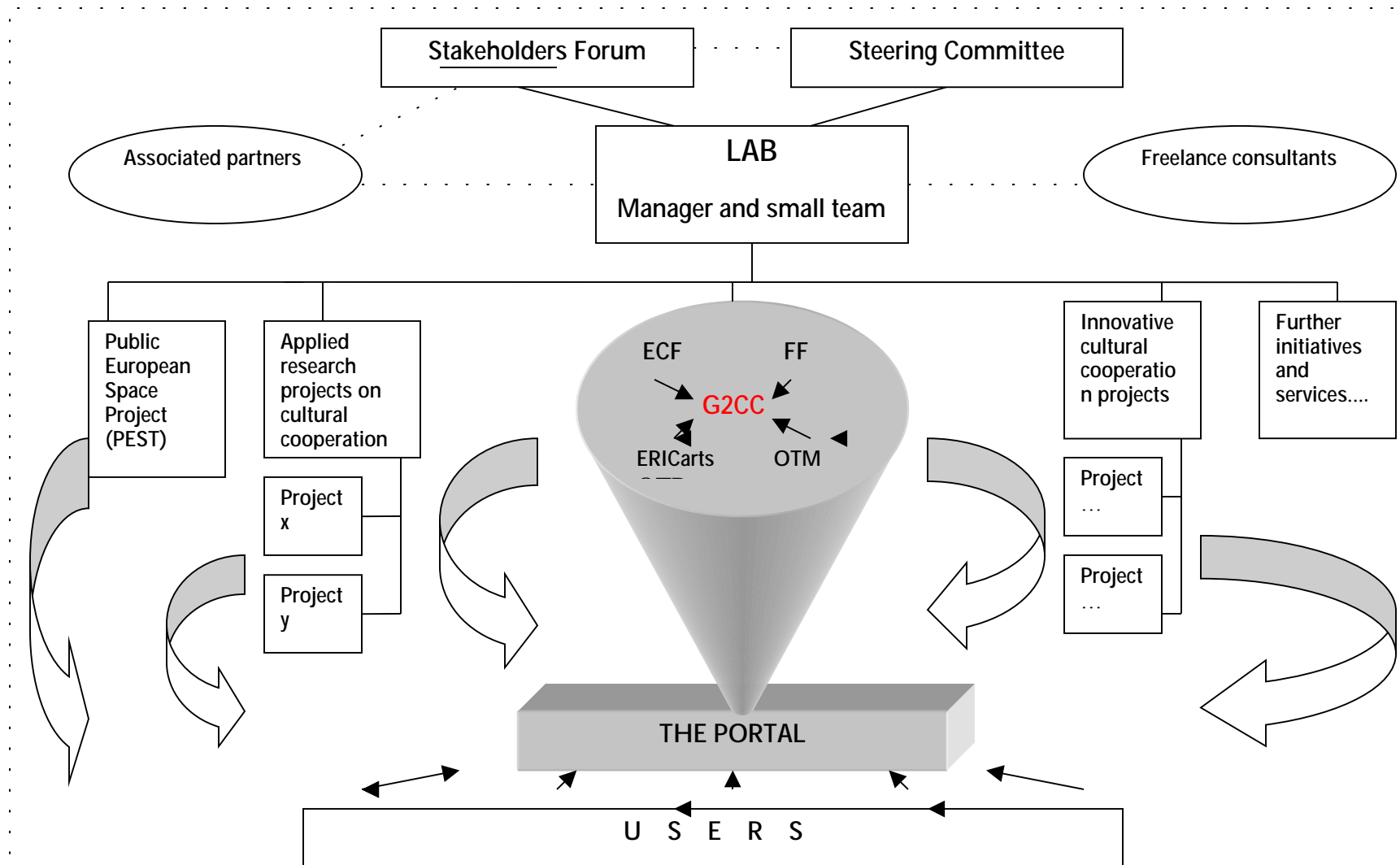
4. BUDGET

The annual budget for the LAB's first year is 1.5 Million Euro. The estimated figure for the total pilot period of four years is between 7 and 8 million Euro. Income will be secured by private funds (mainly from foundations) as well as public funds (the anticipated contributions by various governments). The ECF will contribute 250,000 Euro per year.

The G2CC application to the EU requests 299,800 Euro (total G2CC project value 450,000, including contributions from the four co-organisers) for December 2004 until December 2006.

For more detailed information (e.g. business plan, analysis of existing cultural websites, preparatory studies by Rod Fisher and Raj Isar, and the basic document 'From an Observatory to a Laboratory of European Cultural Cooperation', research proposals etc.) contact the ECF or visit: www.eurocult.org

GRAPHIC: THE LAB'S ORGANISATIONAL AND CONTENT STRUCTURE



* ECF – European Cultural Foundation; FF – Fitzcarraldo Foundation; OTM – On-The-Move.org; ERICarts – European Institute for Comparative Cultural Research)

** Associated partners are present in most of the activities of the diagram. They are members of the Stakeholders Forum. They also contribute through ongoing advice as well as sharing of information and knowledge for building up the G2CC and the analytical part of the LAB Portal.