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3.8. Culture

In finding ways to solve economic problems we cannot neglect another important area - culture. We see culture in the broadest sense of the word, as a state the society has reached since the beginning of its existence but also as a creative capacity to cope with social development. The State cannot and must not reject its responsibility in supporting cultural life.

The main task of the Ministry of Culture is the creation of conditions not only for the basic existence of culture but also for its desired development. We have in mind especially the areas of creation, production, distribution, preserving and consuming of cultural wealth. Culture and cultural life are not in crisis in our country. However, we cannot evaluate its importance only according to the results and acceptance of some important and famous festivals, shows, concerts and exhibitions. On the other hand, the previous ideological dictates have very often been replaced by economic dictates. Nevertheless, the high level of culture commercialization has very often had an adverse effect on the preserving and developing of traditional values which have always, together with education, represented for the Czech nation a guarantee of its independence.

Developed countries spend at least 1% of their budget on culture but in our country this rate has been less than 0.7% of the state budget in the past few years. It goes without saying that cultural development must be supported by the regions and municipalities as well and last but not least by the citizens themselves. The unification of Europe will certainly bring a significant decentralization of cultural life and shift the balance towards the naturally developing euroregions in many respects.

The promotion of cultural matters is not confined to the increase of funds for the cultural development from state sources however. Culture can find many different avenues of expression. But to do so, it need conditions and other source of funding which will allow it to fully operate for the benefit of the public.

What has to be solved first ?

The economic side of culture must gradually change from the system of allocations to direct financing by public-legal funds - in the same manner typical of the EU countries. Their management will need to have optimum transparency and will need to be subject to the public control. The boards of these funds will be formed by impartial experts, not only from the area of artistic creativity but also by well-informed economists. We expect a substantial development of the grant policy and the grant system will have to be re-established as it has not been operative of late.

Lastly and without further delay we must carry out the transformation of budgetary and contribution organizations that on the one hand have provided theatres orchestras, museums and galleries with some economic certainty, but on the other hand have only conserved their present status quo without allowing them to develop dynamically. As long as these organizations exist it is necessary to maintain the contribution to their activities to at least the existing amount, naturally with of course, adjustments for inflation.

Based on the expert and professionally formed strategy of the care of historical monuments there must be a new act passed dealing with the protection of cultural monuments, both movable and immovable, to help prevent their on-going alienation.

Apart from the care of our cultural heritage it is also necessary to create conditions for the development of contemporary artistic creation. An aspect of this will be the substantial revitalization of the State Cultural Fund.

We do not have legal regulations governing audio-visual matters. We need a law establishing State fund for the support and development of Czech cinematography but we also need legislation to regulate the problems concerning media as such i.e. the law on audio-visual creation and the amendment to the copyright law. We will have to harmonize our legislation with the EU legislation not only as far as the economic laws are concerned but also in the area of cultural laws which will be involved with for example the so called project "TV Without Limits". We are in favour of a dual system of radio and television broadcasts which we see as an important tool for influencing the cultural level of the nation and also as a means of promoting the cultural policy. The law must also play the role of a protector whenever the broadcast is in conflict with the protection of human rights and freedoms and also in cases that would promote violence, pornography, drugs and similar negative phenomena. We still lack the much discussed

press law.

It is also necessary to change the situation and number of the so called National institutions and to define their existence by law.

The public libraries will also undergo a substantial change. Apart from the change of their structure and position, we will examine the whole concept of their existence. Unfortunately we do not have an adequate law on libraries at present.

We will also enforce the close cooperation of the state administration with the territorial and expert self-governing areas. Specifically, we emphasise the need for optimum conditions for the local culture seen as the activity of citizens of all social and age groups. We will give support and facilities for the development of non-profit organizations as an expression of the activity of citizens.

It is also necessary to stress the cultural needs of children and youth. This problem exists in mainly three levels: the passive reception of culture as an inevitable part of the general life style, the active cultural life of the citizens and also the support of talented artists and conditions for the development of their talents. In this area we have to consult and co-ordinate the principles of the cultural policy with experts on education, which will also involve the existence of the basic art schools which are the pride of the Czech Republic in the European context. (The solution of this problem has a very important role in the much discussed primary prevention of child criminality.)

Another matter is undoubtedly the "cultural tourism". The monuments (separate objects, historical zones or reservations) and the visits to them by foreign tourists bring an important profit to the state treasury. Nevertheless, not much of the funds acquired in this way is re-invested back into the maintenance or renovation of these monuments.

ÈSSD is ready to resolve relations between the State and the Church and other religious groups. This matter has not only a political and ideological dimension but also a social, health, educational and of course cultural one. We will naturally contribute towards the care of monuments that are or possibly will be in the possession of the Church, but, we will however insist that this care is supported by public budget funds.

We are aware of the overlap with other areas and we have to therefore review and possibly amend other laws relating to the cultural sphere: i.e. tax and trade law and law on foundations.

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