

The Book Platform
EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

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The Book Platform

Period: Jan 1, 2012 – June 30, 2014: 30 months

Countries: Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine & Bulgaria

Project Leader: NexT Page Foundation, Sofia

Key Project Partners: Armenian Literature Foundation; National Publishers Association of Armenia; Georgian Publishers and Booksellers Association; Publishers Forum – Lviv

Project Background: The book/literature industries in the target countries of the project – Armenia (AM), Georgia (GE) and Ukraine (UA) - have some basic common features. The book-related businesses are mainly sustained by SMEs with a small profit margin that makes investments in developing new activities and in marketing almost impossible. The relatively low number of speakers of the respective languages and the growing competition of the entertainment industries poses a pressing urge to the book sector to find new ways for audiences outreach.

Overall Objective (OO): To assist in creating an environment for a healthy, sustainable and open book culture as a prerequisite for economic, social and human development

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Introduction

The present document is the final version of an evaluation report realised between June – August 2014. It is based on the study of the initial concept note and full application for The Book Platform project to the “Investing in People and Eastern Partnership Culture programme: Strengthening capacities in the cultural sector” (EuropeAid/129338/C/ACT), on **desk research** made available by the contractor – NexT Page Foundation in Sofia (Monitoring Report and the first and second narrative reports, narrative reports, monitoring report, various reports and documents which are project outcomes, website documents, communication and planning documents), and on **20 interviews** with the central management team, with the local managers in the three target countries (Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine), with board or advisory board members, with other participants to and beneficiaries of the project (*see Annex 1 for the full list of interviewees and Annex 2 for the list of documents reviewed*).

Also, the evaluation took vastly into account the two full day conference organised in Armenia on 22-23 July 2014 by NexT Page Foundation and the Armenian Literature Foundation, which was conceived as a comprehensive evaluation session with the participation of key actors and beneficiaries from the three countries: Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine.

The present document is structured along the following chapters:

A. Background Determinations: General observations in relation to the project’s context and intervention logic

It includes preliminary remarks about the general context of the project, its potential and limitations, its visible and invisible predeterminations and the impact these had on the project’s overall conduct.

B. Architecture of the Project, Planning and Implementation of Activities, and Outcomes

This chapter includes specific comments to the general structure of the project itself, aimed to observe to what degree there is coherence between proposal, action plan and implementation and, also, which are the issues that seem to emerge as challenging from the experience of the project, as expressed by the coordinators, local partners, beneficiaries, and participants at different levels. It also addresses the categories that emerged as strengths and weaknesses when summing up the monitoring and narrative reports, the interviews' results and the final conference outcomes, as noted by the external evaluator.

C. General Conclusions. Notes on Management

This chapter includes the evaluator's conclusive remarks, preceded by an evaluation of the accomplishment of the project objectives, expected results and indicators, as self-determined by the project. Because management issues are evoked all along the present evaluation (being internally embedded within the categories describing the project's overall cycle under chapters A and B), this chapter provides additional conclusions on three aspects related to the project's overall management.

A. Background Determinations: General Observations in relation to the Project's Context and Intervention Logic

In correctly assessing the effective outcomes of a project like *The Book Platform*, one has to consider a number of specific **background factors** that influenced the overall development and implementation of the project. These are as follows:

- a) The very broad intended scope of the project as embedded within the EU call;
- b) The importance of the book sector as one of the key sectors of cultural public policy in countries where the state sector is still extremely strong and the market is fully dependent on it;
- c) The necessity for cultural industries, more than other sectors of public cultural policies, to have already in place (at national level) a professionalised and a fully effective, consistent system of data gathering and statistics on production and distribution resources, and on consumption practices;
- d) The differences between the three countries targeted by the project regarding practices in the book industry (number of publishers, state support, audience development, statistical data, other adapted instruments);
- e) The relative absence of expertise and needed competences in targeted countries in understanding and implementing the financial and administrative regulations as required by EU projects.

Also, assessment reconfirmed that one has to take into account more **general context-related factors** in the case of transition countries (historical, geo-political, mentality related, recent past related), namely:

- a) **In transition countries ('recent' or so called 'young' democracies), there are important legacies of the formerly over-centralised societies.** These

legacies act directly and indirectly upon the organisational logic of new cultural entities, new agencies, new dynamics; they appear within the competence chain of decision making, in cultural practices, in the learning process. Most of all, they entertain an inertial state of the system and create an important obstacle to change.

e.g. The Book Platform project

- The local management in Armenia was radically changed during the project development, and this operated a very important change in coordination logic in Armenia. The change was made from a representative of a former generation of literary activists to one of the new generation of literary agents. The change was visible for everybody (local managers in other countries, international partners and overall management interviewees) and was considered as positive. To be noted that the initial person in charge himself suggested the newly appointed local manager, as a sign of understanding produced by the project about the limitations of his capacities to fulfil the requested task;
- Sustainability, as revealed during the final assessment conference, is still seen as coming from the outside; there is a weak sense of self-sustainability (a notion better understood in the case of Georgia or by the CEO of Antares in Armenia, for example, but generally seen as a way in which outside public support is given to an organisation);
- The observation that most of the active staff in local management teams is junior or with recent seniority and, also, it is in majority composed by women – as an indication of the multitasking character of the job and also its volatility.

b) **The newly introduced democratic practices, combined with internal and external tensions, are the soil of very many rapid changes:** government sudden collapse, administrative and managerial fragility of new structures, a general turbulent context for any stable institution. This volatility cannot allow solid and medium and long-term managerial strategies, and efficient planning approaches. It also fuels a strong feeling of insecurity, which undermines long-term perspectives.

e.g. The Book Platform project

- Local management staff stated during interviews that the turbulent character of the institutional stability in their respective country makes very relative the possibility of an operator to correctly evaluate what means are needed to what ends, what is stable and constantly available and for how long a time, etc.; this statement is confirmed by the interim narrative reports which show the changing dynamics within the partner institutions;
- As a consequence of the former, a constant mentoring attitude is needed, which, as observed by all levels of project shareholders, the central management in Sofia competently assumed. As some interviewees stressed: “this is the way to respond to problems which are endemic within these societies”);
- Only during the final conference in Armenia, the Georgian government underwent ministerial changes including the Minister of Culture; the same happened in Ukraine, under incessant shifts due to the general political situation in the country;
- All the narratives told by local coordinators, ministry representatives, international representatives, overall management staff in Sofia, included the reality of sudden public institutional collapse, a difficulty to establish a stable contact and follow up with it, the complexity of the issue of public officers with a mandate related to the book industry. Georgia is a positive example in this respect, but Ukraine is a complicated ground on this matter;
- In the case of the local partners, the instability of the local partners, as well as the lack of stabilised protocols of functioning and the mismatch between this and the rigour requested by the project, were often the basis of stress and a distorter of time table plans, as established).

c) **In order to stabilise** procedures resulting from a change of paradigm in an organisation, combined with radical changes within a system, a number of (at least) three to five years are needed; **frequent local changes** do not allow this stability and, as a consequence, the efficacy of outcomes cannot be expected even more so when partners are involved.

e.g. The Book Platform project

Interviews showed that the sudden changes within the local partner and in management approach, or the overall change of the partner organisation, impacted on the project’s overall conduct, putting stress especially on the overall management team in Sofia.

- d) **The process of becoming an autonomous cultural actor implies making choices**, assuming responsibility for those choices and, inevitably, leaving things out. Coming from a profoundly assisted type of social behaviour, encouraged and generalised during the decades before the fall of communism, the autonomous behaviour and its chain of implications is more difficult to adopt by older generations, and younger generations who naturally adopt it are less experienced in terms of the responsibility decisions implies. The lack of an in-between generation is producing a gap, a missing link that has to be overcome successfully only by ongoing negotiation and dialogue.

e.g. The Book Platform project

Interviews with NexT Page Foundation staff, as well as the Head of Information and Library of Goethe Institute Georgia, stressed the crucial importance of mentoring both generations into finding a middle way and developing together a new systemic culture for the book industry in the target countries; also, interviews and the final evaluation conference underlined the importance of “bringing together people who will not sit together otherwise”).

- e) For projects with a broad scope, addressed to countries in economic and ideological transition, **a key challenge is that reshaping contexts of any kind does not depend only on vision and new opportunity, but also on instruments – legal and administrative**. These instruments, in order to be created, are, on the one hand, subject to initiatives that have to be taken at governmental or legislative levels (and executives and legislators have to first understand and advocate for their importance and necessity), and need full and in-depth agreement from the professional circles active in the specific area (in our case: publishers, writers’ associations, writers as individuals, other related creative areas, publishing resources, public officials with a mandated in the field, other international and regional stakeholders, etc.).

e.g. The Book Platform project

Interviews with Ministry representatives and other project participants, the research carried out and published in the three countries, and the narrative reports, all show an unequal level of development of legal and administrative instruments, but also strategic long-term planning being at an early stage in all three countries from the point of view of public policies dedicated to the sector.

Also, these instruments need time to be advocated for, initiated, designed correctly and implemented.

Conclusion: In short, instruments and vision have to come together and match the same objectives in order for an open and self-sustainable system of book publishing in the region to follow a process that becomes both an efficient and an effective one. Like in all transitional and post-transitional societies, it is believed from the exterior that as soon as a new vision and important resources are allocated in order to bring a new dynamic to a cultural and creative sector, instruments will follow. Or, the experience and expertise of former communist countries, as well as the narrative of other countries that emerged from authoritarian regimes and/or suffered forms of “cultural colonisation,” show today that both new instruments and new approaches have to be encouraged in parallel, and that a complementary (visionary and strategic, but also pragmatic) view has to be taken into consideration when assessing the capacity of a project to fulfil its goals.

The Book Platform project had to tackle all these formerly described aspects and, as already embedded in the terms of reference of the EU call’s criteria of success, it had to respond to a recurrent wishful thinking type of approach characteristic to the EU paradigm of calls designed for this region. Hence, it had to face on a permanent basis the great divide between this paradigm and the realities on the ground, whose specific and generic determinations were listed before.

There is no way in which these strong determinations can be ignored in assessing the outcomes of *The Book Platform* project, as initiated, developed and implemented by the NexT Page Foundation and the local partners.

We consider that, despite a number of limitations that are going to be detailed below, The Book Platform project very successfully answered these challenges and allowed the creation of a generous context for further exploration in all three target countries in the area of the book industry empowerment.

B. Architecture of the Project, Planning and Implementation of Activities, and Outcomes

Out of the evaluation performed, a number of key areas of the project are considered relevant. These are:

1. PREPARATION PERIOD

On the one hand, it appears that the preparation period was correctly timed from a technical point of view, but was too short in relation to the dimension of the project and the need for conceptual and skilful alignment of all actors involved. Both narrative reports and interviews (with local partners and central coordination staff in Sofia) underline that more preparation time was needed in order to allow local partners to understand the methodology and the rigorous overall architecture of the project, to align the vocabulary, the requirements, the *modus operandi*, to establish a 'road map' and explain it in detail.

e.g. The Book Platform project

"Learning by doing is risky in the case of such projects," notes one key interviewee. "We had a couple of hours to align everyone but we needed a couple of days to really do so."

On the other hand, the short time allocated to the detailed coordination of the central and local teams functioned as a litmus test, provoking a better identification of missing links, gaps, dysfunctional attitudes on the local level and, thus, permitted a more precise mapping of weaknesses and areas to be addressed.

e.g. The Book Platform project

In response to the first Monitoring Report, the overall management stated at the end of 2012:

“Creating a culture of partnership and building project management capacity for implementing such a large-scale, EU-funded project, requires substantial amount of time. As a Lead Partner, NPF had indeed not planned the time and funding needed for building that base in the start of the project. Instead, mutual adjustment of management practices and implementation of activities had to go hand in hand. The differences between the three beneficiary countries and – more importantly – between the internal institutional cultures of the three LPs, require different approaches with regard to all aspects of project implementation. This was and still is, a process of mutual learning that is also at the core of EuroEast Culture Programme itself. In this ongoing process, NPF stance has always been to be *in support of, to consult and help*. This support we see in the form of the establishment of sustainable mechanisms so as the entire process of identifying and articulating needs, ensuring stakeholders’ support, visibility, planning, management and implementation of the project activities can be led by the LPs.

As much as we work for this to happen, this is a process that cannot be forced and that requires previously acquired experience, time and joint efforts on behalf of all project partners. By looking back and carefully reviewing, we understand that the process of introducing EU project management regulations in the project may have resulted in abundance of deadlines and frames that is perceived as ‘top-down approach’. Due to the busy project timeframe, we believe we may have forced this process too much instead of allowing it to develop by its own speed.”

During the final evaluation conference in Armenia, the recurrent statements of **positive outcomes** made by local managers but also by board members or partners, were in relation to the project as a ‘builder of trust’, as an essential tool in better mapping the region’s needs for the sector, in getting information about one another, in building awareness about the lacks and missing links of the sector nationally and regionally and, above all, in realising the dimension of the lack of needed expertise, research competences needed, systemic instruments needed in order to support the industry.

One can conclude that this awareness would not have been gained at such an important degree if time for preparation were more important and, accordingly, a subsequent narrowing down of tasks had been made.

2. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Questionnaires were addressed prior to most activities in order to better identify local needs, and the relation with the stakeholders and local teams was constant. However, as one of the local coordinators stated: *“We do not always correctly identify our needs, central coordination was better to do so”*. Interviews reveal that one of the key added values of the project is an increased awareness about the issues that are problematic at local and regional level and, also, at a more global dimension.

A second remark regarding the assessment of needs is that the definition of needs depends on the level it addresses. Stakeholders, partners, audiences, the public sector, the private publisher have different needs in regard to the development of the book industry and, at the same time, these needs are interrelated. Evaluation shows that The Book Platform addressed the needs of the publishers, the needs of the public sector (especially by offering strategic approaches), the needs of editors and writers (by offering them translations and information, as well as networking opportunities).

One can also note that, although a comprehensive and efficient needs assessment was not carried out extensively prior to the development phase of the project, the project’s outcomes led to a more extensively informed modality of assessment of needs as a result of the specific responses that organisations, stakeholders, trainees provided during and after the project’s activities cycle. Consultation with local teams existed and the annual leadership workshops in Bulgaria were sessions of evaluation and forward-looking ideas, which were very appreciated by participants.

The same can be said of the detailed way in which the final assessment session was conducted – a session which underlined the limitations and follow-up possibilities, using exercise, debate, peer-to-peer discussion and expert coaching in a complementary and efficient way.

To conclude: Needs assessment was undertaken in a direct and indirect way and choices were made to address the needs of those ‘actors’ of the system that are generators of context themselves. This is part of the positive and comprehensive outcome of the project as well as an argument for it to be continued.

3. METHODOLOGY

Within the methodology category we include: the choice of type of intervention, (including pioneering approaches for coaching competence such as the mentorship at distance), the correlation between different activities (such as training and research), follow-up of past activities in order to built upon future competence, criteria for training activities, etc.

When acting on ‘moving sands’, as one shareholder of the project stated, methodological clarification is a must. The methodological framework existed and it was formally communicated to the local managers, boards and partners by the overall management team on numerous occasions, in the framework of written communication and directly during meetings (*according to interviews and final evaluation conference*). However, given the complexity of the tasks undertaken by the local managers, as well as their diverse degree of preparation and the volatility of teams in charge, the methodology was not always sufficiently taken into account in carrying out the tasks.

e.g. The Book Platform project

- While in some countries the mentoring schemes are difficult, even impossible, to implement, they seem to produce better results at a later stage, when the local managers and board members integrate the meaning of it;
- While correlation between training and research is not entirely self-evident in the project design, the existence of the research material and the translation of specialty studies covering a broad array of issues related to publishing, translation, international distribution, strategic management, broadening of audiences, etc. are considered as very useful by the local partners and the interviewees;
- Communication and professional exchange inside the country and internationally, conceived as key tools for capacity building and sustainability, are considered to be highly useful and an important quantitative and qualitative asset in all three countries.

One may note in conclusion that, even if gradually integrated as a common, inter-related model by all three countries, the methodological paradigm proposed by The Book Platform, addressing a multitude of levels, recurrently created, in the end, a sense of urgency of the sector about being in charge and, also, a sense of the need for critical mass, in order to have an established and legitimate publishing sector locally and regionally. Methodology, expressed as a coherent and rigorous *modus operandi*, translated itself in a positive awareness about the dimension of the existing needs and about the opportunity to address them specifically.

4. FRAMEWORK

The initial framework stating the relationship between objectives, estimated results and plan of activities looks oversized. There are:

- Too diverse specific objectives (the initial specific objectives, aiming for “an enhanced role of book publishing as a key cultural industry” and “fostering access to books and literature for all” have been too wide and diverse to be realistically achievable through such a project, and were rightly narrowed down and realistically streamlined after the initial phase of the project, both as a result of the Monitoring Report but also as a natural response to the situation on the ground during project implementation);
- Too many activities for which allocated time for preparation is too short;
- Some of the estimated results are too ambitious given the specific context, the scope of the activities and the resources available (e.g. Increased transparency, sustainability and visibility of the civil society associations in the book sector for Activity 1; a minimum of 5 advocacy campaigns initiated as a result of Activity 2; increased access to books, particularly in remote areas for Activity 4, etc.).

The reasons for these are (as resulted from interviews and as exposed before), on the one hand, the need to comply with the EU call’s general objectives, and to respond to the very diverse and deep needs as identified in the region by the publishing sector in all targeted countries. On the other hand, these are due to the trust expressed by the project initiators that both internal (local) and external

expertise is sufficiently strong, and also very dynamic and autonomous. Both assumptions proved too ambitious and the project overall managers revised and readapted astutely along the road the scope and the activity road map, as well as the procedures of delegation in decision-making.

There was initial miscalculation of risks and time needed for the implementation of activities within the given log frame, as well as of the capacities of human resource available locally; however, by the end of the project this initial miscalculation provided ground for a natural selection of performant and motivated human resource, a capacity to respond to a vast array of activities, and an awareness about the complexity of tasks involved by the development of a healthy context for the book industry in the three countries.

Board members, advisory committee members and local coordinators were less preoccupied with the overload of activities and consider, all of them, that these were necessary, as the needs are extremely broad; that, even with this effort, a lot has still to be done; and that “imperfections were also positive”.

As resulted from interviews and the final evaluation conference, the project benefitted from an ongoing consultation between local partners and the central coordination, and an ongoing mentoring that the central management succeeded in giving in all content-related or management-related areas of the project.

Differences between countries were taken into account and for a number of aspects they were crucial (Ukraine’s strong community mobilisation versus Armenia’s ‘weak publishing sector’ or the expertise offered to both Armenia and Georgia in public policy issues related to the sector).

Overall, the project central management in Sofia aspired and succeeded to redesign the aspects that were proven problematic in the pilot phases of the Book Platform and to fine tune, adapt and overcome, when and if possible, the initial oversize of the proposal.

5. TARGET GROUPS AND PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

One can observe that the target groups of the project are distributed at various levels, responding to the professional community areas that The Book Platform covered in all three target countries. They very often overlap with partners engaged in the project, because of the weak representation (in terms of numbers) of the professional sector in this area.

Both public and private stakeholders are addressed (ministries, NGOs and businesses), as well as publishers, translators, readers, literary agents, public officers, intermediaries and shapers of the book industry. This very broad address is aimed to build critical mass and to catalyse a process of progressive consolidation of competent and modern practices in the sector.

Regarding this aspect, the following approaches, actions and outcomes are mentioned in the second Narrative Report:

e.g. The Book Platform project

- “Developed further relations with key stakeholders, initiated during previous stages of the project, and expanded the stakeholders base (particularly in Armenia)” (p.2);
- “Set up two types of local advisory committees for taking decisions at local level” (p.6);
- “Increase of members of the association in Georgia; dramatic increase in cooperation contacts with new partners and media in the country and internationally appearance of two new NGOs in the sector (in Ukraine and in Armenia); introduction of an objective and formalized decision-taking process via local committees; media coverage of LP increases by 70%; introducing best practices and international standards in the process of working with more than 50 local managers, assistants, consultants, trainers, experts, researchers, advisors and speakers” (p.26);
- “The project does not have direct relationship with all the groups of the final beneficiaries, except the group of “Creators in the book sector” and “Educators and librarians” that are involved as participants in the capacity building events, in different consultation processes and/or in mediating information on the project. The main target groups – various independent organizations in the book sector, public and municipal bodies as well as cultural organizations with relevant scope and activities, do support the project and are involved in its realization in various ways.” (p.32)

In conclusion, interviews with the entire range of 'actors' involved revealed the gradual consistency of building a community for the Book Platform project – a cluster of clusters that can further act as a catalyst and engage sustainability. On the other hand, the final evaluation conference stressed the impossibility to follow up by addressing all the levels that the BP project addressed, and the need to make choices; this self-awareness was won by the community during the project's cycle.

4. COMMUNICATION

There is a difference in evaluation between the conclusions of the first Monitoring Report (MR, by an external expert) and the data presented in the two interim Narrative Reports and the response to the MR given by the overall project management, concerning communication (external) and transparency (internal). It consists in commenting upon the observation of the MR about the lack of communication and internal information in the initial phase of the project. This consideration of the MR is based mostly on interviews with LPs and other involved partners and it witnesses the difficulty encountered at the beginning of the project to find the right speed and communication logic, as well as to fine tune the expectations of the overall management with those of local partners and the competences of the local partners in communication – both external and internal. This situation was fully overcome, as testified by the final evaluation conference, as well as the number of on-line mentions, media articles, or the related events developed in 2013, which ensured visibility. Also, the dynamics of exchange within the group of LPs as the project advanced is a proof of the cohesiveness obtained through the circulation, coordination and peer-to-peer internal communication that the overall management succeeded in putting in place.

The very wide range of activities, combined with a lack of experience of Local Managers in such large-scale projects, as well as their 'juniority', engendered in the beginning of the project's implementation a blockage in terms of their capacity to establish a list of priorities in communication. This situation improved gradually but substantially towards the end of the project's cycle.

The overall communication coordinator of the BP points out that: “defining the communication targets was a challenge, as well as communicating successfully activity per activity but, by the end of the project cycle, the delegation to local managers’ team started to work smoothly and this contributed to the capacity building and empowerment process of the whole BP project.”

The impressive listing of events and articles, as well as debates and book fair presences, or the online workshop materials in the second Narrative Report, as well as the recurrent positive references to communication issues made by the partners during the final evaluation conference, are a proof in support of this conclusion.

e.g. The Book Platform project

- 1) BP team “presented the project and its results at public discussions (seven) and policy debates (four) in the target countries as well as at major events (three) and professional gatherings (two) in the EU” (p.2);
- 2) “had achieved a visible growth in terms of reach-out compared to the previous period: 42% increase of newsletter subscriptions, 2,5 times more media coverage, 100% increase of web content, 5 times more people reached via social media” (p.2);
- 3) “Audience overview: For the period March 1, 2013-February 28, 2014, there were:
 - 8739 visits to the website/as compared to 3022 for the previous reported period;
 - 5090 unique visitors/as compared to 1471 for the previous reported period;
 - 51457 total number of pages viewed/as compared to 29407 for the previous reported period.” (p.35)

Source: Second Narrative Report

5. OVERALL ‘PROCESS’ OF THE PROJECT

There have been two main phases in the project’s cycle from the point of view of the present evaluation: a) the start of the project, landmarked by the event in Tbilisi (March 2012) and b) a second phase, landmarked by the final evaluation conference in Armenia (July 2014).

The first phase functioned as a reality check of the great dimension of the project and its implementation capacities – mostly at local level. This phase pointed out the

project's weak areas and its misbalances, as well as revealed the ways in which a number of activities and organisational dynamics had to be recalibrated in order to be feasible.

The second phase functioned as an adjusted operational system, much better tuned, and smoothed in its alignment logic, capable to efficiently differentiate between the limitations and capacities offered by each country and each local partner.

However, it was also this second phase that was put to risk by extreme situations like the one in Ukraine: "The major risk in Year 2 for the realization of project activities has been posed by the political situation in Ukraine and the government's response to the citizens' protest at the Maidan." (p.28, second NR)

Despite this, one can note that The Book Platform is a project that stabilised a new and sustainable dynamics of operations in the book sector industry in the three target countries, at all the professional levels touched by the project, and also at a cross-cutting and cross-regional level. It did not just complete in a self-referential way its cycle, but concretely and successfully confronted and solved misbalances, dysfunctional issues, volatility, lack of appropriate partners, etc. BP realised a process-oriented approach during its implementation period and thus allows for a sustainable follow-up.

6. ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY LINE 1: CAPACITY BUILDING

Capacity-building and institutional strengthening of book professional associations via interactive **trainings, mentorships and internship** programs on issues such as intellectual property, new technologies, new audiences outreach and literature promotion. **Creation of centres of expertise within the associations.** Editorial visits and debates, workshops on readership development, public debates, emergent group of researchers creation, online development proficiency, data gathering

As the central management states, the whole project can be described as a capacity building scheme *in the making*. This statement is reinforced by interviews with partner organisations, local management, by the general monitoring and annual reporting information gathered. All activity cycles become resources for information, awareness, contact or exchange experience; published and translated manuals, research papers and research studies are sources of knowledge improvement; meetings, seminars, leadership workshops, encounters of local experts are seen as learning opportunities and empowerment tools.

Training session as such, as well as workshop on certain issues were sometimes positively, sometimes less positively appreciated, but globally there is a sense that the project provided a wide range of learning opportunities and, also, that it engaged in an interactive approach regarding know-how development.

A very telling example, confirmed by interviews, is the following:

e.g. The Book Platform project

"On May 17-18, 2013, during the Lviv International Children's Festival, the international training seminar for participants from Ukraine, Armenia and Georgia was held. The focus of the seminar on "Reading promotion for children and youth", rather than on the broader topic of reading promotion in general, was a result of the policy studies on the topic held during the previous project period as well as of needs assessments held locally. Specialists in promotion of reading, educators, researchers, librarians gathered to share and learn on various techniques of promoting reading among children and young adults. The seminar was opened by Bohdan Kordon of the Lviv Regional Council and Iryna Magdysh of the Lviv City Council who confirmed the local authorities' commitment to promoting reading in Lviv and Ukraine. The seminar was a success both by its atmosphere of open debates and by the active commitment of all participants. The two days included useful presentations by Elżbieta Olszewska, (board member and program director of the Foundation ABCXXI, Poland) about children in the world of values and education through reading, by Dr. Sigrid Fahrner (project manager at Stiftung Lesen, Germany) on aspects of reading in the digital age. Representatives of all participating countries as well as special guests from Bonn City Council presented the most interesting and successful reading initiatives during the discussion panel. During the training, conducted by Olena Bashun (training center manager at Bibliomist program, Ukraine) and Olena Liublianska (head of analytical department of Lugansk Regional Youth Library, Ukraine), participants worked hard and tried to develop a methodology and practical steps for future actions of promotion of reading that could be implemented in their cities and villages." (p.3)

Source: Second Narrative Report

Due the short time period of the project, there is not enough duration and perspective up to date, in order to fully appreciate the actual *qualitative* impact of the project, in time, on the professional associations and their capacity to engage in new initiatives as a direct result of the learning provided. However, narrative reports and interviews show that the degree of awareness, participation and understanding of the sector, the knowledge about the regional needs, the exchange of experience with regional and international partners grew exponentially during the last year and a half. Hence, quantitative expectations were met.

ACTIVITY LINE 2: POLICY STUDIES

Policy-relevant **studies** on readership, publishing and translations; Policy **recommendations & discussions**

This component of the project was considered highly useful and appreciated, as such, mostly for its pioneering character, offering specific information, guided research and competence-driven documents, complementing the training sessions. Interviewees underline it as one of the most important outcomes of the project because of its comprehensiveness and accessibility.

Criticism in interviews and final assessment conference was raised regarding the way in which the policy studies were conducted, the choice of researchers, the type of methodology they used, the solid relevance of data they provide. It is clear that, in the absence of a dedicated research institute in each country, the gathering of data was difficult, and it combined with a scarcity of resources allocated; one cannot compensate a lack of statistical systems and data gathering specifically dedicated to the book industry. One important partner of the project suggested that this research should have been conducted differently and using international entities of research.

This is how the management acknowledged and responded to these difficulties and criticism:

e.g. The Book Platform project

"As noted in the project revised LogFrame, in the last period, the quality of the project outcomes was at risk due to the lack of highly-specialized local experts, with a knowledge and experience both of the local and the international cultural industries, that were needed for the execution of the policy studies. This is valid specifically regarding the local execution of the studies but also as far as English-language translation is concerned. Insofar the studies' texts are addressed not only to local audiences but to international ones as well, we have faced an incomparability between some basic notions/conventions used in the 'Western' and in the local reflection on the book sector. This issue is addressed by investing more time into editing of the texts and discussing them with the local experts." (p.28)

Source: Second Narrative Report

On the other hand, the declared 'weaknesses' of the local research offered a conceptual basis for further development of research entities within the region, and offered incentive ground for information dissemination addressed to international partners.

In terms of its sustainability, it remains to assess whether there is commitment from public authorities, other public or privately-funded organizations in the three countries to continue or to support the process of data gathering, research, consultancy and discussion between different actors involved in the book industry system in the target countries. On the whole, the policy studies are one of the most relevant categories of activities for the project 's 'ownership of knowledge' component.

ACTIVITY LINE 3: DIALOGUE

Provision of **information. Joint events** with intra-regional and EU partners.

Testing of elements of new policy for literature promotion in the region

The internal (within each country and regional) and external (international) networking opportunities are the highest ranked activity component from the point of view of the added value brought by the project. They represent one of the main positive outcomes of the Book Platform project.

ACTIVITY LINE 4: DISSEMINATION & VISIBILITY

Dissemination of results and visibility measures. Creation of a regional **Virtual Book Observatory**

The issue of visibility and dissemination, hard to assess properly, is also one of the most difficult to implement and, as resulted from the interviews, represents a weaker outcome for the project in the first phase and a stronger in the second phase. The dissemination and visibility process will continue in the years to come within those aspects of the project that prove to be sustainable and efficient both inside the respective countries and/or internationally.

The Virtual Book Observatory was mentioned as an important outcome of the project, securing a long-term dissemination of project results. One can note, also, that a better and visitor-friendly structuring of materials within the website and a more rigorous listing of existing sources could be of use. Last but not least, the ongoing enrichment of the website is a way in which the project can ensure important and sustainable visibility.

9. CRITICISM & RECOGNITION. OUTCOMES

The following section will address the most important generic criticism and the most important generic positive notes gathered from desk research and interviews.

9.1. Key criticism of The Book Platform

a) **Top-down approach** – noted in the first Monitoring Report and mentioned by diverse LMs, partners and beneficiaries. The so called ‘top-down approach’ was,

in the process of the BP project, a way of tutoring and helping to gain autonomy at a local level, for reasons explained before in this document; also, most of the mention of top-down approach regarded financial matters which, from all documents and interviews resulted as a 'painful' subject, as EU regulations were generally very difficult to understand and implement by the LMs. Last but not least, the final evaluation conference in Armenia revealed that all LMs, as well as the rest of the participants in the BP project cycle, strongly trusted the overall management and considered their opinion as regulatory and necessary, giving it strong authority over other opinions. This situation is a proof of the important mentoring role that the overall management played also from a content coordination point of view in 'keeping things together' in a meaningful way.

- b) **Lack of transparency of the overall management in Sofia** – noted in the MR, this observation was fully dismissed by all interviews before and during the final evaluation conference in Armenia. Again, the label of 'lack of transparency' appeared to be due rather to a lack of understanding of the complex and complicated nature of the project at the local level and a time needed to adapt means to resources at a central level. Transparency means clarity, and the initial project phase brought a need of clarification before real transparency was possible at all levels involved. Also, this remark is another indication for the weak degree of autonomy of some of the local partners, who are positioning themselves 'in expectation' instead of looking actively for information, if they need it. Transparency was more of a challenge than a weakness of the project, as it came together with a sense of expectation as long as interactive communication issues are concerned. For local partners communication was seen more unilateral; for the overall management, more interactive. A good balance between the two was only reached by the end of the project's cycle.
- c) **Time planning** – a recurring topic in reports, interviews, final evaluation conference.

- d) **Lack of common terms of reference, lack of alignment in the beginning of the project** – a recurrent topic in interviews with staff, LMs, as well as board member, this aspect appears as transversal and systemic for different phases and activities of the project, but the evaluator’s conclusion is that it is an aspect due to the multi-levelled, too ambitious and oversized number of activities, to the various profiles of competence involved, the volatility of structures, to the encounter between junior and senior staff, etc. The more the internal communication improved during the project, the more successful some activities were, and the better they allowed a ground for coherence, as shown during the final evaluation conference. Alignment and common references are an indirect positive outcome of the project, though they were critically perceived during the project’s development and implementation cycle.
- e) **Local ownership** – recurrent in interviews, the evaluator’s note is that it is more of a problem of capacity to measure it (i.e. self-assess the local ownership), than an actual weakness. The evaluator considers that, as long as at the end of the final conference the main ‘actors’ of the project could formulate a number of activities that are sustainable and also identify ways in which participation is ensured to these follow-up activities, the sense of ownership is already formed.
- f) **Quality of research performed** – raised during narrative reports, interviews and the final evaluation. Evaluator’s note on this is the following: policy papers and research performed in the three countries are of unequal quality, but form a mass of documents that can be partially – at least – used as an information base. The research started from scratch, which makes high quality requirements exaggerated; serious research needs long-term data, trained statisticians, researchers, important long-term financial investment. This first endeavour created a precedent and this is the main positive outcome of the research exercise. It is worth noting that cultural research at European scale in general is underdeveloped. (e.g.: *Reading habits in Georgia* or *Translations into Ukrainian* are well informed, structured studies, while *Publishing and Bookselling in Armenia* is a poorly developed document).

9.2. Key positive aspects of The Book Platform. Outcomes.

The evaluator considers that these recurring positive aspects are the generic outcomes of the project:

- a) The **novelty** aspect of the project: encounters, contacts, approach, learning methods (“the BP introduced a brand new approach to things”);
- b) The **strong international and inter-regional dimensions** of the project: developing networks and professional clusters, internationalising one’s experience;
- c) The **pragmatic approach of mentoring and trainings**: design, teaching methods, etc.;
- d) Capacity of **strong and timely mentorship and competent assistance coming from the overall management** team;
- e) The **overall good quality and the diversity of trainers and experts**;
- f) **Interaction between all parties involved** (“the project brought together people who would not sit together”);
- g) Creation of a number of **concrete tools** (e.g. the website);
- h) **Growth of personal reputation** of people involved;
- i) **Gain of status** for professional categories like ‘translators’ or ‘literary agents’;
- j) **Growth in membership of professional organisations**;
- k) **Establishment of public-private partnership**;
- l) **Gained awareness about the importance of human resource and ‘out of the box’ thinking** in order to move forward – good people can create a new context, innovative organisations can create and shape a context;
- m) **Legitimation of the local book industry** in Armenia Georgia, Ukraine, and internationally.

C. General Conclusions. Notes on Management

This chapter includes the evaluator's conclusive remarks, preceded by an evaluation of the accomplishment of the project objectives, expected results and indicators, as self-determined by the project. Because management issues are evoked all along the present evaluation (being internally embedded within the categories describing the project's overall cycle under chapters A and B), this chapter provides additional conclusions on three aspects related to the project's overall management.

1. ACCOMPLISHMENT OF SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED RESULTS (SELF-DETERMINED INDICATORS)

We are including below an assessment of how the Specific Objectives (SO) and the Expected Results (as redefined in February 2013 in the revised Logical Framework) have been met, according to the self-determined indicators and criteria. The comments of the evaluator are marked in bold.

In this respect, the final evaluation conference revealed that:

- a) There are both *tangible* and *indirect* outcomes of the BP project, each being equally important;
- b) The BP project was more of a balancing act between an important number of actors, institutions, general dynamics at country and regional level; turning this complexity into a coherent cycle of events and processes is a definite plus;
- c) There is still not a clear perception about which are the actors that mentor change in a troubled and transitory context; the follow-up of the project therefore depends on the degree of stability of the specific environment in the respective countries, which the project is neither a generator of or responsible for. There is no way in which a project, even as broad as BP, can counteract endemic issues by itself;

- d) Some of the problems in the three countries targeted are endemic, e.g. lack of culture of association, lack of 'civic' culture, lack of autonomous practices in the public policy sector, etc., or the idea that sustainability is related to external help from a ministry, foreign partners, a rich sponsor, etc.

1.1. Specific Objectives

- 1) *Strengthen the position of key actors of the book sector in the target countries by building new skills and knowledge, by supporting institutional strengthening of professional associations and by facilitating intra-sectorial cooperation;*

In process, slower than expected, membership growth is to be noted positively.

- 2) *Back-up policies and strategic decision-taking by providing data and analysis, and facilitating consensus on a shared agenda;*

Kicked-off & in process. Much depends on the public figures in charge; the private sector better empowered and the public sector in the three target countries more aware of the book industry's specific issues.

- 3) *Contribute to diversity in book production in target countries and the EU by encouraging international and regional dialogue between book professionals.*

Strong positive outcome. The Book Platform provided a strong complementary contribution to that of the only other regional initiative in the field, which is the Goethe Institute.

1.2. Indicators identified to assess the achievement of Specific Objectives

- 1) *Key target groups of the project with new knowledge of international developments in their areas, best practices and possible solutions, and with new professional skills;*

From available written reports, interviews and final evaluation, good percentage of professional skills added.

2) *More than 70% of participants in capacity building activities recognize the value of the new skills acquired and start applying them in their professional work;*

This cannot effectively be checked, but there is a large majority of the interviewees who stressed this aspect.

3) *Professional members-based associations' number and effectiveness increases: joining of members; positive dynamics of annual budgets; availability of strategic documents and regulations; new partnerships and activities start; recognition and visibility of professional associations is higher; motivation and participation in joint action by members is higher;*

Evident outcome, but at a slower than expected pace.

4) *Active involvement of sectorial representatives in wider policy dialogue increased: result-oriented and transparent meetings, discussions and public hearings increase, particularly concerning relevant legislation and its implementation;*

In process. Debates and public discussions, workshops, as well as other activities developed in the framework of the BP project - participated in launching these dynamics; Georgia and Ukraine are better off than Armenia (as per interviews).

5) *Methodology, implementation and results of research is up to EU standards, and is recognized by stakeholders as contributing to local solutions (key concepts and recommendations used in public and other documents and statements);*

Detailed in former chapters of the present document; overall, research and policy studies were considered a very positive outcome, despite criticism in relation to possible improvements of the quality and resource dedicated to research.

- 6) *Level of active participation in dialogue w. other actors increased (N of meetings and participants, N of speakers at events and joint decisions);*
Accomplished.
- 7) *An increase of quantity and quality of participation of local book professionals at events, networks, umbrella bodies in EU and the region (N of events, N of memberships, N of participants, level of variety of target events and participants);*
According to narrative reports and interviews, accomplished.
- 8) *Increased interest of EU book professionals in the book sectors of target countries (increased N of EU participants in local book events, N of translations into the local languages, of references to the countries' book sectors in international sources);*
Accomplished. The presence at international book fairs, Georgia being invited country at the Frankfurt Book Fair, editorial visits etc. are all proofs in this respect.
- 9) *Increased visibility of the target countries' book production across borders (more use of available information, more translations published).*
In process and still to be accomplished if sustainability is ensured for the key activities, like editorial visits, presence at book fairs, serious data gathering on publishing and translation, internship opportunities, continuation of the website, creation of the Observatory.

1.3. Expected Results

- 1) *Main target groups will get new knowledge and skills to better meet challenges and changes in the contemporary book business; Yes*

- 2) *Professional membership associations in the book sector will have an increased effectiveness and legitimacy, and will be better prepared for advocacy and policy-participation; Yes*
- 3) *Current and future decisions in the book sector are backed-up by high quality, reliable, up to date data, and assisted by qualitative analyses and recommendations; In process*
- 4) *Exchange projects (events participation, translations) across borders regionally and with EU increase. Yes*

2. MANAGEMENT: GENERAL OBSERVATIONS IN RELATION TO PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Realising the evaluation in a short time and with a reduced capacity to assess all procedures and technical aspects of the project's management, the notes below are the result of interviews with LMs and overall management staff in Sofia, and of the final evaluation conference, and complement the remarks on this topic included throughout Chapters A and B.

2.1. Selection of local partners

The frequent changes in local management created a number of important managerial challenges (most of these challenges were solved by an active and total implication of the overall management and its constant will to find a good solution to sometimes very complicated and stressful situations). Reports and interviews underline that changes realised were positive and to the benefit of the project as a whole.

2.2. Decision-making and management procedures

Interviews, narrative reports and the monitoring report show that there is still a lack of procedural clarification in terms of the relationship between advisory

boards, local management and central management. It remains very much a question of coordinating very diverse institutional, people, dynamics, ways of working and interacting. Although this can be seen as a negative aspect, these ambiguities can also be a trigger to encourage local teams to self-define their role and responsibilities and to create a personal, specific way to work efficiently.

The roles of the advisory committees and board members were different from one country to another, and it is obvious that an active board, a dynamic advisory membership, together with a good local management would make a great difference. The content of the project benefitted each time the local manager could fully invest time in the project's activities.

2.3. Financial management

The Monitoring Report (Sep. 2012) and the Project Leader's response to it noted the difficulties in the first phase in terms of decentralising the financial management of the project to local partners, which has subsequently been improved. This aspect specifically addresses the issue of the need of adapting the ways projects are built by the funder (EU) in view of working in non-EU countries which do not have previous training, understanding and experience on these matters.

3. CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

- a) In the design and the implementation of the proposal, some of the objectives were oversized and time planning was a constant challenge.
- b) A certain number of aspects of the project had to be fine-tuned during the implementation process, some activities proved to be pioneering and needed more preparation time in order to fully accomplish their potential (e.g. distance mentoring scheme, partially the research published).

- c) The trainers were well selected, but their work could not be coordinated fully with other aspects of the project; capacity building out of actual overall processes and activities developed during the entire project cycle was the real training opportunity for participants in the BP.
- d) The overall management displayed a very important and competent assistance capacity toward modelling and adapting the project, refocusing it and giving it rigour and coherence in a troubled and institutionally fragile local context.
- e) A great number of needs present in the region locally and regionally were addressed in an ambitious and courageous way. The diversity and great number of activities did not all correspond successfully to the reality check – some were more efficient than others; there was not always good correlation between dimension and ambition of activity and the autonomy of the sector and its capacity to act. A sense of correct balance between the need to start sustainable projects in the publishing sector in the region and how to make international connection efficient was gained. “Start small but build solid” was a catch phrase repeated in different forms by interviewees.
- f) Recurrent observation that time was too short for issues like: translation policy development, dissemination, international recognition to grow sufficiently clear as a strong project outcomes; the dynamics of the literary and publishing sector is ‘slow’ in relation to others, it needs specific time frames. Catch phrase: “There is no crash course in translating literature, understanding a culture and disseminating efficiently local writers and building a policy. It takes time”. However, the broad array of activities, number of people involved, number of materials published, number of concrete instruments created, the increase of awareness, legitimacy, participation and empowerment of professionals from the book industry in the three countries, all show without the shadow of a doubt that time was short but exceptionally well used given the circumstances.

- g) The issue of systemic communist legacies – lack of initiative and autonomy in decision making, need of assistance in determination of strategies, lack of understanding of EU procedures, difficulty in mapping synthetically the broad regional area, lack of practice in advocating, lobbying for an artistic sector, etc. had an important role in certain aspects of the project that were less dynamic and responsive than expected. Mobilisation of resources and building awareness about the need for this mobilisation takes time, openness, and capacity to fully review inertial professional behaviour. The central management had often to rely on local partners or individuals with better understanding in order to overcome obstacles of this sort. However, despite the fact that the general mentality legacies slowed down the rhythm of the project if compared to the ‘ideal’ chart of expected results, the BP overall management operated the needed changes when necessary, acted responsively and determined a strong culture of trust to be built within the project’s community at all levels.
- h) The overall changes and adaptations of the content of the program took always into account consultation with local management and local partners. The apparent ‘top- down’ approach from the central team was often a modality of coaching the local manager. The central management offered extensively resource, information, contacts and support whenever needed, in the most interactive way, but fully aware of the dysfunctional character of some aspects and ready to correct them. The main principles of the project – developing skills, raising awareness, empowering the professional sector regionally and internationally – were constantly protected and promoted at the level of the central coordination (Next Page Foundation).

Overall, the project met its main objectives, created concrete outcomes (website, research materials, new organisations emerged, informal professional networks were created, new international opportunities for publishing, translating, experience exchange, visibility of the countries were created); The Book Platform implemented successful activities (workshops, debates, research, etc.),

initiated a context and built creatively efficient tools for communication and interaction within the region and outside, developed a sense of ownership and responsibility among the actors of the project, and offered a solid ground for further sustainable development. The participants gained knowledge, skills and legitimation and also the awareness that the continuation of the BP initiative is now fully in their hands.

From the standpoint of the external evaluator, this project is considered strong and impressive by its quality and its size.

Annex 1

Interviews

The present report is based on a series of interviews made by the Corina Şuteu in person (during the conference in Yerevan) or via Skype or email during the evaluation period with the following project staff, partners, participants and beneficiaries:

- 1) Yana Genova, Director of NexT Page Foundation in Bulgaria / BP Executive Project Manager;
- 2) Anna Portarska, Consultant, Bulgaria / BP Project Manager
- 3) Diyana Iossifova, Project manager, NexT Page Foundation (Bulgaria) / BP Platform Visibility & Communications Manager;
- 4) Arevik Ashkharoyan, Executive Director of Armenian Literature Foundation and LM in Armenia;
- 5) Vahan Khachatryan, Executive director, National Publishers Association of Armenia / former BP LM in Armenia;
- 6) Lianna Aghamyan, assistant at Armenian Literature Foundation / BP Local Assistant in Armenia, internship translation promotion;
- 7) Nerses ter Vardanyan, deputy minister of culture - Armenia / BP Advisor
(Note: Engaged by the evaluator in a discussion about the project and the overall context and not a full interview);
- 8) Armen Martyrosyan, director, Antares Publishing, Armenia; board member of National Publishers Association of Armenia / BP stakeholder; training & internship participant;
- 9) Hrispime Madoyan, Antares Publishing, Armenia / BP stakeholder;

- 10) Gayane Ginoyan, Translator, lecturer and board member of the Translators' Association / BP stakeholder;
- 11) Armen Ohanyan, writer; PR of All Armenian Fund / board member of the LP & committee member;
- 12) Salome Maghlakelidze, Executive director at the Georgian Publishers and Booksellers Association (GPBA) / BP LM in Georgia;
- 13) Tinatin Mamulashvili, former President of the Board of Georgian Publishers Association;
- 14) Nino Kiknadze, Assistant, GPBA / BP Local Assistant in Georgia;
- 15) Medea Metrevelli, Director, Book Program at the Ministry of Culture of Georgia / BP stakeholder;
- 16) Irine Tschogoshvilli, Manager, Book Program at the Ministry of Culture of Georgia; BP stakeholder & internship participant;
- 17) Georgi Sabadnidze, National Library of Georgia / BP stakeholder & research co-author;
- 18) Barbara Wattendorf, Head of Information and Library, Goethe-Institut Georgia / BP member of advisory committees in Armenia and Georgia, funder;
- 19) Iryna Lepska, Development and International Relations Director at Publishers Forum-Lviv / BP LM in Ukraine;
- 20) Ihor Sevchuk, Director, Lviv Center for Cultural Management (*Note: Engaged by the evaluator in a discussion about the project and the overall context and not a full interview*).

Annex 2

Documents Reviewed

The present report is based on the study of the following documents provided by the project management:

- 1) Initial concept note and full application for The Book Platform project to the “Investing in People and Eastern Partnership Culture programme: Strengthening capacities in the cultural sector” (EuropeAid/129338/C/ACT);
- 2) Revised Logical Framework (February 2013);
- 3) External Monitoring Report (September 2012) – referred in this document as Monitoring Report (MR);
- 4) Response of the project management to the Monitoring Report;
- 5) First Narrative Report (for Year 1);
- 6) Activities and Communication Plan for Year 2;
- 7) Second Narrative Report (for Year 2);
- 8) Activities and Communication Plan for Year 3;
- 9) Training session kits/manuals for the project training sessions available in English (BP website);
- 10) Studies and Research Reports produced in the framework and as outcomes of the BP project (on translations from and into the language of the three countries, on reading habits in the three countries, on publishing and bookselling in each of the three countries – in hardcopy);
- 11) Calendar of activities and various announcements on the project website (in English).

CORINA SUTEU is an international cultural consultant, president of Film ETC. (New York-Bucharest) and the Making Waves Film Festival in New York. From 2006 to 2012 she has been the Director of the Romanian Cultural Institute in New York, the Romanian public agency dedicated to cultural diplomacy and international arts exchange, initiating and implementing the new vision on cultural diplomacy promoted by RCI. Under her leadership, RCI New York forged a highly visible and flourishing open space for intercultural dialogue, connecting vibrant Romanian arts and artists to the evolving international scene. She also held the presidency of the network of European Cultural Institutes in NYC (EUNIC) in 2010. She became interested in managing cultural organizations immediately after the fall of communism. At the beginning of the 1990s she was the director of the Theatre Union of Romania (UNITER) and of Theatrum Mundi in Bucharest. Passionate about the emerging and controversial disciplines of cultural management and cultural policies, she continued working in France, where she was for nine years the director of the European Master's degree in Cultural management of the Business School in Dijon. In 1995 she also initiated the first regional training program in cultural management for Eastern European professionals, the ECUMEST program, and founded in 1998 the ECUMEST Association in Bucharest, which co-initiated, together with the European Cultural Foundation in Amsterdam, the Policies for Culture program in South-East Europe. She acted for four years as President of the European Forum of Cultural Networks and was a board member of IETM and ENCATC.

She has also worked extensively as independent trainer, consultant and researcher in the fields of cultural cooperation and cultural management and policies with leading organizations throughout Europe, while her key interests continued to keep a balanced focus on the relation between policies and practices in the arts. She has been involved in many international activities as cultural mediator and senior expert (for the Council of Europe, UNESCO, various EU programmes, the European Cultural Foundation, Boekman Foundation, the Soros Foundation network, Interarts Observatory, etc.). She lectured, among others, for the IEP Lyon (DRECI), Observatoire des Politiques Culturelles et IEP Grenoble, Paris VIII, College of Europe in Bruges, Salzburg Seminar, MA in Cultural management and cultural policy in the Balkans of the University of Arts in Belgrade and various European networks.

She is author of *Another brick in the wall. A critical review of cultural management education in Europe* (Boekman Foundation, Amsterdam, 2006) and of numerous articles and studies.