

Memo November 2009

A memo sent to correspondents, friends and acquaintances of the Budapest Observatory (BO) in November 2009. November was grey outside, busy indoors. Holidaying in crisis time. Statistics is food and product for observatories, both input and output. See what BO extruded from a recent Eurobarometer survey:

A piece of good news: the economic crisis made many more European holiday makers save on eating and shopping than on culture. Yet people in the ten eastern states fared much worse in every aspect, except maybe for food and drink. (The columns show the percentage of people who chose the respective response.)

New beginnings Having got rid of Mr Klaus's ban, the European Union has a new basic treaty and a number of new faces on top. We know now whom President Barroso chose to be in charge of culture in the next five years: Androulla Vassiliou, the actual EU commissioner for health. In addition to education, culture and youth, her future remit will contain multilingualism and media (including cinema) – which BO finds a favourable development. More immediate effect on culture, and particularly cultural co-operation in our region, is brought about by the removal of visa restrictions on Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia from 19 December. The process goes on and might reach Albania and Bosnia soon.

New participant In all nine projects that the jury selected from 102 applications offering new ways of enhancing mobility at EU level, organisations from our region are nicely represented (in two cases as leaders) – this is clear progress from where we stood years ago. Chances of east-European involvement have grown another bit by Montenegro becoming the 35th country to participate in the Culture programme. Reinforced help to neighbours – three million, four years, six countries: signal came about the EU Eastern Partnership Culture Programme starting soon, available for operations in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The financial mechanism of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is called ENPI – the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. Since 2007 ENPI replaced TACIS, familiar to many colleagues on the eastern edges of the continent. Browsing the national action programmes may offer clues as to the chances to win support.

New prizes and awards Members of the European Parliament voted for a French film about a Kurdish immigrant, to be subtitled in 23 languages, which goes with the Lux prize. Ten performers have been awarded as Border Breakers by the European Commission. One of them can be voted as the EBBA winner till the end of December. BO vote goes for the only eastern candidate: Love is Dead. Creativity and funding Promote a strong, independent and diverse cultural sector that can sustain intercultural dialogue! This is one of the seven commandments contained in the 1135 word Manifesto that some of the ambassadors of the creativity year drew up as the twelve-month campaign is about to end. Action 1 in the same document calls for the expansion of the Structural Funds towards research and knowledge. And to what extent has culture profited from the Structural Funds so far? A seminar in Brussels was dedicated to the issue. The search goes on, with the aim of assembling evidence for greater, and more direct presence of culture in EU funding. BO is involved – and so can you. Send photos to Prague Do you have photos that nicely capture the changes over the past twenty years in the region? You might win various prizes if you send them in before 13 December. In order to test the taste of the organiser, browse the cultural pages of Prague based TOL – Transitions Online. BO was duped twice After the first case BO received reassuring and apologising e-mails about the silly error of the hotel (in Paris) and promises to refund; with another BO staff member the hotel (in Brussels) was more helpful and went after the missing reservation. Lesson: Book in Hotels is a harmful phishing operation, don't use it! Errand Croats and Spaniards Finally, one more graph distilled from recent Eurobarometer polls, showing changes in the answers "loss of our cultural identity" to the question "What does the European Union mean to you personally?". One per cent fewer of Europeans, on the whole, share this concern. East Europeans, supposedly the more vulnerable, and the more dependent on their cultural legacy, prove to be much less worried than the west – is the issue connected maybe to migration? Croats and Spaniards seem to have lost orientation. They find themselves at the opposite end of the scale than expected. (BO has no clue for the high level of identity anxiety in Croatia.)