

Interview Goethe Institute

1. How is the future of Culture developing in Hungary?
 - a. Under the current development?

I can't tell, it is not my task to tell and I really can't tell at the moment I see a quite dark picture but I think/hope things might change after the next terms of government, or if other things might happen which change things, but now we'll see. The culture of Hungary is in the moment much dependent on the government, I mean this morning I was told that apparently it is not possible to bring (it is something which have nothing to do with us, I was only informed about it) but it seem impossible to bring a small inoffensive exhibition to the museum of ethnology without going through the ministry of foreign affairs, which is something I never heard of before in the countries I have been working in, and I have worked in Serbia before. And that is maybe also something I should mention to start with, I have a very positive experience working with Eunic, in Serbia we were the third cluster that was formed outside Brussels and Berlin where they formed the central network and then they send out the message to create local networks and we were the 3 local cluster, before Budapest before others and that went really well in January 2003, so I have a quite positive outlook but at the same time I see what the problems are, and I saw this more here than in Serbia, maybe because of the cluster being larger or because the cluster having organisational issues dominating the scene, in the meetings for example, I couldn't come to the last meeting, but the first meeting (at the Romanian institute) in August and it was very chaotic, very chaotic, there was a woman which was trying to promote a swimsuit collection and the whole meeting was very chaotic, so I had the feeling that I was losing my time sitting there and none of us have too much time, so I think there is a lot to be clarified in this way, like things we mentioned when you arrived, rules of procedure, very simple thing, who can be a part of the decisions making process and who can be brought in as a associate partner only for projects where we could have a half a page rules like we had in Serbia, but only a half a page, but that worked really well and we stated for example that only representatives of the cultural institute which I represented locally can be a part of the Eunic cluster and other actors, companies, members of embassies or non European partners could come on a project basis, every project are open to everyone, but the actually meetings and decision making process should be limited to a clear number of people, I think something like this could make it much more easy, but now it have started in a different way, and it is very difficult to change it, because if you don't have clear rules then every decision comes out as it was a personnel decision so you don't say "we don't want Japanese foundation" which is immediately is interpretive as we don't want any other in which is a total different thing, I always want others, but I don't think there is a reason for the Japanese foundation to be a part of Eunic.

In Serbia it was much more structured, and because of the way we are and with the recognition of we are different and being a network which work somewhat of like an organization which makes it much more difficult, but these things were a lot more clear and there was a clear consensus that we would never invite someone which individuals or companies which didn't have any knowledge of what is happening inside the organisation or mutual interest. we did also agreed last year I was there on certain subject areas we wanted to focus on, like for example Climate change and something like this, and then to try to look for a Serbian partner which is a very important issue to look for a Serbian partner which could be interested in the same subject area, and then decide what we want to do together. And here I think first of all the decision making process to me is not very clear, everyone is bringing in subjects, and then we suddenly

have Eunic projects and we really don't know how it got this status, if we see this as a status, and then as far as I can tell, and then you realize that you need a Hungarian partner, and you bring in an institution that sees its role as an agency, which is very understandable if it wasn't something which was part of my portfolio and if it wasn't developed together with me, then I can only be a service agency and for this I charge a fee. So I think this is the basics which I see as a basic problem if you want, challenges, and another thing is that Eunic from the outside is seen as a institution, I think that is a problem here, we had that problem in Serbia, but we managed to deal with it, because we had a very clear communication stating that we are a network, we don't have extra funds, we only have the funds which is broad in by the individual members, we are not funded by EU or anybody else but I think people here really haven't understood it yet, or that is what my colleagues told me, they think it is an organization, an organization where you can apply for money, and I think that is something we might have to take a look at

2. Is Eunic an important part of this development?

3. How do you see Eunic's role in Hungary?

a. Especially in the time being

I can't really see its role so far, no I saw and developed a very clear role for Eunic in Serbia, and I think it played its role very well, but I don't really see it here. In Serbia we had a joint stand at the Bookfair every year and it was incredible that the first year we did that, the press were so much after us, they found it so interesting that we had a joint stand, because for them the issue is almost political because they can't find ways to come to an agreement with the republic of the former Yugoslavia and to do things together while preserving your own identity etc... and they saw this as an example, you can be Eunic but all of us are ourselves, we don't lose our identity as the Goethe institute and the Danish Institute, and they really got that message and it was really fine, but I don't see it here, first of all you don't have this problem of being a member of being part of a former union state which no longer exist and we can't solve the major things. So I don't know, I know from the projects that were done so far, have more the character of being abdicative, I mean that projects that we coordinate, films, celluloid curtain, which is nice project but still the thing is everybody participate with their own film, so you have like a bouquet of flowers, which is nice and more than one flower, but it is still a bouquet, and not a tree where you can develop and distinguish and with no roots.

4. What is the best feature of EUNIC?

- And the worst?
- What do you think is the main assignments for Eunic?

Environment, architecture, I asked for that we developed together with the Hungarian institutes, where I thought where Eunic could work really well, it is called the Hungarian foundation for good journalism, and they wanted to create a prize for good reporting on foreign countries, and the reason behind this, is that they say that, and my colleagues confirmed that, that the number of articles that deals with things happening abroad of Hungary is very low, and getting even lower, so all the reporting is only on home issues, and among the articles there are, the number of good articles is almost gone. They want to change that, and a good way to do this is a prize, they have already a prize on economic journalism, and they wanted to do

that on foreign journalism, and we thought that we didn't wanted to do it on our own, but have this prize four times a year fx and alternating countries from Eunic supporting it, I send out a mail with the suggestion, and I only got an answer from the Flemish institute, no one else even answered, and there have gone three months now. I was surprised but also a little insulted, but I will ask one more time, I find it a little bit strange, and this can be a symbolic gesture, and could also be something where we would be seen, acting together, it is not political, but serves a political purpose, very important purpose.

Of course there is the environmental issues which is quite clear, journalism, architecture and off course lingual issues, but we are already doing this, which should continue.

5. What is your preferences towards EUNIC

- a. Active suggesting programs?
- b. Passive partner?

I don't have any preferences, I like to work in a structured way, I am a structuralist, and I don't like to work when things are unclear and chaotic, so sometimes this also decides the choice of partners when I know I can work well with some partners, but I don't have any preference towards any country, not at all.

6. Is the current status of Eunic sufficient developed?

- a. Should it expand
 - i. More countries
 - ii. Legislation?
 - iii. Strategy?
 - iv. Does money play a big role in the development? And how to get these?

I think there is a lack of structure it is not necessarily a question about quantity, but it becomes more difficult with a big quantity and rules of how to use Eunic, if you have a lack of structure it doesn't matter of three members more or less, but it matters something with the structure, I think it becomes an issue for project work and we should decide for certain projects that we form groups within the groups where institutes which want to be in a project form a new group and have extra meetings and send in some written in information which can be taken on the bigger meeting in a short and structured form, but not just to have people sitting there listening to a discussion, It take to long time.

I think that money is important, but it is not something which have been looked at, not here anyway, we were only starting to look at that when we left Belgrade , but it is an issue, not only the money, I think with the EU having decided to have European diplomats, (and international external service in EEAS) not only national but also European diplomats, well first they will work side by side unfortunally and it will be more expensive because we have everything in parallel, but I think the day will come when this is no longer the case, and if you think about the day when there will be a European cultural representation it is coming nearer and Eunic could be a way to prepare that and even to take over this role, whatever this role is going to be, not certainly only as a network only, I think this is an issue and a thing to look on.

7. What can the Eunic cooperation do better than you can alone?

You can add perspectives off course we have the German perspective and we always try to have the Hungarian one as well, and with the way we have been organized the last 6-7 years where we are organized in regions not only countries, we have started working in a way to bring in the central European perspective as well so not only Germany-Hungary but also in certain projects we have a Polish, Czech, Slovaks, Slovenian, Estonian and Latvian partners, quite a few regional projects are structured like that. So Eunic could be a way to act like that as well, we have multi perspectives as well, but it is not the same as with Eunic. Eunic could also be similar like I said with Serbia, even I haven't seen it so much in Hungary, but it could be a model for how you can cooperate and be European without losing your identity which is an issue here.

8. Could a legislative administration be a part of the solution of the cooperation?

I don't think that the presidency should be responsible for the program, or that is how I see it, how I experienced it, the presidency is just a function for representation and for calling the meetings and having the responsibility to get together more times a year, but the projects should be done (as I said earlier) by those who want to do something together and then sit down in a working group and then make up projects together and then present it to the others, but it should not be part of the presidency, so changing presidency don't interfere with projects in this structure. I don't think you should look upon to make more structure, we have already too much of that in our own institutes, and then we shouldn't create another body of finance, financial structure etc... because I don't think we could handle it, and there is the call for post, and where do you take the post from. Making a single independent structure it would mean creating post and making contracts with someone, and who is the employer in this matter? Because all of us properly the most of us work within a setting where we cannot create more post, so even if someone else pays for it, for example we have a system where even if we have the money for a post, we can't create it because there are two different kind of system, one is the counting of heads, a system called stellenplan, and the other is the system of counting the budget and they are separate from each other, so in the counting of heads all over the world we have to reduce the number of post by 1,5% every year, and there is doesn't matter what the personnel is because they don't count the money they count the people which is on contracts, so there is no way we could be responsible for a new contract, because we have to get rid of them, and I suppose that there is similar systems in other countries.

9. Could a single independent structure within Eunic make the expansion of culture stronger?

10. Who do you think would prefer a strong Eunic?

a. Who do you think would have the most benefit of it?

Good question because I don't know, I sometimes get the impression that it is the larger countries which prefer a stronger Eunic, but then again I think it depends on the people (the directors) you can also always tell by the money for example with Eunic working together is part of our strategic plan at the Goethe institute, we have the backing of our bosses, and sometimes I get the impression that this is not the case in all the institutes for example. I heard the head (overall) of servants, the predecessor of the institute was very much in favour of Eunic and that the time they joined, and then the person which followed was very much against it and told the directors that they shouldn't spend any money on that, and so they don't. But also

on a local level, we always have money set to the side to projects connected with Eunic, but I get the impression that this is not the case for all the institutes, but it might be to do with internal strategies.

Maybe it depends on what you look at, if you look at in terms of visibility maybe the smaller institutes have a larger benefit because they are not that visible otherwise, just because they are small, but in terms of projects and dealing with certain issues I think all can profit of it.

11. Is the cooperation in the organization filled with prejudices?

- a. Are there any institutes which you prefer?
- b. Why?

No it is just a matter of how you work together and off course about the projects not the institutes, if it is a project that fits in that we want to do, and we have very clear guideline to what we should do, then it is a lot easier than trying to make something fit, and if you have someone which is very chaotic it is more difficult and when you exactly know your role.

Are you for supporting or promoting your culture from the Goethe institute?

That is a good question, it have been a very big issue at the **Goethe** institute for the last 3 years, we want to and have to be more in the role of the promoter, having the ideas or developing the ideas together with partners or having the ideas and finding the partners which like these ideas and then developing them further but the work that was done in many places was much the other type, supporting, but we don't see that as our role, because then you don't have much to say and feel like a bank, and why should the taxpayers support Hungarian Bulgarian polish jazz festival without our own interference, I don't know it is for you?

12. What about the non European partners, do they contribute to the internal European construction?

13. How do you see the future of eunic?

- a. Development?

I don't know, the future generally I said what I think it should be looking towards the larger Europe and seeing what is going on, on the political scene with the European embassies, being prepared structural wise and sort of being a European cultural representation.

We don't talk about politics and I don't give interviews on politics but I do give interviews on cultural issues, fx we were did a documentation that you can see on our website, on using newspaper articles from Hungarian and German newspapers on Visszinhas, and off course this is a political act if you like, the decision was a political decision and all we do is to chose articles from Hungarian papers and presenting them in both languages and then presenting articles in German papers and then making introduction, and you can see that the whole issue was reported very critically in whole Germany and we looked at all the papers and they all had something about it and not only one article. And in Hungary you can see right wing newspapers, left wing newspapers and you get some articles with you don't think you were allowed to

publish in Germany because they are so radical and anti-Semitic, and that speaks for it selves, you don't have to make a comment.