

CULTURE IN LEBANON BY 2020

State of Play

Study conducted by Agenda Culturel

Partners of the Study:



with the support of:

- Lebanese National Commission for UNESCO



- Safadi Foundation



This report has been translated with assistance of the European Union. The content of this report is the sole responsibility of the Technical Assistance Unit of the MedCulture Programme. It reflects the opinion of contributing experts and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.



Table of Contents

Introduction

A/ Cultural Life (Artists, Performance, Audiences) and Funding

- A1. Cultural Diversity and Heritage
- A2. Lebanese Cultural Life
- A3. Status of the Artist
- A4. Cultural Offer and Accessibility
- A5. Cultural Audiences
- A6. Cultural Recreation
- A7. The Role of Festivals
- A8. Media Status and Role
- A9. Funding
- A10. Cultural Industries and Copyrights

B/ Governance and Legislation

- B1. Ministry of Culture
- B2. Other State Institutions and Inter-ministerial Cooperation
- B3. Municipalities
- B4. Administrative Decentralization Law
- B5. Privatization of the Cultural Sector
- B6. Legislation and Control
- B7. Cultural Infrastructure
- B8. Cultural Life and Associations

C/ International Dimension and Cooperation

- C1. Lebanese Cultural Sector and Arab Countries
- C2. Lebanon and the Euromed Cultural Space
- C3. International Organizations and Western Cultural Centers
- C4. Lebanese Expatriates
- C5. Lebanon as a Host Country
- C6. Tourism as a Cultural Development Factor
- C7. Cultural Organizations' Mobility

D/ Education and Training

- D1. Higher Education Programs and Training of Cultural Sector Instructors
- D2. Culture in Classic Academic Programs
- D3. Building the Professionalism of Cultural Operators and Artists
- D4. Universities' Engagement in Culture Dissemination

Introduction

The year 2020 will be the centennial of the establishment of Lebanon and on this occasion, the Cultural Agenda (Agenda Culturel) aims to contribute in the development of a vision for culture in Lebanon. This vision could later be translated into an actual cultural policy that rises to the occasion. The Cultural Agenda organization and various other cultural operators that constitute the Lebanese cultural life work hard and wish to see Lebanon maintain and further develop its cultural presence. Despite the status quo in the region and the many difficulties that the country is facing, this endeavor aims at continuing the various efforts that have been made by the cultural sector to enhance the diversity and dynamism that Lebanon has been known to enjoy.

This project serves as a call upon all those who wish to contribute to the development of Lebanon's cultural vision by 2020, given their involvement in the cultural sector.

Being aware of the potentials of the different cultural areas, and convinced of their need to prosper, the Cultural Agenda managed to carry out an evaluation of the current situation, which represents a true testament of its knowledge and expertise in the sector, after consulting with a large number of artists, cultural operators, university professors, and intellectuals who are able to answer fundamental questions such as: What can we do? For whom? Why? With whom? How?

What we desperately need today is a vision for a cultural policy under which all efforts would be made, and an all-inclusive vision that would direct all potentials towards common objectives and interests so that no initiative is ignored and no effort goes in vain.

This study does not only aim at setting parameters for reflection in the cultural sector, it rather goes as far as to include, first and foremost, the future use of lessons from the past with the objective of proposing an action plan for culture in the future.

The Cultural Agenda and its contributors can develop specific recommendations aimed at uniting Lebanese cultural operators under a common vision for 2020, by inviting them to work together in the same direction on clear ideas and perspectives strategically prepared with attention to artistic diversity and a sense of cooperation, innovation, and originality.

Therefore, it is crucial to deal with the risk of cultural events moving abroad unless a related future vision is developed. The development of a vision for culture remains crucial for young people who only dream of leaving the country, especially in regions suffering from cultural drought away from cultural hubs in Beirut, as well as for thousands of cultural operators aimed at keeping culture alive and promising.

A/ Cultural Life (Artists, Performance, Audiences) and Funding

A1. Cultural Diversity and Heritage

Lebanon boasts cultural and religious diversity (with 18 sects), and therefore enjoys a rich cultural heritage. It is a country that has long attracted and still attracts, albeit in different ways at the time being, a large number of stakeholders, including intellectuals and artists from around the world, whether having fled their country of origin (Armenia, Palestine, Iraq, Syria, etc.) or having willingly chosen to settle in Lebanon. Therefore, the country has always been in close contact with other cultures through the populations which have lived in its territories.

Moreover, Francophone and Anglophone influences play an important role in the history of the Lebanese society and cultural practices.

As a result, you can find trilingual people in Lebanon. However, this only includes part of the population. Nevertheless, although small, this segment is one of the most active ones in all cultural fields. One cannot help but notice that most cultural operators are ones whose participants master multiple languages, which makes the country an internationally preferred hub for culture. However, it should be noted that this trilingualism has led to a division among the population: Arabic-speakers who form the majority are present everywhere in the country, especially outside of Beirut on the one hand, and French-speakers who previously made up the intellectual class of the country, but whose influence is facing today competition from the younger generation who is increasingly embracing the English language on the other.

In spite of that, the presence of three languages is a rich source that should be maintained because it plays an important role in spreading culture in Lebanon.

In general, Lebanon constitutes a strategic meeting point in the cultural sphere and is known as one of the Middle Eastern countries where freedom of expression, which is protected and celebrated by everyone, remains one of the most important freedoms.

Thanks to these two factors (trilingualism and freedom of expression), Lebanon has boasted throughout history diverse cultural productions.

Furthermore, while cultural diversity can be a source of political disputes, and in some cases religious ones, in a country where civil culture is still far from spread, cultural diversity remains a source of wealth and unity in the field of cultural and artistic production. Nevertheless, the question remains: How can we maintain and develop this positive side of cultural diversity in Lebanon?

A2. Lebanese Cultural Life

Culture in Lebanon came to life at the beat of events that happened with time.

Many artistic movements in various branches saw the light, prospered, and paved the way to other movements in line with the political, economic, and social conditions at the time. The civil war which lasted fifteen years shook the cultural sector to the core, which led to many artists leaving the country, and a large number of establishments closing their doors. This long war also led, especially after the reduction of school hours, to impeding schools' introductory role to art.

The return to peace later gave way to a renaissance in various cultural and artistic fields and the issues raised were often related to the tragic past and its consequences on society.

Thus, it became clear that cultural life swung between varying levels of activity, between a growth in creativity, a thriving artistic market, and a doubling in the number of cultural operators on one hand, and disappointment on another, all based on the political and security situation. Yet, Lebanon remains renowned for its entrepreneurial spirit and creative society.

Artistic activity varies significantly at the moment and each domain faces its own problems and challenges. The Lebanese cultural sector has its own levers and might be the most protective of its dynamism and vitality as demonstrated by the number of its activities amounting to 4,153 counted by the Cultural Agenda in 2013 and 2014.

The Cultural Agenda which works hard to increase visibility for all cultural activities had counted an almost similar number of activities in the last two years, i.e. 2,184 activities in 2013, and 1,969 activities in 2014. It should be noted that some events could not be highlighted, either because they were organized at the last minute or because they were held by private clubs (bars, cafes, night clubs, etc.)

Art house films ranked first (commercial movies were not taken into consideration), as 699 movies were shown in 2014 (693 in 2013) in film clubs and festivals. Movies are most likely to maintain their rank if we count commercial movies too. The second rank went to music, with 454 concerts having been held in 2014 compared to 394 in 2013. Classical music was the public's preferred choice, with 182 concerts held in 2014. This is largely due to the Lebanese National Higher Conservatory of Music. However, and as is the case with movies, these numbers would increase significantly if we were to include musical events held in tens of bars, pubs, cafes, and night clubs.

Galleries and art spaces, whose number is increasing year after year, are organizing an average of one exhibition per day. These exhibitions amounted to 431 in 2014. These are followed by theater performances with 127 events held in 2014. Afterwards comes dancing with 35 events, and festivals with 49 festivals. Consequently, cultural life is abundant in Lebanon, and especially in Beirut, with an average of five new activities per day.

It is noteworthy that the Lebanese cultural sphere is characterized by a greater social and humane cohesion than that seen in other fields.

This success is due to the fact that it includes thousands of talented and qualified actors all working in a diverse climate with a multiplicity of languages and beliefs. Yet, within these same fields, efforts are often limited to individual initiatives and small networks of cultural operators who do not cooperate adequately for reasons that we find in other countries as well, including societal, political, and aesthetical ones, but also, especially, due to personal relationships, since every field in Lebanon consists of a small number of players who all know each other. Moreover, difficulties funding culture exacerbate the phenomenon.

Another important note to be made is about the frail participation of government authorities. Cultural life derives therefore almost exclusively from the private sector, and remains hence dependent on the will of funders (banks, sponsors, embassies, institutions). This situation tends to aggravate the lack of cooperation and communication witnessed across all fields and reflected by most cultural operators.

A3. Status of the Artist

It is clear that artists and cultural operators do not enjoy today a real professional status neither any actual social safety linked to their practice of their profession. In 2012, a law related to a Mutual Aid Fund for artists was passed (law no. 7535 which has not yet entered into force). It governs a fund that would be run by representatives of artists' unions and the government.

Annual contributions would be effected out of a 2% tax deducted from tickets to all cultural and artistic performances to be collected by the Ministry of Finance and deposited in the fund.

Many cultural events reflect the fact that, despite the many opportunities available to artists, the sector remains limited. Hence, art does not constitute a main activity for many artists, as made

clear by the large number of cultural operators who practice other activities to fulfill their needs and even to fund some of their projects.

The precarious situation of artists is linked to the perception that the Lebanese have regarding this kind of activities, as they often have a negative view of art professions which are not seen as a recognized or important career path. Hence, there is a lack of recognition of local artists and their work, exacerbated by the lack of support from the Ministry of Culture and especially audio-visual media which does not contribute to the promotion of Lebanese culture.

In this regard, one cannot help but notice the departure of many artists to the west in a bid to publish their works and get recognized.

Some of them remain unknown by a large segment of the Lebanese public for a long time, but as soon as they start achieving some success and fame abroad, they start receiving interest from those same Lebanese.

A4. Cultural Offer and Accessibility

Cultural life is manifested through a permanent, appropriate, and diverse cultural offer. This is at least the case in the capital – the central point of cultural life in the country – which offers its habitants – in addition to access to the offer in terms of mobility sometimes even with no financial constraints – a diverse cultural offer in terms of art forms, doubled number of initiatives, and evolving alternative scene. However, the heavy concentration of cultural life in Beirut is generating an apparent imbalance, reducing thus the number of people receiving this cultural offer. Even in the case of Beirut, more often than not, a play, a concert, or an exhibition is only displayed for a few days given the absence of an adequate audience. This waste of energy reflects negatively on cultural operators which aim at sharing their work with the largest number of people. As for remaining regions, with the exception of a few important cities (Tripoli, Jounieh, etc.), cultural offer remains limited and seasonal if not absent.

A5. Cultural Audiences

Out of the total population which amounts to 3 million people (excluding those under the age of 6 and those above the age of 80), the number of spectators that could be interested in cultural events is estimated at no less than 300,000 people.

But even with this number in mind, it is important to speak of “audiences” (in plural), as this segment is divided, whether geographically, linguistically, socially, by age, or by points of interest.

And as is the case of the country’s small population, the space is also limited. However, this does not mean that mobility does not constitute a serious obstacle, given traffic congestion in the suburbs, especially during rush hours which coincide with cultural activities’ times. Furthermore, representation of the 18-25 age group (also called “the war generation”) is weak in this cultural audience which it boycotts given its lack of general knowledge. Social class also plays a role as is the case everywhere else: Privileged classes often participate more than the other classes in this cultural life, even though many cultural events are free of charge.

As we have already pointed out, the division of the audience by language (Arabic, French, English, and Armenian) further exacerbates this segmentation.

Finally, since events offered by the cultural sector are largely diverse, some segments prefer dancing over theater, and some music over painting, and some movies to literature. Hence, it is important to speak of “culture audiences” as opposed to “culture audience”, since segmentation is very widespread.

A6. Cultural Recreation

Has cultural recreation replaced culture itself? It is a question raised everywhere in the world. Some even go as far as to say that there is no longer culture, only “entertainment”. This English term - “entertainment” - is more appropriate than the term “recreation”. It refers to consumer culture as opposed to knowledge culture. Entertainment has invaded music, books, television, etc. Even authors are offering works adapted to these developments in the world of culture. In Lebanon, entertainment has been popular for a long time, and knowledge culture has only ever been important for a minority. Should things stay the same?

It is not appropriate at the moment, especially in the context of Lebanon’s cultural life, to have a debate over culture and recreation.

In fact, the low investment on the part of the public sector leaves no room for the private sector to compete: Artistic production is increasingly up to private sector producers (who run the music, movies, and publishing industries).

This production is evaluated based on the market demand and what we’re seeing is a copious cultural offer aimed at recreation and entertainment instead of a cultural offer with high content requirements.

The content issue raised is: Why cannot culture be entertaining?

Accordingly, cultural recreation should not be interrupted: the international broadcasting of opera concerts at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York has a recreation character.

A7. The Role of Festivals

Festivals in Lebanon are organized under the Ministry of Tourism which contributes to their funding. It is difficult, if not impossible, to determine the total revenues of festivals. However, international festival revenues can amount to 3 to 4 times the total budget of the Ministry of Culture.

There is no regulation that sets terms for festivals in Lebanon. And the shy attempts launched by the Ministry of Tourism were not followed through. In Lebanon, any association, municipality, or parish can have its own festival.

Festivals of all types are organized and mainly take place during summer, bringing culture outside of Beirut, whether they’re international or mere village festivities. And there is a clear passion for festivals that are far from any cultural content, not to mention religious occasions during which festivities are organized in villages.

On another hand, one should note the small number of significant festivals which draw the attention of Lebanese local production and creativity promoters enough to list them in their agendas, which is often due to financial reasons. Festival organizers fear incurring big financial losses and recognize the apparent lack of interest among the Lebanese in the local art scene, and their preference of global stars who end up selling more.

A8. Media Status and Role

The Cultural sector enjoys significant freedom of opinion reflected through the press, television, radio, and lately online social media which have entered the Lebanese scene in full force. The television and radio sector is governed by law no. 382 of 1994. The Ministry of Information is currently considering re-drafting this law, including with regards to online social media.

Media, with the exception of social ones, dedicate little room for culture for reasons related to the lack of financial payback and audience.

Even though media are obliged by law to dedicate time to broadcast cultural topics, it would be an illusion to say that the current situation could change any time soon. Moreover, it should be noted

that the large number of foreign cultural channels that can be viewed at a low price makes competition difficult, particularly with respect to quality.

Social networks – which are very active culture wise – allow small cultural operators and structures the opportunity to directly address their audiences and contribute to filling the shortage by sharing and rebroadcasting cultural programs, but also and above all, by promoting cultural events, artists, initiatives, and activities.

In fact, it seems that there is a significant shortfall in the role played by the media – notably the television and radio – to showcase the various cultural scenes, and this is contributing to the poor awareness of the Lebanese about local art. Similarly, little importance is given to local artists, youths, and alternative or emerging arts, while many could benefit from radio and TV programs addressing cultural and musical topics. The Cultural Agenda is the only magazine today dedicated to the promotion of arts and culture.

A9. Funding

Many types of funding sponsor Lebanese culture, the most prominent 4 being culture-savvy sponsors, government support, corporate sponsors, and foreign funders. Some of these stakeholders offer bigger support than others. (For other forms of funding, see paragraphs B1, B2, B3, and C3).

Culture in Lebanon is still closely linked to commercial sponsorship and sponsorship from companies which value culture. Consequently, behind every cultural success, there is support from a culture-savvy or commercial player, and this has been the case for a long time.

These types of support currently represent the main source of funding for the Lebanese cultural sector. Even festivals, which receive partial coverage from the government, and more specifically from the Ministry of Tourism, cannot survive without private-sector initiatives. And so far, so cultural policy can be visualized without the contribution of private players, with the State only coming second, given its other priorities, for the few years to come, hence the need for private funding.

Nevertheless, it seems that culture-savvy and commercial sponsors are less demanding art wise and want art products that they fund to have larger audiences, which is a path they take at the expense of creativity's artistic requirements.

On another hand, it is important to point that setting a culture development plan in Lebanon does not require large investments and that the material resources of potential Lebanese sponsors residing in Lebanon and abroad are gigantic and have not been exploited properly.

In fact, the more prominent direction now is towards local actors despite the poor economic situation, and therefore outside support has become indispensable.

A10. Cultural Industries and Copyrights

The term “knowledge economy” has formed since the turn of the millennium (1992) a new era in the history of economics. The knowledge industry has constituted 34% of the US GDP in 1980 and 50% of the GDP of the entire OECD region by the end of the nineties (1990) compared to 45% in 1985. These percentages are growing at a higher rate than the GDP's in most countries. The cultural sector constitutes an integral part of this new knowledge economy.

The culture economy has constituted the topic of many studies around the world for around a decade. These studies are mainly based on the analysis of cultural fields that produce revenues through copyrights (in literature, filmmaking, music, and new technology).

Consequently, we see a positive development in cultural industries, making the protection of cultural works a real economic challenge for the cultural sector.

Moreover, many studies carried out in Lebanon have specifically revolved around the audio-visual field (the most recent one being carried out by Fondation Liban Cinema in 2014). These studies notably highlight the economic expansion that was expected for the sector 10 years ago.

Despite all these studies, it is impossible to fully assess the overall impact of the cultural sector on the Lebanese economy.

In fact, these studies only address copyright-related fields and the protection of cultural works, which represents a qualitative easy-to-assess indicator.

With regards to other culture-related economic variables (such as show revenues and indirect income emanating from the labor market), the lack of statistics does not allow to put a number on the contribution of these industries in the national economy, which is indispensable for the launch of a development program. However, the numerous thorough studies that are based on tens of interviews conducted with cultural operators have rapidly shown the dynamism and diversity of the creative industries and sectors in Lebanon and the potential to develop them.

Among these industries, and as proven and recognized by the UNESCO, one could cite heritage, performance arts, visual arts, crafts, publishing, audiovisual (radio, television, and cinema), design (fashion and graphic), and creative services (architecture and advertising), as well as recent interactive media.

No true comparison can be made at the time being between cultural initiatives in Lebanon and robust projects with a long-term vision that rely on existing activities for the development of new ones. In Lebanon, it mainly comes down to catering to topical needs and providing services of a commercial nature to satisfy short-term economic interests.

Creative industries, especially in Lebanon, are small to medium workshops created, ran, and funded by individuals, artists, or technicians who have to export part of their production abroad in order to survive. These workshops are usually run by people who have received remarkable education that allows them to design, produce and sell a product, and often come face to face with a lack of assistants or technical specialists.

Without those on their side, any development would be difficult, if not impossible. Those entrepreneurs do not necessarily favor training, due to their busy schedule or their lack of know-how in the field.

On another hand, employers themselves do not have the proper tools to improve their production.

In terms of marketing Lebanese culture abroad, this is made possible by governmental initiatives through the Ministry of Culture (groups working on museums and antiquities) which officially participate in international exhibitions, as well as by the private sector through local galleries which are increasingly participating in international exhibitions and markets (Dubai, Singapore, Paris, etc.). In this context, the fashion industry is noticeably present and is organizing many fashion shows (notably in Paris).

With regards to copyrights and intellectual property, there is still a lot to do (illegal reproduction and piracy are rampant) even when it comes to the sector highlighting the impact of cultural industries.

The Lebanese law no. 75/1999 relating to copyrights, defines protected works and protection terms as well as the scope of copyrights. The law also determines additional rights which serve publishing houses, radio stations, music and CD producers, and theater actors.

Lebanon has moreover passed several agreements and conventions on copyrights, including namely the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, the UN Universal Copyright Convention of 1952, and the World Intellectual Property Organization charter.

There are in fact copyright protection bodies in Lebanon, including Société des Auteurs, Compositeurs et Editeurs de Musique au Liban founded in 1942, which is the only association

with the power of recovering copyrights in Lebanon. It had 900 members in 2014. However, this kind of bodies is not sufficiently recognized by cultural organizations themselves and this lack of efficiency and visibility prevents any serious work from being carried out, despite it being crucial to the good operation of the various cultural fields. Accordingly, several copyright breaches were detected.

B/ Governance and Legislation

B1. Ministry of Culture

The Ministry of Culture was established in 1993. It used to be part of the Ministry of Higher Education which was called the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education. The two ministries were separated in 2000.

The Ministry of Culture is made up of two directorates: The Directorate General of Cultural Affairs, and the Directorate General of Archeology. These two directorates have the mission of supporting creativity, improving accessibility to the art and heritage offer, and creating job opportunities, not to mention the special interest in books, which has been reflected through the establishment of the national library and several other libraries on the Lebanese territories.

Four bodies, each with its own system, work under the Ministry of Culture: Lebanese National Commission for UNESCO, Lebanese National Higher Conservatory of Music, the National Library, and the International center for Human Sciences.

The estimated budget for the Ministry of Culture was established in 2015 accounting for 1.56% of the total budget of the Lebanese government, i.e. US 24.3 million, which is a small amount.

The lion's share of the said budget of the Ministry of Culture in 2015 went to the Directorate General of Culture (33%), followed by the Directorate General of Antiquities' activities (research, archaeological excavations, and the acquisition, management, and protection of heritage) (21%), and the Lebanese National Higher Conservatory of Music's activity (45%) for the payment of rents and salaries. The Ministry of Culture's personnel, despite being qualified, get paid limited salaries. There is also a shortage of employees in many departments, resulting in operational obstacles. The Ministry is currently working on the establishment of a new organizational structure, since there are currently many vacant positions and most employees work on a day-labor basis.

The Ministry dedicated part of its annual budget to the support of cultural activities through 5 budget items intended for the support of creativity and cultural development in the following fields: books, visual arts, performance arts, cinema, and associations. This financial support's patterns and objectives were pre-defined. Nevertheless, cultural organizations have to apply themselves to obtain the support which is often granted on a case by case basis, and only to associations which have been around for at least two years. Moreover, the granted amounts are small and generally, the government offers bigger support to festivals through the Ministry of Tourism.

The Ministry faces a fundamental difficulty that is bigger than the apparent shortage in capabilities and it is the lack of a strategic policy for structure. It is a factor that often goes neglected at the Ministry and gives little importance to the role of the Minister of Culture in the government. The ministry hence often finds itself lagging behind in the cultural field which is a victim of the market logic that is set beyond the control of state institutions.

Hence, there is no real policy at the state level that caters for the protection, recognition, and appreciation of local production.

B2. Other State Institutions and Inter-ministerial Forms of Cooperation

Many state institutions play a role or have a role to be played in organizing and developing the cultural sector in Lebanon:

- The Ministry of Tourism has the role of organizing festivals and promoting archeological sites (production of media materials).
- The Ministry of Interior and Municipalities has the power of registering applications from associations, especially cultural ones. Moreover, it oversees the work of municipalities, notably at the cultural level (See section B3 below).
- The Ministry of Education awards certificates in arts and culture.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for Lebanese culture and art events abroad.
- The Ministry of Social Affairs is in charge of crafts.
- The Ministry of Finance is the main stakeholder, since it is the last link in the decision making process in terms of releasing sums for the implementation of governmental policies, including cultural ones.

B3. Municipalities

Articles 49 and 50 of the law of June 30, 1977 on municipalities sets out the powers of municipal boards, including the support of clubs, help of associations as well as all health, social, sports, and cultural activities. Municipalities are hence obliged to perform a genuine role, especially in terms of financial activities that take place in their jurisdiction.

Municipalities can, within their jurisdiction, establish or help establish and organize festivals and village celebrations, run museums, libraries, movies, cultural and social clubs, parks, and sport venues. These initiatives generally take place during summer, because the number of people inhabiting these small villages is considerably smaller during winter. That is why all municipalities, big and small, are concerned and aware of their responsibilities in the cultural field, despite their small potentials. Meanwhile, the effective control of a number of institutions (at the district, governorate, and Ministry of Interior levels) leads to excessive guardianship of municipal institutions, which eliminates the autonomy that they are supposed to have lawfully to be efficient and responsible, especially at the cultural level.

According to the principle of vertical delegation of authority, municipalities are the most capable of defining cultural policies in lines with their geography and population, based on the geographic particularities of cultural demand and government action capabilities in this area.

B4. Administrative Decentralization Law

Administrative decentralization has been set up in the Taif Agreement and so has been the drafting of a bill which has been discussed at several levels in relation to its implementation.

The Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS) published in 2015 the results of a survey that included 120 political figures (MPs, heads of municipalities, members of the parliamentary committees, representatives of political parties, clerics) on their perception of the implementation of the law considered in April 2014 by the Minister of Interior at the time, who was officially commissioned to do so by the Prime Minister in 2012. The survey results showed that MPs were in favor of reducing the role of local councils as well as electing them on the basis of national lists as opposed to area residents. At the financial level, the MPs preferred that the government be in charge of financial matters as in the case in the time being.

In sum, the current political class is seeking to strip the decentralization law of its validity, allowing local councils to only coordinate between municipalities, which would grant the political class more power over municipalities.

The Lebanese government's centralization is apparent in the cultural scene, where Greater Beirut dominates almost entirely the country's cultural life, despite the shy attempts carried out throughout the different regions to prove the presence of a real demand. Hence, there is a kind of cultural discrimination, which is neither necessarily voluntary, nor socially acceptable, yet makes for a cutoff whose severity varies between Beirut and the rest of Lebanon.

B5. Privatization of the Cultural Sector

The minimum standard culture adopted by the government seems overly apparent in Lebanon, left by the vacuum state in the wake of the Lebanese civil war. This is reflected in all areas, including the cultural one. Currently, funding and legislation of art projects and local cultural organizations and even any cultural initiative suffers from an apparent lack of support and an alarming lack of state financial involvement.

This large scale privatization of the sector is forcing cultural organizations to self-fund themselves and to expect very little of the state. Hence, private sector enterprises see themselves concerned with these tasks and consequently constitute weighty players, where each of them strives to expand its financial support network in order to fund its own activity. Fund sources and partners play a crucial role in programming choices and types of activities and projects prepared by those enterprises, as well as the whole creativity process.

Consequently, the cultural sector is dominated by the private sector. Government action is replaced with the private sector which lacks cohesion and sustainability and this situation is more often than not criticized by cultural operators who strive to protect their activities through solid government action.

B6. Legislation and Control

The Ministry of Culture is a recent governmental body. It was first established as part of the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education (Law no. 215, 2/4/1993). It was only separated from the Ministry of Higher Education in 2000 (Law no. 247, 7/8/2000). Later on, in 2008, laws 35 and 36 (16/10/2008) defined the role of the Ministry of Culture and its mission, as well as related governmental institutions.

Afterwards, the organization of the different units of the Directorate General of Cultural Affairs was set out (decree no. 622, 09/18/2014) in terms of the establishment of the legislative structure and tasks.

Other than laws that provide for the establishment of the Ministry of Culture's legislative structure and tasks, decrees were passed concerning literary and artistic property (decree no. 918/2007), as well as cultural property (law no. 37/2008), organization of art professions (law no. 56/2008), organization and management of the Mutual Fund of Lebanese Artists (law no. 7335/2012) and the Antiquities law before the establishment of the Ministry (law no. 166/1933).

From a legal perspective, it is noteworthy that, despite the presence of a set of laws ready for implementation, their enforceability, scope of work, and transparency often give rise to challenges. Moreover, the lack of a clear and sustainable policy amidst the succession of governments prevents any long-term planning.

The trade unions issue is problematic too, since those do not play a real representative role in terms of artist rights. As a result, many do not join these unions because they do not feel that they are taken into account or concerned, not benefitting thus from health insurance.

Another obstacle for institutions that wish to host artists is related to the high cost of obtaining entry visas for artists coming from abroad, making the task of those institutions a difficult one.

Finally, it should be pointed out that law no. 7535 (which has not entered into force) provides for a 2% tax that the Ministry of Finance would collect from every leisure and recreation activity ticket. This tax could include plays, concerts, and even theme parks, and would fund the Mutual Fund of Lebanese Artists.

Lebanon is considered one of the Middle East and Arab region countries that enjoy the freedom of expression the most, and because of that, many intellectuals, artists, and creative people come from all fields from neighboring countries such as Syria and Jordan to Beirut, mainly to be able to introduce their work and get room for expression. Nonetheless, there is censorship in Lebanon that is reflected in different ways and varying degrees. And it is not the Ministry of Culture who is in charge of this censorship, but rather the General Security Service which exercises censorship on all media and cultural broadcasts.

In this context, cultural organizations point to the lack of competence of people in charge with this task. In some cases (plays), the Ministry of Culture interferes to allow for a certain work to be broadcasted. However, recently, many local and foreign works were banned under many pretexts: offence against public morality, offence against state power, pro-Israel propaganda, and even sectarian strife. Censorship is exercised in many ways including the withdrawal of the work from the market, ban, or intimidation. Many intellectuals also complain from an excessive influence of religion and fundamentalist groups which exploit the state weakness to wage battles in the name of public morality within the creative field. Audio-visuals and music are the sectors that breach prohibitions the most. In fact, the large number of private satellite and radio stations as well as the abundance of possibilities offered by the internet allow for a certain margin for broadcasting work where the state does not exercise its power.

Proving how firm the cultural sector is holding on to the freedom of expression is the censorship virtual gallery www.censorchiplebanon.org which was launched by March, the NGO, in order to keep an inventory of works that have been censored since 1940 in various cultural fields: Movies, theater, books, music, visual arts, television, press, and online media.

B7. Cultural Infrastructure

In terms of public cultural infrastructure, Lebanon has a public library (currently under renovation), national antiquity museums, and the UNESCO palace build in 1948 and renovated in 1998 which contains a 1,200-seat theater, two exhibition halls and two conference rooms. Given the lack of a contemporary art museum, the Ministry of Culture launched in June 2015 an online virtual museum to make its art collection (with approximately 1,800 works) accessible to the public at artmodernmv.gov.lb.

Besides the UNESCO palace, there is no national facility dedicated to live music, theater, and dance performance, which constitutes a big issue whether for creativity, or broadcasting. A clear example is the fact that all theaters in Lebanon are owned by the private sector and are rented by cultural organizations themselves. Privatization hinders any art production cooperation between theaters and enterprises which could share creative work production costs. The lack of a national theater or governmental financial support for theaters keeps these facilities tainted with a pure commercial character, where it is all about making profits and maintaining a heavy demand. This

situation poses difficulty on cultural organizations too which have to secure theater rent costs in order to be able to display their work.

Outside big cities, there are few initiatives to prepare the ground. Generally, everything achieved is through the private sector (choirs, theaters, dance, art craft associations, etc.).

Public infrastructure is barely present outside big cities, and that through a network of reading and cultural activation centers which amount to around 40 at the time being, as well as through the fourteen branches of the Lebanese National Higher Conservatory of Music. There are also cultural centers outside big cities, ran by Lebanese associations and organizations as well as by branches of the French cultural center. Finally, places of worship, historical sites, and other places also host cultural events: bars, archeological sites, universities, churches, etc.

B8. Cultural Life and Associations

Associations are playing a growing role in cultural life. They have a presence in all fields, especially through related to the protection of human rights, environment, and protection of nature. They're also present in the cultural sphere: Associations work mainly as carriers of projects of many cultural initiatives. The number of these associations in 2014 reached 71 cultural associations supported by the Ministry of Culture with a total sum of 351 million LBP, i.e. approximately 4,943,662 LBP for each association, which is very little.

Moreover, these associations constitute a preferred partner to a number of foreign organizations which see that they have freedom to work and dynamism. These associations are expected to increase, to specialize, and to become a preferred partner for non-governmental organizations, governmental organizations, and the private sector in general.

However, the downside to these associations is their shelf life which is often insufficient to complete the work that they successfully start, due to their reliance on the involvement of individuals in taking responsibility. Finally, these associations face difficulties in relation to funding that limit their work dramatically.

C/ International Dimension and Cooperation

C1. Lebanese Cultural Sector and Arab Countries

The Lebanese cultural sector conduct towards cultural organizations and offices in Arab countries has always been based on considering them allies, far from any notion of confrontation or competition. Lebanon became an ally in cultural policies launched by these countries which have been dedicating significant budgets to culture for over twenty years. These countries have embraced tens of Lebanese cultural organizations which occupy important positions in their cultural structures.

On another hand, all Gulf countries are witnessing exponential and continuous growth at the cultural level, through their global presence, universality of residents, and huge financial resources employed in cultural development. Therefore, we are witnessing the emergence of new cultural poles in the region, and although Lebanon still enjoys a prominent place in the MENA region, given its history and dynamism, it is exhibiting tremendous delay in terms of culture policy, compared to some Arab countries, including Palestine, Egypt, Morocco, and even Tunisia.

The international nature of culture in the Arab Gulf countries is providing Lebanese artists living abroad with the opportunity to rebuild the relationship with the Arab region, and notably with their mother country. Moreover, some of them is benefitting from funds that foster creativity in the Gulf, especially in the movies field.

However, it should be noted that funding from Gulf countries is not significant in the cultural sector.

The most significant granted amounts go to the national library which is under renovation (Qatar) and the Archeological Museum in Beirut which is under construction (Kuwait).

It is also important to note the important role played by some regional institutions in funding art and culture projects in Lebanon and other places, namely the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture, an independent funder with a pan-Arab character located in Beirut, which is in turn funded by other Arab funds, banks, individuals, and institutions. There is also Culture Resource (Al Mawred Al Thaqafy) and the Young Arab Theatre Fund.

C2. Lebanon and the EuroMed Cultural Space

Established based on the mandate from the Barcelona Declaration in 1995, the Euro-Mediterranean partnership celebrated its twentieth year during the recent Euro-Med Summit held on November 30 and December 1, 2015 in Brussels. However, it is noteworthy that Euro-Mediterranean dialogue is still at the time being not fully active with relation to political, economic, and social strategies. Some projects, such as the European Neighborhood Policy, are currently under review. These projects revolve their vision around regional dialogue and the participation of economic and social councils as well as regional development organizations, and the need for a common response to immigration and refugee challenges.

Within this framework, Lebanon constitutes a real link between Europe and the Arab world. Its place in this regard is solid and well recognized thanks to the advantages it offers through its geographical location, multi-lingualism, long-standing political relationship with Europe, and the size of its diaspora and its influence, given that it includes many cultural ambassadors of the country, not to forget freedom of expression, diversity of cultural fields, and competence and activity of its cultural organizations.

For all these reasons and more, Lebanon represents a preferred location for cultural cooperation between various Mediterranean countries. Therefore, many initiatives and programs have been undertaken, to offer a bigger role for the cultural sector and encourage exchange whether at the

North-South level, or at the South-South level. These initiatives often result in bilateral exchanges with European countries and are carried out individually between Lebanese and European institutions.

In the end, in Lebanon, culture in external relations remains a non-governmental project, run by a small and well defined community that abides by international standards. This represents a real challenge for the country in terms of ensuring sustainability and strengthening an independent world-class cultural sector in the absence of regulatory public policies.

C3. International Organizations and Western Cultural Centers

Foreign cultural centers, especially European ones, have and some still does play an important role in culture in Lebanon.

However, it should be noted that the poor budgeting that most of these centers has suffered from has often dramatically reduced their work potential: Foreign cultural centers have underwent budget reductions that reached up to 50% within 6 years, such as the French Cultural Center, leading them in some cases to seek Lebanese sponsors and supporters or to companies from their country operating in Lebanon to fund their activities.

On another hand, the growing role carried out by supranational European institutions such as the European Union has led to a change in the field of work of these cultural centers and embassy cultural divisions (such as the British Council, Goethe Institute, Cervantes, and the Istituto Italiano di Cultura). Consequently some of these centers have undergone a reduction in the budget dedicated for cultural events in Lebanon and have focused on funding specific projects.

Nevertheless, this does not apply to all centers, whose activities take multiple forms, such as the French Cultural Center which focuses its efforts on language learning, bilateral collaboration with the Lebanese government, and even the decentralization of cultural life by being present outside big cities.

Many centers end up filling the gap left by the Ministry of Culture and the state in general with regards to cultural offer, but also, and most importantly, in terms of funding. Nevertheless, the projects benefitting from the support of these institutions are subject to the principle of supply and demand. Funded projects often must meet specific requirements in terms of creativity, content, and artistic form and have an impact on Lebanese cultural life.

As for the United States, it adopts a policy whereby it only directs its aid towards the private sector (through the US Agency for International Development – USAID).

C4. Lebanese Expatriates

Lebanese expatriates around the world amount to approximately three times the population of Lebanon. Those expatriates form an integral part of the cultural life and potential of Lebanon. Expatriates in many countries are active and stand out in different fields. Those expatriates' link to Lebanon has not withered despite the fact that most of them have been abroad for decades. Subsequently, Lebanese artists living abroad increasingly seek recognition in Lebanon and this phenomenon is growing in size. Meanwhile, there is a growing desire to introduce and highlight Lebanese culture abroad: we are seeing an increasing number of Lebanese associations abroad, as well as interest in Lebanese artists by local audiences there.

Therefore, the role of Lebanese artists living abroad is very important for the cultural sector. In fact, it is now an established fact that expatriates with a big experience built on acculturation-driven path are a source of enrichment for the nations they live in as well as ambassadors of diversity and openness.

It should be noted here that there are currently no policies in place that aim at taking advantage of the contributions of those expatriates. There is no count to this date of their number, which, if

known, would give way to fruitful cooperation. The only initiatives in place are those carried out by the private sector and are restricted in general to the invitation of these talents to participate in concerts and give performances.

C5. Lebanon as a Host Country

People who have taken refuge in Lebanon come from all nationalities, most of which are Arab. Some of them have even arranged to as to settle quasi-permanently in Lebanon considering it their second home. Among those, many intellectuals and artists enrich and participate actively in the cultural live, and continue to produce artistic works which they sell locally.

Lebanon is receiving today more than ever bigger waves of audiences (refugees) and the question here is: Is Beirut on the verge of becoming the capital of Syrian, Iraqi, or event Arab art? The continuing conflicts in the countries of those refugees and the fact that cultural life in those countries will need a lot of time to return to its normal state implies that they will be staying in Lebanon for a long time.

It should be noted that a few hundreds of those refugees are known in the cultural sphere by Lebanese cultural institutions. Some of those have received excellent training in areas that still need development in Lebanon, and few cultural officials see this category of refugees as competition. Others rather see them as a source of enrichment and a dynamic factor to the Lebanese cultural scene.

C6. Tourism as a Cultural Development Factor

Tourism is entrenched in Lebanon's geography as well as in its history, traditions, economy, and know-how, hence, in its culture. The country's archeological riches and cultural aspects make it a touristic country, both locally and internationally.

The cultural and touristic sectors are intertwined. A large number of cultural activities and events take leverage from tourism. When the latter is faced with problems, the cultural sector is the first to suffer and the large number of festivals in Lebanon is an indicator of the correlation between the cultural and touristic sectors.

Moreover, the cultural dimension of these many components is witnessing considerable progress in emerging touristic activities, with cultural-exploration touristic initiatives (such as gastronomy tours, archeological site visits, artisan visits outside big cities, etc.) reaching their peak and seeing increasing success whether from nationals or foreign tourists, not to forget the endeavors of the Lebanese Tourism Office in Paris to promote culture within its strategy, through the organization of projects such as "35 mm from Beirut" as PhotoMed Lebanon.

C7. Cultural Organizations' Mobility

Cultural organizations located in the peripheries face difficulty in practicing their art, which forces them to head towards big cities, notably the capital. Since cultural equipment and installations are inadequate in their towns, they find themselves obliged to leave, leading as a result to the vanishing of the audience.

Some cultural organizations also relocate within the framework of specific programs, especially due to local and regional conflicts. Despite the fact that there are specific unilateral initiatives to promote cultural exchange between different regions, there is significant shortage in collaboration between local and national institutions to establish cooperation in cultural activities among regions.

With regards to the international mobility of Lebanese artists, Lebanon hosts artists and shows, especially from Europe, more than it sends artists abroad. In this context, many artists settle abroad, either to improve their art or because they think of the Lebanese public as very limited. And here, the

difficulty of obtaining entry visas to Western countries constitutes a major obstacle to this international mobility.

D/ Education and Training

D1. Higher Education Programs and Training of Cultural Sector Instructors

Education and training programs for instructors in Lebanon are of a good quality, whether in universities or specialized higher education colleges. Moreover, there is currently some kind of awareness of the importance of certain topics, such as fine arts and music: Some universities are increasingly trying to engage in the arts of a certain region or geographic region and to adapt their vision accordingly in terms of the education they offer. New faculties, departments, and colleges are also seeing the light, as is the case in museology and exhibition organization. This major is increasingly developing given the return of cultural operators who studied abroad and their engagement in this education.

However, in other fields such as design and performance arts, there is a clear need to update programs which currently offer education that lacks diversity. There is also a need to renew faculties who are now creating a deadlock in methodological approaches and academic program content.

D2. Culture in Classic Academic Programs

When it comes to schools, those with specialized instructors are very few. Schools are faced here with the school hours issue and the priority they give to science and literature classes, forcing students to resort to tutoring.

Art classes are not mandatory in schools, and only private ones offer their students activities such as artistic workshops and cultural site visits, knowing that this only applies to a small number of schools in Lebanon.

In this regard, the Center for Educational Research and Development launched an initiative with the attempt of introducing music, drawing, and theater to the curriculum. This initiative, albeit developed systematically by a qualified team with the aim of editing and printing the books, never saw the light given the absence of the government in the field, which could be due to the financial obligations this initiative would ensue (for the training and hiring of hundreds of teachers).

Finally, the school and household play an indisputable role in raising the awareness of young people as to the importance of culture; without them, it is difficult to visualize the democratization of culture, resulting in generations that are unaware, hence uninterested, in cultural notions. It should be noted here that introducing culture in school curricula required big funding, especially in order to hire teachers who are specialized in these topics. Lebanon does not have any quality higher education schools that offer programs in these fields.

D3. Building the Professionalism of Cultural Operators and Artists

At the local level, there are a lot of artists and cultural operators, not to mention those living abroad. Therefore, the Lebanese cultural scene is vibrant, internationally renowned, and has interesting potentials that suggest a promising future. However, it is faced with many big challenges. In fact, training is often uneven, and self-training is often the rule since training institutions, especially the top ones are very few and visions aimed at building professionalism are few too. Many artistic workshops attempt to fill the gap and many artists participate in them. However, those who want more have to

travel abroad to improve their performance and knowledge of their arts, that is if they possess the means.

In terms of labor market and fresh graduates obtaining jobs, reaching a position that ensures permanence with respect to wages remains a very difficult thing to do. Many work independently and in more than one institution at the same time to earn a living. And some literally abandon the cultural sector to head towards other more “stable” sectors such as television, advertising, etc.

D4. Universities’ Engagement in Culture Dissemination

Most universities in Lebanon do not have a real impact on cultural life in the country. However, it is worthy to note the increasing and obvious engagement of some universities in cultural life through general conferences and training and specialization courses.

Out of the 42 accredited universities in Lebanon, only 6 have an impact on cultural life in the country. These universities (AUB, USJ, USEK, LAU, NDU, Antonine University, and ALBA) contribute in many cultural domains, namely music, heritage, cinema, theater, and visual arts). However, these universities do not address a large public.

Universities and their faculty could play a huge role, proving the real shortage given the absence of around thirty universities from the cultural scene.