

Project : Asia - Europe Cultural Policy Seminar

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Seminar tackles cross-cultural policies

BANGKOK — Cultural policy makers and researchers from Asia and Europe weighed theories on international cultural co-operation at a four-day seminar in Bangkok, which closed last Sunday.

The seminar, hosted by the Asia Europe Foundation and Thailand's Ministry of Culture, gathered recommendations on forging cultural co-operation between Asia and Europe.

In Europe, state spending on culture spiked in the 1980s, but has fallen since as countries try to fit cultural development into their budget-strapped policies. France is struggling to juggle its many cultural commitments as Ireland increases its spending, and Germany tries to balance

cultural policy and spending cuts. In most Asian countries, government support for the arts remains minimal as they continue to feel the effects of the 1997 financial crisis.

"Due to budget constraints in the current fiscal environment, the extent to which the government can preserve cultural heritage is still very limited," said the Indonesian Ministry of Culture and Tourism's deputy director for Cultural Preservation and Development, Junus Satrio Atmodjo.

Participants discussed challenges that governments must face in drafting cultural policy, like working within financial and structural frameworks, balancing heritage and contemporary arts, establish-

ing evaluation mechanisms and boosting co-operation between Asia and Europe.

Việt Nam is the first non-European country to adopt the European Programme of Building National Report on Culture, with help from the Sweden International Development Agency (SIDA).

"It is my belief that today there is no doubt about the role of culture and the arts and we are all aware that international cultural co-operation has become very important for all nations," said deputy director general of International Co-operation Department at the Ministry of Culture and Information Nguyễn Văn Tinh.

Asian representatives discussed issues emerging from

cross-cultural interactions. As more European organisations identify the growth potential of Asian markets, cultural co-operation, rather than exploitation, must be promoted.

"While there are positive effects of globalisation, there are also negative consequences like cultural invasion by dominant economic powers. International cultural co-operation programmes should aim for greater awareness, understanding and appreciation of each other's culture," President of the Cultural Centre of the Philippines Nestor O Jardin said.

The seminar was held in preparation for the 5th ASEM (Asia Europe Meeting), which Hà Nội will host in October. — VNS