



Mobility Infopoint mapping in Italy

Fondazione Fitzcarraldo

Executive Summary

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Research carried out by Fondazione Fitzcarraldo in the frame of the **PRACTICS** project – **See Mobile, See Practical**

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The study “Mobility Infopoint Mapping - Italy” was carried out by Fondazione Fitzcarraldo in the frame of the **PRACTICS** project, funded by the European Commission for the period 2008-2010 with other three pilot projects on arts and culture mobility in the EU. **PRACTICS – See mobile, see practical** addresses the issue of the information provision related to incoming and outgoing culture mobility; to this aim, four “Mobility Infopoints” were set up (in Belgium, Spain, the Netherlands and Wales) and two studies were carried out in Italy (by Fitzcarraldo) and in Finland (by Tinfo).

This **Executive summary** was prepared for the workshop “*Encouraging cross-border cultural mobility*” scheduled in Torino on October, 2nd 2010 in the frame of the conference ArtLab10. The readers are invited to refer to the full report for the detailed analysis of the issues tackled.



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Introduction

In line with the aims of the PRACTICS project, the study pursued two main goals: mapping the Italian situation of **information offer and demand** related to culture mobility, and defining a **set of quality criteria** to apply to a Mobility Infopoint which could possibly be set up in Italy.

The study must not be intended as a comprehensive picture of every single form of support for mobility currently available in Italy; it rather highlights the main features and trends of mobility support today and what kind of information is available, also providing examples of “good practices”.

In the context of this study, **mobility** is to be understood as ***a temporary condition for individual artists or companies from the visual and performing arts sector*** (including theatre, dance, music) ***and from the sphere of heritage who can spend some time abroad (in a EU country other than their usual country of residence) in order to do research, study, work, perform, tour, or to participate in co-productions, festivals, exhibitions, residencies or workshops.*** Conversely, the study presented below also considers mobility from the perspective of hosting venues and inviting foreign artists or companies for various purposes such as teaching, co-productions and performances.

the research considers information needs and other issues related to mobility for cultural workers based in an EU country other than Italy and moving there (**incoming mobility**), and for cultural workers based in Italy – be they Italian nationals or not – and mobbing to other EU countries (**outgoing mobility**). Nationality therefore is not an issue.

Methodology

The mapping activity, carried out between May 2009 and May 2010, developed through three main tools:

- an **Internet desk research** on the issues of the study, coupled with a short **questionnaire sent to Regions and autonomous Provinces** focused on regional laws directly or indirectly financing mobility;
- two **public meetings**, held in 2009 in Florence and Turin on the issues of the study, attended by over 60 culture professionals and policy-makers;
- **44 interviews** carried out between January and June 2010 with potential *information seekers* (artists, operators and professionals) and actual or potential *information providers* (public and private institutions and organizations).

Mobility in Italy

Historically “mobility” is not a relevant issue for the Italian cultural policies; contemporary creation and international cultural cooperation, to which mobility issues are naturally related, suffer from a weak and tardy acknowledgement of their political and socio-economic relevance.

In the absence of a foreign cultural policy focusing on promotion, cooperation and international exchanges, public institutions lack of resources to support mobility through “structured” and long-term activities.

The limited relevance of culture within the national policies and the fragmentation of public responsibilities in the support to culture (State, Regions, Provinces, Municipalities), together with the political instability, influence the amount and the continuity of resources for culture, generating an uncertainty that concretely hinders the interaction of Italian operators with the international scene.

Although the lack of quantitative data on arts and culture “mobility” does not allow to define the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the phenomenon, it is nonetheless possible to define the key actors interested to mobility issues: artists, curators, artistic directors; responsible of residency venues and programs; programmers of festivals and theatres. Each group shows different approaches and motivations to mobility, different amounts of resources and specific information needs, and faces particular obstacles.

A specificity concerns the museums and heritage sector, in which, also due to the mainly public nature of institutions, *mobility* seems almost a “non-issue” and the experiences are the result of (rare) individual initiatives rather than common practices.

The study points out that the **obstacles** to culture mobility to and from Italy are related to the scarce public resources and to ill-adapted norms, to the mindset of many artists and operators, to bureaucratic constraints.

The main **needs** highlighted regard the coordination of existing policies, the need for cultural policies allowing a long-term planning of (also international) activities, a different attitude towards mobility both by professionals and by policy-makers and funders, and a better focused and more effective action by the EU.

Introducing a national policy promoting the contemporary Italian arts and culture abroad, with a specific attention to mobility, creating new funds supporting mobility and a series of initiatives and strategies (networking, sharing, advocacy) are among the possible **solutions** suggested.

The **support to mobility** in Italy currently involves a plurality of actors, mainly public subjects, but only a few of them states explicitly the support to mobility in its mission and, finally, no support to mobility *tout court* exists.

At the **central government** level the two Ministries sharing responsibilities for issue related to international cultural cooperation and the promotion of Italian arts and culture abroad are the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; they recently signed agreements and undertook collaboration to improve the connection of their activities.

The **Ministry of Culture** shows an **increasing acknowledgement** of the potential of international activities and of the relevance of associations and other subjects already supporting mobility, with whom the central government cooperates and that it supports; yet this clashes with the **limited budget available** and the constant decrease of State resources for culture, the main obstacle to face.

The **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** does not include explicitly the mobility of artists and cultural operators in its mission, nor in the mission of the 90 **Italian Cultural Institutes** abroad, that, lacking specific policies and – consequently – a specific budget for mobility, can sometimes support it through *ad hoc* projects and initiatives started by the directors of each Institute, in cooperation with the local authorities of the referring country.

In the last years the **Foreign Cultural Institutes** redefined their priorities, because of a progressive reduction of the budgets as well as for the re-orientation of the activities towards the emerging economies (especially Asian countries).

They consequently weakened their role of support to mobility, as antennas and facilitators of exchanges and collaborations and as funders, that some institutes in particular (Goethe Institut, British Council, Centre Culturel Français) had for decades at national level and through peripheral offices.

Some specific projects are funded by **embassies** – especially by their cultural services – in cooperation with Italian subjects and institutions; a number of “historical” residency programs in Italy are managed by foreign institutions, as in the case of the Académie Française in Rome.

The **local institutions** (Regions, Provinces and Municipalities) have a prominent role in financing arts and culture in Italy, but their action for mobility is extremely fragmented. In general, mobility is not supported directly by programs or laws mentioning it explicitly, but rather “indirectly”, as a part of the international activity of artists, companies and venues, through regional funds for vocational training, the activity of theatres, festivals and companies, *ad hoc* projects and contributions earmarked *una tantum* to theatres or festivals. Only in Piedmont a more “structured” support to mobility and international circulation of artist and shows exists, with a focus on the closest French regions.

Foundations of banking origin, definitely the main private actors of the Italian cultural scene, pursue – according to their statute – local development goals. The international dimension has an indirect and marginal role in their intervention strategies and programs, which mirror the priorities of the public policies, including the limited support to contemporary creation. The support to mobility is often declined in terms of opportunities for higher education abroad or funding of local activities having an important international component.

Other **private players** support mobility through grants and funds for artists, especially for the visual arts sector, in which private subjects play an important role as sponsors, owners of art galleries, etc. The financial support by public bodies is often essential to allow associations and non-profit organizations to support mobility through long-term plans and activities, allowing them to give a more “structured” support to international creations and exchanges.

Many cooperations, co-productions and residencies come from the direct initiative of **cultural actors** (festivals, theatres and venues in first place) whose projects try to compensate the lack of structured support to mobility by the public institutions, which anyway are the main financial supporters of such activities. An important element of these projects is the networking at international scale, which sometimes allows the start up of co-productions and additional funding with relevant impacts on the local scene.

Information needs and provision in Italy

The analysis of the demand of relevant information for mobility shows that issues and sources of reference change according to the direction of mobility (from or to Italy), activity (e.g. visual arts or performing arts) and features of the artist or organization (e.g. emerging or experienced; free-lance or employee).

The **key issues** on which subjects interested to mobility look for information are:

- mobility and work opportunities abroad;
- features of the cultural markets and of the cultural scene in other countries;
- fiscal and social issues (taxation; insurance, contributions, social security);
- intellectual property rights;
- visa and work permits for third-country nationals.

The analysis of current information provision highlights four main features of the circulation of mobility-related information in Italy:

- information is scattered over a **multiplicity of sources** (organizations, networks, venues, consultants, festivals, public administrations), none of which including explicitly information provision in its mission;
- mobility-related information is often relayed through **informal channels** (personal connections and networks), while formal and official information are perceived as less reliable, clear and up-to-date;
- current mobility-related information providers target **precise groups of users** (e.g. visual artists; artists based in a specific region; etc.);
- **current information provision services are not well-known** among artists and cultural operators.

Towards an Italian Mobility Infopoint

The best solution to address the information need by the culture sector would consist in **strengthening the current information providers**, improving their **visibility** and setting up a **network of mobility information providers (Infopoints)**, rather than a single office or organization. The network should present the following features:

- being made up of subjects already supporting arts and culture mobility (also through the information provision) and/or having an experience in international activities;
- including different information providers for the different sectors;
- providing their services at two levels: (1) direct consultancy for artists and small organizations having little or no experience of mobility, and (2) periodic training for the staff of inviting venues;
- providing the relevant mobility-related information both via Web and in a physical place;
- working as a one-stop shop providing information immediately or very rapidly, either directly or by addressing the users to other information sources;
- deal with all relevant aspects for both incoming and outgoing mobility;
- delivering information in Italian and in English (through all channels, both virtual and real);
- having a reliable staff matching theoretical knowledge and practical experience in all fields, so that the users can feel that the service allows them to save time and energy and provides practical, reliable and updated information;
- political changes at national and local level should not affect the quality, reliability and stability of the information service,
- be guaranteed long-term sustainability through long-term financial support from the institutions, especially at central level but also, when possible, at regional and local levels;
- build a permanent dialogue with institutions at all levels.

Discussion with the PRACTICS Infopoints would certainly be beneficial, both during the project and set up phase and when the Infopoint is off the ground; a systematic collection of users' feedbacks and periodic evaluations would also ensure the efficacy of the information system.

Conclusions and recommendations

The study ends with four main **recommendations**:

- improving the **visibility** of the existing structures (networks, organizations, projects) currently providing mobility-related information;
- foster opportunities for **meetings**, comparisons and discussions between those who currently provide information, so they can work together on developing existing tools and fostering networking and lobbying;
- provide **additional resources** to the existing information providers, thus enabling them to widen, deepen, strengthen and focus their information provision service (which could be explicitly stated in their mission);
- strengthen and increase **training opportunities** clearly targeting professional development in an international perspective, including tutoring and mentoring.