

HOW?

For the most part, cultural observatories can be said to embrace a quantitative approach in their research and reporting methods. Although undeniably valuable, quantitative data fails to address the subjective experience of culture. How can we assess the intangible feelings which make a person choose to attend a cultural event (or not)? How can the experience of a three-day festival be measured? Despite the difficulty in measuring such variables, the assessment of these could very much increase the ability of cultural institutions to gain audiences.

Moreover, 42% of observatories surveyed in SaCO claimed an international scope, but how much does their final product reflect that scope? Do their observations of reality apply across borders or are they only parallel in some ways? In many ways this issue is related to the funding bodies involved and what they ask for, regardless of where they are from. However, the 'range' in which they act as a cultural observatory should be related or contrasted to their final products and their own discourse of scope.

It is difficult to talk about evaluation on a European level because national realities are so diverse and different stakeholders are doing the same work differently. How observatories develop in the future will depend on how these questions are addressed.

In this context, we challenge you to consider and debate these statements:

- » Indicators are the proverbial 'Holy Grail' of the cultural field. How can we find appropriate indicators for each cultural field? And will they be useful? Or just a lowest common denominator?
- » There is a common framework and methodology; we just haven't found it yet.
- » The success of the cultural industries depends on the government, who need to use public funds to increase the public awareness of culture.
- » How does the outcome of cultural observatories now, affect our work in the future?
- » Do the models financing in place now need serious revision?