

The Roberto Cimetta Fund

Background

The Roberto Cimetta Fund (RCF) is an international association promoting artistic exchange and the mobility of professionals in contemporary performing arts and visual arts within the Mediterranean area. It is based in Paris and supported principally by the European Cultural Foundation, with the Ministère de la Culture (France), Gulbenkian Foundation and Fondation de France. From 2000 – 2007 it awarded 626 mobility grants.

It was founded in 2000, an initiative of members of IETM, in memory of the theatre and festival director, Roberto Cimetta, who had initiated projects that made a significant contribution to the development of the international theatre community.

RCF supports cultural mobility across the Mediterranean area and has been influential in seed-funding the encounters required to develop artistic projects with the Maghreb and Mediterranean Middle East. Since it was set up, other players have emerged in the region, notably the Anna-Lindh Foundation. Apart from the geographical focus, its main originality is that it only funds *individuals*. RCF has therefore developed substantial know-how through mapping the region and identifying significant individual actors and catalysts for cultural action.

How it works

Mobility grants cover travel and visa costs for trips such as attending professional cultural network meetings, workshops, artists' residencies, festivals, symposiums etc. The programme is intended to operate simply, flexibly and quickly with regular selections (every 5 to 6 weeks). The programme currently has a grant budget of some 30 000 EUR and the average grant is 500 EUR.

The aim is to facilitate networking, cooperation and exchange between arts professionals; travel should indirectly contribute to local cultural development (i.e. the networking experience should bring know-how and contacts back to the applicant's own country where they should benefit others); it should also demonstrate a sense of continuity.

It is open to professional artists, cultural operators or technicians working in the fields of contemporary performing arts, visual arts or cinema in the Mediterranean. Professionals from EU countries may apply but only if their project has a strong Mediterranean connection.

Priorities set for 2008 are: *artistic fields* - contemporary theatre: new theatrical forms, new writing for theatre, dramaturgy, especially travel for authors' meetings and writing workshops; *types of project* - projects with strong impacts and long term objectives (e.g. creating a festival), collaborative projects in the Arab World (meetings of artists, meetings of professionals, network meetings) and training courses, workshops and masterclasses.

The exchange must take place in the Euro-Mediterranean area: the EU; southern and eastern countries of the Mediterranean (Turkey, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Cyprus, Malta, Algeria, Libya); Balkan countries (Serbia, Albania). Nationality is not a selection criterion – rather it is the country where the applicant lives and works.

Priorities in 2008 for direction of mobility are:

- travel towards the Maghreb countries;
- travel from an Arab country or from Turkey towards an Eastern European country;

- travel within the Arab World;
- travel from an Eastern European country towards an Arab country; and
- travel from an Arab country towards a European country.

The application must be made by an individual. Organisations are not eligible and applications by several people from the same organisation are evaluated separately according to the individual applicant's professional pathway. There is no age limit but a stated preference for emerging artists and cultural operators at the start of their professional careers.

Grants cover travel and visa fees only - accommodation, registration fees, per diems are excluded. Trips linked to production or touring are not eligible. There are certain other exclusions for trips to festivals and for artists' residencies.

RCF operates in a field where, for many professionals in North Africa and the Middle East, there are no government sources of funding for mobility and few options for support from foundations or sponsors. RCF's strategy of funding only travel and visa costs is significant since visa costs for 3rd country nationals to travel to many EU countries can be costly. It also places the responsibility for hosting costs - accommodation and registration fees for meetings/training - with the applicant (or host). With modest mobility grants averaging 500 EUR average, RCF is likely to have been the catalyst for matching funding from host organisations in the EU – the main destination for grant recipients.

Results

The Roberto Cimetta Fund has undertaken considerable analysis and evaluation of its mobility scheme over seven years of activity. Internal reports were made available to the case study author.

Overall totals (2000 – 2007): 1 208 applications received – 626 grants awarded.
The origin of grant recipients (RCF statistics):

	2000-2005	2006-2007
Northern Europe	17% (majority from France)	25%
Southern Europe	29%	28%
Eastern Europe	3%	4%
Maghreb	20%	8%
Middle East (Med)	30%	35%

In 2000-2005, RCF notes that 76% of grantees originated from the South. The study also assesses trends in the direction of mobility: Europe and particularly Northern Europe was the main destination and there is little mobility between the Maghreb and Middle East. 65% of grantees were artists – double the numbers since the programme started. Training was the main purpose for mobility (39% of grants). Dance was the main artistic field (38%).

In the later analysis for 2006-07, the main destination of mobility is still Europe but preference has moved to Southern Europe (S. Europe 37%, N. Europe 26%). Artistic sector is 54% performing arts (18% dance) and 46% visual arts, media and cinema. 25% of grants were for training purposes, 24% for cultural network meetings.

Evaluation has been carried out in-house, using available statistics and reports from grant recipients. The most complete analysis is for 2005-07. As a result priorities have evolved over the period as noted above.

Roberto Cimetta Fund is an example of a relatively mature mobility fund with seven years track record. It operates in a sphere of mobility (geographically and in terms of individual grants) which was challenging and original when it was set up and remains so. The challenges for cultural cooperation across the Euro-Med region have evolved and intensified over the period.

RCF has a valuable asset in its close analysis of application data. Knowledge of applicants' and grant recipients' origins and directions of mobility, as well as artform, type of applicant and purpose of mobility enables RCF to monitor changing mobility trends and how the achievements match RCF's objectives. The priorities which RCF sets in 2008 in terms of direction of mobility, artistic field, type of applicant and project are worth studying. Such an example of changing priorities, responsive to the sector, to its needs and to the environment for mobility, is an interesting model for other mobility schemes. RCF is uniquely placed to have a perspective on directions of mobility, noting the lack of South-South and South-East mobility and the underlying reasons for this. The RCF priorities for direction of mobility are an investment in addressing such discrepancies.

The average grant (500 EUR) seems rather modest. With higher air fares and visa fees, the cost of mobility in this region will rise in 2009 and beyond. Without the funding to increase its average grants, RCF's mobility awards are likely in future to fall below the stated 70-100% of travel costs which it aims to fund.

Sources

Analyse du programme de bourses 2000-2005 (internal report)

Mobilité Artistique en Méditerranée: Analyse de Programme de bourses 2007 (internal report)

Made in Med : the challenges of artistic exchange in the Mediterranean, Roberto Cimetta Fund & Fondation René Seydoux, 2007.

Application form: <http://www.cimettafund.org/documents/CIMETTAFUNDFORM.PDF>

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