

**Compendium  
Country Profile  
Cultural Policy  
in**

**Syria**

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Al-Mawred Al-Thaqafi (Culture Resource) Organization launched in 2009 a regional initiative aims to identify the main features of cultural policy in Arab countries. The ultimate goal is to build a Knowledge Base that supports cultural planning and collaboration in the region, as well as propose mechanisms to develop cultural work in Arab countries.

First stage of the project targeted preliminary surveys of policies, legislations, and practices that guide cultural work in eight Arab countries: Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco.

The process of Monitoring was conducted in the period between May 2009 and January 2010 by Arab researchers from all eight countries, and thus "Ettijahat. Independent culture" as the regional coordinator of the project developed the surveys and updated its information and data through specialized researchers who reviewed the information and amended it based on the most recent developments in the cultural scene.

The study has been completed according to the Compendium model which is adopted in study about cultural policies around the world. Research is divided into the following:

- 1- Cultural context from a social and historical perspective.
- 2- Administrative Subsidiarity and decision-making.
- 3- General objectives and principles of cultural policies.
- 4- Current topics debated in cultural policy development.
- 5- Main legal texts in the cultural field.
- 6- Financing of culture events and institutions.
- 7- Cultural institutions and new partnerships.
- 8- Supporting creativity and collaborations.

This survey has been conducted in 2009 and 2010 by the researchers Rana Yazeji and Reem Al Khateeb. The original material of the current survey is found below in black. "Ettijahat. Independent culture", a regional coordinator of the project has updated the exploratory surveys periodically, in cooperation with national groups and independent researchers, the updates in the year 2013 was done by the researchers Rana Yazeji and Wedad Salloum. Then updated again in 2014 by the researchers Wael Qadour and Wedad Salloum, you can find these most recent updates in red within the survey.

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## 1. The cultural context

### 1-1 Socio- Cultural Perspective

Modern History of Syria

In 1516, Syria was taken under by Ottoman Empire; this occupation continued through the following four centuries.

This occupation started to stagger under the pressure of Arab liberal revolutions in 1916 during First World War, only to come in to an end in 1918, Syria then was declared independent under the leadership of King Faisal I.

During the two years that followed the end of the war in 1918 – and in accordance with the Sykes-Picot Agreement that was signed between Britain and France during the war – Syria was decided to be part of the French territories.

In early 1920, French troops landed on the Syrian shores, and in 1923 the French control of Syria became formalized by the League of Nations' mandate system, The French mandate of Syria lasted until April 17, 1946.

Upheaval and instability were the dominant factors in Syrian politics in both internal and foreign affairs, the creation of Israel State on the land of Palestine was declared in 1948.

March 1949 witnessed the first Syrian coup d'état by Col. Husni al-Za'im, This was soon followed by another overthrow, by Col. Sami al-Hinnawi, who was himself quickly deposed by Col. Adib Shishakli, all within the same year.

Shishakli was in power until 1954, during which the opposition forced him to resign and leave the country. The upcoming four years were considered the most significant in Syrian history

In 1958, Syrian President Shukri al-Quwatli and Egypt's Nasser announced the merging of Egypt and Syria, creating the United Arab Republic, The Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser was chosen as its Chairman. This union was announced on 28 September 1961 only to fall apart in 1963, the Baath Arab Socialist Party led another coup known as “March Revolution”.

As a result, the Baath party came to power and stayed in control until the year 2011 when Grassroots movement started. Ever since and through the process of writing this report, the Syrian regime has been in confrontation with this movement for **43 months**. This movement caused significant changes to Syria's political, economic, social and humanitarian future. Despite the current efforts and statistics, all the possibilities of this crisis evolving into other phases are still open.

The 2014 Presidential elections were held for the first time since the Baath party's coming to power. Three candidates ran for President of the Republic, one of whom was Bashar Al Asad who was elected for a new Presidential term for another seven years. Elections were held in areas controlled by the Assad regime with no international monitoring. During the past year, matters in Syria are increasingly and unremittently complicated due to infiltrating foreign armed groups (from Iraq, Lebanon, Iran and Afghanistan) working alongside the regime to suppress movements. It is estimated that within these groups are 35,000 fighters according to

a study conducted by the Syrian Network for Human Rights on 5/7/2014<sup>1</sup>, in addition to the Islamic formations some of which appear to be fighting the current regime and have been placed on the list of international terrorist organizations (al-Nusra Front, Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant).

The official name for Syria is the Syrian Arab Republic; the official language is Arabic, and the majority of Syrians are Arab Muslims. Syria has a spectrum of ethnic diversity such as Circassians, Armenians, Kurds, Turkmens and others, this diversity is also present in religion, where different doctrines and religions are considered to be “religious minorities” such as Druze, Yezidi, different sects of Christianity, and others.

Syria has 185.180 sq.km divided into 14 governorates which is: Damascus , Damascus countryside, Kenitra , Dar'a, Sweida, Homs, Tartous, Latakia, Hama, Idleb, Aleppo, Rakka, Deir ez-Zor, Hasaka.

The following Statistics “published by the Central Bureau of Statistics ” in December 31, 2011, , shows how Syrians are distributed based on gender and governorate:

<b>Governorate</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Number of Household</b>
Damascus	796212	755949	1552161	340864
Aleppo	2090680	1954486	4045166	706498
Damascus Rural Area	1171746	1101328	2273074	426228
Homs	786414	742988	1529402	271500
Hama	711621	673332	1384953	233563
Latakia	447783	431768	879551	185135
Idleb	645936	612491	1258427	201685
Hasaka	646968	628150	1275118	181195
Deir-ez-Zor	513925	490822	1004747	132874
Tartous	358101	343294	701395	143051
Rakka	407134	386380	793514	120163
Daraa	430544	412934	843478	132843
Sweda	155775	157456	313231	64135
Kenitra	34039	32588	66627	10624
<b>Total</b>	<b>9196878</b>	<b>8723966</b>	<b>17920844</b>	<b>3150358</b>

<sup>1</sup> Syrian Network for Human Rights 5/7/2014

During a workshop on the population sector in Syria held on 13/2/2012 by the General Commission of Scientific Research, the Dean of the Higher Institute for Population Studies and Research stated that the current conditions in Syria and ever since 2011 have imposed a great deal of required effort from persons in the field. First, there is a need to review documents on Population Policy and their backlog, in addition to great research efforts required to address demographic issues and problems arising from socio-economic changes in light of the changing demographics in Syria that show the signs of opening and widening demographics in governorates in Sweida, Tartous, Latakia and Damascus. A report compiled by a group of researchers from different research and academic backgrounds was presented at the workshop and revealed that as a repercussion of the current crisis in Syria the estimated number of residents in Syria in 2012 was only 18 million. The report noted that the number of Syrian residents who have left the country during the current crisis is estimated to be 3 million. In addition, during the period between 2011 and 2013 there was major internal migration in Syria as well as multiple and possibly frequent movement between governorates, as initial estimates point toward at least a third of the Syrian population have migrated to one or more locations from their original place of living.

The official website for the Central Bureau of Statistics <sup>1</sup> posted a research survey titled Project Report on the State Population in Syria in 2013. The Central Bureau of Statistics conducts the census survey in collaboration with the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs with the following goals:

- 1 Humanizing the current population condition and its main challenges into an integrated concept of development that includes economic social and institutional conditions
- 2 Studying the effects of the crisis on the population and the related interactions in the period between 2011 and 2013 including geographical distribution of the population, demographic characteristics, economic situation, living conditions and social relations.
- 3 General identification of the status of services and infrastructure, and productivity of related institutions
- 4 Suggesting a population policy in an integrated developmental framework to overcome effects incurred by the crisis

This study was not published until the date when the research was presented

In light of absent official institutes for statistics in Syria, independent research organizations such as 'Syrian Centre for Policy Research' were established, which publishes a series of periodic reports on the crisis' effects on Syrian society for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and United Nations Development Program, in collaboration with the Central Bureau of Statistics , and the Commissions for Regional Planning and International Planning in Syria. The report that monitors the second half of 2013 contained the following<sup>2</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> [www.cbssyr.sy](http://www.cbssyr.sy)

<sup>2</sup> [http://scpr-syria.org/att/SCPR\\_Squandering\\_Humanity\\_Ar.pdf](http://scpr-syria.org/att/SCPR_Squandering_Humanity_Ar.pdf)

The population in Syria has decreased by 10.7% compared to what it was in 2010. This decrease is generally a result of the considerable increase of refugees and emigrants from Syria, and to a lesser extent the number of deaths resulting from armed conflict.

The reconfiguration of the demographic map inside Syria has been profound with migration of approximately 5.99 million people inside Syria until the end of 2013, which makes up 33% of the estimated population of Syrians within Syrian territories; even though more than 45% of Syria's population were forced to leave their homes as result of continuous armed conflict in search of relatively safe places and seeking to secure basic needs of living.

More than 11 million people have lost their main income due to unemployment that fell by 2.67 million during the conflict, and half of the workforce have become jobless; in addition to 75% of the population living in poverty 20% of whom are living in extreme poverty.

## **1.2 Historical Perspective: Policies and Cultural Instruments**

The Ministry of Culture in Syrian Arab Republic was founded in 1958 during the unity between Syria and Egypt, thus for we can consider this founding a dividing line between historic events.

The local community played<sup>1</sup> a key role in the cultural movement before the ministry was founded, along with the Syrian University which has been a major cultural center at that time, not only on a Syrian level but for all neighbouring Arab countries as well.

The medical Institute established in 1901 “followed by the Law School in 1913” was the nucleus foundation for “the Syrian university” which was founded in 1923 to include both Medical and Law schools.

In 1953, the university name was changed to “Damascus University” to include the following schools:

Faculty of Literature and Human arts opened in 1946

College of Education in opened in 1953

It is an interesting fact that one of the first art exhibitions in Syria was held in 1928 at the Syrian University in Damascus, participants were several artists and photographers, such as Tawfiq Tariq, Saeed Tahseen, Michel Kirshai, Faez Al-Azem, Josephine Tajer and Mohammad Ali Al-Khayyat .. the university continued to be an incubator for artists through collective and individual exhibitions.

A group of artists “including, Salah Al Nashif who traveled to Italy in 1939 and studied there for 3 years” returned from Egypt and Italy after completing their higher education. They contributed to founding the Arab Arts Society in 1941 and the Syrian Arts Society in 1950 these artists taught in the Faculty of Fine Arts, Damascus University.

In 1950, the General-Directorate of Antiquities and Museums adopted the artistic movement. It has established an annual exhibition and became the reference body for

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Appendix 1- Cultural clubs, cultural & social societies; publishing houses, bookshops and magazines in Syria since 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup>



artists' affairs. Later on, this directorate established a permanent exhibition and called it Gallery of Modern Art.

In 1958 the Ministry of Culture and National Guidance was established, and within its structure, a Directorate of Fine Arts was created as well as a Department of Acquisitions and Exhibitions, and a Department for Monuments and Statues.

The cultural forums<sup>1</sup>, social associations, publishing houses, libraries and periodical cultural publications were key drivers behind the active writing and translation movement. Cultural and literature leagues, clubs and associations have contributed into growing the cultural community in Damascus since early twenties until the end of 1950s.

The first Arabic print press entered Aleppo in 1706 and Patriarch Athanasius III Dabbas used it to print "The Book of Psalms" in the same year. The first print house in Damascus, founded in 1855, was owned by Hanna Al Dumani and named after him. When it comes to libraries, Damascus is considered one of the richest eastern cities in acquiring books and founding libraries along with Aleppo. The oldest library in Damascus goes back to the nineteenth century and located in Ummayyad mosque. There was nine other libraries spread around the city where people used to study and read<sup>2</sup>." This includes private libraries that were successful due to the huge efforts of the owners such as: (Al Omaria library, Abdallah Basha Al Azem's library, Sulayman Basha's library, Othman Al Kurdi's library, Al Khayateen library, Al Edadiya library, Al Shamsatiya library, Al Yagoshiya library, etc.)<sup>3</sup>

The first printed book in Damascus didn't come out till almost half a century after Aleppo's, when Aldomania press printed in 1864 the book "Prayers of Sheikh Abdul Ghani Al-Nabulsi". But the progress of typography was weak, only 272 books were printed in Syria by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Their subjects have been mostly in religion, literature, language, and few of them have been in philosophy, science, arts and sociology.

Printing in Damascus didn't develop until the 1930s when schools began to spread and schoolbooks became needed, Arabic Language Assembly provided the market with heritage books, also a lot of different newspapers appeared.

But the early publishing activity in its current sense started with The Arabic Bookshop, which was established in 1908 by its owner Ahmad Obaid, who is considered the first master of publishers in Damascus. His work caused a leap in bookshops operations from printing and sale into publishing business.

In 1865, Damascus was first introduced to press with "Souria" the first state newspaper. Two years later, it was followed by "Ghadir Al Phurat" the state newspaper in Aleppo. Later on, more private newspapers started to appear; in 1870, "Dimashq" newspaper was issued in Damascus by Ahmad Izzat Pasha Al Abid and in 1878, "Al Shahba" newspaper was founded in Aleppo by Al Kawakbi in cooperation with Hashim Al Attar.

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Appendix 2- Case study- Socainah Forum.<sup>1</sup>

Joseph Alyas: Development of Syrian journalism in a hundred years, part 1, pg. 15 <sup>2</sup>

The previous resource, pg. 28-29 <sup>3</sup>

The issuing of more newspapers continued periodically and drastically in most of the Syrian cities; during the Ottoman era, 25 newspapers and 4 magazines were issued in Aleppo, while 36 newspapers and 9 magazines started in Damascus.

under the French Mandate. Damascus issued more than a hundred newspaper and magazine. A new phenomenon of establishing intellectual societies and clubs was noticed in the second half of the nineteenth century. This brought famous cultural and artistic names and figures to the Syrian scene. The first social club in Damascus was named "The Bond of Love Association", founded in 1874, followed by "The Historical Society" in 1875. Others were founded mainly in Damascus and Aleppo such as; The Syrian Society, The Arab Club, The Arab Women Club, The Literary Association, The Political cultural Symposium Association, Pen Inspiration Association, The Youth Writers Association and more.

Artistically speaking, there were individual and group initiatives to form artists' assemblies, clubs and teams like the experience of the Arab theatre pioneer, Abu Khalil Al Kabbani. He established a theatre to incorporate an elite group of actors, singers, chanters, players and dancers, his first show in Damascus was in 1871.

In Homs, "The nice view" theatre was founded by Muhammad Khalid Al Shalabi.

In 1914, "The Oriental Music Club", founded by an artist named Shafik Shabib, was the first music club in Syria.

The phenomenon of associations and forums proliferation hasn't been limited to the French Mandate period, or the reign of Independence. Its roots go back to the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the first scientific & literature association known as "The Syrian association" was founded in Beirut by a number of intellectuals, Syrian and orientalist, such as Alyazaji, Butrus Al-Bustani and Michael Mashaka.

The first time associations were known in Damascus was in 1874 through the founding of the association "bond of love" which was a scientific rhetoric association. Then the associations began to increase. In 1875 the "Association of History" was founded; and in 1878 the "The Charitable association for the establishment of Schools and the promotion of knowledge".

- The Arab club, established in 1918, during the period of the Arab government. It is one of the oldest clubs in Damascus. The role played by the club at the beginning of its establishment was to awaken the national consciousness and gathering the forces of struggle for the consolidation of independence. The club was closed after the French occupation. In 1936, the club was re-founded again and contributed in social, literary and national activities.

- The Ladies Literary Club, was founded in 1920, a number of Syrian women have contributed in its establishment headed by the writer and the journalist Marie Ajmi, who is the owner of the first women magazine that was issued in Syria in 1910, the magazine was entitled "Al-Arous, The Bride". The club organized many activities, the most important of which was the ceremony held on the occasion of the writer May Zeyada visit in 10/10/1922. It was held in the Balour "Crystal Palace " in the neighborhood of Bab Touma in Damascus.

- The Association of Literary League as Mr. Samy Kayyali said was established in 1921. The Association issued a magazine under their same name, it was published first time

in September 1921. It has been mentioned that this publication was motivated by the jealousy towards country's literature. The association holds a weekly meeting in which each time one of its members delivers a lecture. The association did not last long and the French mandate authorities closed it.

- In 1936 during philosophy classes for the eleventh grade students in "Tajheez El Banat" school, the idea of a secret forum was born. The Association of Women's Cultural Forum continued holding secret meetings in its member's houses until it was publically announced in 1942 and got a license from authorities of the French mandate.

- The Catholic Youth Club was founded Al Kassaa district in Damascus during the twenties of last century;. The club held a monthly cultural conference which included lectures and poetry nights. The club has also issued "Al Fekr" (The Intellect) magazine in which they published the monthly cultural conference activities.

- The Cultural League of the Arab Medical Institute, which was founded by a group of students, in the early forties. This League was also known as the "Cultural Conference". The most famous founders were: Abdul Salam Al Ajili – Mohamed Al-Ashoury- Mounir AlHamamy- Faisal Al Sabagh and Aref Keyasa. The foremost activity of this League was to issue "Sabah" (Morning) Magazine. The magazine was issued by Abdel Ghany Alotry in Damascus during the forties. The student Abdel Salam Al-Ajili published "Al Makama Al Sakhera", "Al Makama Al Tebeya", which became very popular in the cultural society, these writings were the beginning of satirical literature.

- Al Liwaa Al Thaqafi" was one of the distinguished literature clubs in Damascus, founded in the late 1930' by a number of teachers and students from Iskenderun territory. The most famous founders are: Mr. Youssef Zakhour, the president and Mr. Zaki Al Arsouzy who was surrounded by a large number of friends and students. He gave political and cultural lectures, and wrote a number of books whose proceeds were allocated to this club.

- Pen Inspired League: was founded in 1952. Some of the most famous members are: Mr. Tahseen Mirkhan the president, Abdallah Al Sabagh, the writer, Ezz El Deen Alkak, Said Morad and Raafat Alkordy. The event which has culminated the league activities was the ceremony held in 1954 on the occasion of the second anniversary for the creation of the association. A large number of writers, poets and intellectuals were invited as Hasseeb Kayali.

- Story People League which was founded in 1956. Among its members were Eskandar Louka, Jean Alexan, Fouad Al Hakeem and Georges Doulbani.

- League of the Youth Writers, founded in the mid-fifties of the last century. Some of its founding members: Nasr Al Deen Al Bahra, Said Mourad, Ahmed Al Ghafry, Nadia Khost, Soliman Zakareya, Hesham Al Nahaas. The objective of this League as mentioned in its founding statement "Members of the League believe in realism as a mode of expression concerning the continuous movement of life and reality, because they are consistent with the requirements of development forces in the society". Said Al Jazaery opened the doors of his magazine "Al Nokkad" (The Critics) to the members of this League.

- The League of Syrian Writers founded in the middle of 1950 was one of the most famous literature associations. It was, later, the nucleus of the Arab Writers Union.

Some of the founding members were: Hanna Mina, Shawky Baghday, Said Hourany, Murad Al-Sabai, Salah Dohny, Mostafa Al Halaj, Shehada Al Khoury and Abdel Salam Oyoun Al Soud. One of the league members, In early August 1954, the League held a conference to pave the way for its conversion into "The League of Arab Writers".

- The Association of the Arab Writers, a number of retired members of the Syrian Writers League, those who did not believe in all League's goals and aspirations, created a literary conference naming it the "Association of the Arab Writers".

- The Syrian Society for Arts is an artistic cultural association founded in 1950 and was based in Abu Rummana street. This Association played a prominent role in promoting arts and cultural movement by organizing regular lectures given by a number of writers, poets and artists such as Nizar Qabbani, Olfa Al Adlaby, Adham Ismail, Shawki Baghdadi, Mohammad Mehdi Al Gawahergy, Dr. Abdul Karim Al-Yafi, Dr. Sabah Kabbani and Najat Kassab Hassa.

- Friends of Arts academy was established in the early 1950. The Academy invited writers, poets and intellectuals to give lectures to it's members.

- Cultural and Social Solidarity Association was founded in 1954 by Mr. Mohammed Rashid Al-Rashidi in his residence, in "Al Mazraa" district. Some of the well known members were Said Houraniyyeh, Bashar al-Kadi, Said Murad, Haseeb Kayali, Mawaheb Kayali, Salah Kharboutli and Raafat Kurdish. The Association held several cultural conferences and participated in publishing a lot of books written by its members.

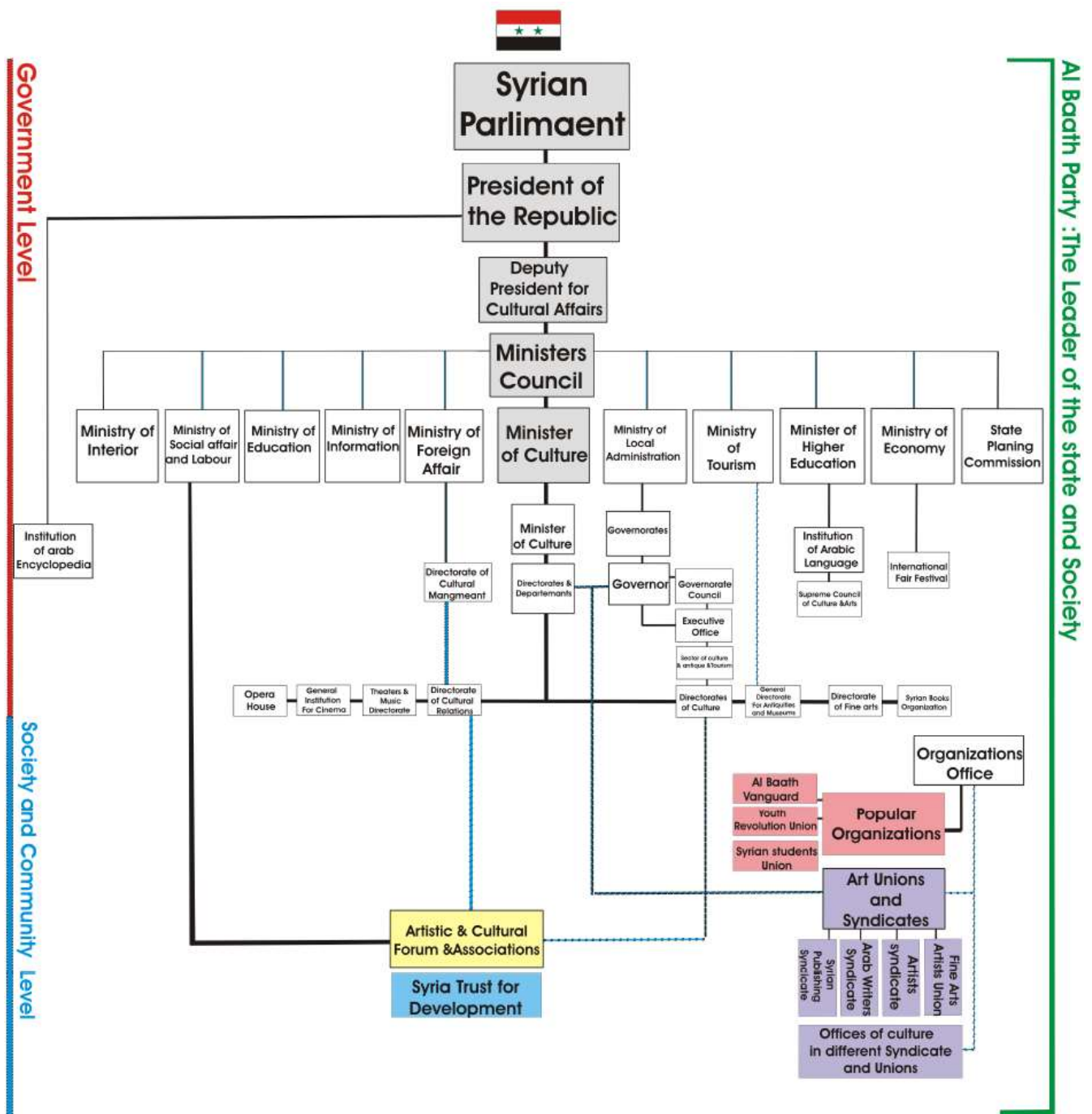
Moreover, a lot of rich cultural groups, conferences, workshops and forums were organized, such as the Cynics Group, Al Maamoun Seminar, the Social Circle for Graduates of Higher Institutes, Marie Ajami Salon, Zahra Al Abed Salon, Thouraya Al-Hafiz Saloun and the Literary Forum.

## 2. Subsidiarity, decision-making and administration

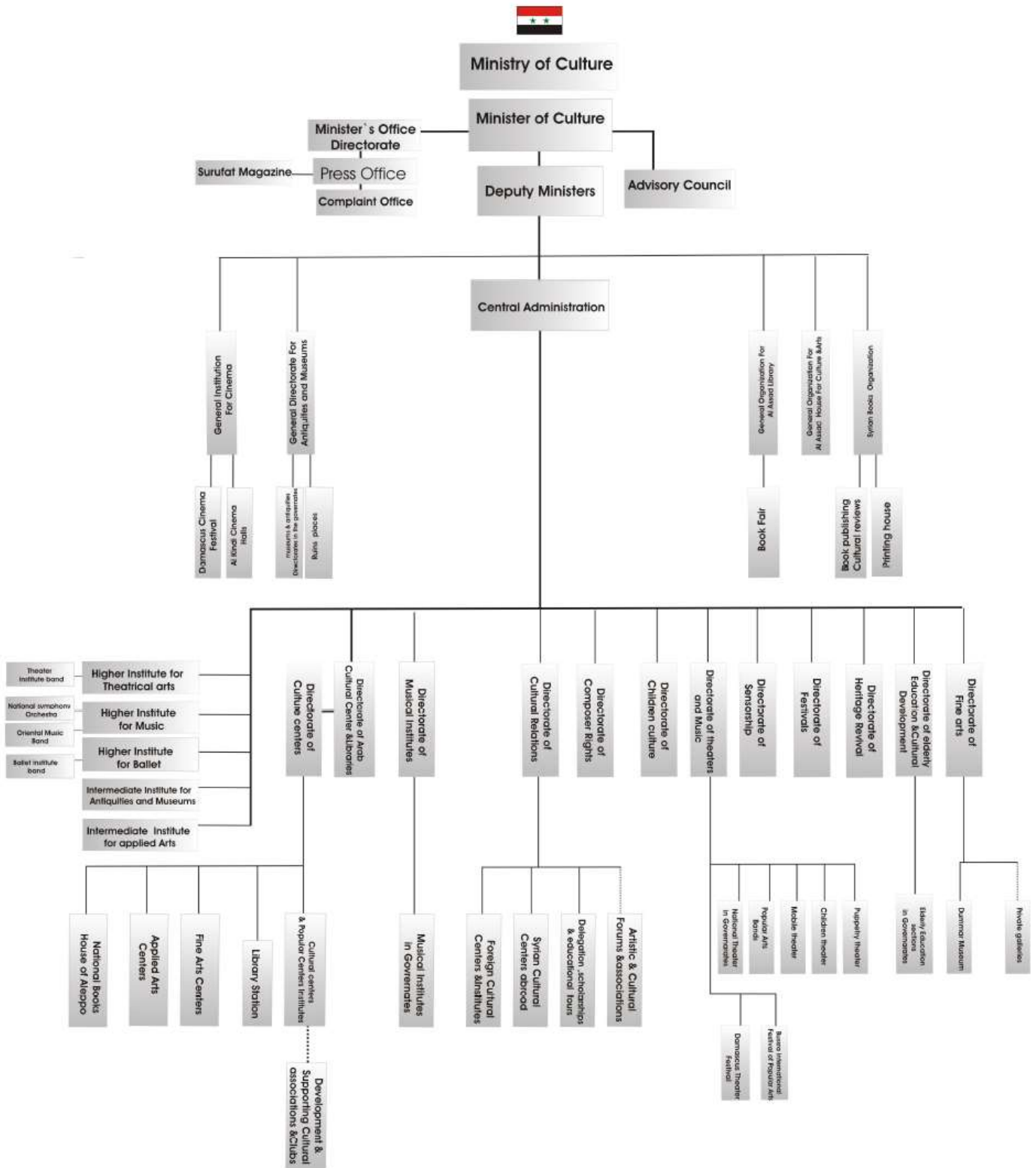
### 2.1. The Organizational structure

Organizational Chart 1 provides a general picture of the Syrian cultural institutions and how they relate to the government and political power. It includes all the Syrian institutions and ministries, which practice remarkable cultural activity within the Syrian administration.

#### Official Level (Governmental)



Organizational Chart 2 represents the organizational structure of the Syrian Ministry of Culture.



## **2.2 description of the system (All representatives of cultural policy)**

Government institutions in charge of cultural aspects

On national level

International Cooperation and Planning Commission

This is a technical bureau associated with the leadership of the government's cabinet that was founded on 11/1/2011 as an alternative to the State Planning Commission. The new commission works on studying and analyzing environmental, social and economic situations as well as pointing out the sources of strength and weakness and following up on regional and international updates. In addition, the commission also works on preparing future studies on different issues to predict Syrian economic updates along with suggesting general visions and objectives and long-medium-short-term strategies and plans for social and economic development on the general national and provincial level.

The law has also considered the International Cooperation and Planning Commission an official gate between the Syrian Arab Republic and the outside world, and the only official channel with Arab and foreign countries as well as with international and regional financial institutions and organizations on issues related to achieving grants, funds, and technical aid<sup>1</sup>.

As a conclusion, the income of the International Cooperation and Planning Commission is considered, within governmental institutions that are in charge of organizing cultural sector's work, a necessity to understand the general image of the cultural work in the public sector. Although the commission is not especially considered with culture, it's the side that's assigned with establishing a commission for international cooperation and planning in every institution and ministry, of which the Ministry of Culture is included.

State Planning Commission

SPC is the body in charge of elaborating short, medium and long-term development plans on massive and sectorial levels. SPC is a technical apparatus affiliated to the Council of Ministers, it aims to support and enable the "Higher Council for Planning" to fulfill the needs for social and economic development in Syria, including the cultural sector.

SPC oversees plans and follow up their implementation, and seek to achieve the sufficient and necessary international cooperation to support the implementation of development plans, and provide technical assistance to the government concerning economic development issues.

Decree 86 of 1968 and its amendments by virtue of Decree 5 of 2004 is the SPC main organizing legislation, since it stipulates the basic duty of SPC; elaborating the economic and social development plans and providing the necessary internal and external resources for its implementation.

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<http://www.buildexonline.sy/detail.aspx?id=15437><sup>1</sup>

On this basis, SPC assumes follow up, supervision, organizing, coordination and support with and for all the bodies involved within the framework and responsibilities defined in that Decree.

The 1<sup>st</sup> FYP in Syria was elaborated in 1960. The current 10<sup>th</sup> FYP (2006-2011) has three general sectorial objectives<sup>1</sup> as following:

Adopt cultural development in its broad sense, toward "culture for everyone" through consolidating human concepts and values to raising the cultural standard of the public, spread the culture of dialogue, introduce the Arabic culture to the world and disseminate its message.

Develop the Syrian cultural product; create the necessary empowering environment to raise the cultural movement; publicizing knowledge and culture, being considered as an investment sector, and investing culture and knowledge for the benefit of individuals and the prosperity of society.

Watching over the Syrian diversified cultural heritage and to promote the antiquities status, and to dedicate the necessary attention to it being one of the key alternatives.

The relation between SPC and the different ministries, including the Ministry of Culture, at the level of annual plans is summarized as follows:

Each ministry comprises a statistics and planning directorate, administratively subject to the concerned minister, but in terms of its work connected to SPC, SPC duty is to lay the annual plans for the concerned ministry including the investment plans which gets its budget after it's included in the annual investment plans of SPC, and being approved by the Council of Ministers, while the current budget of the ministries is confirmed after it is certified by the Parliament during the discussion of the General State Budget.

Based on what is stated above, the classification of SPC within the governmental institution is considered a necessity to understand the general illustration of the cultural work in the public sector, although it is not a concerned institution of culture in a special way, but it is the party which issue the substantial "Document" which defines the policies for the different ministries of which the Ministry of Culture.

**Syrian National Commission for Education, Science and Culture: A national commission for education, science and communication within the Ministry of Education. It incorporates into its main structure a General Secretariat of staff and a public commission headed by the Minister of Culture and also includes associate ministries: Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Expatriates, Ministry of culture, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Oil and Mineral Resources, Ministry of Environment, the Commission for Planning and International Cooperation, and representational of governmental scientific institutions: the Centre for Scientific Studies and Research, Atomic Energy Commission, and Assad National Library. The National Commission was formed by Legislative Degree number 944 on 13/5/1976 based on the UNESCO Constitution that was ratified by member states, one of which was the Syrian**

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix : 10<sup>th</sup> FYP matrix in the cultural sector



Arab Republic that joined the organization in 1946. The National Commission is considered the link between ministries and related national institutions and three international organizations: UNESCO, ISESCO and ALECSO.

### Ministry of Culture

This ministry was established under the name of “Ministry of Culture and National Guidance” in 1958 during the unification with Egypt by virtue of Law 197. The Ministry is still pursuing the same objectives set for it when it was established as following:

Popularization of knowledge and culture, presentation of the Arabic culture and disseminate its message.

Public guidance using proper Pan-Arab ideological guidance; developing mass Pan-Arab awareness; counseling citizens to raise their social level, boost their morale and strengthen their sense of responsibility; motivate them to cooperate, sacrifice and intensify efforts to serve country and humanity.

Facilitate means of popular culture.

Contact overseas cultural and artistic institutions and benefit from their activities.

Implementation of the cultural agreements signed with foreign governments within the Ministry's jurisdictions.

Stage festivals and cultural and artistic events; hold conferences, organize competitions; offer prizes and encourage the establishment of cultural societies.

Revive the traditional Arabic heritage in the fields of science, literature and research.

Discover the archeological and historical heritage of the Syrian Region.

Establish archeological, historical and traditional museums.

Encourage arts and literature and steer them to achieve state's interests.

The ministry supervises a number of directorates and institutions that are administratively independent and artistically bonded with it, thus it's considered the centre of decision making for all the cultural sectors.

The bylaw of the ministry contains a detailed description of the nature of supposed cultural ministry activities, including: The Ministry of Culture shall work on developing artistic talents and qualifying them for artistic and creative production through art and academic centers and institutes (Fine and Empirical arts, music, theatre and ballet), in addition to the other institutes interested in talent development of visual and Empirical arts and popular arts institutes, linked with the cultural centers available in most Syrian cities.

The ministry encourages people to found and create versatile cultural civil societies and clubs of cultural nature, it follow-up their activities, help them to fulfill their tasks, interact with the people through local cultural centers, theaters and different gallery locations open to the public at no cost. The ministry work on adopting artists and supporting their participation in local and international art exhibitions, as well as supporting private shows by providing financial and moral support to facilitate their international contribution.

The Ministry of Culture and National Guidance has developed alongside the political rhetoric, starting with its name which became the Ministry of Culture but without significant change to its role and Regulatory structure.

Directorates of the Ministry of Culture: National Assad Library, Directorate General of Museums and Antiquities, National Organization for Cinema, Directorate General – Dar Al Assad for Culture and Arts/Opera House, Syrian Writers Association, Higher Institute for Dramatic Arts, High Institute of Music, the Ballet School, Directorate of Arab Academies of Music, Directorate of Theatres and Music, Technical Institute for Applied Arts, Directorate for Heritage, Directorate of Cultural Relations, Directorate of Fine Art, Directorate of Arab Cultural Centres, Directorate of Copyrights and related rights, Directorate of Engineering, Directorate of Computer Science, Directorate for Elderly Education, Planning and Survey Directorate, Directorate of Censorship of Works of Art, Children’s Culture Directorate, Legal Affairs Directorate, and Directorate of Administrative Affairs.

#### Other Ministries and organizations

A number of other ministries are concerned with different cultural sectors and arenas, such as:

Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, functions as an administrative body in charge of regulating NGOs.

Ministry of Tourism, which oversees the Higher Council of Tourism and Tourism Promotion Directorate. The council is in charge of regulating businesses and investments in archeological sites, while the Directorate promotes Syrian archeological heritage through exhibitions, local festivals and participation in international fairs. The Directorate is also the regulating party of antiquities acquisition, On 25/1/2012, the Ministry of Tourism was issued a new structure, creating several new directorates<sup>1</sup> such as the Directorate of Religion Tourism, simply because Syria is rich of religious landmarks. As well as the Directorate of traditional crafts, with a main focus on how to advance local production and create job opportunities. Also, tourism centres have been converted into training institutes to upgrade the education and training of Tourism industry.

- Ministry of Education, which oversees the departments concerned with school theatre and other extracurricular artistic activities.

In 2010, the Ministry of Education was able to attract 250 graduates from the High Institute of Theatrical Arts and the High Institute of Music. These graduates were the driving force behind the 2010 Arts festival, which was the first of its kind, followed by a second one in March 15, 2011. The Directorate of School Theatre held some workshops in 2011 with children refugees who had fled hot zones into safer territories.

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Organization structure No.1 <sup>1</sup>

- Ministry of Defense runs the Military Theatre, where Art major graduates do their mandatory military service. The Theatre management signed contracts with few actresses to perform plays of patriotic themes in theatre and on touring shows to military divisions.

Ministry of Media oversees the General Authority of Radio and TV.

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, which oversees the Supreme Council for Arts and Culture, and the Arabic Language Academy.

Ministry of Economy oversees the Fairgrounds; home of **the Chamber of Cinema Industry**, Damascus Annual International exhibition, which activities are not limited to Exhibits but it also includes theatrical & musical shows as well as Fine Art exhibitions. The year 2012 was the Exhibition's fifty-ninth session and the following bulletin was published in the Exhibitions and International Markets magazine: "due to the exceptional conditions and travel difficulties for participants, the fifty-ninth session of Damascus International Exhibition has been postponed till further notice". Government official insisted that this was a postponement and not a cancellation, no update so far was received on when the exhibition might be held again.

The Ministry of Finance also oversees the chamber of film industry.

Ministry of Local Administration is partially involved as a management organization for the work of provinces and municipalities

Grassroots organizations and labor unions

Grassroots organizations are the regulatory frameworks that attract the potential citizens according to the nature of their work. These organizations are approved by state institutions but they Adopt different systems derives its general thrust of the national and pan-Arab perspectives and fall in three frames:

Cultural offices in Organizations affiliated with the Baath Party: such as Pioneers organization, Revolution Youth Union, and the Syrian Students Union, which participates in local cultural activities, international fairs and festivals, and competitions.

It was mentioned in the presidential decree issued on Feb 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 that "the workers of Baath Arab Socialist Party and Grassroots organizations who have not been elected or assigned leadership tasks should be appointed in vacancies (within state official positions) making a rule for this purpose. This step complies with the upcoming period when the Baath party will become an equal to the other Syrian parties. Then, it will reduce the Party's financial burdens to a minimum and workers will get their salaries from the state budget, and serve in its institutions.

Cultural offices in other unions "whose board and chairperson are elected by their members" such as General Women's Union, Syrian Union of Farmers and Labor Union. All these organizations participate in local and international cultural activities and receive support from relevant ministries.

Unions of artistic and cultural professions "whose board and chairperson are elected by their members" such as: Fine Artists union, Arab writers union, artist association, Syrian publisher's union and journalists union.

All these unions are overseen by government agencies without interference in the union's functioning mechanism, they practice cultural activities on both national and international levels, and contribute efficiently in expanding and supporting Syrian art and culture, the unions receive amenities and support from the ministry of Media, Culture, and other stakeholders.

Local level:

The Ministry of Local Administration "which is the new name assigned in 2009 to what was previously known as the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment" is the centralized administration for governorates and municipal councils. As shown in the organizational structure chart, every governorate has an executive office in charge of cultural affairs, celebrations and festivals. It also oversees the governorate cultural centers, even though these centers are technically affiliated with the Ministry of Culture, which creates duplication in these centers functions.

This Ministry was created in 1971 after the Local Administration Law was issued with the objective of placing responsibility in the hands of the people, and where local authorities work with a centralized administration that regulates public participation in various fields, including cultural.

The directorates of culture are distributed on all 14 Syrian governorates, each one of these offices serves as a sole representative of the Ministry of Culture, and these offices are the link between the Ministry and local authorities. They are the guardians of local activities which is planned on a monthly basis, this plan is subject to the Ministry's approval and funded by the governorate local authority.

A joint initiative was launched by the EU and Syrian government in 2005, to prepare the MAM Project (Municipal Administration Modernization) which was implemented first in an experimental stage in six cities<sup>1</sup>. MAM Project aims for decentralization in decision-making, giving local authorities greater control over their affairs, authority for developing their mechanisms and making administrative and financial modifications in order to create municipalities with greater independence and strategic vision.

On October 06<sup>th</sup> of 2010, the Local Administration Ministry and the EU mission to Syria celebrated finishing the Municipal Administration Modernization project (MAM) and launching decentralism and local development program which is considered the second phase of the (MAM) program with a budget of €22.5 million on four years.

On 24/8/2011, the legislative decree number (107) was issued. This decree consists of a local administration law which aims to implement decentralism of authorities and responsibilities, to be centralized instead into the hands of the people and to ease procedures of providing services to the citizens in addition to reinforcing incomes of the administrative units, and reinforcing the role of surveillance through official and domestic surveillance. (2)

Changes on public sector level

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<sup>1</sup> Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Latakia, Tartous and Der Ezzor.

Like most of the governmental sectors in Syria today, the Ministry of Culture is not politically active. Instead, it follows superior political instructions to support and promote the mechanism of “confronting the conspiracy/crisis” this not a new role for the ministry but it became more acute after the recent political instability.

The effort paid by the ministry in contribution to creating the cover up image (of a normal life) was clear. Thus, the cultural movement was constricted to local and regional activities. (It covers a few regions that are not facing a political movement) including usual artistic activities, despite the fact that there are no audiences. The main focus was on activities dedicated to children, book printing, holding cultural nights, and honoring some cultural figures. In other words, the cultural movement has come down to activists whose political preferences match the regime’s orientation in this period. The ministry has also participated shyly in the cultural events of the countries that are still friends with the political regime in Syria. Trying to observe the ministry’s efforts in having agreements, whether new or as old as three years, we haven’t found any new ones, and those signed back in 2010 are either dead or frozen.

Moreover, the changes of decision makers in the ministry and its main departments are many and frequent with no subjection to any standard. One of the most important changes was changing the minister; Dr. Lubana Mushawah was nominated after Dr. Riyad Esmat in 2012 and will be in office until 2014 to be succeeded by Mr. Issam Khalil who will be in charge of the Ministry of Culture’s portfolio. Mr. Khalil received his degree in law from Damascus University and is a member of the Union of Arab Writers, Syndicate of Lawyers, and a member of the People’s Council in a legislative role since 2012. The changes also involved directors of several directorates and organizations that belong to the ministry. It's worth mentioning that the management of Al Arayis theatre/ Theatres and Music directorate was handed to Mr. Mahmoud Othman in 2012 instead of Mr. Ziki Cordelo who had been arrested by the security authorities at some time in the same year because of the people’s movement. This obviously proves to us that the ministry hadn't tried to take any action or stand up for its employees. Instead, it sometimes carried out procedures against them, not taking action when employees and cultural activists were taken by security and investigated. Also, choosing to be silent about security arresting employees from organizations and directorates belonging to the ministry, and dismissing them for reasons not related to their jobs. As an example; in July 2012, The General Institution of Cinema in Syria (the only official body in charge of cinema production and distribution) issued a sentence dismissing three Syrian cinema directors for "being absent more than 15 days without giving an excuse" according to the ruling. This dismissal sentence was considered highly politicized according to art societies and circles because the directors were known to stand by the people’s movement in Syria and oppose the regime. This caused a lot of cultural activists and figures opposed to the regime to leave Syria for various destinations and use their arts, mixed with their bitter experiences, to organize various cultural activities and enlighten the public opinion to what’s currently happening in Syria, and get support for the Syrian revolution against the regime’s oppression. As a result, poetry and singing nights were held along with plays and films –

some of which participated in international festivals. They also founded TV channels, radio stations, magazines and newspapers.

Cultural activists who are still remaining in Syria have been divided into three categories. The first category is considered pro-regime and they work with the regime's official cultural institutions and under its commands. The second one is small and considered neutral and they try to work under very difficult circumstances to be able to remain existing. The third category is anti-regime and with whom the cultural authorities have abolished their relationship. There is a clear intention not to hire opponent artists in the Ministry of Culture or Information as well as giving direct commands to private sector companies to boycott them and prevent them from participating in its productions. It's worth mentioning here that some from the third category have contributed along with young activists in all Syrian governorates to create an alternative informational and cultural body, despite harsh conditions. We have noticed many local newspapers and websites covering political and social events in addition to some artistic activities, although they're few.

The Syrian official cultural sector did not witness changes of deep and direct impact with regard to public policies and approaches<sup>1</sup> since the establishment of the Ministry of Culture in the 1950s<sup>2</sup>, because the legal and administrative regulations that organize cultural activities remain unchanged and still working according to the regulations it was established according to. However, observers of cultural life in Syria can sense slow and irregular changes on government level. These changes are bonded to the changed priorities of official rhetoric and to openness on the outside world, also the independent local sector and international organizations are considered important tools to achieve and push forward these changes.

The beneficiary of these changes at the time being is not the Ministry of Culture, due to its contradiction with its operation mechanism, at the same time, the independent sector, due to the disunity the individual nature of the independent and civil institutions in Syria, which prevents it from forming an existing force parallel to the official sector, and that keeps every institution be confined to its own individual resources and projects.

#### Changes in the role of the Ministry of Culture

The independent sector is growing and its impact on Syria's cultural life is increasing, in parallel to the continuity of the power and resistance of the Ministry of culture role as a regulator of the cultural work in Syria with the limited support the Ministry of culture providing to the independent sector. The existence of two poles (even with unbalanced

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<sup>1</sup> Despite the establishment of important infrastructures such as Al-Assad House for Culture and Arts (Opera House), Al-Assad Library and increasing number of cultural centers in many governorates.

<sup>2</sup> Syrian intellectuals in general believe that the Ministry has deteriorated after Dr. Najah Al-Attar stepped down as Minister of Culture. The late President Hafez Al-Assad appointed Dr. Al-Attar Minister of Culture in 1976 and she remained in that position until the beginning of 2000 when she stepped down as a result of the cabinet reshuffle order by the late President three months before is death.

weights) will necessarily push for a number of measures driven by the key question: how to transform the role of the Ministry of Culture?

These transformations may be identified by examining a number of examples, from which we present two examples:

Damascus Capital of Arab Culture 2008:

On Jan 10, 2007 President Bashar Al-Assad issued a decree to form a secretary-general board to be in charge of "Damascus Capital of Arab Culture 2008 Celebration". This board is linked with the Prime Ministry and consists of one secretary-general and several members. The said presidential decree named the secretary-general of the Celebration and the Board chairperson; accordingly the following tasks were assigned to the Board:

Providing the general guidance for the method and mechanism of presenting Damascus as capital of Arab culture.

Providing the legislative and organizational cover for the working teams through coordination with the concerned ministries and public agencies and institutions involved in these activities.

Proposing the provision of technical and financial support by the competent authorities to insure effective execution of the Celebration.

Adaptation of the Celebration's lines of action.

General supervision of the accurate achievement of the intended celebration message.

Proposition of the working team's structure.

The decree also stipulates that the funds earmarked from the Ministry's budget and the government donations, in addition to contributions and aids provided by other parties shall be put in a fund created for that purpose. The Celebration's secretary-general shall be the treasurer and pay master of this fund in order to provide all the necessary requirements to render success to the Celebration without being bounded by the laws and regulations in force.<sup>1</sup>

The key question that went through the minds of all people involved in culture in Syria is why the Ministry of Culture and Damascus Governorate were excluded from running and organizing the Celebration? Despite that they possess all the necessary infrastructures and human resources to implement the Celebration's activities? And despite their ability to cooperate with the other government bodies to mobilize all available resources, and why the Celebration's secretary-general was given spending powers without being obliged to observe the laws and regulations in force?

Analyzing these indicators is takes a long time, but they certainly raise questions about the Ministry's role and the vision of the highest authorities of its ability to work within the laws, regulations and mechanism in force.

Proposed modifications on the bylaws of the Ministry's directorates of culture

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<sup>1</sup> Pursuant to which government bodies act.

The slow changes in the Ministry's role may be traced through the partial measures taken by many government institutions. One of the important examples is the proposed amendment of the bylaw of the Directorate of Theatres and Music, being one of the Ministry's big directorates, this Directorate is currently drafting a new bylaw that reflects its vision of its own role in the theatrical and musical life in Syria.

One of the clear strategies set by the modifications is being able to supervise the independent sector by setting up a number of sections and subsections to oversee the activities of independent troupes and musical bands and groups and keep an eye on their work out of the notion that the Ministry of Culture should supervise any cultural initiative or activity, which will preserve its central role of the Ministry.

These measures are not to be considered a substantial modification on the essential role of the Directorate of Theatres and Music, since its bylaw describe clearly its role in supervising and coordinating with the independent parties, but setting special directorates for this concern, reflects hidden pressure felt by the Directorate of Theatres and Music.

Marking that the Ministry of Culture (through its infrastructure and the legal and financial facilities granted and high potentials of co-operation with the other governmental institutions) forms a target of support, all institutions of private sector aims to it in order to involve the Ministry of Culture as a partner in its activities, in order to benefit of the necessary facilities. But the control assures that the Ministry is providing its support on selective and unclear basis bounded to official directions or ministerial order.

#### Changes in the cultural work mechanisms

The image of the governmental cultural sector generally seemed to be stable and heavy in structure, and after the people's movement eruption in March 2011, it has turned into the "spokesperson" of the ruling regime confronting the so-called "the universal conspiracy on Syria", which opened the doors wide to the critics who condemned this role for the this sector in a unprecedented rhythm. In 2011, cultural assemblies or civil movement assemblies increased in the Syrian scene. Those assemblies used cultural expression forms, and crossed the limits of the censorship and the previous work mechanisms characterized with difficulties (which now considered traditional) like laws and regulations, or financial resources. Despite the fact that it has been about **three years** since the foundation of some of those assemblies, they're still considered to be in a creation phase, suffering from weak institutional structure and needs experience and knowledge. Some institutions have adapted to the rapid changes in the Syrian situation by ignoring all forms of censorship and laws. Others work with mere instant visions which threaten their persistence because their vision, message, and therefore persistence are connected with an instant political situation - no matter how long it takes. As a conclusion, we can't observe precise and clear scientific changes in the work mechanism of the recent cultural institutions in Syria.

Opposite to the stability of the governmental sector and its heavy structure, we find a mobile private sector, with light structure, which doesn't necessarily lead to say that the non-governmental institutions have easier mobility since they are not subject to the



observation laws, and its weak and non-continuous finance. But the Syrian private sector and due to its novelty and exterior unfold in search for the necessary funds, is based on modern concepts in cultural management, which clearly and directly affect the cultural atmosphere in Syria, one of the key effects is the emergence of new cultural professions that are yet to be adopted by the government sector such as cultural management, cultural marketing, cultural promotion, etc..., these professions gradually increase the number of practicing persons which changes the map and orientation of individuals and institutions.

These changes are reflecting on the national concept of culture (resistance culture, Pan-Arabism culture, culture as a tool to develop Pan-Arab awareness and as a socioeconomic development tool) and also on the main features of Syrian culture (one-pole central culture and appreciation of Syrian cultural product).

Finally it should be noted that the impact of the independent sector on the government sector cannot be scientifically measured due to the lack of serious measures that allow the development to be monitored and analyzed. This reading depends on individual observation of cultural life and work mechanisms in this field.

### **2.3. Inter- ministerial or intergovernmental (inter-sectorial) co-operation**

Cooperation between ministries or government bodies involved in culture is limited to signing short-term memorandums of understanding for the purpose of implementing a certain project or carrying out a certain activity without any long-term strategic dimension.

In most cases, and in order to execute such agreements between the ministries, a joint committee is formed under the supervision of the legal departments in the concerned ministries to write down an understanding memorandum, after the official signature of this partnership, another joint committee is assigned to coordinate for the execution of the project in accordance with the agreement items.

Within the coordination frame in-between the ministries, it has to be pointed out that there are authorities granted to certain ministries to supervise certain sides of the other ministries work in accordance with the internal bylaws which regulates the ministerial work.

One of the obvious examples of such kind of custody is the Ministry of Finance, it assigns in each directorate of the Ministry of Culture's (also in the other state directorates) an accountant related to it, he/she manages the internal financial affairs of the ministry that he/she is assigned to under the supervision of the Ministry of Finance.

Based on the report issued by the State Planning Commission (SPC) after the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> Five-year plan: "it is considered that the poor coordination between the ministries or government bodies involved in culture and art in Syria, is an indicator of the poor implementation of FYPs". This poor coordination is evident on the interference of internal systems of governmental institutions and their administrative dualsubordination, in addition to constituting similar and overlapping projects without coordination between various ministries and commissions.

First level of overlapping: overlapping in proposed inter-ministerial cooperation projects  
The huge amount of coordination leads to interference between projects adopted by different ministries, examples worth mentioning:

The Ministry of Culture is working on an understanding memorandum with the Ministry of Education for the development of School Theater, this is a project which aims in general to offering a theater training for the public schools students, and introducing cadres from the Music and Theater Directorate to the scholar theaters. At the same time the Ministry of Education is working together with the Syrian Development Trust on signing an understanding memorandum with a Swiss donator, which is considered an ideal case for studying cooperation between public and private sectors.

The lack of coordination between the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Tourism is noticeable, since the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP is allocating “twice the coordination relations between the Cultural and the Touristic sectors” which clearly affects the volume and the income of the cultural tourism.

Second level of overlapping: overlapping in the governing rules of government institutions and their administrative repercussions:

Example: there are many cultural centers in the Syrian Arab Republic, these centers in most Syrian cities, are the only cultural spaces outside the capital centralization. But it is subsidiary of two parties, Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Local Administration, through the local cultural directorates in the provinces which abstracts the real efficiency of these cultural centers.

## **2.4. International cultural cooperation**

### **2.4.1 Overview of main structures and trends**

The international cooperation relations are always related to the political orientation and the external political relations of the concerned country. In Syria, it is noted that most cooperation agreements are associated with direct presidential instructions, thus political relations affect in a very direct way the cultural cooperation and constitute the main framework and a regulator governs the bilateral agreements signed by Syria.

For example, since Bashar Al Assad took power in 2000, strong political relations had been built with Turkey. This pushed officials, in charge of cultural policies, to encourage relations with Turkey, starting from organizing tourist trips to importing all sorts of Turkish products including Turkish TV series for show, sale and dubbing purposes. This created a competition with the Syrian drama series’ in Syria and in the Arab society as well. It’s important to notice that Syrian maps had used to show the Iskenderun province as a Syrian occupied region until 1998 when a military dispute was about to erupt. Then, a political treaty was established in Adana and an agreement to which both sides agreed to postpone the Iskenderun’s issue to the future. Syrian sources have denied any abandonment of the province and rather announced to put disputed issues aside for the Syrian benefit and look forward to the economic, political cooperation with Turkey. Despite the announcement, some circles in Syria did not stop demanding for it. After the

movement in Syria started in 2011, Syria put the province back on the map and hinted its demand for it.

#### National (Arab) dimension of the cultural cooperation

The official cultural speech has a clear Pan-Arab dimension, of the clearest examples what was mentioned in the interview with the current Minister of Culture in occasion of opening the third festival for comedic theater on 26.03.2009: "I see that there is nothing named with "The Syrian Culture", I see something called "Arab Culture". That's why you find me possessed by the obsessions of the Arab writers from Tangier to Salala. I don't only care about the Syrian inventors production, I everyday read the Egyptians, Yemenis, Moroccans and the GSS countries writers production because we all fall in the same ocean, and drink from the same spring which is the Genuine Arab Culture. And because we are all concerned with the Pan-Arab intellect and the spreading of the resistance culture, the limits of our cultural aims are beyond the political geographic space".

The decision makers Pan-Arab political speech in the cultural sector is not translated through cooperation agreements and treaties with Arab countries, since we cannot sense a clear policy in terms of Syrian-Arab cultural relationship, despite of a variety of Arab cultural organizations and committees within the framework of the Arab League<sup>1</sup>, but they had no impact on Syrian cultural life previously. Currently, Syria's membership in the Arab League was suspended on 12/11/2011 and the seat was given to the Opposition and Revolution Forces Coalition on 1/4/2013. The key Arab League cultural bodies are:

Arab League Education, Culture and Science Organization (ALESCO): organization caring of preserving Arab culture. It was established as a specialized system associated to the Arab League on 02.07.1970 caring of developing education, culture, and sciences in the Arab countries, drafting comprehensive strategies, also assisting in its implementation, so that all educational, cultural and scientific systems become subjoined to it. Tunisia is the permanent residence of this organization. **The organization also oversees several institutes and centres, including: Arab Manuscripts Institute, Arab Centre for Arabization, and Institute of Arab Studies and Research. At the beginning of the current year the committee in charge of laying down the organization's future plan (2017 – 2022) finalized its strategy which is considered the third medium term plan (for six years) published by ALESCO since 2005. Maintaining Arab material and non-material culture and finding functional ways to preserve heritage from being wiped out and disappearing is prominent topic no doubt in light of current changes in priorities of the organization's work. The reality of public education in the Arab world and ways of its development are also considered currently one of the organization's priorities. It must be noted that the Arab program for improving quality of education falls within the framework of implementing the plan for development of education in the Arab world which was endorsed by the Arab**

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<sup>1</sup> Syria is one of the six founding members of the Arab League (established 22 March 1945). The Alexandria Protocol which led to the formation of the Arab League is the main document on the basis of which the Arab League charter is based on.

Summit (Damascus, 2008). In addition, in April 2014 a Memorandum of Understanding between ALECSO and the International Council for Museums (ICOM) was signed.<sup>1</sup>

The Permanent Committee for Arab Culture: a subsidiary of the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization in charge of preparing the annual meeting of Arab ministers of culture. In its meeting in Cairo at the end of 2011, the committee complemented Syria on joining “the easing of cultural production transfer treaty.” This treaty was approved in the general conference of ALESCO held, in its ninth period, in Tunisia from 19 to 22/12/1987. It stated that Arab countries should work on easing the transfer of Arab cultural production (whether inside the Arab states or outside) by all means. As some are as follows:

Exempt the transfer and the materials used in the production from customs fees.

Grant it the priority in transportation between Arab states.

Provide it with low transportation fees that don't exceed 25% of what's imposed on other materials.

International dimension of cultural cooperation

All cultural agreements between Syria and the countries of the world are endorsed by the President and a presidential decree is issued for each agreement, such as Decree 281 of the year 2004 which endorses the bilateral cultural cooperation agreement with Qatar. Each agreement is endorsed by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Culture. Based on the document signed between the two parties, the Ministry of Culture supervises the implementation of its terms.

In the following, some of the agreements that were signed in the past few years:

In 2008, Syria signed UNESCO's agreement on protecting cultural diversity. Since the agreement asks each country, as a condition, to hand in a report observing the country's achievements and the steps taken to preserve the cultural diversity every four years, the Ministry of Culture made the report and sent it to UNESCO in 2012.

In 2009, an agreement was signed between the Ministry of High Education and UNESCO in the building of the ministry with the attendance of the Japanese ambassador to Damascus. This agreement includes financial support with \$113 thousand worth of scholarships for Golan students studying in Syrian universities.

Syria and Lebanon signed 18 agreements, memorandums of understanding, and cooperation protocols for the years 2010, 2011, and 2012 at the end of the Continuation and Coordination Commission meeting between the two countries held in Damascus on 18/7/2010. Three of the memorandums were concerning culture, tourism, and education.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/pages/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B8%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%88%D9%85-Alecco/116560108420060>

On 9/8/2014 the Syrian Arab News Agency SANA posted on its website a statement from the Ambassador of Syria in Lebanon, Ali Abdel Karim, who stressed the importance of implementing the bilateral agreements signed between the two countries especially in relation to anti-terrorist coordination. The Ambassadors' statement did not mention previous agreements concerning tourism, culture and education.

13 executive programs, cooperation attestations, memorandums of understanding and protocols were signed between Syria and Yemen in Sana'a on 8/8/2010. One of the executive programs was for cultural cooperation and another for educational purposes for the years 2010, 2011, and 2012.

On 16/5/2010, the Executive Program for the Tourist Cooperation Agreement and the Executive Program for the Cultural and Artistic Cooperation Agreement were signed between Syria and Kuwait for the years 2010, 2011, and 2012 along with many other agreements signed by the two countries.

In 2012, Russian sources explained that Syria and Russia were intending to open cultural centers in Damascus and Moscow. The sources confirmed that the Russian government endorsed an agreement draft prepared by the Foreign Affairs Ministry which would be valid for five years and could be renewable for another five years. Meanwhile, at the time of updating this research, we haven't noticed any practical steps taken.

Based on the statement made by Mohammad Kanaan, Director of Arab and International Relations at the Syrian Ministry of Economy, on 1 September 2014 at the meeting held between the Ministry of Economy and Trade and the representative of the Russian Embassy in Syria, Andrey Tchurkin, 'there will be a meeting of the Russian-Syrian Joint Committee at the end of the current month where several topics on cooperation will be discussed and a cooperation protocol will be laid out in addition to implementing cooperative agreements previously signed'<sup>1</sup>.

Also, according to the Syrian Arab News Agency's website post dating 11/6/2014 'to confirm the growth of cultural and educational relations between the two countries, the Ministry of Education has decided to include the Russian language in school curricula as of the next academic year, wherein seventh grade students would be able to choose between studying Russian and French as a second language.'

On 23/3/2014 the website of the Syrian Ministry of Education posted a statement from Minister of Education "Hazwan al-Wazz" saying that the Ministry has completed the book for seventh grade students, to be ready in April 2014 in time with the end of educational qualification courses for teachers. According to the same source, the director of the Russian Cultural Centre in Syria Vyachislav Ovsyankin has promised to provide the necessary support to open the Russian language teaching division at the Damascus University.

It is interesting to note that there has not been any ability to follow up on the fate or stages of the implementation of these agreements, and whether any of their stages have

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<sup>1</sup> <http://breakingnews.sy/ar/article/45002.html>

indeed been completed, which indicates that most of these agreements have been frozen under the current circumstances in Syria.

It's worth mentioning that there was no capability of tracking those agreements or their execution stages nor knowing if any of their stages had been achieved. This indicates that those agreements are frozen due to the current situation in Syria.

Some agreements involve several ministries in their activity domain, such as the cultural and educational cooperation program between the government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the government of the United States of Mexico for the years 2007-2010 signed in Damascus on 23.07.2007 as a step to implement the Cultural and Educational Cooperation Agreement signed between the two countries in Damascus on 26.04.2004.

The program was signed by the Deputy Minister of Education and the Director of General Administration of Cultural Affairs/Foreign Ministry/United States of Mexico. The program activities include three ministries: Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education and Ministry of Culture, where every ministry implements the terms related to its field of work separately.

It worth mentioning that the activities of foreign cultural centers in Syria are divided into two types: activities designed according to the programs, goals and policies of these centers, approved by the Ministry of Culture based on its regulations, and activities related to the bilateral cooperation agreements between Syria and any other country.

Reading the documents signed between Syria and other countries, a number of issues has to be mentioned:

International cultural cooperation relations are not based on a strategic vision.

International cultural cooperation relations are accidental, not accumulative, they happen as a result of a political event (official visits, occasions, political stance supportive to the Syrian policy... etc.).

International cultural cooperation relations are not based on local needs but according to projects put forward by foreign sides.

International cultural touristic cooperation relations, aim to show the heritage and art of each party without meaningful activities in terms of cultural exchange and research.

International cultural cooperation relations, since it is restricted to the framework of the government cooperation, therefore they consolidate the official culture in Syria and the partner country, away from the other aspects of the cultural life in the either of countries.

Currently and due to the security situation deteriorating state and international resolutions, we should mention the reflections of the Syrian crisis on the foreign cultural centers available in Syria:

The American School: **Established in Damascus in 1957** (This is a school providing its services to diplomats, people, and residents of the hosting country). It was closed on 22/1/2012 and officially announced on the seventh of February 2012 for overlapped political and security reasons. The official statement was: "the incapability of Damascus in providing sufficient security and protection for the embassy and its surroundings."

The British Council: Began work in Syria in 1942, its last official activity was participation at graduation of the first cohort of students in 2012 from the Department of Environmental Sciences at Damascus University, which was set up in 2007-2008 in collaboration with the University of Manchester in the UK.<sup>1</sup> Language lessons had stopped since the uprising in 2011 but the administrative body still running. Most of the British employees left and the council has been recently closed. A number of the council's administrative members left to Beirut to finish work on some files. The British Council continued to support and fund a number of cultural and artistic activities in a limited way, whether in theater or in visual arts some of which were done inside or outside Syria. Recently, the council has decided that any funding it offers, should not be for any activities inside Syria.

The French Cultural Center: Although it usually closes every year in August as an official holiday since its opening in Damascus in 1977. In 2011 it closed in July, earlier than usual, anticipating its usual annual holiday. According to the official version, the decision for early closure was taken based on the two incidents in which efforts were paid by pro-regime demonstrators to storm into the French embassy when things got out of control. As a result, the center was set to close for the 2012 school year. Later, the center continued to support some cultural projects in addition to finishing some unresolved business. It also supported some artistic workshops inside Syria targeted children and teenagers, especially those affected by the crisis. In March 2012, the embassy was totally closed after the killing of two French journalists in the Baba Amr district of Homs.

The Spanish Cultural Center: it remained open in the first few months of the crisis for Spanish language students, as well as holding artistic and cultural events normally. However, the center was suddenly and entirely shut, and the language courses stopped in February 2012. The center's cultural and artistic activities were reduced to film showing, lectures and abstract art exhibitions. The contents of all the activities were not related with the Syrian crisis or the Arab Spring in general.

The German Cultural Center (Goethe Institute): The Institute was established in 1955. On 10/10/2011, Goethe Institute's administration in Syria announced the closure of the center in both Damascus and Aleppo "until further notice" for reasons described as "out of our desire." They continued, "The decision of closing the centre is due to the current situation in Syria and it was taken directly by the administration in Munich without consulting us in Syria."

The Danish Institute: Established in Damascus in 1997 after the agreement signed between the Syrian Ministry of Culture and the Danish Ministry of Education and Culture, which is the agreement to lease the 500 year old Beit al-Aqad in the old souk of Damascus for the Danish cultural centre for a period of 50 years. On 16/5/2012, the Syrian regime asked the institute's administrator -Andres Hastrub- to leave the country. The deportation decision was issued when the institute's administrator had already been in Denmark since the beginning of April because of the temporary closure of the institute due to the "security state deteriorating in Syria." Hastrub commented on the deportation

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.syrianeducation.org.sy>

decision, “Maybe because we have tried to arrange a number of small events and activities which we got permission for from the specialized authorities, but because of the security situation we had to change them and arrange other alternative activities which seemingly some considered offensive.”

The Russian Cultural Centre: it was open in Damascus in 1974. Its name in the beginning was the Soviet Cultural Centre and continued to be known so until the nineties when the Soviet Union collapsed. The name was then changed to the Russian Cultural Centre. It provides Russian language lessons as well as granting scholarships for Syrian students who want to study in Russia. It also arranges a lot of cultural and artistic activities. Although the Russian authorities evacuated many Russian citizens in 2012 because of the crisis in Syria, the centre was still operating at the time of this research.

In March 2013 the Centre’s director left Damascus, and in December 2013 the Centre closed its doors to visitors (due to the increase in fighting within the country) according to the Russia Today website.

On 10/2/2014, Russian bureau ‘Rus Sotrudnichestvo’ whose work is concerned with expatriates and the Directorate General for Humanitarian Cooperation operating around the world, announced stopping their work in Syria. Its new representative Vyachislav Ovsyankin headed to Damascus on Sunday February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014. <sup>1</sup>

#### **2.4.2 Government organizations and cultural diplomacy**

The Syrian government is working on encouraging and protecting culture, the Ministry of Culture is considered the main player in the public sector, it works on popularization of culture among citizens, promoting and publicizing Arab Culture message and providing all resources for communicating and meeting up with other civilizations and cultures.

The Ministry is taking over providing most means and requirements of local cultural work and international participations by staging exhibitions, festivals and art shows, producing films and theater plays, organizing local and international conferences and festivals, participating in Arab book fairs, international art exhibitions and biennials, also Arab and international theater and cinema festivals.

The Ministry has the speciality of contacting foreign cultural and artistic institutions and benefits from their activities by implementing cultural agreements and protocols concluded through the government cabinet (International Cooperation and Planning Commission) and signed between the Minister of Culture and his counterpart from the other country.

The Ministry Directorate for Cultural Relations follows up the implementation of these agreements and protocols terms, under the supervision of the Cultural Management Department in the Foreign Affairs Ministry, which coordinates with the cultural missions of foreign countries (if a cultural center of the foreign country looking forward to practise in Syria) activities and cooperation are activated by virtue of the cultural cooperation agreements signed between the two countries through the cultural center. There is

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<sup>1</sup> <http://arabic.rt.com/news/650303->



usually a room to include a large number of activities outside the framework of bilateral agreements, subject to the prior Ministry approval, decided by consultation and exchange of opinions between the involved parties. Mostly the cultural cooperation with the foreign countries reflects the depth of relations. The Directorate of Cultural Relations at the Ministry of Culture, coordinate most of the foreign communication missions of the Ministry of Culture, such as:

It coordinates the relations with “UNESCO”, “Arab Organization for Education, Culture and Science”, “Islamic Organization for Science, Education and Culture”, “UNICEF”, “the United Nations Development Program”, “European Union”, “GTZ”, “GAICA” and “Aga Khan Establishment” (the Syrian Citadel Rehabilitation Program). The Directorate also organizes the mechanism for receiving donations and technical and artistic aids presented by donating Organizations and International Establishments in cooperation with the concerned parties.

It supervises the execution of the Cultural Treaties and Aid Treaties terms, especially the part that is concerning the Ministry of Culture with the participation of the Specialized Directorates.

It supervises the affairs of the Specialized Artistic Delegations, Scholarships, Exploring Missions, Training and External Facilitation.

It supervises the Cultural Centers abroad (France, Spain, Iran, Yemen and Brazil) and the foreign Cultural Centers in Syria (France, USA, Germany, Russia, Bulgaria, Great Britain, Spain, Italy, Holland, Denmark, Finland) and drafting regulations and special basis for organizing the activities conducted by these centers on the Syrian soil, which mostly based on teaching their mother languages and launching cultural programs to popularize their culture and arts including all cultural and artistic aspects and perform researches and studies (such as the French Center) in addition to artistic projects which adopt cultural dialog, exchange of ideas, development of artistic, technical and cultural management expertise (like the British Council projects) archaeological search and excavation (the Italian cooperation in the field of mosaic restoration).

Send invitations to the masters of art and culture and the intelligentsia to Syria to launch art, cultural programs, researches, cultural weeks, exhibitions, theater acts and cinema and popular art shows to present the development of the Syrian art and culture to the other countries.

#### Other local players

##### The Ministry of Local Administration

Local assemblies, in the State general policy, are specialized in facilitating the local administration affairs and all acts needed to modernize the governorate “economically, socially, culturally, and structurally speaking” in a way compatible with the equal permanent development in the fields of planning, industry, agriculture, economy and trade, education, culture, archaeology, tourism, transportation and roads, irrigation, potable and sanitary water, electricity, health, social affairs and labor, services and recreational areas, mining and mineral wealth, disaster management and fire

extinguishment, traffic organization and management and driver's licensing centres, environment, sports and youth, and mutual projects between administrative units.

Some of the most important assignments of the local assemblies with its different levels are:

Issuing the administrative permission for touristic, educational and service structures.

Suggesting the establishment of social, cultural and sport clubs in all governorates.

Exempting some institutions, structures, and commissions from local fees and expenses.

Setting the bases and standards, especially for granting permission of billboard installation.

Selecting advisors to teach religion, give advice and preaches, and to practice religious norms in social care institutions working in the field of events.

All the governorate specializations that are applied in the laws and regulations especially for organizing civil societies work.

The Ministry of Local Administration together with local authorities, through governorates' councils, participates in the cultural activities taking place in the country and provides the necessary infrastructures necessary for it. Also the mentioned ministry acts within the scope of the State general policy, plans, programs and laws concerning local and international cultural work (particularly through twinning between Syrian cities and cities of the world where artistic and cultural activities are exchanged).

The executive offices of the cultural sector are assigned to promote literary and artistic creativity in close cooperation with popular organizations in the country, organize cultural festivals and celebrations and art activities and exhibitions and conduct seminars and lectures, in addition to other overseas participations according to the general approach of the State. These offices also grant licenses to artistic, literary and cultural societies and academies pursuant to the rules in force.

Other ministries, particularly the Ministry of Tourism, participates in the country's cultural life by promoting Syrian archaeological heritage, culture and arts through its local festivals and participation in international fairs accompanied by many popular arts and folklore groups and handicrafts.

The Ministry of Information (regarding its duty: portraying state image) also contributes in the local cultural activity through its media programs and cultural and art festivals staged to disseminate and promote Syrian art and culture locally and overseas. This Ministry seeks in particular to support and promote the product of the TV drama sector (whether produced by the private sector or the State official TV), contributes in spreading and protecting Syrian drama, provide moral and financial support and facilitate participation in international competitions in order to transform this sector to a supportive industry and disseminate local thought and culture to the world through producing drama shows of major Syrian authors and writers.

The Ministry of Information launched new initiatives amongst what the ministry had called a "modernization and renovation plan" which included shutting down both of the

local TV channels in 2013 and launching a religious satellite TV channel named with “Nour El Sham” in 2011 and a new satellite TV channel named with “Talaqi”. The Minister of Information, Omran Al Zu’bi, had announced (according to the Lebanese newspaper Al Safir during the opening event of the Talaqi TV channel on 22/5/2013) that “Talaqi” embodies “his personal project that he dreams of and it is part of the Syrian government general strategy.”

It doesn’t seem that talking about “strategy” is a strange matter in the context of the Syrian official speech that sees what’s happening in the country as an “media war in the first degree.”

The Ministry had previously launched Souriana FM and Amwaj radio stations in Latakia, Al Karma radio station in Sweida, and the SyriaTimes E-newspaper. In addition to the mentioned, it had also established the Syrian Media Center in Moscow and the E-Information Management center in the ministry’s building.

Cultural civil associations (the new players)

This time period is a period of eruption for Syrian civil cultural institutions and groups. It’s also a period of activities and gaining experience and expertise that could be an alternative of long years of work. There are a lot of institutions that grew larger after the revolution, some of which are the following:

**Al Makan Art Association<sup>1</sup>:** Al Makan Art Association, a Syrian non-governmental and non-profit organization, was established in 2006. It aims to promote cultural and artistic exchange between east and west, and contribute to revitalizing art movements in Syria on the Arab and international levels as well as to operate as a means of encounter with contemporary art around the world. The organization contributes to enabling and empowering youth to access knowledge through culture and cultural work and supports through its projects the sense of self-confidence and community belonging. The Association also promotes active participation of youth in their communities. The Ministry of Culture and artist Mostafa Ali’s gallery, who is known for his loyalty to the Syrian regime, sponsor its activities. The last of its activities was held in 2012.

The Syria Trust for Development (a non-government and non-profit organization established in 2007), was considered one of the key players on the cultural and socially developmental level since it was founded, until the beginning of the people movement in March 2011 (its board is chaired by Mrs. Asmaa Al-Assad to ensure that the social development objectives are achieved in consistency with the national vision for change and social development).

The Trust is active in the fields of education, rural development, culture, and heritage and it plays an important role in the Local Syrian cultural scene through its projects and exchange of international expertise since it has overseas partnerships and is supported by most of government and local institutions.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://almakan-syria.org/arabic/about-us/>

The Trust works with many international organizations and partners such as: Qatar Foundation, Association Echanges Culturels en Méditerranée, EC, EU, SDC, UNDP, Egyptian Population Council and many other programs and projects.

The Trust has also a partnership with the private sector, where it receives financial assistance from many Syrian companies such as SYRIATEL, MTN and other Syrian commercial groups.

While mentioning the Syria Trust for Development, we should refer to its cultural project “Rawafid” which stopped after many of its staff members had left despite the pressure given by the mother organization to stay. It’s a strong and direct reflection of the ending of the “mandate module” possibility in Syria, at least with the political authority that’s still in power in the current time. It’s also evidence of a “civil project return”. Prior to the revolution, it was acceptable for the independent cultural sector to “negotiate” with the political authority to achieve benefits that allow it to work.

The Syrian Trust for Development is still insistent on being present in Syrian society. Its activities are limited to regions controlled by the regime and operate in areas of aid, education, health awareness in addition to contributing in the promotion of handcrafts and setting up bazaars during holidays and school openings.

Ashari’ Institution for Information and Development:

This is a non-profit, informational institution that reserves some of its income for projects attempting to help those affected by the crisis in Syria. Nowadays, it works on a group of informational projects and civil activities inside and outside Syria to protect informational freedom by different materials of informational work.

The Ashari’ Institution project was launched in February 2010 with media campaign to support refugees in the north-eastern province of Syria after their farms had faced drought. This was done through mediacampaigns and various civil activities, including photography exhibitions and organizing periodic visits for journalists to the refugees’ camps.

After a year of field work in the Syrian drought refugee camps, the Syrian uprising started in March 2011. As a result, the Ashari’ Institution entered a new level of work covering the events and producing documentary films. Today, the Institution works on interviewing politicians and people in the field, recording reports and documentaries from places of action, and a group create other informational projects and civil activities inside and outside Syria for the purpose of protecting human rights via different materials of informational work.

The association has continued its work for five years until now and has thirty-four films in its registry and thirteen various cultural and aid projects. It recently announced the “Syrian Mobile Film Festival” grant for six films; the value of each grant is ten thousand dollars.

Itijahat Independent Cultural Institution:

“Itijahat” is a cultural institution located in Damascus and founded by a number of Syrian cultural activists in 2011 as a civil company (a company established for ideological purposes).

Itijahat believes that the opportunities created by an independent cultural presence will enlarge in the transitional periods: as people needs and lives change from one level to the next. While a dominant culture is characterized by a slow reaction to reforms, an independent one is considered a newborn of changes and strongly relates to them. The dominant culture is responsible for its own vanishing, as it responds slowly to changes and is mostly connected to ideologies and beliefs that used to be popular ideas in the past.

According to what’s written on its website and Facebook page, Itijahat’s work depends on three points:

- 1 -Activating the independent artistic movement and collaborating with independent cultural artists and activists as part of a creative activity cooperating with its political and social environment.
- 2-Providing academic and field research and studies necessary for cultural planning and building cultural and ideological projects relevant to the society needs.
- 3-Renovating the cultural policies and the principal intentions of art and culture, national wide speaking, to blend the cultural definition with the developmental process.

Since its foundation, Itijahat has launched a number of cultural projects.

In the beginning of 2012 Ettijahat signed a cooperation agreement with Al Mawred Al Thaqafy through which the organization will play the role of coordinator with what are known as ‘National Groups’ that work on writing documents related to general trends which monitor cultural policy in seven Arab countries (Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Palestine and Lebanon).

In 2013, Ettijahat launched the ‘Research to Strengthen the Culture of Knowledge’ project and through it supported eleven researchers in terms of capacity building, creating opportunities for young researchers in the field of cultural policy and research. A few books by participant researchers came out in the form of studies as part of this project. Ettijahat also launched the second cycle of its research project in October 2014. In May 2013, within the competition for research proposals to restructure governmental cultural frameworks in Tunis, Syria and Egypt, Al Mawred Al Thaqafy chose the research proposed by ‘Ettijahat’ which includes monitoring the current state of governmental cultural frameworks in the country and changes in the past two years. The research would also evaluate the performance of governmental cultural organizations within their existing structures and create a clear vision to restructure these governmental organizations taking into consideration suggestions and working mechanisms that can be applied within a precise time frame. The proposal would be implemented in 2014. ‘Ettijahat’ also completed its fifth periodic report on cultural policy in the Arab region. The report covers developments in cultural policy, legislation and practice in 9 Arab countries

(Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Mauritania, and Yemen) during the second half of 2013.

As a new stage in the development of the 'Cultural Policy in the Arab Region' project, 'Ettijahat' and 'Al Mawred Al Thaqafy' have collaborated on launching the official website for cultural policy in the Arab region on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July, 2014. (The website would be an open platform for individuals and groups working directly or indirectly toward change of cultural policy in their countries or in the whole region).<sup>1</sup>

#### Kayani

Kayani is an independent artistic-informative project founded by a group of Syrian activists. It works to contribute to building a Syrian civil community through giving opportunities for new Syrian voices in the field of music and visual art. It's interested mainly in recording aspects and human stories which create the background in the Syrian revolution in a creative and artistic way, suitable with the sacrifices of the Syrian people.

The following was written on Kayani's Facebook page<sup>2</sup> on 16/5/2013 "after a complete year of producing and supporting documentaries and small reports, and holding workshops in those fields, the Kayani project has come to an end today. People in charge of Kayani project would like to thank those who have contributed and participated throughout that year in making this project successful". An explanation was not given regarding the closure of the project.

#### Dawlati

Dawlati was established in June 2012, and is a not-for-profit project for building capabilities and working on developing visual, audio and context exercise materials on democratic transform and transitional justice in Syria for:

The significance of diversity, being different, and accepting differences in viewpoints.

Attempting to minimize the desire for retaliation, and encouraging to ask for justice instead.

Making advertisements about human characteristics and the rule of law.

Peaceful transformation.

'Dawlati' published on its website<sup>3</sup> results up until the end of 2013 which are: 225 posters, publishing small booklets and pocket books that promote peaceful civil movements in cooperation with international organizations. Dawlati also launched its Syria Infographic project and is working on documenting works of art on the Syrian revolution.

Bidayyat<sup>4</sup>: A Syrian non-profit organization that provides support and production of short films, documentaries and visual arts. The organization also organizes specialized training courses on all the stages of documenting filmmaking. The 'Bidayyat' produced film

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.arabcp.org/>

<sup>2</sup> Kayani's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Kayaniproject?fref=ts>

<sup>3</sup> <https://dawlaty.org/node/2701>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.bidayyat.org/ar/index.php?>

'Baladna Al Rahib' ('Our Terrible Country') won the Grand Prix of the International Competition at the 2014 Marseille Festival of Documentary Film.

Hamisch: The Syrian Cultural House in Istanbul opened in March 2014, a new independent space in intellectual and critical exile for the exchange of ideas, experiments and practice in the field of culture. It is also a space for cooperation and collaboration for artists, academics, intellectuals, and writers from Syria, Turkey and other countries.

Creative Memory of the Syrian Revolution website<sup>1</sup>: a project for documenting cultural production in Syria, launched in 2013 with support of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. The site is specialized for document the cultural affairs of the Syrian Revolution in all its forms. It aims at "documenting all forms of intellectual artistic expression in the time of revolution. It consists of writing, blogging and collecting stories from the Syrian people in the epic experience the crisis has brought and who have regained through it meanings of social, political and cultural existence," as the Creative Memory of the Syrian Revolution website describes itself. <sup>2</sup>

Syrian Center for Policy Research<sup>3</sup>: Established in January 2012, a non-profit non-governmental organization that works in three main fields: policy research and studies, dialogue, crowdsourcing and impact. Within these three areas are other activities such as training and capacity building. Since its establishment until now the Center has published a number of reports and research that monitor the demographic, economic, social and developmental effects of the crisis on the Syrian people.

Syrian Association for Culture and Knowledge: the 'Syrian Association for Culture and Knowledge' took off in Damascus toward the end of 2013 with regard to supporting culture and promoting knowledgeable and scientific dialogue. It is a civil organization working on empowering Syrian society knowledgeable and culturally in a civilized, dialogic and interactive environment in order to achieve human-centered sustainable development. The organization aims to contribute to the flow of information, and create an appropriate environment for encouraging reading and enhancing knowledge based and scientific discussions that would contribute to the development of capacities of members of society as well as expand options available to all communities' knowledge. The Association provides its activities with the support of official Syrian institutions such as the Ministry of Culture and the Syrian Trust for development among others.

Syrian Charter Organization<sup>4</sup>: A movement born on the 27<sup>th</sup> of November 2011, out of knowledgeable Syrian youth who strive for peaceful resolution in society. It is an international non-governmental organization registered according to EU law legal procedures in the city of Horn in the Netherlands. The organization's main base is in Berlin, Germany. The organization has transformed since its creation from an ambitious political movement "to write a charter on the minimal demands of revolutionary activists and in spite of politicians achieve these revolutionary goals," to a civil organization

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.creativememory.org/?lang=en>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.creativememory.org/?lang=en>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/SyrianPolicy?fref=ts>

<sup>4</sup> <http://syriancharter.org/>

somehow specialized in new media; a qualitative leap that was preferred by activists in the movement to turning it into a frozen political party. After several discussions, the aims of the 'charter' were finally specified as "contributing to development and awakening Syria as well as increasing its role in the international community through spreading the culture of peace in Syrian society," with complete reliance on "the energies of the organization's members and volunteering" while distancing from all forms of funding and political dependency, as clarified by the organization's director Mouannes Al Boukhari in his conversation with the online newspaper "Al Modon" in February 2014.

Nahna Cultural organization<sup>1</sup>: Established in 2013 and describes itself, according to its website (a Syrian civil society organization (license pending) concerned with creative development and works through culture, art and contemporary technology as active tools in the process of development and positive dialogue to the advantages of Syrian society. The organization works by coordinating and collaborating with various official and civil parties involved in these fields.) it holds its activities, which are generally coordinated and collaborated with Syrian Development Fund, in Mustafa Al Ali's gallery in the old town of Damascus. Official Syrian media covers its various activities. In September 2014 the organization held a workshop of expertise exchange in cinema with a group of Syrian youths.

"Al-Arfa Culture and Heritage Arcade" is one of the houses opened in 2013 by the Syrian Ministry of Culture in collaboration with the AL-Arfa family in Damascus (as part of a plan to open Syrian intellectuals' and novelists' houses as cultural centres and literary and artistic houses). The Arcade contains a shop to sell publications from the Syrian General Commission for Books, and a space for children's drawing and another one for music. The Arcade has a hall named "Ajabik Ajayeb" that contains a magic box and a space for a hakawati storyteller.

Also, cultural unions and networks were established and considered to be an alternative to the institutions in charge, which were joined by opponents to the regime. For example:

Syrian Independent Plastic Artists Assembly:

It was founded by a number of abstract artists opposed to the regime and its institutions on 14/1/2012. It was written in the foundation announcement of the assembly on the Facebook page of assembly that 229 members have joined to so far. Syrian abstract artists who are signing this declaration find themselves forced, with strong belief in their rights, to announce that the current syndicate does not represent them and thus, they have decided to establish a new manufacturing structure with their own means that will:

Protect them and their benefits.

Express their various, creative, and ideological choices.

Be part of the real modern Syrian culture.

Be open to world cultures and visual achievements.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://n7na.org/about.php>



Be a legitimate representative of a community that revolts tyranny and a lack of freedom.

The Syrian Writers Association:

Founded in Cairo on 18/9/2012, this is a Syrian civil society organization joined by Syrian writers from different literature and ideological currents. Palestinian writers who are living in Syria also enjoy a full membership in the Association. It's also open to Arab and foreign writers who are supporting the Syrian people.

Reasons of Establishment:

We, Syrian intellectuals from different backgrounds, intend to constitute an association for free Syrian writers that expresses our participation in the Syrian revolution, inside and outside Syria. As well as showing our desperation for an independent democratic frame for all Syrian writers that expresses the new Syria that's being born now in the streets of freedom.<sup>1</sup>

The Association published only one issue of its magazine "Writers' Association Magazine" when it was established, afterward the magazine's name was changed to "Awraq" and its first issue was published in London at the end of 2013. The third issue was published in June 2013. On 17/4/2013 the Association announced the Mazraa Prize for literature in coordination with engineer Yahya Al Qadamni who was conducting and funding the prize in the city of Sweida (1997 – 2011). Also, on 17/4/2014 the Mazraa Prize was awarded to three Syrian literary writers.

Syrian Journalists' Association:

"Syrian Journalists Association" was founded in Damascus on 20/2/2012 and is considered an independent democratic assembly that complies with the essentials of the Syrian revolution for freedom and dignity and people desires for setting up a diverse and democratic State which provides freedoms, justice, and equality, and the rule of law with no discrimination.

It assures the diversity which the Syrian society is built on and the necessity to provide opportunities for its components to express their creativity. The Syndicate is proud of the languages spoken by the components of the Syrian population; Arabic, Kurdish, Assyrian, Turkmen and others.<sup>2</sup>

The Press Freedom Commission has worked on documenting violations against journalists by all warring parties.

During a press conference in March 2014 the unification of "the 'Syndicate of Kurdish Writers in Syria' and the 'Syndicate of Kurdish Writers and Journalists in Syria'" was announced.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Website of the Syrian Writers' Association: <http://syrianswa.org/ar/statement>

<sup>2</sup>Facebook page of the Syrian Journalists' Association:

<https://www.facebook.com/SyrianJournalistsAssociation/info>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.yrks2012.com/node/360>

In addition, there are numerous groups of Syrian intellectuals and Syrian media groups that are present through social media pages, and report news and activities without specifying goals or visions (Syrian Intellectuals collective, Syrian Intellectuals collective for the support of 12 – 15 March uprising, Media Syria, Damascus News...).

Government financial support for international cultural cooperation

The Syrian government provides all possible financial support for international projects through the Ministry of Culture and Damascus Governorate in terms of providing places for shows and plays, movie theaters, lecture halls, and traditional cultural houses (such as Qasr al-Azm, Damascus Citadel, AsaadBasha Khan, Maktab Anbar and other free of charge locations).

These projects are exempted from all fees (to allow the entry of certain technologies according to the agreements signed and to project needs).

Government institutions take part administratively and technically through its cadres (and allow their partners to benefit from all available resources to support its cultural contribution and secure the possible means for success).

In many occasions government institutions bear some financial costs such as travelling, staying, transportation costs and other expenses for Syrian participants in the cultural projects they support or for foreign partners.

### **2.4.3. Direct professional cooperation**

We will focus in this paragraph on samples review of types of direct professional cooperation raised by the governmental and external sector, the private, governmental and, foreign sectors.

Direct professional cooperation – government sector

The Ministry of Culture sends invitations to Arab and foreign groups and performers to the international festivals taking place in the Syria (Busra Festival and Damascus Theatrical Festival) in coordination with the ministries of culture in the countries concerned to create art programs within where Syrian groups and shows are presented in addition to foreign ones. Sadly, there haven't been any festivals from the year 2010 to the time of this research.

Worth mentioning that the Syrian Ministry of Culture looks after hosting and organizing cultural weeks dedicated for most of the Arab Countries, this phenomena has become active in special during the year 2008 as a part of the activities held by the Ministry of Culture in celebration of Damascus the Capital of Arab Culture. Despite the modesty of this hosting, it has stopped since the people's uprising in 2011.

Direct professional cooperation – government and civil sector

The Jazz Festival in Syria hosted at Damascus citadel (an ancient citadel located in the old city of Damascus), a musical festival had been organized and funded by the Swiss Embassy, since its launching in 2004, and in 2008 this Festival became the responsibility

of Syrian Trust for Development (given its capacity as a national cultural organization) able to continue to stage this event.

The fifth version of this Festival, which opened in the 07<sup>th</sup> of July 2009, had received high financial and logistical support from the Ministry of Culture and Damascus Governorate as main partners in the event, in addition to commercial sponsors. The festival since its beginning raised with contributions of foreign Embassies in Damascus in this event, also through the foreign diplomacy in Damascus in cooperation with the public sector, the private sector and the commercial sectors (sponsors), annual festival considered one of the most festivals novelty, and most separated from the governmental style of the Ministry of Culture festivals, that is organized in Syria. The sixth version of the festival was the last (at the time of doing this research), and held at the Damascus Citadel from July 3<sup>rd</sup> to July 13<sup>th</sup> in 2010 with the participation of 14 local and international bands.

#### **2.4.4. Cross-border dialogue and co-operation between cultures**

There are many cultural programs and projects that support cross-border dialogue, but such programs are only implemented through official cultural cooperation agreements and protocols especially since the Syrian Arab Republic has not signed the Second Protocol to the Hague Convention (1954) for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, neither has it signed the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects (1995). In this context we studied agreements such as the cooperation agreement between the Ministry's General Directorate for Antiquities and Museums and Musée du Louvre which was signed in 2008. This agreement encourages hosting and exchanging personals in the scientific field from both sides to study and restore pieces of art in Syrian museums and qualify Syrian trainees in the field of restoration, and also train Syrian students from the Department of Archaeology in coordination with Damascus University. The agreement also contributes in establishing documents safe at Damascus National Museum, in the archaeological search in Syria in cooperation and coordination with the French or Syrian Faculties, development of archaeological sites especially "Marry" site, holding fairs and reforming the halls of the Eastern Antiques Department at Damascus National Museum and introducing and showing the Collections of the Syrian Eastern Antiques to the French people with the contribution of "LOUVRE" museum in every cultural event. The agreement is valid for five years starting from the date of its signature and renewable by collateral agreement.

The Cooperation agreement between Syria and Italy signed in February, 2007: this agreement includes a large number of development projects for the National Museum in Damascus, Aleppo Museum, and rehabilitation of Idleb Museum and establishment of a database for the museums pieces of art. The other part of the agreement aims to develop the technical lab (Damascus Museum), equip it with the latest lab technologies, provide HR training to use these technologies, establish a show room at Damascus Citadel for Syrian Mosaic for restoration purposes, in addition to other important projects designed for the Castle and establish a database for Syrian heritage. There are also certain programs designed according to the official institutional frameworks concerned, (such as

the Cultural Tourism Development Program) funded by the EU as of 2002. The key outcome of this program is laying down a study to develop the ancient city of Palmyra and rehabilitation in harmony with its historical importance.

Cultural dialogue projects with multicultural countries

Such projects are scarce and launched only via official channels and are often through initiatives launched by foreign cultural centers such as the French Cultural Center and British Council.

The “Nahnou-Together” Project (launched in 2005 by the British Council in cooperation with Teet Gallery Museum and Adham Ismael Center for Plastic Arts in Syria/Ministry of Culture) since the year 2005, is one of most notable examples of cultural dialogue and cooperation projects between Syria and a prominent multicultural country (Great Britain). The project was constructed during the years 2006-2007, and gave the youth from both countries a chance to discover and familiarize with their cultural identities through searching in the artistic works, and discussing visual acts from both countries. The project developed into a second stage with Jordan joining during 2008, many artists, teachers and other concerned figures took part in this project, including the working cadres at Adham Ismael Center, Arts House and Royal Museum (Jordan), curators of Teet Gallery Museum and the British Council.

In addition, the State (through the Ministry of Culture) supports the participation of youth and children in various artistic fields (theater, music, visual arts and ballets), provides academic education, training and skill-development almost free of charge, gives the opportunity to stage many activities, events and festivals within its institutions, and fully funds their travel and participations abroad.

Popular organizations such as the Revolutionary Youth Union and Al-Baath Vanguard (also support joint international projects pursuant to their rules), **were participating in giving** children and youth the opportunity to meet and have dialogue with their counterparts in the world in the fields of art and culture and fund their participations. This was the situation of the organizations of the Baath party when it used to be the leading party of the State and society (according to the eighth article of the former constitution). However, we’re following up the changes that will occur to its status and work mechanism after modifying the constitution in 2012, through which the eighth article was modified to become: (the political regime of the state is set according to political diversity).

## **2.5. Foreign cultural policies (foreign centers, institutions, institutes, etc.)**

Syrian cultural centers abroad: These centers and cultural missions at Syrian embassies (supervised by the Cultural Administration/Foreign Ministry) are in charge of disseminating Syrian culture and arts outside Syrian borders, consolidating cultural and artistic cooperation, and introducing Arab culture to the world by organizing seminars, lectures, cinematic shows, and exhibitions. Syrian cultural centers abroad facilitate teaching the Arabic language by organizing language courses.

Foreign cultural centers in Syria: These centers are bound by the limits of cultural activities stipulated in their mandates and may not conduct any activity that may harm the Syrian Arab Republic or violate its laws.

Foreign cultural centers in Syria coordinate with the Directorate of Cultural Relations/Ministry of Culture, which is the assigned administrative body to supervise the those centers activities.

Foreign cultural centers and institutions are subject to the provisions of their agreements and to national laws in all matters provided for in these agreements and are exempted from customs tariffs, municipal fees, and other.

Foreign cultural centers represent vital points in the Syrian cultural life, despite the decrease of its audience to certain social and age group categories, these centers apply the cultural policies of their respective countries and they seek to introduce their culture and social heritage, disseminate their languages and promote their intellectuals and artists. However, there are clear variances between these centers which work on basis of very private agenda of their mother countries such as the German Cultural Center in Damascus, and those adopting parallel policy to that of the foreign policy of their mother countries, but adapt their programs to be less direct and more closer to the Syrian public and artists such as the Spanish Cultural Center.

## **2.6. Cultural Policies in the Independent (Civil) Sector**

The most circulated terminology in the cultural scene in Syria before the uprising was “the Independent Artist”, independent organization, (non-governmental organization - NGO) while there was an agreement not to use “Civil Society Institutions” terminology due to the political implication it carries and change it to “National Society Institutions” with its local implication, far from the definitions of citizenship and participation.

Law 93 of the cooperatives and private institutions law issued in 1958, regulates the activities of NGOs, this law assigned the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor(formerly) to be the authority in charge of this Law management, including giving it the powers to dissolve any civil cooperative<sup>1</sup>. In 2013, a presidential decree was issued regarding modification of ministries. Thus, the previous ministry has now become two ministries (the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Labor). It was mentioned on the Attasharukiya website that the Ministry of Social Affairs was assigned to set up a project for modifying the law of institutions completely (Law 93 of the year 1953) towards the active participation of national societies in social and economic affairs and others.<sup>2</sup>

It was also mentioned in the local administration bylaw for the year 2011 in article 38 within the tasks of the executive office of the governorate council (all the governorate specializations such as laws and regulations, especially for organizing the work of national societies, apply)

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<sup>1</sup>Law of non-governmental organizations will be explained in detail in Chapter Five.

<sup>2</sup>Website of the International cooperation and Planning Commission: <http://www.planning.gov.sy/>

There are only few firmly-established civil associations in Syria such as "Art Friends", "Damascus Friends Cooperative" and "Adiat Cooperative" which was founded in Aleppo and spread to other governorates such as Tartous, Homs, and Sweida. On the other hand, there are some newly established associations such as "Rainbow Cooperative", "SHAMS Cooperative" and "SADA Cooperative" – "Syrian Social Forum".

In 2010, the First International Conference for Development was held in Syria in which the reinforcement of the national sector role in development was assured as well as the significance of vital diversity in the Syrian national societies. There are other institutions that work in various fields like environment, culture, welfare, development, rural, scientific research centers, medical research centres, etc. **Before the crisis began** in Syria, we've started to sense a dramatic change to the reality of the national sector, and witnessed a noticeable increase to the number of institutions and societies working in this field. The increase has exceeded three hundred percent in the past five years **(2005 – 2010)**.

It's not sufficient, considering the challenges that cultural groups and institutions face today as a lack of skills. Instead, we ought to search for the reasons that led to the absence of a policy or a vision in this sector. These organizations have faced, for so long, a number of challenges that make strategic action within a specific vision a difficult task, since they are not independent in the true sense of the word, because it has not the authority to decide its own internal decisions. They are also unable to get overseas funding for their projects directly but through the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, formerly.

The international cooperation and planning commission is considered, according to article (11) of its foundation law (law number (1) issued on 5/1/2011), the official gate between the Syrian Arab Republic and the rest of the world and the only resource regarding all non-military, non-security and non-political cooperation with countries and regional groups, and international and regional financial organizations and institutions. It's also considered the only channel through which contacting foreign and Arab countries, regional groups, organizations, and international and regional funding institutions for acquiring loans, grants and technical help for development funding is done in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and others. We still haven't verified yet the efficacy of these new laws on societies' activities and funding.

## **2.7. Cultural Policies in the Private (Commercial) Sector**

There is no clear policy adopted by the private commercial sector and its contribution is shy financial assistance for purely publicity purposes without any clear strategy or vision. The state provides only moral incentives to encourage the private sector take part in supporting the country cultural activities.

The role of the private sector in Syria cultural life is restricted to individual initiatives launched by some businessmen for primarily profit purposes. The culture industry in Syria is all but absent, with the exception of a small number of companies such as:

1 -Doubling companies for series and cartoons **most of which are still operating in Syria up until the date of this research.**

2 -Animation production companies (there **were** only two such companies in Syria but they are merely executive services companies for often Gulf TV stations). **With the closing down of one of these companies, a new company (Ox Animation) appeared in 2010.**

3 -Commercial theater: mostly comedian humorous plays highly popular amongst certain social categories. **We haven't checked any recent commercial theater plays in Syria.**

### **3. General Objectives and Principles of Cultural Policy**

#### **3.1 Main Elements of the Current Cultural Policy Model**

The main entry to analyze Cultural Policy Model in Syria is the administrative level (decision-making) and the financial level (National Budget distribution).

Chapters 2, 5 and 6 of this research show that the existing model in Syria is the socialist model; the State had played, until the uprising started in 2011, the fundamental role in patronizing culture and arts, through a network of institutions concerned with all aspects of cultural life. The main difference that we have noticed in the past ten years (2000-2010), even though the State is still the main patron of cultural life, is that the Ministry of Culture is no longer the only player. However, the cultural movement in Syria cannot be seen without considering the slow, clear-cut changes that are reflected on many fields, mainly: the new forms of production, the role of the Governmental Cultural Institutions, the infrastructure such as the private sector investments in culture and the civil society organizations.

The cultural policy model changes in Syria until March 2011:

**The Patronage Model:** Senior officials in the regime patronize many artistic and cultural activities and supervises them directly. Furthermore, they often take initiatives towards creating work opportunities to mobilize the Syrian human capabilities.

**The Socialist Model:** through developing the public sector, where legislations, work mechanism and regulations were slowly changing , while the official institution plays a new role due to the presence of parallel sectors or recognized individual initiatives that are capable of taking action.

Openness in the cultural production market, which started in the 1980s and has been increasing in the past few years (and which has witnessed a visible decline since 2011 and at the time of making this report due to the crisis in Syria). This openness is internally moving towards the local cultural production and externally toward the foreign cultural production.

Fundamental transforms after March 2011:

After the uprising had started in Syria, even though there were no noticeable changes concerning decision-making mechanisms on the national level, there are fundamental factors that have newly appeared and dramatically changed the cultural scene and predict a long-term change on the cultural policy level, however the political change is shaped in the country. The most important factor is that dozens of civil institutions and assemblies that were interested in the cultural matter have now left the frame of regulations and laws, and the unfamiliar activity in the civil assemblies. This change could be temporary and might be reduced later if there are no efforts paid in getting support and building coalitions towards the development of the independent sector as a force pushing political transform mechanisms on the cultural level later.



## 3.2 National Definition of Culture

### 3.2.1 National Vision of Culture

Culture as a concept in official rhetoric

Since the 1970s, the concept of culture and the approach adopted by the official cultural institutions in Syria has been directly associated with the official political rhetoric and the conflicts in the region. Culture was thus burdened with responsibilities that do not necessarily constitute part of its essence, however it reflected the environment prevailing in Syria at that time. Accordingly, the common culture got various definitions, the most important are:

Resistance culture: associated with the national struggle in which Syria had a key role throughout the history of the region.

Pan-Arab culture: where politicians in the Syrian cultural environment denied the existence of an independent Syrian culture and instead considered it a vital component adhered to a more comprehensive Arab culture.

Syrian culture as a tool to develop public awareness of Arab causes.

Culture for development where culture is characterized as: official cultural domination, centralism, complimentary Syrian cultural production.

The time-period of the uprising in Syria has been full of transforms and changes including culture within its national definition. Thus, we should now ask the questions (which have remained for so long off the table) for the cultural national definition reproduction. **It seems that official institutions in Syria have become aware of the necessity of redefining national culture from its own perspective. On 10/7/2014 the Ministry of Culture held a conference at the Damascus Opera House titled "The Future of Syria: Belonging... Tolerance... Participation" which tackled the main factors of national belonging and forming a national culture that maintains the country's and people's unity as well as ways of creating atmosphere of tolerance and the possibility of applying participation.**

The Dominance of Official Culture: support was directed exclusively at the official culture and all its forms and activities, to the effect that all creative initiatives that are outside the prevailing cultural concepts we reconsidered abnormal elements which emerge and disappear without leaving a clear trace due to the absence of any resources to support them.

Centralization: work mechanisms in the Syrian cultural environment are means to consolidate absolute centralization since the decision-making process is linked to the highest government levels, which leads to inflexibility and bureaucracy at state institutions, that ends in restricting the development of cultural work<sup>1</sup>.

Gratuitousness of the Syrian Cultural Product: the cultural and artistic product is considered by the public a service product provided for gratis. This approach aimed to spread official culture and make it accessible to everyone.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP.

### **3.2.2 Components of Syrian Culture**

There is no clear definition of the Syrian cultural components, but they can be derived through defining the officially recognized components:

The Syndicate of Fine Artists: includes painters, sculptors, interior designers, and advertisement designers.

The Artists Syndicate: includes actors, directors, and the different careers related to performance arts and cinema production, but it does not include artisans (glass, clay, crafts etc.) as they belong to the Craftsmen Union.

Organizational Structure of the Ministry of Culture: This structure includes: Heritage and archaeological sites, book publications, theater, cinema, plastic arts, copyrights, adult education and literacy programs and artistic academic education, in addition to the development of international cultural relations.

It should be mentioned here that the Syrian official speech gives special importance to heritage as a basic component of human culture. Historical monuments, traditional handcrafts and intangible heritage appear to be essential components of Syrian culture. Many examples can be given here; we notice that the artistic activities at schools focus on folk arts in the first place, in addition to theater, and music. Also, we see that the artistic groups of the Ministry of Culture, which are considered part of its bylaw, are the folk groups, in addition to Busra International Festival for Traditional Dance which is one of the biggest official artistic festivals in Syria besides Damascus International Festival of Theatre and Damascus International Film Festival.

### **3.3 Cultural Policy Objectives**

Strategies and objectives of the public cultural sector in Syria are highlighted through different chapters of this study. However reading the new development on cultural policies objectives requires shade light on the newly developed private and independent sectors. Though the independent sector is very new and has not created its history and traditions yet, and despite the difficulties of working in it, it is an actor that we cannot ignore when we pursue the development of the cultural policy discourse and the trend.

The following description of the civil cultural section depends on surveillance and a variety of examples and case studies. It's mostly considered "a description that cultural participants and Syrian artists agree on for the benefit of the relationship between artists (individuals and institutions) and the political authority in Syria." Since the year 2000, particularly with the arrival of President Bashar Al Assad into power, the political authority has sought a new period of reconciliation with the independent Syrian artists, ending a long-term dispute. Before the year 2000 there were two types of artists; independent, and those working within the political system and official media. Independent artists had had no connection at all with the political authority. After the year 2000 the political regime and its authoritative body, specifically those in the ruling level, have worked to build a strong and solid alliance with the artists. Thus, the Syrian community and moreover, the international community have changed their views on the political regime in Syria.

As a result, a new phenomenon was born: "The Shepherd Model" for cultural policies which prevailed inside the artistic and cultural life in Syria. Those directly responsible for creating personal relations with the artists were the second generation of the political authoritative body; those who belonged to the ruling political, economic, and security class in Syria. They constituted a network of mostly closed relations described as friendly and intimate for the benefit and coexistence of both sides. Therefore, artists gained fair support which didn't require any limitations or restrictions on projects or content, and didn't require them to be fully loyal or obedient. Instead, they were permitted to lead positive criticism of the authority (Al-Dumari newspaper - Ali Farzat, which was later shut down by the political authority). On the other side, artists were thankful to the regime, and most importantly convinced that it was more open and modernized, which had a great impact on the Syrian public opinion and helped to legitimize political power inheritance.

Along with the start of the revolution and considering the revolutionary movement and opponents as enemies by the government, a lot of artists have visibly joined the revolution with no hesitation. They were seeing the support they had received during the past ten years as their right and not "a favor" and that it was normality that artists would have abundant production opportunities in their countries. They also considered the support given to them by the State as a kind of "social responsibility" especially that they would actually receive it through trade companies allied with the political authority. This image resembles a general structure with a presence of exceptions.

The official bulletins that form the objectives of the non-governmental organizations cultural policies are:

Providing academic and field researches and studies that are necessary in cultural planning and building intellectual and cultural projects that are compatible with the needs of the new society.

Developing cultural policies and the main intentions of arts and culture on the national level to blend the definition of culture in the development process.

Publicizing civil characteristics and the rule of law.

Peaceful transformation.

Contributing to building a Syrian civil society.

Activating the independent artistic movement.

Defending informational freedoms by different materials of informational work.

New terms started to appear and spread in the Syrian cultural life and policies giving the cultural work, in the first place, a developmental attribute that links the cultural development to the socioeconomic development, seeks to establish dialogue with different categories of the local community, and tries to transform the cultural action to working programs on strategic dimensions. Accordingly, the basic pillars forming NGOs cultural policy objectives are as follows:

Promotion of Syrian Art and Artists: promotion is considered the objective of some Syrian institutions at local, Arab or international levels; example: Ayyam Gallery.

Youth Support: youth support attempts started to be a key inevitable headline in any statement of decision-makers in Syria and activists of all sectors of culture. Whoever observes the policy of the General Secretariat of Damascus Capital of Arab Culture 2008 notices that this is a main pillar of the year. The Syria Trust for Development is, as well, an important model for the cultural programs specified to support the youth.

Capacity Building: rehabilitation and training are an important axis for governmental and non-governmental cultural organizations in Syria. This concept started to develop to change from being mere workshops and courses proposed by the Ministry of Culture annually to integrated work programs designed so as to match basic needs of cultural domain.

Interactive Approach: since 2000, independent working groups, led by Dr. Marie Elias, started to introduce the interactive approach to the creative action, changing theatre, in the first place, from conventional spaces to more lively places, so that the interactive concept is introduced to a wider range of work domains and directed to different groups and segments, according to the project and its purpose (rural population, school students, librarians, juveniles ...etc).

Local Communities: in the cultural work in Syria, local communities turn to be a partner in research, politicization and building programs. Communication channels between the cultural sector and local communities are still primitive, but it has big potential to future development. Cultural institutions started to move towards specific social segments (Syrian Funds for Rural Development – Syrian Commission for Family Affairs).

We also notice that, in the recent years, the Ministry of Culture has focused on conducting activities in the Northern Region of Syria, which was neglected because the culture work was concentrated in the Capital and a few big Syrian cities.

### **3.4 Cultural Policies Assessment Standards and Mechanism**

No clear and transparent standards are applied in Syria to monitor and evaluate the cultural policies and their execution strategies. The Country Five-year plans and the annual progress reviews and the final revision of it, are the only way to monitor the executive programs supposed to be developed by the various Ministries and Bodies.

## 4. Current issues in cultural policy development and debate

### 4.1 Main Cultural Policy Issues and Priorities

The topics and main priorities of the cultural policies in Syria during the past few years can be followed through the main document adopted by the government as a strategic plan by the Ministry of Culture (MOC). This plan is known as the Tenth Five-Year Plan. It's worth mentioning that most projects, proposed by the Ministry of Culture and its institutions necessary to perform cultural policies, had not been performed until 2009 which is the year before the last in the Tenth Five-Year Plan.

The Decision Support Directorate (a newly created body directly reporting to the Prime Minister) recently conducted a study which assessed the progress achieved in evaluating the strategies of the 10<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan which are<sup>1</sup>:

Adopting the cultural development with its broad sense towards implementing the motto of "culture for all" through strengthening the concepts and human values to improve the cultural level of the citizens, to spread the culture of dialogue, and to introduce the Arab civilization and its message.

Improving the Syrian cultural product, providing the necessary enabling environment to enhance the cultural movement, spreading knowledge and culture amongst the people as it represents an investment sector as well as exploiting it for the best benefit of the individuals and the well-fare of the society.

Paying attention to the diverse Syrian cultural heritage, and promoting the archaeological sector and raising it to the sought level as well as paying it the necessary importance as it is considered one of the important component of the Syrian culture.

The report presents a reading of the Initiatives and the required reform projects with the aim of implementing the plan, namely, the plans presented by MOC and its affiliated institutions as important projects to carry out the government cultural policies. Most of these policies have not been implemented until 2009, knowing that the course of the current Five-Year Plan ends on 2010<sup>2</sup>:

Initiative 1: the National Literacy Campaign.

Initiative 2: Establishing the museum of modern arts as well as centers of plastic arts in the governorates.

Initiative 3: Developing the work for the cultural centers.

Initiative 4: Establishing the General Directorate for Theaters and Music.

Initiative 5: Promoting the level of prints published by the Ministry.

Initiative 6: Upgrading the cultural status and opportunities for children.

Initiative 7: Integrating children with special needs in society.

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix No. ...

<sup>2</sup> Appendix No. ..., Initiative s and reform projects to implement the tenth five-year plan.

Initiative 8: The program of administrative development pertaining to the General Establishment - Dar Al-Assad for Culture and Arts.

Initiative9: The program of the legislative development of the General Establishment - Dar Al-Assad for Culture and Arts.

Intiative10: The program of the technical development of the General Establishment - Dar Al-Assad for Culture and Arts.

Initiative 11: Developing cinema industry.

Initiative 12: Re-structuring and administrative reform of the General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums.

Initiative 13: Upgrading the archaeological sector.

Based on the assessment of the 10<sup>th</sup> Five-Year plan and the capability of the cultural institutions to implement and abide by it, the report issued by the Decision Support Directorate has called for carrying out a number of reforms on the level of policies, and the legal and institutional levels, and implementation requirements:

Working towards modifying laws and legislations which achieve the goals of the cultural development and boosting investment to grasp the goals of the 10<sup>th</sup> Five-Year plan.

Organizational and Institutional development and job allocation based on qualifications.

Encouraging the banks to enter as financiers and investors in the process of the cinema production and to offer credit facilities to enhance private sector participation.

Establishing a national funds to support the industry of cinema within the framework of the Chamber of Cinema and TV Industry and finance the Funds by domestic resources.

The International Cooperation and Planning Commission has prepared a draft for the Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2011-2015) in cooperation with all related parties. This plan had four general ideas which are:

Improving the cultural level of citizens and choosing cultural development within its wide definition towards "culture for all".

Reserving heritage diversity and promoting the conditions of archaeology.

Renovating cultural production and advertising for culture and knowledge amongst citizens.

Easing the approach of culture and knowledge sources and reducing their expenses for individuals and society.

The priorities of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan were determined by concentrating on agriculture and transformative industry, which provides many job opportunities. In addition to the importance of eliminating development dissimilarity between governorates, which requests a big governmental budget in the field of infrastructure to lessen the dissimilarity to the minimum. Basically, one third of the governmental five-year-spending goes to human development while another third goes to development in the real production sectors and the last goes to infrastructure. As well as spending on programs and projects aiming to support woman and reduce poverty, which affects the weak groups in the society, those of who will be targeted with intense programs which help them fund their small projects.

#### **4.2 Recent Policy Issues and Debates**

The following topics were based mainly on observing the controversy amongst workers in the cultural domain. In which we aim to present different readings related to the reality of current issues in the cultural domain in Syria, and elaborate various perspectives that are resulted from current development of the cultural field.

Public Cultural Institutions:

The adoption of the Syrian official speech by official cultural institutions before and throughout the uprising has led to boycotting them by a wide group of specialists who see them as institutions working on cultural affairs in favor of the political ones as well as practicing the policy of having independent organizational work absent and which is practiced by the political authority. This convinced those who are working in the cultural sector that the official institution with its current state is incapable of continuing further as it is, during the appearance of cultural assemblies and institutions that work on creating a different definition of culture in the societies that have witnessed dramatic changes.

The Credibility of the Public Cultural Institutions (Culture and Institution  
–Culture and Individuals)

The Public cultural institutions in Syria are not carrying out a review of its structures and work mechanisms. This leads to slow and an intangible institutional development. Several institutional applications has convinced workers in the cultural field of inefficiency of the Public Cultural Sector, thus believing that the institutions currently are incapable of carrying out the developments and the changes that have to be done in the structures as well as the mechanism of the cultural activity. This can be seen as an indispensable stage of chaos towards comprehending new forms and mechanisms of the cultural domain. Consequently, this results in a wide gap between the work of the official institutions, on one hand, and the needs of individuals, their knowledge and ability to develop, on the other hand.

Laws and Legislations:

In general, the laws and legislations that govern the cultural activity in Syria, as stated in Chapter5, are old and incapable of covering all aspects of the cultural activity. Therefore, these laws and legislations curtail and undermine the cultural activity with the aim of

controlling it. This constitutes one of the main problematic issues that efforts have been exerted **in the past few years** to overcome **predating the crisis in Syria**.

Individuals Role Prevalence in the Cultural Institutions:

The ability of the directors and the active persons in official cultural institutions to activate their institutions and to implement their programs are based on their personal attitudes and the level of their relations with the decision-makers, as well as their ability to achieve balance within and outside the institution more than on their independence on the feasibility of their project.

The Credibility of the Non- Governmental Cultural Institutions

NGOs concerned with culture and arts has started to play its role in Syrian Cultural life a few years before the uprising in 2011, being considered new bodies in the Syrian society. Workers in the cultural field say that these organizations do not work with clear visions, strategies, or goals. In addition to that, and most often, these organizations have started to become commercially-oriented due to the difficulty of having the required funding to carry out their activities. **Some of these organizations have stopped their activities with the beginning of the popular movement or shortly after its beginning, and some others have left Syria for neighbouring countries. In the background of the crisis were created organizations that claimed to be (independent or non-governmental) and carry out their activities sponsored by official political institutions.**

Cultural Financing (Official, Private, External and New Partnerships):

The Syrian society has been accustomed to the fact that the state is the body patronizing culture and art. With the introduction of new concepts and different production forms in partnership with the private sector and with external financial support, artists and workers in the cultural field show different responses towards this approach, ranging between complete support and expressing scepticism in the intentions, goals, and agendas of the financing bodies.

There is a structural difference between culture and Syrian society on one hand, and cultures and societies of European countries on the other hand, which leads to big differences with regard to vision, role of culture, basic needs and role of culture and arts in society. Thus, many programs that are implemented upon agreements with foreign agencies of institutions are far from basic pillars and needs for progress and development in Syria.

Entry of Artistic Products to Economic Market, the Feasibility of the Cultural Production Independently of Consumptive Commodity (The Phenomena of Artists Monopoly)

Some private galleries in Syria, which are few however rapidly spreading, work towards the monopoly of the plastic artists through exclusive agreements with them. These contracts allow the monopoly body to impose its own viewpoint on the artist work as well as the topics he/she chooses, in return to a financial compensation that guarantees a continuous and stable income for the artist. These institutions work on propagating the works of this artist and holding exhibitions of their work inside and outside Syria.



The main controversy in the artistic circle in Syria revolves around the absence of the artistic criteria for the sake of the commercial ones in addition to a major factor which is the rising price of the artistic production. This poses another question: who are the possessors of the artistic works?

Through observation, it appears that those who buy the paintings of high prices are, most often, not Syrians. On the other hand, this mechanism creates an imbalance with regard to the standards of pricing the artistic product amongst those artists who are monopolized and the independent artists, and also amongst the monopolized artists themselves.

Most cultural activists in Syria see that these institutions are Bodies that do not enjoy neither the required background nor the credibility that permit them to enjoy the title "Sponsor of arts and artists" rather considered as an activity carried out by some big capitals for economic purposes.

**Absence of Mechanisms and Statistical Analysis for Cultural Development:**

**The Absence of Analysis-Development-Measurement Mechanisms, the Absence of Field and Statistical Researchers:**

The Central Bureau of Statistics is the only body in Syria authorized to carry out field and statistical surveys. Reviewing the documents of the Bureau has proved the little interest paid to the cultural field with regard to carrying out statistical studies. Thus, the field researches concerned with the study of cultural activity are absent (Workers in the cultural field, the cultural product, and the recipient of cultural product).

**The Absence of Monitoring and Evaluation:**

The programs of monitoring and evaluation are completely absent with regard to the cultural activity carried out by the governmental institutions which hinder carrying out a study on the feasibility of the programs implemented, mechanisms of implementation, and means of decisions making.

**Cultural Relation with the Sociopolitical Change and State Rebuilding:**

Many believe that cultural change is part of sociopolitical change, and that cultural work is one of the reasons for the culmination of the Syrian society, as culture rules the process of sociopolitical change and its kind. It's because of the society cultural rules that the mass ideas of the society it belongs to and moreover, the society's beliefs, specify its reaction towards events taking place in the society.

Therefore, the massive changes happening in the Syrian society assign cultural activists and institutions with responsibilities and priorities, starting with studying the positive and negative effects of the movement on the society to finding appropriate solutions for fixing the negatives and strengthening the positives, and lastly, approaching the desired positive change. This approach needs massive support and participation between individuals and institutions which were born as a result of the exceptional situation of the Syrian society and of the fundamental privilege that assures the freedom and dignity of

people as the top intention of cultural work, along with having people become the top intention of the political work.

The “Independent Culture for Democracy” conference was held in Cairo from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 2012 in which participants (some were Syrians) asked for (in the countries that are facing dramatic political change), a transitional mechanism that should be set for the governmental cultural sector, in cooperation with independent cultural institutions, which guarantees the non-suspension of cultural services from citizens and spreading them to as many people as possible, as well as covering the needs of the sociopolitical change levels; at the same time, another mechanism should be specified for a long-term cultural policy.

#### The Relationship between Syrian Culture and Syrian Society

The relationship between the cultural practices and the public is problematic. Workers in the cultural sector set up their projects regardless of the spectator-consumer.

Many economic and social factors play a major role in keeping the Syrian audience away from the cultural product.

What draws the attention is that the controversy over this point has increased following the end of the festivity of Damascus as the Capital of Arab Culture for 2008. Many have come to the conclusion that the Syrian audience is close to the cultural atmosphere and that the problem lies in the small number of the activities and the poor financing as well as their low level. Moreover, the exhibition halls, theaters, and cinemas witnessed a big turnout in 2008 because the level of the activities was high. Others say that the activities presented, despite their high artistic value, are seasonal that depend to a great extent on hosting world celebrities through which Damascus was able to attract the Syrian audience throughout a whole year. Nevertheless, the sustainability of this phenomena and relating it to the domestic local product remains the crucial question.

During the meeting on cultural policy and the challenges to cultural work in the Arab region<sup>1</sup> that took place in the Tunisian capital in December 2013 by the initiative of the regional office of Al Mawred Al Thaqafy organization. The role of culture and arts was emphasized as an influential and essential factor in social and political change that the region is witnessing, and the importance of creating the National Group for Cultural Policy with the aim toward developing the organization of cultural activity in Arab countries and strengthening cultural diversity.

#### Feasibility of Developmental Role of Culture and Arts

Developmental dimension of Arts and Culture which is concerned in social and economic development is considered one of the core issues of the role of governmental institutions, NGOs, and Externally-Funded Programmes.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.radiotunisienne.tn/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=100006%3A2013-12-24-14-03-13&catid=153%3A2010-03-23-12-22-02&Itemid=505](http://www.radiotunisienne.tn/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=100006%3A2013-12-24-14-03-13&catid=153%3A2010-03-23-12-22-02&Itemid=505)

Developmental approach of culture and arts is becoming controversial issue, in the sense that whether prevalence of this approach means the absence of the pleasure resulting from the spontaneous creativity of the artist.

### **4.3 Cultural diversity (minorities, groups and communities)**

It was mentioned in the ninth article in the first chapter in the first section of the new Syrian constitution, “the constitution sponsors the protection of the cultural diversity of the Syrian society with its all components as it is considered a national heritage that reinforces national unity in the frame of Syrian lands unity. “

There are inconsistent statistics for religious and ethnic minorities in Syria varying between resources during short time-periods which proves that these statistics are not scientific along with having different backgrounds some of which are political:

A statistic mentioned in a book published by the Syrian Information Ministry in 1982 called, “Syria Today”, states that “86 percent of Syrians are Muslims, 13.5 percent are Christians and a few thousands are Jewish.”

A study of a statistic that was published in 1984 points that “76.1 percent are Sunni Muslims, 11.5 percent are Alwaites, 3 percent Druz, 1 percent are Ismailis, 4.5 percent are Christians and 0.4 percent are Shi’as.”

It’s mentioned in the international religious freedom report issued by the American State Department in 2006 that “Sunni Muslims form 74 percent, while the report estimates the number of Alawites, Ismaalists and Shi’as 13 percent of the population, Druz form 3 percent and different sects of Christianity, according to the report, form 10 percent of the population.”

In a book entitled, “The Struggle for Power in Syria: Sectarianism, Regionalism, and Tribalism in Politics” by professor Nicolas Van Dam, a Dutch diplomat, he says, “Sunni Muslims who speaks Arabic form the majority of 57.4 percent of total population regarding religion and language, while remaining groups may be considered ethnic or religious minorities; the biggest religious minority in Syria is the Alawites at 11.5 percent, Druze at 3 percent, Ismailis at 1.5 percent while Roman-Orthodox Christians form 6.4 percent, and are the most important Christian community in Syria which makes up 14.1 percent.” We should point out that “community” terminology is an abstract political terminology used within this context for purposes described as not precisely scientific, because a community here is defined as a group of people living abroad in a new country that is not their mother country.

The “We’re All Partners of the Syrian Electronics” website has posted a statistic that is dated back to 2005 (during the peak of the international pressure on the Syrian regime and the predictions of its future) conducted by specialists. According to the resource: “45 percent are Sunnis, 20 percent are Alawites, 15 percent are Kurds, 12 percent are Christians, 3 percent are Druze, 3 percent are Murshdis, 5.1 percent are Ismailis and 0.5 percent are Shi’as.”

Mr. Yeseen El Haj Salih – a Syrian writer, researcher, condemner, and translator- discusses the previous statistic on “The Civilized Dialogue” website<sup>1</sup> in an article entitled, Minorities do not Exist in Syria, but The Besiege of Sects is Possible, from which we mention some extracts: the statistics show numbers and percentages that are stunning and unfamiliar ,and which go against what’s decided in all the resources that we know on the new and modernized Syria. It’s written from an ideological and political standpoint, and dominated by indications that are shallow and abstract as it points out that Syrians are minorities only “just like the Lebanese case” and that “the majority” is not many and “the minority” is not little.

The main nationality of the Syrian Arab Republic is the Arab nationality. The number of those who belong to the Arab nationality in Syria range between 77% - 90% of the census of the Syrians, whereas the remaining percentage is of the Kurds, Sharks, Armenians, and other minorities.

The majority of the Syrians are Muslims whereas the Christians with their different sects constitute about 12% of the Syrian people.

Syria is considered a diverse country in terms of cultures, nationalities, and religions. In their statements, the Syrian politicians view this diversity as “the source of the social cohesion in Syria and that it represents one of the power factors in the Syrian society and not a source of conflicts and disputes”.

Different minorities practice their rituals and celebrate their feasts in different ways and levels, it can be noticed that there are Sharks and Armenian associations, where they teaches their language and hold different activities with the aim of grouping people of these minorities and forming small social communities to practice respective traditions.

In some cases these associations obtain limited support from the Ministry of Culture, such as offering theaters for free to celebrate a specific occasion or to present a performance that embody their traditions. While Kurdish nationals have suffered a lot in Syria starting from the Arab Belt Project, which was issued by the Syrian government in 1965 and aimed to make the north-eastern province of Syria (along the Iraqi borders up to Ras El Ain in the north) empty of Kurds and settle Arab families instead. Building the Euphrates dam (which started in 1968) was a good opportunity to impose the project and as a result, hundreds of Kurdish families were displaced and lost their land after some had not been given the Syrian citizenship in 1962. The Kurds continued to suffer for many decades.

It was mentioned in the report (year 2000) of the Human Rights and Freedoms Defending Commission in Syria:

The number of Kurds who haven’t been given Syrian citizenship is approximately 200 thousand. A rule numbered (7889/G) was issued in Hasaka on 15/10/1999 to prevent neighborhood administrators or public parties from giving any document that revealed the situation of the Kurds.

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<sup>1</sup>Website of the Civilized Dialogue: <http://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=57826>

Also, a decision numbered (768) was issued in May 2000 closing shops that sold Kurdish music (or preventing them from doing so) as well as the prohibition of speaking Kurdish.

According to Human Rights Watch report in 2010, Kurdish language could not be used or taught at schools in Syria, banning the establishment of such schools along with the prevention of publishing books, magazines or newspapers in Kurdish.

The report has more revealed that security forces “opened fire to disperse Kurds while they were celebrating the Kurdish New Year in 2010, north of Raqqa, which led to the killing of at least one person.

Furthermore, a military court gave sentence of four months in prison to nine Kurds who were thought to have participated in the celebrations held in Raqqa and being accused of “provoking sectarianism”.

On 24/3/2011 and during her press conference, the Syrian president’s advisor, Buthayna Sha’ban, noticeably addressed Kurds and spoke about the Nayrouz feast, considering it a feast for all Syrians, as well as sending regards to Kurds on this occasion. This was the first Syrian official speech that indicated this feast and publicly recognized the Kurdish culture as one of the Syrian cultural components. Some considered this openness by the government towards the Syrian Kurds as an opportunity to encourage them not to participate in the uprising in Syria.

It is not possible to recognize activities organized by governmental cultural institutions that aim to promoting concerns or heritage of these minorities, on the national level and abroad. However, there are initiatives that seek to underline the social cohesion. One example is Busra festival, edition 2007, where the Ministry of Culture concentrated on highlighting on the Syrian cultural diversity by presenting folk dancing bands that represent various Syrian communities. In the meantime the Syrian flag was held at the end of each dance by the dancers indicating that the differences between these communities are melting within conception of a national belongingness.

Even though the year 2011 was a major turning point for the question of teaching Kurdish language, wherein Kurds formed a military force that took control of several Kurdish cities in North and North East Syria; the regime’s as well as the opposition military forces were both expelled. In 2012 institutions concerned with social affairs were created, among them the Kurdish language organization “szk” that took on the task of integrating Kurdish into official school curricula in regions largely controlled by Kurds, the Syrian regime responded with creating obstacles. In 2013 the determination to teach the Kurdish language in public schools became a reality, after the Ministry of Education gave its implicit consent to teach Kurdish curriculum.<sup>1</sup> In April 2013 Damascus University announced its need to make a contract with two Kurdish language schools that have a license in any specialization and have teaching experience and qualifications to teach Kurdish, with the aim to open new sections within the University’s Language Institute.

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<sup>1</sup> according to several websites on the Kurdish cause in Syria

After legislative Decree number (49) that was published by the Syrian regime's President in April 2011, the judgement granted Kurds registered as foreigners in the Hasakah province records the Syrian nationality. The president's rhetoric is still devoid of any focus on Kurdish cultural rights as one of the components of Syrian society, and some consider that this discourse is of purely political goals.

#### **4.3.1 Language issues and policies**

The official language in the Syrian Arab Republic is Arabic, the dominating language on the cultural activity, practically speaking, based on clear political directives not only to support Arabic but also to adopt the classical Arabic and not the colloquial in all official media outlets and the other arts. Discussing the languages in Syria, we should also mention Aramaic which attracted the local attention lately and as a result of the Western interest. In mid 2013 Damascus University announced openings to hire professors to open a new section for teaching Aramaic at its Language Institute as the language is rare worldwide.

#### **4.3.2 Social cohesion and cultural policies**

The access of minorities to culture and the cultural activities is not considered one of the issues and the questions raised by the stakeholders in Syria. This absence is not considered an act of marginalizing to these minorities, but a reflection of the absence of the relationship between culture and Syrian public.

This point which has been ignored for decades and almost not noticed, may be the fundamental basis for any cultural work or thinking of establishing new national intentions.

On the other hand, it can be noticed that the majority of rural regions are lacking the access to all cultural and artistic activities and products, as a result of centralization and imbalance in cultural investments and phenomena.

#### **4.3.3 Gender equality and cultural policies**

The Syrian Constitution:

The constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic, issued in the beginning of the year 2012, states in Chapter 3, article 23 that: "The state guarantees women all opportunities, enabling them to fully and effectively participate in the political, social, cultural, and economic life. The state removes the restrictions that prevent woman development and participation in building the socialist Arab society".

Indicators on Woman Empowerment:

According to numbers, women are living in an era which hasn't been witnessed before. A report conducted by the United Nations Development Program in 2005 states that 11% of the Syrian ambassadors and almost 15% of diplomats are female, 21 women are direct managers and 27 others are vice-managers. In 2006, prof. Najah Al Attar became the first woman of holding the vice-presidential post. In labor committees, the number has reached 1600 women with another 240 in labor syndicate offices and 13 in executive

offices. Also, 180 women are working as judges, two as secretary generals of two of the National Front's parties and one as the head of the Homs city cabinet. In the field of information, the percentage of women working is (38%) of Journalists Union members, (50%) in visual media and (30%) in written media. In 2009, and for the first time ever, a woman held the post of Attorney General in one of the Syrian governorates.

Based on a study prepared by the Businesswomen Committee on the reality of the Syrian woman and her development, the special indicators on enabling women can be measured in three domains:

The political Participation and Decision-Making: this can be measured by the percentage granted to men and women in the Parliament (12% in the People Assembly and 3.1% in the local administrations )

The Economic Participation and Decision-Making: this can be measured through two indicators: the percentages of men and women with regard to the posts of legislators, high-ranking officials, and directors and the percentages of men and women with regard to vocational and technical posts (7% in the Ministry, 11% in the diplomatic corps, 13.38% members of the Journalists Union, 38% of the Journalist Union).

Control over the Economic Resources: it is measured by the estimated income of men and women.

Women in all work sectors constitute 20,1% (the agricultural, industrial, and service sectors) of the total Syrian labor force.

According to the Syrian Statistical Abstract for 2004, the following can be mentioned:

With regard to the age category between 15-19, women constitutes 29,1% of labor force compared to 17.7% of men in the agricultural field.

With regard to the age category between 20-24, the percentage is 23,2% of women labor force in the agricultural field compared to 17,3%.

The percentage is even for men and women in the agricultural field for the age category between 30-34.

As for the other sectors, there are no clear statistics due to the interference between these sectors.

The average of unemployment between women is double of that amongst men.

The incomes of female workers in the different sectors range between (5000-9001 SYP), with its highest averages in the agricultural field.

According to the survey conducted by the Central Bureau of Statistics at the end of the year 2006, an enormous decrease is noticed in the percentage of Syrian female workers from the total available female force in the country, and that the percentage of Syrian female workers does not exceed 13% of the total force.

To give this result another dimension, we should realize the fact that approximately 120,000 female workers working in the private sector get no salary. In other words, they

work just because they're family members, especially including women in the Syrian countryside.

The World Economic Forum in 2013 listed Syria at the bottom rankings with regard to women's empowerment in the crisis. The international report on Syria revealed that the country went down to number 231 out of 135 countries when it comes to gender inequality, as opposed to ranking 124 out of 134 countries in 2011.<sup>1</sup> On September 20, 2014, a discussion session was held at the headquarters of the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs in collaboration with the Syrian Association for Knowledge and Culture in order to review and analyze the implications of the current crisis on the current reality of women in Syria, as well as to discuss ways of empowering women in various fields in order to strengthen their role and improve quality of life for women, family and society. Theoretical initiatives and recommendations were proposed in relation to the topic.<sup>2</sup>

#### Decision-Making:

The first female Minister in the Syrian Cabinet was Prof. Najah Al Attar who was appointed in 1976 as the Minister of Culture. She was promoted, and recently occupied the post of Vice-President for Cultural Affairs. On 18/7/2014 legislative decree number 228 was published instating Dr. Najah Al Attar Vice President of the Government in addition to her continuing the role of implementing cultural policy according to the Republic's president instructions. In 2006, CollietteKhoury, a writer and literary figure, was appointed as the first presidential advisor for cultural affairs.

Three women were appointed to Bashar Assad's fourth Government Cabinet formed on 22/6/2012. The first is Eng. Hala Mohammad Al Nassir as the Minister of Tourism. The second is Prof. LubanaMshawah as the Minister of Culture and the third is Prof. Nazira Farah Sarkiss as a State Minister for Environmental Affairs. Bashar Assad also reshuffled the Cabinet in 2013 to include three women who were delegated Ministerial portfolios, Lubnana Mshawah and Nazira Farah Sarkiss kept their ministerial portfolios and Kinda Al Shammat was appointed as Minister of Social Affairs until Decree number 273 was published in 2013 that ruled the creation of the Syrian cabinet wherein only Kinda al Shammat and Nazira Farah Sarkiss kept their pervious portfolios.

#### Ministry of Culture

The MOC Central Administration has four female directors. Five more female Head of Directorates were appointed. The percentage of female directors at Al-Assad National Library reached 70%, seven female directors at Dar Al-Assad for Culture and Arts, and a female was appointed as Director of the Department of Fine Arts<sup>3</sup>.

Women in Decision Making Positions at Ministry of Culture:

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<sup>1</sup> <http://wonews.net/ar/index.php?act=post&id=5365>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.scfa.gov.sy/portal/inc/print.php?news=true&pages=103&lang=1>

.National Report of Syria on Beijing + 15, Syrian Commission for Family Affairs, 2009 <sup>3</sup>



**Presence of Women in Administrative Positions at the MOC and affiliated bodies and directorates – 2008**

<b>Number of Employees</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Personnel	780	269	1049
Directors	14	4	
Chief Department	20	5	

**Number of Male/Female Workers at Dar Al Assad General Establishment for Culture and Arts**

<b>Number of Employees</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Personnel	186	68	254
Directors	-	7	7

**Number of Male/Female Workers at Soulhi Al Wadi Institute for Music**

	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Educational boards	50	25	
Students	344	253	
New applicants – 2009, born 2001	54	76	
New applicants – 2009, born 2000	50	30	

**Number of Male/Female Workers at the General Directorate for Antiquities and Museums**

<b>Number of Employees</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Personnel	1265	503	1768
Directors at Central Administration	10	1	

Specialists in Scientific, Artistic and Human domain	237	235	
Clerical Works	54	86	
Services Jobs	700	35	
Other	264	146	

#### Number of Male/Female Workers at Intermediate Institute of Antiquities

	Male	Female	Total
Personnel	10	8	18
Educational Board	16	14	30
Students 2008	52	76	128
Graduates 2007	12	19	31

The tables above are official numbers available up until updating the research in 2014

#### 4.4 Media Pluralism and Content Diversity<sup>1</sup>

##### State-Owned Media

The daily state-owned Newspapers: 8 newspapers, three of which are published and released in Damascus and one in each of Homs, Latakia, Aleppo, DeirEzzor, and Hama. The Ministry of Information has also launched the SyriaTimes E-newspaper and established the Syrian Information Centre in Moscow.

Newspapers issued and released by public universities: three newspapers in Damascus, Tishreen, and Aleppo University.

Newspapers issued and released by the ministries: 19 newspapers issued and published by the Ministry of Information, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Supplies and Internal Trade, Ministry of Housing and Construction, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Religious Endowment (Al Awqaf), Ministry of Education, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Industry, and Ministry of Local Administration. All of which are monthly-issued magazines and newspapers.

Newspapers issued by the bodies, institutions, and state-owned companies: 21 newspapers.

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<sup>1</sup>.Report on the media situation in Syria, 2007

Newspapers issued by Syndicates and Vocational Unions: 21 newspapers.

State –owned radio: 3 and three others have been launched during the end of 2012 and the beginning of 2013.

State-owned TV stations: 5 land and satellite TV stations, one of them is specialized in exhibiting Syrian drama series and another is educational. In 2011, a religious satellite TV channel was officially licensed while the year 2013 witnessed clear changes regarding the closure of the two cable TV channels and the launching of a new satellite TV channel named, “Talaqi”.

#### Parties Media

Newspapers issued by the parties of the National Progressive Front: 8 newspapers issued and released by: the Ba’ath Arab Socialist Party, The Arab Socialist Movement, The Syrian National and Social Party, the Central Committee of Syrian Communist Party, the Democratic Socialist Unionist Party, The Arab Socialist Union Party, the Syrian Communist Party, and the Arab Socialist Unionists Party. Even though nine new other political parties which work on the Syrian land were licensed, they haven’t yet published any newspapers, and instead created websites and Facebook pages.

#### Private Media

Daily newspapers: issued from the Free Zone in Damascus, They are subject to the laws applied on foreign newspapers which are circulated in Syria, and there were two newspapers until 2011.

Weekly newspapers: there were 25 newspapers with topics ranging between economic, cultural, advertisement, sports, social and variety.

In addition to a big number of monthly and bi-monthly magazines.

Since its foundation in November 2011 to June 2012, the National Information Council has granted license to more than twenty newspapers and magazines interested in politics, culture, law, and medicine according the interview with Council Director by SANA<sup>1</sup>. One of which was “Assham” newspaper which is a daily political and cultural newspaper owned by Amid Al Khouli, who was the former Head Editor of Atthawra newspaper, and another weekly comprehensive newspaper known as “Al Manbar Al Hur”.

Private Radios: there are 16 private radio stations<sup>2</sup> in Syria. **According to the “Syria Gate” website in 2014 there have become twenty private radio stations.**<sup>3</sup>

Private TV Channels: there are 3 private TV channels.

#### Newspapers Issued by Civil Institutions

Until March 2011, five newspapers had been issued in Syria by civil institutions on environment and medicine, in addition to a religious magazine issued by the Patriarchate of Antioch on media and intellectual topics. While the independent informational sector

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<sup>1</sup>Website of SANA news agency: <http://www.elaph.com/Web/news/2012/7/747792.html>

Website of the Ministry of Information: <http://moi.gov.sy/ar/aid5930.html><sup>2</sup>

<sup>3</sup> <http://syriagate.com/266/%D8%A5%D8%B0%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%AA>

(the civil) has witnessed a real revolution since the beginning of the uprising<sup>1</sup>. As a result, plenty of information items, both electronic and paper, all of which are independent, were issued. Some were founded by activists not specialized with information work, and who thought the presence of civil information as necessary to cover the uprising events as well as granting opportunities for freely expressed opinions, ideas, and vision regarding the social-political events. At the time of the research, the statistics have been as following:

More than 60 newspapers and E-magazines, most of which are printed as well, are distributed throughout Syria.

Four radio stations, three of which broadcast on the internet and one on air from the city of Saraqib in Idlib.

Even though the previous media instruments grew in exceptional conditions and most of their staff members were not information or cultural specialists, this makes the issue of the possibility of their persistence and development a legitimate question. It also grants social activists the opportunity to study the case of each item separately, searching for and providing continual bases for it, as if it was clearly capable of continuing and developing.

All previous information monitors Syrian media outlets until mid 2013. After that onward opposition media outlets not under government control, whether inside Syria or abroad, have witnessed a lot of activity in form of being shut down or stopped only for new media outlets to launch. Counting and following up on outlets' activities requires a specialized body therefore "Syrian Charter"<sup>2</sup> organization has created a site for Syrian media.<sup>3</sup> The "Creative Memory of the Syrian Revolution"<sup>4</sup> website documented 26 Syrian private stations against the regime.

#### **4.5 Cultural Industries: Policies and Programs**

There is no clear-cut and agreed upon definition of the cultural industries in Syria, yet it is known that the cultural industries are the products of commercial type that can be marketed on a wide scale. Of which the most prominent with regard to Syria is the TV drama production, companies of animations and advertising companies. With the exception of the advertising companies, the main market of the TV series and for the production of the animations companies is the Arab market and more precisely the Gulf market.

Cinema, on the other hand, is not yet considered a cultural industry in Syria. Cinema production, in most cases, is restricted to the General Establishment of Cinema which produces one or two films per year. These are festival films that are not commercially marketed.

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<sup>1</sup>Attach of the national opposition information

<sup>2</sup> <http://syriancharter.org/> a non governmental organization for the service of syrian society based in Berlin, Germany

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.syrianmedia.com/about-us/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.creativememory.org/?cat=116>

As it is pointed out in paragraph 3-2 on “ The National Definition of Culture”, the cultural and artistic product is considered a free of charge service product and belongs, more precisely, to the category of” social services” in addition to the health, recreational services,etc...

Due to the fact that the state has been completely undertaking the task of production and promoting for culture and art until the beginning of 2000, the concept of the cultural industry is a modern concept that cannot be recognized clearly in the cultural policies but on a preliminary basis, as stated in the 10<sup>th</sup> Five-Year plan: supporting the private production of cinema sector and offering facilities to private banks to be a partner in the cinema industry.

As a result to the above-mentioned, opportunities are not being offered in Syria to train professionals of the cultural industries neither rehabilitation programs. The wide-spread concept is the concept of” Learning be doing” as young specialized have been working during the last years on improving their skills through practical experience and contact with foreign bodies.

#### **4.6 Employment policies for the cultural sector**

As will be mentioned in Chapter 5 concerning laws regulating the cultural work, paragraph (5-1-7), workers in the cultural sector, namely, artists, administrators, and technicians are subject to the Unified Labor Law in Syria. They do not enjoy special legislations or laws, rather they are subject to the general law that comprises all sectors with the exception of some sectors which has their own regulations.

Based on that, wages of the workers at the official bodies concerned with the cultural affairs are specified based on the Unified Labor Law. That is to say, these wages are the same of those in any other work field (125 Dollars per month on average), but artists: actors, decoration designers, customs designers, directors, and dramaturges, etc... are granted compensations on the form of” rewards” that are not subject to unified system and criteria, rather they are specified arbitrarily based on personal appreciation.

During the last years, the issue of the wages of artists has been subject to long and extensive discussions and debates at MOC but these discussions have not produced tangible results.

The TV drama production has affected wages of artists. Due to the success of the TV drama, the success achieved by the Syrian actors who have become stars across the Arab world, and as a result of the power the private sector enjoys in this field, the disparity in terms of wages between the TV actors and the other artists has pushed the actors, for example, to take part in the TV production and also pushed the theatre actors to ask for, though individually, increase in the wages.

#### **4.7 New Technologies and Cultural Policies**

Forms of the contemporary arts, that depend on modern technologies, are absent from the Syrian cultural scene due to many factors, the most important of which is the absence of institutional frameworks that encompass the arts of modern technologies.

Due to the fact that the academic bodies concerned with arts, such as Faculty of Fine Arts and the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts, offer a very limited space for these arts within its curricula, the youth concerned with these arts find themselves obliged to develop their tools and skills through personal and individual experiences as well as through contact with the professionals in these fields. Young Syrian artists specialized in new technologies, work on basis of international visual language, which is linked to the modern international modern arts, rather than working on building their own local identity.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that MOC is not working on introducing these artistic kinds to the fields it supports, whereas special Initiatives such as All Arts Now adopts modern arts as alternative bodies to support the young artists.

#### **4.8 Heritage Issues and Policies**

The cultural heritage is considered one of the main topics of the cultural policies in Syria. MOC works on developing its tools through preserving and documenting this heritage. Most often, heritage-related projects are carried out in cooperation with European bodies or international organizations, amongst most prominent development in that field during the last few years are:

The president of the Republic launched on July 2006, the first phase of “Damascus Citadel Restoration Project”.

In implementation of the MOC strategy regarding “Computerization, Protection and Development of the Syrian Heritage”, and according to the mutual cooperative agreement between Syria and Italy, signed on 2007, the MOC – The General Directorate for Ruins and Museums has inaugurated “Syrian Heritage Data base Center” at the National Museum in Damascus. This Center aims to documenting and preserving the ruins sites in addition to link between all sites in Syria.

In April 2009, the First Lady Mrs. Asmaa Al Assad, opened Mosaic Exhibition hall in Damascus Castle, that has been accomplished within the framework of Syrian Italian Agreement. On the other hand, this agreement is aspiring to build capacities of national expertise in heritage, as well as the preparation of the Syrian infrastructure amongst main components of the above-mentioned agreement including re-equipment of labs. In 2012, the Ministry of Tourism founded the Directorate of Traditional Crafts to protect Syrian handicrafts from vanishing amongst the import of imitated versions.

**Article seven of Legislative Decree number 62 published in 2013 that on the protection of copyright and related rights provisions the protection of popular traditions (oral, musical, performance, and material which includes traditional crafts and all hand made art products).**

Registration of cities and villages in Northern Syria on the list of World Heritage Sites: the MOC works on preparing necessary studies to register cities and village of Northern Syria on the list of World Heritage Sites, as it owns historical and antic assets, which make it unique and liable for nomination to be included in the list, this file should be submitted during 2009. In June 2011, the International Heritage Commission in UNESCO adopted a decision on a project that states enlisting the archaeological villages in northern Syria

(which is numbered to be as many as forty villages that date back to the late Byzantine eras) and considering them as culturally significant on the international heritage list. Thus, the number of Syrian archaeological sites enlisted on the international heritage list have become seven which are: the Old City of Damascus, which was enlisted in 1979; the Old City of Busra, enlisted in 1980; Palmyra, enlisted in 1980; the Old City of Aleppo, enlisted in 1986; and Crac Des Chevaliers and Saladin fortresses, enlisted in 2006. UNESCO declared during the first half of 2013, that the sites on the international heritage list in Syria are under great threat.

According to the UNESCO decision in May 2014 regarding non-material culture in Syria, (archaeological sites and historical cities of immense value in Syria have been destroyed, since the outbreak of the crisis in March 2011. The crisis has cause damaged to all six world heritage sites in Syria, especially in the ancient city of Aleppo and the Qal’at Al Hosn citadel. There are visible signs that these sites were used as military bases and have been directly hit by bombs and explosions)<sup>1</sup>.

In 2009 UNESCO launched the project (MedLiHer Mediterranean Living Heritage). The project’s aspiration is conservation of non-material cultural heritage in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. This heritage is considered a major source of cultural diversity and creativity and the basis of community identity. Oral traditions, performance, festivals as well as handicrafts are examples of this kind of heritage. The Syrian Ministry of Culture was a partner in the project but we were not able to monitor the Ministry of Culture in this regard. The last of what informs us in relation to the project is a workshop held by the Ministry of Culture in collaboration with UNESCO and the European Commission at the Assad Library on 26/1/2010 regarding the non-material heritage in Mediterranean countries project.

The Musical Heritage: Currently, many Syrian artists work, individually as singers, and collectively, as musical bands or musical projects, on reviving the Syrian heritage. Shedding lights on the various musical cultures in Syria, namely, the Assyrian, Armenian, and the Kurdish ones is the main topic of the musical project “Bridges” which has been initiated many years ago. The project enjoys great support by MOC.

In this regard it may be noted that Syrian youth who had taken the streets to protest the regime since 2011 have worked on producing versions of folklore songs from all around Syrian regions with rewritten lyrics that express their demands. Syrian musician Wael Al Qaq has worked since mid 2011 on documenting the popular music used in protest chants, and after his search for funding and popular musicians he released a record titled “Neshama” that consists of songs from the Syrian revolution, the revolution associated with shaking up major notions on the ground, including music.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.un.org/arabic/news/story.asp?NewsID=21181>

## **5. The Main Legal Texts in the Cultural Field**

### **5.1 The General Legislation**

#### **5.1.1 The Constitution**

##### **5.1.1.1 The Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic**

This research is being conducted during a period of dramatic transformations which Syria has been experiencing (2011-2013). Although the image is still vague as to what the public policies would get into because of the dramatic changes on the political scene, and thus on the legislative structure as well, we believe that studying the current legislative structure is the foundation, and that change will be made according to the current situation which is “starting from the situation to understand the situation and changing it.” As precise knowledge of laws will allow cultural activists to work on advocacy and get considerable support to change it in a way compatible with their vision, their participation, and the fundamentals of creative and cultural work. This knowledge also allows to sense legislative flaws that prevent the activation of independent cultural work, far from “services” offered by the Ministry of Culture which is considered the patron, protector, and owner of cultural work in Syria. As well as repairing weaknesses in the legislative structure in such a way that cultural work is returned to its society and to the intellectual and creative sources.

The year 2011 was enriched with law and constitutional transformations in Syria. Along with the political changes and the intense popular movement opposed to the regime, the political authority worked on a “reforms program” which included the law in addition to other fields. There was a referendum on a new constitution, which was put forth by a constitutional commission. The suggested constitution had the acceptance of Syrians by a percentage of 89.4% as the Minister of Interior, Nidal Al Sha’ar, claimed. He also said that out of 8,367,000 voters, 57.4%, practiced their right in the referendum, while out of 753,208 voters, 9%, rejected the constitution’s proposal.

We will mention a group of legislative transformations affecting cultural work either directly or indirectly. Some of the important legislations are: the Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Civil Society Organizations Law Project, and the Information Law and E-Information Law Draft. In addition to studying the change that happened to the cancellation of the State-Emergency Law which was replaced by the Terrorism Law, as well as issuing alternatively restrictive laws such as the Law of Demonstration.

The Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic was issued on the 13<sup>th</sup> of March 1973. Since its issuance, the Syrian Constitution has only been modified three times. The first was on April 29, 1980 which requested that Article (6) to be modified. This article was related to the flag of the country, the motto, and the national anthem; the flag of the Unified Arab Republic was removed, as it was to its motto and national anthem which the constitution had previously stated. The second modification was on July 3, 1991 which requested that Article (84) to be modified. This article was related to the electing of a new president before the term of the president still in office finishes, and to be within a time-period of



not less than one month and not more than six months (it was previously two months). The third modification was on June 11, 2000 which requested Article (83) to be modified. This article was concerned with reducing the nomination age for presidential candidates from 40 to 34 years old to elect Al Assad, the son, as the father's successor. The modification was endorsed for the first time by the vice-president, due to the president's death.

### The New Constitution

The project of the new constitution for the Syrian Arab Republic in which the "referendum" was carried out in the beginning of 2012, came in favor of the cultural scene. Although, unlike the former constitution, it did not hold any description for the cultural sector whether in the matter of service or development. The constitution considered cultural diversity as one of the fundamental principles that should be reserved, as it was mentioned in the beginning along with national unity, public freedoms, and human rights. Also as part of mentioned were relevant principles, such as the equality of opportunities and citizenship which are necessary principles to reinforce working on the protection of cultural diversity.

Article (4) urges on the usage of Arabic as the official language of the State, which is considered an encouragement for the Arab culture. This encouragement came as a result of the introduction that mentioned the political location of Syria as "the beating heart of Arabism", in addition to what was mentioned in the first article that people in Syria are part of the Arab Nation. Article (9) guarantees the protection of the Syrian society cultural diversity with all of its components, considering it a national heritage that reinforces national unity in the frame of Syrian territorial unity; giving culture a political dimension and an important role in preserving the cohesion of the various components of Syrian society.

Article (23) reinforces the role of women in culture, stating that the state provides all sorts of opportunities which allows them a comprehensive and active role in the political, economic, social and cultural life. However, Article (25) considers education, health, and social services as fundamental pillars for building the society. **The constitution specified "The State works on achieving equal development between all Syrian regions without mentioning culture as one of the components of development work."**

The fourth chapter specializes all of its articles in cultural and educational principles. Article (28) states that the educational and teaching system aims to build a generation who hold on to their identity, heritage, origin, and national unity; thus, the educational and teaching system should blend in the cultural dimension to achieve integration between the current items and the introduction. As for culture, it maintains an important role in preserving identity, heritage, and national unity.

One of the most important articles in the constitution is article (31) which guarantees the support of the State for the scientific research and all of its needs, as well as cultural, artistic, literary, and scientific freedom while providing the tools to achieve this purpose. It also provides all the help needed for science and art progress, and encourages scientific

and artistic inventions along with creative talents and efficiencies while protecting their outcomes.

According to Article (32), the State is in charge of protecting archaeology, archaeological and heritage sites and valuable parts of art, history and culture. The article in the current constitution is considered to be a more noticeable development than the former. Article (34) strongly states that each citizen has the right to contribute to culture, leaving this issue for the relevant laws to organize.

Articles (42 - 2) and (43) adopt freedom of expression by all means and freedom of press and publishing. Moreover, they add an important part related to the independence of informational tools according to the law. Here, we inquire about the law and how it will sponsor the independence of information without interrupting the legitimacy of freedom of expression and information.

Article (147 – 2 – A) states that the Supreme Legitimate Court would hold surveillance over the legitimacy of laws.

The Constitution includes legislations that address the cultural case as embodied in the following articles:

The Socialist National Culture:

Part 3 of Chapter one of the Syrian Constitution addresses the constitutional principles in the educational and cultural domains. Article 21 of this Chapter stipulates that the educational and cultural system aims to "Creating a socialist nationalist Arab generation which is scientifically-minded and attached to its history and land, proud of its heritage, and filled with the spirit of struggle to achieve its nation objectives of unity, freedom, and socialism, and to serve humanity and its progress".

Article 23 stipulates that:

The Socialist Nationalist Culture is the base for building the unified socialist Arab society. It seeks to strengthen moral values, to achieve the higher ideals of the Arab Nation, to develop the society, and to serve the causes of humanity. The State undertakes to encourage and to protect this culture.

The encouragement of artistic talents and abilities is one of the bases of the progress and development of the society. Artistic creation is based on close contacts with the people life. The State fosters the artistic talents and abilities of all citizens".

Article 24 of the same chapter stipulates that "The State protects the rights of authors and inventors who serve the people interest".

Other articles are included in the Constitution on woman rights and on rural life; underlying the great interest the State is paying to these two domains on different levels, amongst them the cultural domain:

Woman Rights:, Article 45 set forth in part 4 of Chapter 1 of the Constitution stipulates that the State "Guarantees woman all opportunities, enabling them to fully and effectively participate in the political, social, cultural, and economic life. The State

removes the restrictions that prevent women development and participation in building the Socialist Arab society.

The Rural Life: Article 47 set forth in part 4 of Chapter 1 of the Constitution stipulates that: "The State guarantees cultural, social, and health services. It especially undertakes to provide these services to villages in order to raise their living standard".

#### 5.1.1.2 The Constitution of the Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party:

The legislative texts of the Constitution of the Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party, the leading Party of the State and Society, are worth considering.

The first principle of the Constitution of the Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party entitled: "The Arab Nation Unity and Liberty" highlights the national dimension of the Party vision with regard to the Syrian culture by stating that: "the Arab nation is one educational entity. All differences existing amongst its natives are casual and fake. They can be removed by the awakening of the Arab conscience".

The second principle entitled: "The Arab Nation Character" indicates clearly the Party's support of the freedom of Art by stating that: "The freedom of speech, Assembly, Belief and Art are sacred and that no authority can undermine them".

Article 41 highlights the Party's vision on "The Culture of the Society"

Term One: "The Party shall work on establishing a generation, national, Arab, free, progressive, comprehensive, and profound culture. This culture will be generalized amongst all classes of the people".

Term Two: The state is responsible for the preservice of the freedom of speech, publication, assembly, protest, and press, within the limits of the supreme Arab national interest, and offering all means and capabilities that shall fulfill this freedom.

Term Three: The intellectual work is one of the most sacred works, and the State has to protect and encourage the intellectuals and the scientists".

Term Four: "Giving way- within the boundaries of the Arab National Conception- for the establishment of clubs, association, parties, youth organizations, establishments of tourism, and utilization of cinema, broadcasting, television, and all means of modern civilization on the generalization of the National Education and entertainment of the people".

Article 44, on the other hand, confirms: "To stamp all the intellectual, economic, political, constructional and technical phenomena of life with pan-Arab national character that can restore the glorious history of the nation and spur it to look for a more glorious and ideal future".

#### **5.1.2 Division of Jurisdiction**

In general, mechanisms of decision-taking, especially with regard to development of legislations related to the cultural domain are in line with the distribution of the general legislative authorities of the State, i.e.:

## The Legislative Authority -The People Assembly (the Parliament):

The Parliament practices its legislative authority in accordance to the permanent constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic. It is stated in Article (55), the first chapter, the third section, "The Parliament holds the legislative authority in the country the way it's stated in the constitution, which put the legislative authority in specialty of the articles (74), (75), (76), (77), (78), (79), (80), (81) and (82).<sup>1</sup>"

The People Assembly exercises its legislative power based by virtue of articles: 50-51-52-53- 60- 67-70-71-74 of the permanent Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Article (174): Members of Parliament practice the right of suggesting laws and addressing a ministry or any of the ministers with questions and interrogations according to the provisions of the Parliament's internal regulations.

Article (75): Parliament undertakes the following specializations: 1- Approving laws. 2- Discussing a ministry's statement. 3-Motion of no confidence of a cabinet or any of the ministers. 4- Approving general budgets and final calculations. 5- Approving development plans. 6- Approving international treaties and agreements that are related toState safety and all treaties related to foreign sovereign rights, in addition to, treaties and agreements that assign the state's treasury, and expenses that are not mentioned in its budget. 7- Approving general amnesty.

Article (76): Head of the government's cabinet should submit, within a maximum of thirty days of the ministry establishment, the ministry statement to parliament to discuss.

Article (77): Motion of no confidence not permitted unless after a directed interrogation done to a cabinet or one of the ministers. Request forMotion of no confidence should be according to a suggestion submitted by five parliament members at least and it's executed by the majority of parliament members.

Article (78): Parliament has the right to establish temporary members committees to gather information and find facts in issues related to its specializations.

Article (79): Budget project should be submitted to parliament at least two months before the beginning of the financial year.

Article (80):

1. Parliament should vote on budget, section by section, and it is not considered legitimate unless approved by parliament.
2. If parliament has not finished approving the budget before the beginning of the new financial year, parliament should work, then, with the previous year budget until approving the new one and incomes are obtained according to laws and regulations.
3. Swap is not permitted between budget's sections unless by provisions of law.
4. Parliament is not allowed, during the budget study, to exaggerate in evaluating the total of incomes or expenses.

Article (81): After approval of budget, parliament is permitted to approve laws that create new expenses and resources for them.

<sup>2</sup> **Article 50:**

- a-The People Assembly assumes legislative power in the manner defined in this Constitution.
- b-The members of the People Assembly are elected by general, secret, direct, and equal ballot in accordance with the provisions of the election law.

**Article 71:** The People Assembly assumes the following powers:

- a- Nomination of the President of the Republic
- b- Approval of the laws
- c -Debate of Cabinet policy
- d -Approval of international treaties and agreements.
- e-Approval of general amnesty.
- f- Accepting or rejecting the resignation of a member of the Assembly.
- g- Apply Motion of no confidence in the Cabinet or a minister.

## The Executive Authority: Represented by President of the Republic<sup>1</sup> – The Cabinet<sup>2</sup> – The Local Councils, and the Local Administration<sup>3</sup>.

**Article 74:** The draft budget is submitted to the Assembly two months before the beginning of the fiscal year. The budget is not in force unless it is approved by the Assembly.

At the beginning of a new legislative term the Assembly forms its permanent committees: Committee of Constitutional and Legislative Affairs, Committee of Accounts and budgets, Committee of Fiscal laws, Committee of Arab and Foreign Affairs, Committee of Directing and Guidance, Committee of Planning and Production, Committee of Services, Committee of Environment and Population Activity, Committee of National Security, Committee of Interior and Local Administration, Committee of Complaints and Petitions, Committee of Agriculture and Irrigation.

### <sup>1</sup> **The President of the Republic:** Goal:

**1-**The President of the Republic, through consultation with the Cabinet, lays down the State general policy and supervise its implementation in accordance with the Constitution, and strengthening defense capabilities of the State. **2-** Setting up tools of the Presidency, identifying its jurisdictions, cadre, and all financial affairs and personnel rights by a resolution issued by the President.

The President of the Republic assumes legislative authority and exercises power with regard to: **1-** Issuing decisions endorsed by the People Assembly, **2-** Issuing decrees, laws, and orders in accordance with the legislations in force, **3 -** Issuing amnesty and reinstatement decisions, **4-** Declaring war and general mobilization, state emergency, concluding peace upon the approval of the People Assembly, **5-** Concluding and canceling agreements and international treaties in accordance with the Provisions of the Constitution, **6-** Accrediting heads of the diplomatic missions to foreign governments and accepts the accreditation of the heads of foreign diplomatic missions to him, and **7-** Presenting draft laws and referring them to the People Assembly for consideration.

<sup>2</sup> **The Cabinet:** The Cabinet is the highest State executive and administrative body. It consists of the President of the Councils of Ministers, his deputies, and the ministers. It supervises the execution of the laws, regulations, and the work of the State machinery and institutions.

**The Local People's Councils:** The People Local Councils are bodies which exercise their powers within the administrative units in accordance with the law. The law defines the powers of the People Local Councils, election and formation methods, rights and duties of their member, and all relevant powers. <sup>3</sup>

Before implementing the law of the local councils issued by the legislative decree no. 15, 1971, there were two main administrative bodies derived from the French Legislation :

- A- An administrative body
- B- A municipal body

:Some amendments were introduced, which can be summarized as follows

- Based on to the legislative Law No.24, 1972, the governorates were entitled the authority of monitoring the work of the municipalities, formerly recognized by the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Areas in line with the recognized laws and regulations.
- Based on Law No. 29, 1972, the jurisdictions formerly recognized by the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Areas with regard to supervising the financial and administrative affairs of the municipalities, were entitled to the Ministry of Local Administration.

**The Local Administration:** Law of the Local Administration issued under the legislative decree no.15, 1971, and as stipulated in the 1<sup>st</sup> Section, states on

- The Proletariat is the leader in implementing the principle of the popular democracy, addressing the people's will, safeguarding its continuous supervision over implementation, and its active participation in recognizing the united Arab socialist society
- All administrative units are responsible for the economic, cultural, and services issues, as well as other affairs concerned with the daily life of the citizens within the framework of the general planning, the laws, and, legislations endorsed by the State.

The Judicial Authority: Based on distribution of legislative authorities in Syria, we say that the body responsible for proposing amendments on laws and legislations with regard to the cultural life in Syria is the Ministry of Culture. The latter presents the amendments to the People Assembly where all are subject to discussion and examination, for determining what appropriate measure to be undertaken.

### **5.1.3 Freedom of expression and association:**

The establishment of associations in Syria<sup>1</sup> falls under the civil law of 1949 and its amendments, especially those introduced by law No. 384 of 1965 which was first applied in Egypt, then in Syria during the era of the Syrian- Egyptian Union between February 1958 – September 1960. Later amendments were introduced in 1969, by Decree No. 224, that is still regulating up to the current time the work of the “Association and Private Institutions” within the framework of the Syrian Constitution.

Many association related legal details are introduced in the executive bill passed by decree No. 1330, of the 13<sup>th</sup> of October, 1958, and endorsed by a presidential decree for the year 1958.

The decree entitles the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in the tasks concerned with law application and management, including the practice of its power with regard to declaration of association , dissolving, integrating, and monitoring associations, in addition to determining their agendas and activities,etc... In 2013 the Ministry of Social Affairs was separated from the Ministry of Labor which tasks and privileges were specified according to the law project that was appointed by the legislative decree, number (15), on 9/2/2013. The Ministry of Social Affairs remained responsible for the management of the societies law.

In the beginning of 2013, the Minister of Social Affairs assured, regarding the societies law, that the law project which included civil society organizations<sup>2</sup> , was deeply studied in the Ministry of Social Affairs, so if it was accepted would form an important legislative formula in activating the civil society and promoting it to become one of the development factors<sup>3</sup>.

We are not up to date in this regard except for legislative decree number 41 that was passed by the Syrian president on 14/9/2014 concerning agricultural cooperative associations. Chapter Five of law number 62 for 2013 concerning copyrights and related rights identified groups it called “collective rights management” defining them as: (authors and copyright holders or their private or public heirs may give their rights under

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- Entitling the jurisdictions related to these affairs to the local authorities, by restricting the task of the of the central authorities to planning, legislation, organizing, introducing modern technical methods, supervision, rehabilitation, training, coordination, and following-up the implementation of the big projects that cannot be carried out by the administrative units or that are of general concern for the citizens.
  - Securing an effective and feasible contribution in the efforts exerted to lift up the society within the domestic context by qualified people who are capable of providing such a constructive contribution.
  - Entitling the bodies emerging from the administrations of the administrative units with authorities for a smooth running of work and providing them with all necessary capabilities to realize that.

<sup>1</sup> The Society is the official name of the NGOs based in Syria

<sup>2</sup>Attach (6)- law project of civil society organizations

<sup>3</sup>Website of SANA News Agency in February 2012

exclusive licenses of their rights and collect compensation attributable to them fully or in part to collective management organizations who manage copyrights taking into account non-governmental organizations law if applicable must not be inconsistent with the provisions of the law mentioned). Authors and copyright holders delegating their rights renders the collective management organization to recognize these rights and collect royalties in all forms to give back to authors and copyright holders. Article 51 of the law specified the conditions of forming a “collective management organization” that is by obtaining permission from the Ministry of Culture – being subject to the Ministry’s censorship and power – after providing (a copy of the internal structure of the organization – a copy of the registration contract – names of authors and copyright holders that delegate on their behalf to collective management, a copy of royalty collections and their duration – a copy of the organization’s financial regulations). The Chapter also contains legal details and rights that govern the relationship between the organization and copyright owners, between the organization and the Ministry of Culture one of which is that in case of violations the decision to dissolve the organization goes back to the Minister of Culture.

#### Financing of Associations:

The Law No. 93 regulates the relationship that connects these association with the external world. This law prohibits the involvement and/or contact of any Syrian society with an external body unless the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs is informed in advance and provided that the Ministry does not issue a notice of objection within a term of 30 days from the date the Ministry was informed (Article 21, law no. 93). The same article also stipulates that the Ministry has the right to prohibit financing the society.

Moreover, no society has the right to receive or be granted funds or money from any individual or society outside Syria without prior permission and approval of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (formerly). It’s not yet clear; the law form for funding societies after the International Cooperation and Planning Commission has become the State only gate concerning funding, partnership and loans. With regard to domestic funding, the associations are not permitted to receive any funds or approve on funding unless the Ministry is previously informed (Article 17 of the Executive Bill).

#### Attempts to Reform the Law of Associations:

In 2005, the Syrian authorities have started reviewing the Law No. 93 and its executive Bill with the aim to altering the role of these associations from a charitable into a developmental, with Government approval on receiving foreign funds on condition that these associations work under the State supervision. In February, 2005, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs has held a workshop in cooperation with the European Union to discuss means of developing the civil society in Syria. Based on statements released by officials taking part in the workshop, it can be said that no recommendation were adopted.

A month later, the Syrian Association for Family Affairs, that was established in 2003 by a Presidential decree, held on the 22nd and 23rd of March a workshop with the participation of around 30 persons from various Syrian non-governmental organizations,

the European Union, the British Council, and the Swedish Embassy in Damascus to discuss the circulated law for establishing associations. The participants reached specific conclusions and adopted a lot of recommendations<sup>1</sup>.

The project amendments law for the establishment of associations coincided with the signing of the Syrian-European Partnership Agreement and the National Indicative Program II between both parties, resulted in a 60 million Euro donation to enhance trade, civil society, and human rights. The donation includes financing activities of the NGOs<sup>2</sup>. This partnership agreement had stayed frozen, at least, until 2009<sup>3</sup>, (a French diplomat, related to the Syrian file in Paris, assured that there are no specific difficulties or obstacles towards the endorsement of the partnership. However, he added that the endorsement requires a “political decision” to be taken by the member countries in the European Union. The diplomat also mentioned that there’s a “substantial European agreement” on the endorsement of the partnership, which is going to be a “political indication” towards Syria, therefore “the appropriate moment” should be seized). At the time of making this research, we have not noticed any new procedures regarding the agreement.

Head of the State Planning Commission, Mr. Abdullah Al-Dardari has declared to different media outlets, on many occasions, including his interview with Al-Hiyat newspaper, that under the directives of President Bashar Al-Assad, efforts were being exerted to activate the local society with intentions to enhance people participation in the process of development and secure access of various societal groups and areas to aspects of development where the State, due to bureaucracy, cannot reach with high efficiency. He further pointed out to the draft law on introducing amendments to the law no. 93, for the year 1958 that maintains an overall view and allow for a foreign financing under the supervision of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.

It is worth mentioning that the above mentioned law is currently under review and examination (in 2009). It is said that the final draft of this project has been finalized and two proposals on amendments law for establishment of associations were introduced:

The associations should be, administratively affiliated, to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, with concentration on restructuring the role played by the Ministry.

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<sup>1</sup> The government should issue a new law, since amendment of law 93 in force is insufficient. As one of the participants observed: “amending a 50-year-old legal text would be insufficient because it has been introduced in a context and reality completely different from the current challenges and opportunities that Syria is facing.

- The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs should honor article No. 10 of law No. 93 which, as mentioned above, stipulates that unless the Declaration was made within a 60-day period of time, it will be canceled in line with the observed law. But participants said that this is not practically applied.
- The government should eliminate all obstacles facing the associations with regard to the Declaration.
- The associations must be allowed to hold meetings with similar associations in terms of domain of work on the domestic, national, and international levels.
- Restrictions imposed on financing should be eased and associations should be allowed to raise funds and receive the national and international financial support.
- A new administrative authority should be appointed with the aim of enhancing the civil society in Syria.

<sup>2</sup> The number of the NGOs in Syria is 584, among of which, 280 associations are charities offering livelihood services for around one million inhabitants. The figure also includes the other associations concerned with environment issues, culture, art, and all sectors of the civic work.

<sup>3</sup>Al Watan Syrian newspaper- March 23, 2009



That the Associations be directly attached to the Prime Minister<sup>1</sup>.

The Ministry of culture has also a role in terms of approving the establishment of cultural associations, notwithstanding that, administratively speaking, associations work is the responsibility of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. Granting license for establishing a cultural society necessitates a number of approvals amongst of which the approval of the Minister of Culture.

Other Laws:

Cooperative Associations:

Cooperative associations embody a convenient model for intellectual work and for the gathering of a number of owners of one craft, as well as allowing beneficial and non-beneficial work for the good of the society all at once. The establishment of cooperative associations in Syria is controlled by law (317) for the year 1956 which is modified by law (91) for cooperative associations that defines a cooperative association as an association entirely established by people, who are described as consumers or producers, on the following fundamentals:

The association budget should be made of shares that are not specified in numbers and in which each person has the right to participate in and divert to any other person according to this law and the system of each association.

Each member of the general assembly has one vote regardless of the number of shares they possess.

Budget shares should not get a profit that exceeds 6% of its assigned amount.

Net profit, which is allowed to be distributed among members, should be distributed to each member with a ratio in accordance to their work with the association.

Associations that are established, not in accordance to this Law, are not permitted to have their names to contain the word “cooperation” or any of its derivatives. The association’s name should include whatever points to its cooperative characteristic, real purpose and location. It should also not consist of any of its members’ or non-members’ names. This Law enforced restrictive conditions related to the association budget, starting from Article (5) which stated that a cooperative association is not permitted to issue shares worth an amount that’s varied from the one stated in its system. This amount should not be more than one pound or ten Syrian pounds paid at once or gradually, as what costs during the booking shall not be less than a quarter of the share cost. The association system assigns a time-period, for not more than two years, to pay what’s left of the cost of booked shares. Thus, the association has the right, afterwards, to suspend members who haven’t paid the rest by a written letter. While Article (12) stated that founders should submit a paper stating the association paid budget.

The Law is directed at cooperative associations, in matters not mentioned in the Law, to the private associations and institutions Law, according to Article (11).

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<sup>1</sup> These information were quoted from talks of individuals activists in the cultural domain, accordingly, they are not documented. Interested people are waiting for the issuance of the new Law

Article (17) is considered the best part in this Law according to the research. It states that a cooperative association shall start its work in all the fields of social and economic activity and it's allowed to reduce its work to one of the fields or work within a couple of them according to the association system and the regulations of each field. Thus, this Law ignored completely the artistic and cultural works and put a social and economic dimension as a condition. Although cultural and artistic sectors consist of social and economic dimensions, the Article was specified and leaves no chance to be interpreted.

Article (28) is considered an obstacle for those working in open crafts to join a cooperative association. The Article states that a member of an administration council is prohibited to practice, by himself or by other people, any kind of activities practiced by the cooperative association or activities that go against its interests.

Enforcing cooperative associations on joining one of the unions puts intellectual works far from cooperative associations. For example, photography is considered a craft, thus, if a number of professional photographers agreed to work and establish a cooperative association, then they will be obligated to join the crafters union, which leaves professional artistic photography outside the circle. Article (34 – A) states that the general assembly is normally held as in request from the cooperative union which the assembly belongs to. Thus, the assembly is required to join one of the unions such as the Union of Workers, the Union of Farmers, or the Union of Crafters, etc... As a result, owners of intellectual crafts stayed away from real and organized contribution to building the society within those mechanisms.

While the work of cooperative associations seems more detached than the work of civil associations, they remain comparable on a variety of issues related to following the administrative side, surveillance over funding, calculations and spending, and working for others, even though they're one-craft owners, within the associations tasks. Thus, cooperative associations also get a role in developing crafts.

Article (51) states that the dissolution of an association is permitted if it works on political issues which makes it hard for cultural activists to benefit from this model.

Articles (35), (36), (37) state the surveillance mechanism by the administrative side (The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor) over cooperative associations. This surveillance is in control of inspectors, who are assigned by specialized minister, and whose reports are carried out to him and to a specialized governmental team as well. The specialized administrative team has the right to suspend any decision, issued by commissions in charge of an association administration, which goes against the Law principles, association system, or cooperation fundamentals. Accountants or accountants' assistants, who are recognized by courts in the Syrian province, are assigned to review the cooperative association calculations at least once a year at the association headquarters.

Cooperative associations also hold a social and developmental responsibility that has distant similarities to the private sector social responsibility. Article (41) states that in a case of associations which start the same kind of operations with members and non-members, the money made which is distributed among members, should not include any

of the profits resulted from those operations signed with non-members. The association should set aside those profits to improve the district affairs where the association is located and according to what the general assembly decides.

Companies Law:

Companies' law was issued according to the legislative decree number (29) for the year 2011. The Syrian companies law divides types of companies, legally speaking, to: partnership, commandant, limited liability and joint. While it defines types of companies: trade companies, mutual companies, free-zone companies, holding companies, external companies, and civil companies. The latter is the type which suits founding companies that are interested in artistic and cultural work.

Companies law defines civil companies as the following: civil companies are the ones founded by partners of intellectual speciality and crafts, or companies of civil purpose and which are subject to the civil law principles and law principles that are related to them and their contracts and interior system. Companies registry which is possessed by the registry of trade office consists, in each governorate, of a registrybranchspecialized in civil companies.

It was mentioned in the fifth section, Article (56), "a company's budget or part of it is allowed to be offerings in kind. The rights of privilege, invention, artificial knowledge and other incorporeal rights are considered of offerings in kind and it's not allowed for these offerings to be services or works of any person."

At the end, it is worth mentioning that there is a number of other legislations related to the associations acts in Syria, especially those related to the establishment of general Unions in specific circles such as: General Woman Union, Students Union, and Labor Union. Laws and decrees issued have granted these unions the right to monopoly domains of work related to each. For example, law no. 33 (issued on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December, 1975 related to the establishment of General Woman Union prohibits the establishment of any other woman society, article 66)

Law Execution:

Governmental sides are not abiding by the rules they're currently being made or those which had been issued prior to March, 2012. One of the most important examples regarding this is having interior orders issued in the Ministry of Finance that prohibit civil companies from officially registering, but only by renting a commercial property which is against companies law that allows civil companies, which are non-commercial and non-profit, to use an non-commercial property. Thus, this makes it impossible for civil companies to get an official permission, as the costs of converting a residential property to a commercial one are very expensive, and in addition, the cost of operating is not possible for any side that is not commercial.

#### **5.1.4. Allocation of Public Funds:**

The Ministry of Finance initiates the first step in the process of preparing the draft budget. The Ministry circulates a communiqué addressing public administration and bodies and

Ministries to prepare a draft budget in accordance with instructions included in the note. Accordingly, ministries prepare their budget projects and refer them to the Ministry of Finance.

Following collection of draft budgets of concerned Ministries, the Ministry of Finance integrates amongst them all and prepare one draft Budget including estimations of expenditure and revenues and submit it to the Cabinet, which, in return, refers the general draft budget in its final form to the legislative authority to be examined and endorsed. The Ministry of Finance has the right to modify the drafts presented by the Ministries and Public Administrations and Bodies in line with the reality and needs of these bodies, and with the financial capabilities of the State on condition that this is done within the framework of the plan and following consultation with the concerned Ministry and the State Planning Commission.

The People Assembly is the body entitled to endorse the country general budget. Article 74 of the Constitution has supported this role by stipulating that: “The draft budget is submitted to the Assembly two months before the beginning of the fiscal year. The budget is not in force unless it is approved by the Assembly”.

Versus to this exclusive right granted by the Constitution to the legislative authority for endorsement of the general budget, the executive authority, on the other hand, has broad financial liabilities in terms of opening temporary appropriations on a monthly base, and amending the provisions of the budget.

The Minister of Interior initiates the deliberations on the draft budget at the People Assembly during which he outlines the fiscal policy of the government, the reasons behind setting forth the draft budget as it is. He further presents an analytical study of the figures on expenditure and the revenues, and compares them with figures of the previous year. Following that, the Speaker gives the word to members of the Parliament to have their free talks and comments on the draft budget. With completion of deliberations, members of the Parliament vote on referring the draft budget to the Committee of Budget and Accounts for examination and endorsement. If adopted, the draft budget is referred to the Committee in accordance with Assembly bylaws Article 119 that stipulates “Following submission the government fiscal statement on the draft budget, the Speaker gives the platform to the members of the Parliament to express their opinions and general comments. At the conclusion of the deliberations, the Speaker asks for voting on referring budget to the Committee of Budget and Accounts. If adopted, the draft budget should be referred to said Committee.

The Committee of Budget and Accounts<sup>1</sup>: Nominated as such by virtue of the Assembly bylaws, this body has been granted the authorization to examine the draft budget, and

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Syrian legislation, the Budget and Accounts Committee is entitled to wide authorities. The draft budget should be referred to the Committee following presentation of the fiscal statement by the government and comments by members of the Parliament. The Committee presents its amended draft law to the Assembly to be discussed. The People Assembly is not entitled to discuss the draft law of the budget presented by the government, but rather entitled to discuss the one proposed by the Committee of Budget and Accounts. The Committee presents its report on the draft law of the budget within a 30-day period as of the date of receiving the draft law. In case the period was expired before the Committee has completed its report, it should ask for an extra period of time from the Assembly, accompanied with due reasons and justifications. If the Assembly found the request of the Committee worth observing, it agrees a 10-day-extension time at

all ordinary, subsequent, developmental, and private budgets, beside to currency banking rate. The mandate of this Committee is restricted only to examine the draft budget and accounts.

Article 129 of the bylaws of the People Assembly stipulates that “the Speaker should introduce all sections of the draft budget for examination and vote one by one. The draft budget is only endorsed, by following discussing expenditure and approving them, next discussing revenues, finally endorsing the draft budget. The President of the Republic passes the draft budget law adopted irrevocably by the People Assembly to put it into force in the final form.

#### **5.1.5. Social Security Frameworks:**

Freelance artists don't enjoy rights with regard to social insurance.

Artists working in the public sector are subject to law No.92 of the social insurances and its amendments by law No.78, 2001. The law is applied by the General Establishment for Social Insurances. In September 2011, the social insurances law draft was set and asked to be discussed for the issuance purpose<sup>1</sup>. The general manager of the social insurance institution assured, in March 2013, that the project of the new law of social insurance was in its final stage and that it would form a prominent change in the institution work and in solving a variety of dilemmas that had appeared through conducting Law (92) for the year 1959 and its amendments in 2001<sup>2</sup>. **On 9/7/2014 the Cabinet ratified the amendment of law 92 from 1959 relating to social security and its revision. The amendment aims to overcome the difficulties faced by the Social Security Administration, and the revisions included solving the problem of double taxation of insurance, buying services to complete the terms of pensions, and abolishing the fourth class so that all workers can benefit from insurance. These amendments also stipulate providing Syrian workers abroad with social pension income in old age and disability and compensation in case of death, and other benefits with an interest return to both the Administration and Syrian workers.**<sup>3</sup>

Artists registered at the Syndicate of Artists<sup>4</sup>, and according to Syndicate's bylaws, enjoy the following rights:

Pension Funds: the fund is passed by the legislative decree No.44 aiming to securing pensions, allowances, and financial aids to the artists and their families<sup>5</sup>.

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most. In case the Committee did not submit its report during the extra period of time, the Assembly discusses the draft law of the budget as referred by the Executive authority.

<sup>1</sup>Website of SyriaNews in 14/5/2011

<sup>2</sup>Website of A Arab News in 26/3/2013

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.al-elam.com/?page=Details&category\\_id=8&id=10322](http://www.al-elam.com/?page=Details&category_id=8&id=10322)

<sup>4</sup> The artistic professions include: music, singing, dancing, acting, directing (cinema, radio, and TV), as well as other related professions as is included by the decision issued by the Minister following consultations with the board of the Syndicate of Artists.

<sup>5</sup> The artist has the right to ask for retirement if the following conditions were met:

- i. That he is a member registered within the Syndicate of Artists and has paid all duly fees throughout period of exercising his profession which will be necessarily taken into consideration upon retirement.
- ii. That he practically has exercised one of the professions enlisted in the law of the Syndicate for not less than 30 years, on a regular or intermittent basis since the registration at the Syndicate.

Based on article 26 of the Funds Pension law: The retired artist has no right to exercise his previous artistic job with the exception of the temporary scientific or technical consultations assigned to him by the Syndicate, official bodies, or his colleagues.

Artist Insurance Fund: This fund was established in 2002 according to a decree passed by President Bashar Al-Assad. The aim of the Fund is to provide a financial support to members of the Syndicate in the following cases: death, retirement, surgeries, medical treatment, health care, and delivery.

Plastic artists are registered at the Syndicate of the Syrian Plastic artists and are subject to its regulations. **Law number 55 in 2004 stipulated the name "Union of Plastic Artists" instead of Syndicate of Plastic Artists, but the law has not been made effective yet at the time of this research.**

### 5.1.6 Tax Laws

Decision no. 18/M.D

The first decision on exempting industrialists from paying taxes was issued in February, 2009 in case they provided financial support to a number of developmental, cultural, or medical projects related to the handicapped or orphanages<sup>1</sup>. On 17/10/2010, a publication was issued by the Ministry of Finance to the financial directorates in all the governorates. It set to have Syrian imports of artistic works and their different kinds to follow the executive regulations of the legislative decree No.15 for the year 2001 which

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iii. That he is of a Syrian citizenship nothing less than 5 years, an Arab Palestinian, or an Arab citizen who registered at the Syndicate before the issuance of law no.13, 1990.

<sup>1</sup> Decision No. 18/M.O stipulating deducting some of the industrialists charges and expenditure on their annual net profits before cutting the taxes.

The Syrian Arab Republic, Presidency of the Cabinet, and the Cabinet.

Based on the provisions of law/41/, 2005, and especially article/12/, on the Legislative Decree No.40, 2005, on the Legislative Decree No.50, dated with the 11<sup>th</sup> of February, on the notification of Ministry of Finance No. 57/s/16/43/, dated with the 8<sup>th</sup> of February, 2009, and on what has been adopted at the session of the People Assembly held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February, 2009, decides the following:

**Article 1:** the following charges and expenditures are considered personal expenditures that might be deducted from the annual gross profits of the industrial taxpayers:

1. Expenditures on training unemployed for gaining special skills that allow them to enter the Syrian labor market.
2. Expenditures on the scientific research of a private facility or expenditures of researches carried out by universities, or research centers for the sole benefit of a certain sector be it through complete or partial funding.
3. Expenditures on contribution to improving conditions of the public utilities: establishing a healthcare center, providing medical apparatus, and building schools, and kindergartens to be delivered to the Ministry of Education, contributing to financing developmental projects approved by the state.
4. Expenditures on participating in conferences, domestic and foreign exhibitions relevant to work.
5. Expenditures on capacity building and training courses of the facility personnel.
6. Expenditures spent on centers of the disabled and orphanages including establishing or contributing in the establishment of new centers.
7. Expenditures on purchasing and installing energy machines, including building electricity generating stations that use the alternative energy offered to one of the public bodies.
8. Expenditures of purchasing and installing machines for fighting pollution in the area concerned or granting donations for purchasing parameters for detecting pollution rates in water and air for the benefit of a public body.
9. Expenditures spent on afforestation campaigns in the facility neighboring areas or leading to it, or in any other area.
10. Expenditures spent on the cultural activities to support culture.

**Article 2:** The aforementioned personal expenditures in article /1/ are accepted within an average not exceeding 7% of the total declared net profits, on condition that these are documented by relevant bodies.

**Article 3:** The decision is to be published in the official gazette, and is applicable to tariffs of the year 2008 and after.

Damascus, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of February, 2009

Prime Minister, Mohammed NajiUutri

is related to exempting Syrian imports from taxes. The ministry explained that the publication validity would be imposed on the costs of 2010 and after.

The (former) Minister of Culture, Riyadsmat, had issued decision No.460 by which he granted huge financial simplifications to owners and investors of cinema theaters in Syria as well as encouraging the opening of new theaters and renovating the old ones. This decision contains the executive regulations for imposing the principles of the legislative decree No.118, 22/9/2011. **On 4/7/2013 the Syrian president passed law number 16 for 2013 which was very concise and its first article stated (funding support for cinema shall be discontinued wherever stated in laws and regulations).**

The decision contained the exemption of custom fees on imported equipment, in addition to, the exemption of income tax for five years starting with the date of renovation of the existing cinema theater or the date of starting work in the new theaters. All the theaters were exempted from taxes and local administration fees in case of building new ones or renovating others.

Article (18 – 2) of the Syrian constitution for the year 2012 states that the tax system is built on fair foundations and that taxes should be ascending for achieving the principles of social equality and justice. This should be reflected, later, upon the tax assignment law and tax exemptions for the interest of reinforcing the private sector social responsibility towards development plans and projects of public benefit as well as having cultural projects blended in.

The law is observed as one of the most important decisions in the domain of cultural legislation. Cultural institutions and activists in domain of culture are working on promoting the law and putting it in force.

Taxes Imposed on Services and Cultural Goods:

The tax on profits of industrial, trade and non-trade related professions and handicrafts: (Category of taxpayers of real profits):

The following bodies are subject (in addition to a big number of industrial, trade, and non-trade handicrafts and professions) to the law of taxation on profits of industrial, trade, and non-trade handicrafts No.24 issued by the President on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November, 2003.

Cinema halls, 1<sup>st</sup> class, according to the classification of the concerned financial bodies, after five years of their foundation or renovation.

Artistic production (movies, TV Series, commercials and similar products).

Distributors of the local and imported artistic production.

Investors of circus shows.

In addition to a number of cooperative association, cooperative establishments, and agricultural investors), persons who exercise the following professions are exempted from paying taxes: music composing, playing music, painting, sculpture.

## Salaries and Wages Tax<sup>1</sup>:

The taxation is applicable to artists of different categories, public servants, unionists, etc...

Law No.112 on Amendment of the Law of Incomes in the Syrian Province- Persons subject to Taxation:

Law No.112 was passed on the 11<sup>th</sup> of August, 1958 with the aim to identifying exemption on taxation as follows:

Exempted from paying the taxes on a permanent basis are:

Individuals exercising the following professions: Writing, playing, composing, drawing and sculpturing. However, exemption is conditioned for the works of sculpting as follows:

For the work of statue sculpting, exemption is included in the artistic work, while it's not for the other works that accompany sculpting in some cases like, building a cement or rock base for the statue, setting a fence to surround it, electrical wiring or others. Profits resulted from those works are subject to the assigning of income tax as they're considered not related to the conception of statues being sculpted.

Statues that are built using boxes and not sculpted are not considered in the exemption.

The exemption mentioned only includes the works done by an artist alone. However, when an artist establishes a foundation and gets others to help in doing the works, then the foundation is not covered by the exemption.

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1. The salaries and wages tax is to be deducted from each individual receives a salary, wage or an allowance:
    - A. From a private treasury if he is residing in Syria or if the paid sum of money was an allowance for services he/she offered.
    - B. From a public treasury if he/she is residing in Syria or abroad.
  2. Exempted from paying the tax on Income and Wages are:
    - a. The accredited ambassadors at the Syrian Arab Republic, the diplomatic corps, consuls, team of the diplomatic corps, and their foreign personnel on condition of reciprocity.
    - b. Military men of the armed forces, policemen, and firemen.
    - c. Personnel in charge of mosques and churches.
    - d. Syrian and non-Syrian personnel working in the Syrian embassies.
    - e. Pensions and family allowances granted, allowances of dismissing from employment, and all sums granted to the public servant after his period of service has ended.
    - f. Allowances paid to personnel subject to physical damage due to labor accidents.
    - g. Wages of housemaids.
    - h. Bonuses granted by a resolution issued by the President.
  3. The Tax System:
    - a. the tax is to be deducted on the basis of profits per month
    - b. the average of the tax is determined as follows:
      - c. **Legislative Decree number 42 of 2011**
      - d.
        1. **5% on the net income per month between the minimum exempted limit and 15000 SYP, and on every cut payment.**
        2. **7% on the net income per month between 15001 and 20000 SYP.**
        3. **9% of the net income between 20001 and 25000 SYP.**
        4. **11% on the net income per month between 25001 and 30000 SYP.**
        5. **13% on the net income per month between 30001 and 38000 SYP.**
        6. **16% on the net income per month between 38001 and 50000 SYP.**
        7. **19 % of the net income per month between 50001 and 75000 SYP.**
        8. **22% on the net income per month exceeding 75000 SYP.**
      - e. **Article (2) amends article 69 of the law number 24 of 2003 wherein it becomes as follows:**  
**A minimum amount exempt from tax on monthly income of 10000 SYP**
      - f. the tax is applicable to artists contracting with the public and private bodies, as well as other bodies and individuals who hire employees in return for an income, wage, allowance, or a bonus.



Non profitable cooperative association – kindergartens, institutes and foundation houses of those with disabilities, Syrian welfare associations and their unions, touristic exemptions, exemptions given to exhibitors in Damascus International Exhibition, works of exporting products of Syrian origin according to the principles of the legislative decree No.15 for 2001. (Syrian imports of different kinds of artistic works are included)

On 27/6/2013 the Ministry of Finance released operational instructions to law number 13 that amount to adding 5% on taxes as well as direct and indirect fees for a period of three years for the rebuilding what has been destroyed due to the circumstances of the country<sup>1</sup>. The Director General of the General of the General Commission for Taxes and Fees stated in an interview with Tishrin newspaper published 9/7/2013 (that according to executive instructions of the law the added percentage on taxes and direct and indirect fee for the duration of three years includes the rate of proceeds from real estate tax, income tax from professions, industrial and commercial and non-commercial crafts, trade taxes, land value, empty lot, move and real estate registration, and fees for possession of weapons, irrigation and exit fee , environmental protection fee, General Security fees, car fees , extra fees for car registration, transfer of right of investment fee, and other direct fees)

#### **5.1.7. Labor Law.**

The main system of State workers (Law No.50 for the year 2004):

This law is the organizer of the relationship between public and governmental commissions and their workers. In its first article, the law defined a worker as each person who is permanently posted in one of the noticeable jobs in the numerical property of the public side. Thus, it provided total equality amongst all employees despite the nature of their jobs and their employment ranks.

Artists were exempted, according to the Law, from the section especially for transferring employees as what it was stated in Article (33 – G). They were also exempted in Article (37 – B) from the principles of blame to be replaced with the principles mentioned in the laws and regulations, especially for them. Also, Article (42 – A) transferred the task of specifying the hours and the amount of work done by artists to the laws and regulations, especially for them.

While in the section of tasks and restrictions, Article (63 – A) clearly stated that “workers should work by performing their assignments in reinforcing the socialist system by which it guarantees the adhesion of principles of the united Arab socialist society. They should also abide by performing the State plan and objectives in unity, liberty and socialism.” This takes us back to the policies of the Baath Arab Socialist Party and its effective role in dominating the socialist, nationalist and Arabism features over the society in general.

There is no doubt that considering an artist as an employee in the public sector forms a possible obstacle for artistic creativity and development. Article (64 – 2) restricts workers from “practicing an open career along with their employment except the ones that laws

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.syrianfinance.gov.sy/arabic/budget/regulations-taxes-duties/3620.html>

and regulations state on allowing the practice of and within the specified conditions.” Since there isn’t a united syndicate or law that brings together artists in general, regardless of the differences in their work, this article makes cultural work harder for some activists to achieve.

Speaking of compensations, Article (96 – 2) of the law along with retaining the principles mentioned in the laws and regulations, especially for disposing compensations, states that the disposing of compensations are for “those of medical professions and members of scientific research commission”, not mentioning cultural or artistic professions. Seven categories were defined in the section of compensations which can be legally gained, along with the salaries, by workers. The second category was for “compensating nature of work and art specialization” which is detailed later in Article (98 – A – 5) as for “specialized art” work without clarifying the meaning of the specialization. Knowingly, paragraph (B) specified that “work nature and specialization compensation should not exceed, regardless of the number of its kinds granted to one worker, forty percent of the salary at the time of performing work,” while paragraph (G) specified the ratios by five percent as a reward of distinguished intellectual or physical effort and by eight percent for specialized art work.

In paragraph (D) of the article, the article keeps in charge of the government cabinet right of issuing a decision based on the suggestion of: the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, the General Union of Workers Syndicates and the Specialized Syndicate Organization, on specifying the kinds of compensation (according to the elements it’s granted to), the groups benefiting from all its kinds and the amount of benefit each group gets, the conditions and fundamentals of its issues and restrictions, and lastly, the conditions of mixing between its kinds. Thus, neither the Ministry of Culture nor any of the artistic syndicates has a role regarding this, which brings up a question on the role of the Ministry of Culture in protecting those who are working in the cultural sector and to what extent the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor and Workers Union can evaluate the nature of art work to suggest the appropriate compensations.

It gets more clarified within the context of Article (105 – A) stating that it’s possible, when needed, and by the decision of a specialized minister, “assigning some workers limited additional tasks outside the official work hours that are agreed on in the departments they work for and granting them, as a reward, a cut compensation specified in that decision, as long as the monthly total payment they get in reward of those tasks, no matter how much/many, doesn’t exceed five percent of the maximum amount of wage in their categories.” Also, Article (105 – B) clarifies that “Mixing between assigning additional work and additional work hours is not allowed”, confirming that theatrical and artistic work, particularly, may require long hours of work outside the official work hours. Later, Article (109) exempts the article from compensation amounts that are assigned in Articles (101), (108) about additional hours, payments, additional work compensations, and commissions’ compensation....(2) compensation of composing or invention (4) compensation of press and intellectual production (5) compensation of art production and artistic works that are performed by artists. The question is to what extent these

articles are being implemented in a way that serves the art and cultural sector and encourages creativity and development.

Article (131) states that one of the reasons for the worker service termination is the worker having reached the age of sixty, so is it possible to implement this article on those who are working in the cultural sector? Would it not have been better if the project had chosen different standards that are related to the capability of cultural production and creative works?

Like the other issued law statements and legislations, the practical application and the occurring events have approved an urgent need to amend Law No.50 for the year 2004 which is named, the Main Law for State's Workers, and which is the modified version of Law No.1 for the year 1985 in matters of cases that need to be organized according to different mechanisms and restrictions. As a practical example of the determined intention for modifying the law, a commission was established on 26/2/2013 whose task was restudying and modifying the Main Law for State's Workers No.50 for the year 2004. The commission was joined by representatives from the Ministry of Labor, the General Union of Workers' Syndicates, the Central Bureau of Financial Surveillance, and other related parties. Based on the commission request, most ministries submitted their suggestions and feedback for the law modification<sup>1</sup>. **The commission formed by the Ministry of Labour by decision number 337 for 2013 reached findings in September of the same year to establish general principles and parameters through which the draft amendment will be made. We have not updated on the results of the amendment on the level of labour at the date of this research.**

Private Labor Law (law No.17 for the year 2010)

Along public labor law which includes artists working for the public sides in the State, there is a group of artists whose daily work is supervised by statements and principles of the private labor law. A worker is defined by this law as "each normal person who works for someone who owns a job, no matter the job kind, and under their authority and supervision." The second article encouraged the fundamentals of equality in treatment and opportunities, with equivalence with no discrimination. Despite the necessity and the positive aspect of this article, it encouraged the fundamentals of not having differentiation in cultural and art work based on its special nature.

What's meant by the word "work" according to Article (27 – G) is that it's "each work that is industrial, trade, agricultural, craft, banking, service, art, or other." This clearly defies Article (37) that's especially for theoretical, artificial, or practical training and which has totally neglected art work in terms of training and practice. It was followed by Article (38) which imposed conditions on the trainee to have reached eighteen years of age, thus, children were prohibited from professional art training in private art institutions.

One of the things that denies independence of art work and restrains creativity in it, especially in terms of training staff, is what was mentioned in both Articles (42), (43) which granted privilege to the specialized Minister to interfere in the information stated on the

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<sup>1</sup>Atthawra newspaper- 20/5/2013

training certificates given to trainees, and that he specifies, by a decision he makes, the permission requirements for establishing training centers in the structures of private sector and the topics covered in the artificial training.

Once again, the cultural sector has been neglected, although it's considered a service sector in the State Five-Year Plan. Article (69), especially for wages, states on the establishment of the National Committee of the General Minimum Wage by a decision made by the prime minister and under his command, which doesn't include the Minister of Culture nor art syndicates principals. Thus, the question about the role of the ministry in protecting artists and the cultural sector is brought back. This role is reinforced later in Article (71) which states on the establishment of a committee, by a decision made by the minister, in each specialized directorate to suggest the minimum wage for all professions that are subject to the principles of this law, excluding the membership of the minister.

Public sector workers in the domain of cultural field are subject to Labor Law no. 91 of 1959. Artists and workers in the cultural sector being not exempted from subordinating to the articles of this law is considered, as they believe, amongst prominent factors that hinder the cultural movement<sup>1</sup>.

The 10<sup>th</sup> five-year Plan underlines the importance of developing the legislations with regard to the cultural sector based on nature of work. Artistic and cultural activities should be held at night and no incentives are available on the nature of these activities.

In line with directives of the 10<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan, the Cabinet has issued law No. 20/M in its meetings held on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April, 2005 in which percentages of allowance on the nature of jobs are specified as well as allowances on the specialized artistic work as follows:

Article 1: Percentages of allowance on nature of work and activities as proclaimed in article 98 of the Basic Law of the Civil Workers No.50 for the year 2005, are specified in line with the salary or wage as of the date of work performance as follows:

Journalists registered in compliance with regulations at the Journalists Union payroll in the Syrian Arab Republic, get according to the provisions of decree No. 58, for the year 1974 and its amendments included in the provisions of decree No. 48 for the year 1980, a percentage of 6,5% of the total wage.

Artists working at the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Information, and other official bodies, included in the provisions of the decree No.32 for the year 1973 have a maximum 5% of total wage.

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<sup>1</sup> It is worth considering here the categories of public servants who are exempted from Law of Labor as stipulated in article 174 of the 17<sup>th</sup> Chapter. Exempted from the provisions of this law are: 1. Judges subject to the law of the judicial authority, judges of the Higher Constitutional Court, judges of the State Council, and lawyers of the Administration of the State Courts. 2. Members of the educational board, technical, and lab staff subject to the law of Universities. 3. Workers at religious jurisdiction (fatwa), religious teaching, imams, preachers, Quran readers, servants at mosques, and other individual working in the religious domain. 4. Military men, armed forces, and policemen. 5. Members of the General Intelligence. 6. The custom authorities. 7. The technical staff, members of the Commission of Scientific Research at the Center of Scientific Research, members of the technical staff, members of the lab, and staff members of the Commission of the Scientific Research at the Atomic Energy Commission. 8. Scientific workers at the Arab Encyclopaedia Institution. 9. Flights crews at the Syrian Airlines and the sailing cruise personnel at the Syrian Maritime Company. 10. Domestic personnel appointed at Syrian diplomatic missions abroad.

### 5.1.8 Copyrights Provisions

First: Decree No. 2385 dated 17<sup>th</sup> of January, 1924 was issued at the time of the French Mandate over Syria and Lebanon.

Article 145 of the above Decree stipulates that: "Each work of Art or work of Literature is meant to be an intellectual production, disregarding its kind or value, whether it is scientific, literary, lyrical composes or just verbal such as rhetoric, lectures, or even sound production such as musical works, motion, dance, pantomime, or industrial such as drawing, sculpture, cinema, and photography.

Second: Article 708 of the Syrian Penal Code stipulates that: "every intellectual production, disregarding its value, is considered a literary or artistic work whether it is:

Written like books, booklets, or newspapers.

Verbal like rhetoric and lectures

Sound like music.

Motion like dance, and pantomime

Industrial like construction, sculpture, drawing, engraving, cinema, or photography.

Article 709 stipulates that: "According to the provision mentioned in the article, the following are considered literary or artistic works:

Translation, adaptation, proofreading, and copying on condition that this would not harm the intellectual property right of the original work of art.

Selected pieces and works which are entitled to enjoy a distinctive nature through collecting them in one work.

Transcribing rhetoric, seminars, lectures of professors, and every verbal expression be it by writing or by sound machines.

Transcribing texts of old manuscripts and publishing them on condition that every individual has the right of firsthand publishing or transcribing.

Third: On the 5<sup>th</sup> of November, 1981 the Arab Agreement on protection of intellectual Property was signed in Baghdad by a number of Arab states and which Syria did not join. Nevertheless, the agreement did not include the protected works amongst a specified category but it listed these works.

The directorate of composer rights in the Ministry of Culture, **which made decision number 929 on 6/8/2002**, undertakes international laws set by WEBO which is a UN organization that Syria joined in 2004. The directorate was established by the Ministry of Culture in 2001. It has a judicial enforcement team whose task is to verify complaints sent to the ministry. If they were proved right, the complaints would be sent to court through cooperation between the directorate and the Secretary General office. Legislative decree No.74 was issued in 2005 to agree on Syria joining the Rome International Treatment for protecting performance artists, audio recording producers, and broadcasting commissions.

#### Fourth: Law on the Intellectual Property in Syria:

Law number 12 for 2001 was made concerning the protection of Syrian copyrights. On September 17, 2013, legislative decree number 62 for 2013 was published and stipulated applying the rulings of the “protection copyright and related rights”<sup>1</sup>. The detailed law had 104 articles, the last article stipulated that law 12 for 2001 was abrogated.

##### Domain of Protection:

Literary, scientific and artistic works are liable for protection by sole means of its creating. Protection includes all forms of intellectual production

Books, booklets, publications, manuscripts, archives, and blogs; and any similar literary, artistic and scientific work.

Works that are transmitted orally such as lectures, speeches, sermons and their equivalent; drama, performance and musical works.

Dance choreography, pantomime and mime performance and similar invented theatrical performance works.

Musical works whether with lyrics or without, audio-visual works such as cinema, television and similar related works.

Works of photography and related visual arts.

Computer programs whether in source code or machine code.

Databases whether in readable form or digital or any other type if the database was invented.

Working title if it was invented.

Derivative works such as translations, adaptations, musical distributions or alterations, popular works and traditions such as encyclopaedias, anthologies, software and related computer programming data, and literary, artistic works in encyclopaedias and anthologies that are considered as intellectual inventions because of its chosen material and its arrangements.

##### Intellectual Property Rights

Right of the author to publish their work for the first time and to assign the type of publishing and release date. The author’s royalties are guaranteed.

The author shall not conceal their identity or use a pen name.

It is forbidden to distort, vandalize or modify the author’s works. It is forbidden to infringe upon the author’s work with aims to cause damage to their honour or reputation.

It is prohibited to put up the author’s work for trade or withdrawing it from circulation even if they have previously had the right to financial investment, if that is for serious reasons the work can be banned or withdrawn.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://sns.sy/sns/?path=news/read/66442>

Moral rights of the author are perpetual and are not subject to limitation or disposal. The author's direct heir inherits these rights according to stipulated rights in this article of the law and the Ministry inherits these rights in case the author has no heir. The author or their heir who has inherited the financial royalties rights has exclusive financial rights.

Copyright holders of manuscripts of literary, musical notation works, and works of art such as paintings and sculptures who own the single original work enjoy inalienable rights that allow them royalties of no more than 10% of the work's sale value subsequent to the sale of the original ownership of the artwork. The author's financial rights concerning audio-visual works and joint works are protected for a period of fifty years starting from the first calendar year after the work was first produced.

Financial rights regarding works that are published without mention of their author's name or their pen name are protected for a period of fifty years starting from the first calendar year after the work was first published.

Financial rights regarding applied art works are protected for a period of twenty-five years starting from the first calendar year after the work was completed. Financial rights regarding database works are protected for a period of fifteen years starting from the first calendar year after the work was completed.

#### Joint Works

A joint work is a work that was produced by more than one author whether each author's contribution can be separately distinguished or cannot so long as the work is not categorized as a collective work; each author who has contributed to producing a joint work or authoring a part of a work that can be distinguished from its other parts, has the right to take measures to prevent the infringement of any intellectual property right with regard to the work.

Collective Work: is a work that more than one author has contributed to its production with the initiative and guidance of a natural or legal person who publishes the work under their name. the person who led the initiative, guided it or provided funding to produce the collective work is the owner of copyright and financial rights unless an agreement was made otherwise.

Financial rights of collective works authors are under lifelong protection and for a period of fifty years after the last living author's death unless otherwise stipulated by law.

#### Related Rights

Related rights are defined in article 1 of the legislative decree as: (rights enjoyed by performance artists, audio-visual recordings producers, and broadcasting institutions, companies and stations and publishing houses).

Performers enjoy moral rights such as the right to a percentage of the revenues of the performed work whether live or broadcasted, the right to reserve admission and prohibit any distortion or disruption of their live or broadcast performance. As well as financial

rights concerning transmission of unrecorded performance, recording and registering the performance, copying registered performances and renting, distributing or disseminating original performances.

Producers of audio or visual recordings, works and information in their role as representatives of performers enjoy the right to copy, distribute, lend, rent and the right to disseminate audio-visual or informational recordings to the public. Performers enjoy financial rights that are protected for a period of fifty years starting from the first calendar year after the public performance took place. Producers of audio-visual recordings enjoy financial rights that are protected for a period of fifty years starting from the first calendar year after the audio-visual recordings were disseminated.

Broadcasting stations' rights grant the protection of their resources and programming for a period of twenty years starting from the first calendar year after the material was first broadcast.

#### Exceptions and Necessary Licenses

Chapter 1 of Section 4 states the exceptions of intellectual property laws and related laws in detail so long that the exceptions in this chapter do not waive copyrights of authors and performance artists.

Chapter 2 states the government rights represented by the Ministry of Culture in publishing, or providing publishing licenses or translation with regulations that do not overlook copyrights.

#### The Directorate for the Protection of Copyright and Related Rights

With the implementation of the previously mentioned law the Directorate for Protection of Copyright and Related Rights replaced the Copyright Office at the Ministry of Culture that is assigned to educate authors, performance artists, producers of audio-visual recordings and broadcasting stations on the best ways to exercise their rights, study and follow up issues, staying up to date with collective management organizations and monitoring their activities as well as helping in the implementation of their tasks, preserve archiving works and audio-visual recordings and others and suggesting what is needed to implement provisions of the law, saving informatics and coordinating with the Ministry of Communications and Technology in areas of verification, copyrights of data producers. Article 67 of the chapter mentioned contains the regulations of entrusting works, manuscripts and data that need to accompany the archived workbook.

#### Folklore

Oral forms of expression such as stories, riddles, proverbs and folk poems.

Musical forms of expression such as folk songs and music.

Folk dances and plays, artistic forms and rituals, in addition to material forms of expression such as calligraphy, painting, engraving, products made out of clay, wood, mosaics and handicrafts and similar forms.

Musical instruments.



### Architecture styles.

The mentioned forms of folklore are considered a national property by the Directorate for the Protection of Copyright and Related Rights at the Ministry of Culture and as a perpetual right with no limitation period.

Chapter 1 of Section 2 of the law concerning preventative measures lists them in detail and in Chapter 2 of the same Section are detailed penalties including prison terms and fines for each violation, and the parties or authorities assigned to determine criminal violations.

### Frameworks of Law Enforcement

Provisions of the law concerning intellectual property are applicable to: Intellectual property of Syrian citizens or under Syrian law.

Works that have been first published in the Syrian Arab Republic or published in Syria within thirty days after being published in another country.

Audio-visual works by producers headquartered in Syria.

Architecture that was built in the Syrian Arab Republic, and other works of art or other installations incorporated in the building located in Syria.

Informatics produced in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The law is applicable to performers whose performance took place in the Syrian Arab Republic or was included in audio or video recordings protected by this law, or of the performance was included in broadcasting medium protected by the law.

The law is applicable –to producers of audio or video recordings if they are citizens of the Syrian Arab Republic or if the recording was first broadcast or disseminated for the first time in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The provisions of the law concerning the protection of broadcasting stations' material and programming if the station was based in the Syrian Arab Republic or was broadcast from stations that are inside Syria.

Section 10 of Law number 62 of 2013 contains general provisions and the decision to abolish law number 12 of 2001.

### Data protection laws:

In April 2012, the Ministry of Telecommunication and Technology discussed with concerned parties, in the framework of being assigned to put forth a new law for the protection of personal data that is capable of being used on internet, the suggested ideas about the form of the responsible party, which would be responsible of the assurance of law enforcement in order to put it along with its executive bureau in service. The Minister of Telecommunication and Technology stated that, "The law project is considered part of the laws that the ministry is working on setting to organize E-services in Syria. There is personal digital data that is capable of being utilized on the worldwide web or available in databases, which requires the availability of legislations to control its usage by parties that are not permitted to look through it, and to restrain its transfer from the outside of

the party that has collected it; which requires the availability of specific restraints and mechanisms to protect this data.”

He indicated that the topic has two branches; the first is related to those restraints as there are available international legislations that organize which way data collecting, modifying, transferring and looking through are permitted. While the other branch is about the executive method of the surveillance authority which is defined as the responsible party for the protection of persons rights and freedoms regarding modifying data on personal instinct. **Until the date of publication of this research the data protection law has not been passed.**

Laws on protecting the data are not applicable in Syria

#### **5.1.10 Laws of Language**

First: the Syrian Constitution stipulates in its fourth article that:”The Arab language is the official language”.

Second: Article 24 of the Law of Governing Universities in the Syrian Arab Republic stipulates that:”Arab language is the language of teaching at universities with the exception of foreign languages curricula, beside to scientific faculties where one or two curricula can be taught in a foreign language”.

Third: The Project for “Empowerment of the Arab Language”:

Under the directives of President of the Republic, the National Project for Empowerment of Arab Language began in Syria in August, 2006 under the supervision of the Vice-President Dr, Najah Attar and in cooperation with concerned Ministries and Bodies with the intention to set up an overall perspective, a joint framework, and a mechanism for empowerment of Arab language. The concerned bodies has each, within less than a year, set up its own work plan and formed a follow-up committees that hold meetings on a regular basis. Arabic has been decided on to be the official language in conferences and meetings in the Arab world as well as using it in international occasions and having representatives of the Arab states abide with this usage in the United Nations Assembly and its organizations. **During the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Linguistic and Cultural Diversity that was held in Yakutsk between 28/6 and 3/7/2014, Assistant Minister of Culture presented a paper titled (The Role of Education in Preserving Linguistic Diversity) that focused on the nature of language and its relationship with cultural identity and the dangers of blacking out a whole language as it leads to the obliteration of others’ languages and their culture due to the interrelatedness of language and culture. This paper was presented at a time when political power in Syria has been for decades repressing cultural rights including the mother tongue of Kurds in Syria.**

The concerned bodies have been assigned by Mrs. Attar are: Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Information along with all affiliated establishments, Arab Language Academy, and Writers Union.

Within this context, the wide-spread of the Internet poses one of the biggest challenges because it generated a hybrid language, in other words a mixture of foreign, eloquent, and colloquial language that is being used widely on a daily basis.

Fourth - The Project of Amending Law of “the Arab Language *Academic Assembly*” in Damascus to enable it to practise its role.

Following its establishment, the Arab Language Academy was able to play a leading role in reviving the Arabic language but this role has started to retreat starting from late of the 60's. Upon reconsideration, the legislative rules of the Academy were restricted and some very important articles have been eliminated such as articles addressing encouragement of creative work, publishing, literary criticism, and presenting creators to public and granting them prizes. This led to diminishing the influence of the Academy, keeping it away from the creative and cultural domain and turned it into a lifeless body. The underway project for Empowerment of Arab Language covers the Arab Academy of Language. And according to Dr. Attar, a new legislative draft has been presented, which takes into consideration the items removed and also benefits from the Egyptian experience in reviving the Academy in terms of number of the Academy members, and mechanism of members election or assignment. The project was issued by the cabinet of government on 4/6/2008 and working with law No.38 for the year 2001 was stopped<sup>1</sup>.

Fifth: the First National Conference on the Industry of the Arab Digital Component:

The conference was held in Damascus in June, 2009 with the aim of expanding publishing Arabic language and Arab culture on the Internet.

Amongst the most important recommendations:

The necessity to set legislations specific of linguistic issues. This has been included in (The Project of Upgrading Arabic Language towards Society of Knowledge), proposed by Syria and later unanimously adopted by the Arab Summit and the Arab League. Article 4 of the legislation stipulates that: national legislations should be issued for protecting the Arabic language, promoting, developing and improving its usage by media outlets, in advertising, and via Arab internet websites.

Adopting Arabic to become amongst the seven acknowledged global languages (*in the Global E-Library*) established by the UNISCO. Although it has been four years since the first conference, there hasn't been any other held, and there's no signal of the fate of the requests on the ground for Syria, officially speaking.

In October 2012, ESCWA held a meeting that brought together government officials and organizations specialized in information technology and communications and investment institutions in addition to experts, operators and academics working in the Arabic digital content enhancement sector. During the meeting ESCWA announced the necessity of organizing awareness campaigns on the importance of Arabic digital content production, and launching competitions for Arabic digital content on the national and regional levels through which winners receive a sponsorship for a period between six months and a year

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<sup>1</sup>SANA News Agency- 4/6/2008

in one of the region's business incubators.

It appeared on the website of “the Arab team for translation” on 23/11/2012 (some university students in Syria started a new project named Arabic Empowerment) which aims to provide the Arab scientific content on internet. Its method is translating scientific content from English to Arabic in the beginning, while there is a long-term project that passes translation over into explanation and production.

## **5-2. Legislation Regulating Cultural Domain**

The bylaws of the Ministry of Culture, and those pertaining to all Directorates and Bodies and Establishments affiliated to the Ministry are the main document for cultural legislation in Syria<sup>1</sup>.

## **5.3 Sector specific legislation**

### **5.3.1 Visual and Applied Arts**

The Syndicate of Plastic Artists was established in Damascus at the beginning of the 70's of the last century. Establishment of Union of Plastic Artists law was issued on the 26<sup>th</sup> of December, 2004 whereas related bylaws, that were prepared by the Syndicate of Fine Arts and sent to the Ministry on 15/6/2006, have not been issued so far knowing that, delay in issuing the bylaw is considered an explicit violation of Article 68 of the 19<sup>th</sup> Chapter and the transitional provisions of the law which explicitly stated that: “The by-laws and the financial system of the Union should be issued by a Ministerial Resolution in a period not exceeding 6 months from the date of passing the law. Until issued, the bylaws and the financial system of the Fine Arts Union will be in force in a way that does not violate the provision of this law. On 15/11/2011, a law project was issued by the Syrian government cabinet that made a statement on the establishment of abstract artists retirement chamber, which aimed to provide a retirement pension, offer compensations, and grant aids to its members and their families according to the arranging principles. In addition to that, the government cabinet had issued earlier on 27/7/2011 a law project that included establishing a center named, “the National Center of Visual Arts” in Damascus University. The law project aimed to revive the Syrian creative abstract art movement and the usage of visual arts in contribution to enriching the cultural, social, and educational life and developing youth art talents.

The Center, which has 20 employees, did not present any activity until the second half of July 2014 when it announced beginning a group of workshops in sculpture, photography and others.

The Union of Plastic Artists is considered an urgent body which is needed to preserve the artists interests, regulates respective legislative system related to health and social insurance, Pension Funds, and establishing specialized artistic associations.

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<sup>1</sup> Detailed documents are referred to in the 9<sup>th</sup> Chapter: Sources and Internet Links.

Galleries should have the consent of the syndicate of Plastic Artists on holding any artistic exhibition.

### **5.3.2 Arts of Performance & Music**

Ministry of Culture:

The bylaws of the Ministry of Culture, first issued in 1958, and was subject to a number of amendments, is considered the main legal document applicable for legislating the artistic work in Syria, categorizing the artists, setting up the financial and administrative regulations, defining mandates of decision-taking, tools, and mechanisms of production.

Syndicate of Artists:

The Syndicate was established by virtue of the Legislative Decree no. 162 issued by the President in 1967, upon the Resolution of the temporary Regional Command of the Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party No.2, on 25<sup>th</sup> of February, 1966, and upon the Resolution of the Cabinet No.609 dated 26<sup>th</sup> of December, 1967. The 163 male and female founder artists held a meeting and elected the first board in 1968.

The Legislative Decree No.44 was issued in 1972 stipulating establishment of a Pension Funds and all related provisions. Some provisions were later modified under law No. 51, 2002.

The approval of establishing a “colleagues chamber” was issued by Damascus branch of the assembly with the number (87) on 22/9/1996. The chamber council could, in a very short time, organize itself and issue an interior law-package along with its agendas, in addition to offering some necessary loans, services, and supplies to the members. The administration council of the artists colleague and social sponsorship chamber initiated to sign a group life insurance contracts with 100,000 SYP for each member without assigning them any financial burden in return of the contract. The contract included aiding the members in different scenarios; permanent total disability resulted by an accident or illness, permanent partial disability resulted by an accident, as well as, supporting the member’s family in the case of his/her death, caused naturally or by an accident.

Granting a License for Establishing a Theatrical or Musical Band:

The Syrian artists granted license for establishing theatrical and musical bands via the Syndicate of Artists under the name: “an artistic gathering”, as stipulated in the Syndicate bylaws. This allows a number of independent artists to work within a legislative framework away from the law of Association set up by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

### **5.3.3 The Cultural Heritage**

Taking care of the culture heritage and monuments is amongst the most important aspects of the Syrian cultural life.

Amongst the most prominent examples is that the Legislative Decree No. 88 for the establishment of the General Directorates of Museums and Antiquities, including the system of General Monuments was issued on the 30th of June, 1947 years before the establishment of the Ministry of Culture in 1958.

The General Directorates of Museums and Antiquities (Ministry of Culture) is considered the administrative body that is charged with applying monuments and antiquities-related laws in Syria .

The law on Monuments issued on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October, 1963 governs the legal framework of the cultural heritage and monuments in Syria, accordingly the Legislative Law No. 89, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, 1947 that governs ancient monuments was cancelled. Law No.1963 was modified on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February, 1999. The comparison between the 1963 law and its amendments for the year 1999 show that monuments-trafficking, which has been formerly legalized, has been utterly prohibited. In this respect, most offenses have been modified into criminal laws.

The General Directorate of Archaeology and Museums worked with UNESCO during the time-period of 2007 until the end of 2010 on preparing a document for enlisting the archaeological compounds northern Syria on the international heritage list. In June 2011, the international heritage committee in UNESCO adopted a decision project that stated on enlisting and naming the archaeological villages in northern Syria, which are as many as forty villages that date back to the Byzantine and late ancient eras, a cultural view on the international heritage list.

It's worth mentioning that the decree No.28, issued on 17/1/2012, requested upon modifying the name "Damascus Museum" into "the Damascene Heritage House".

On "the General Directorate of Archaeology and Museums"<sup>1</sup> website, it's posted, a work plan for the project of archaeological heritage sites and museum development in Syria, within the project of modifying archaeology law, which includes the work plan for the years 2011-2012. The plan looks forward to finding legal integrative bases for protecting, managing, and publicizing the Syrian cultural heritage.

Currently, the Ministry of Culture is considering a project entitled "The Committee for Protecting Heritage", to be established under the auspices of the Ministry and might be headed by Damascus Governor. The Committee's goals are diverse: protecting and prohibiting any damage to historical sites, collecting the non-material Syrian heritage through cooperating with the Directorates of Culture in all Syrian Governorates in addition to focusing on cooperation with the bodies and organizations of the civil society.

Despite the destruction and misusing that affected archaeological sites in Syria, this committee has not appeared on the ground. Instead, the "Syrian Archaeology Protection" An association came out in Strasberg and submitted a report in 2011 that showed the different damages caused to twelve Syrian museums, in most cases, by shelling, breaking and robbery, and accusing the Syrian archaeological authorities and the concerned international organizations of not making enough of an effort to protect the archaeological sites in Syria<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Website of the General Directorate of Archaeology and Museums  
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?m=307>

<sup>2</sup>Website of SyriaNews[http://www.syria-news.com/readnews.php?sy\\_seq=155724](http://www.syria-news.com/readnews.php?sy_seq=155724)

According to the report that was conducted by the General Directorate of Archaeology and Museums in June 2013, all museums have been emptied of archaeological pieces which were wrapped and transferred to safer locations, in addition to having transferred all the important historical documents into special storehouses that are secured in case of robbery, fire, or humidity. The report stated in its introduction, "The heartbreaking events that Syria is facing, have reflected negatively during the current crisis, on the Syrian cultural heritage as some archaeological sites, in hot zones, have faced works of drilling, misusing, and robbery along with gangs smuggling and forging archaeological pieces. As well as, having, in some governorates, archaeological buildings severely damaged." The General Directorate of Archaeology and Museums had earlier sent a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in May 2013, demanding the International Security Council to take action towards the prohibition of Syrian archaeology-trafficking and regaining what has been stolen.

On 15/7/2013 the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ISESCO published a press statement accusing the Syrian Army of destroying mosques and Islamic antiquities in Syria.

While UNESCO made a statement during the meeting it held on (26 – 28 May 2014) with the attendance of 120 experts from 22 countries that (concerning intangible cultural heritage, it is being subjected to severe damage as a result of social dispersion, and the effects of displacement and migration. In the ancient city of Aleppo that suffered the most severe destruction craftsmen have lost a large number of their workshops, tools and materials that they use. Activities related to transfer of their skills have also stopped. In regions around Damascus, Qishani porcelain and clothing have suffered severe damage)

The European Union and UNESCO have started the project "Emergency Safeguarding of the Syrian Heritage"<sup>1</sup> to stop continuous losses that cultural heritage has suffered and to organize priority activities to be implemented after the conflict. The project is funded by the European Union in collaboration with UNESCO among other strategic partners with an estimated budget of USD 2.46 million. The monitoring project will have the UNESCO office in Beirut as its headquarters and will include an electronic aspect. The project was supposed to be officially inaugurated on March 1, 2014 for a period of three years.

On 12/3/2014 the UN sent an emergency call to conflicting parties in Syria in order to protect "the rich cultural heritage that is being destroyed in the country" by the three years of war. The statement pointed out that "World Heritage Sites (in Syria) have been seriously damaged and in some cases irreparably".

#### **5.3.4 Literature and Libraries**

Law on Freedom of Press and Libraries, issued by a Legislative Decree on 2001:

It was cancelled by Article (2) of the new information law in 2011, so the National Council of Information would become in charge of distributing publications according to Article (22) of the Law. According to Article (37), the National Council of Information grants

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/new/ar/safeguarding-syrian-cultural-heritage/international-initiatives/emergency-safeguarding-of-syria-heritage/>

permissions to publications, without the permission being affective if not endorsed by the government cabinet, as the permission request should include, as it was stated in Article (38), the name of the publication, the name of its owner, its budget and headquarters, and a recap on the publication policy and its ignition project. However, Article (39) specializes on the conditions that a permission requester, whether an ordinary person or a company, must have for a publication as long as the owner of an informational method, the proprietor of a daily publication with a portion exceeding 50%, is not a proprietor of another daily publication with a portion exceeding 49%. Article (40) specifies the conditions of transferring the permission place and the permission to others or inherits. While Article (41) is specialized on the conditions that must be available in both, the manager, in charge of the publication, and its head editor. According to Article (42), the permission is considered cancelled in case of having three years passed since its approval and the publication is still not issued. Finally, Article (43) specifies the data that should be mentioned in each issue of the periodic publications: the owner's name of the publication, the headquarters of the informational method, the name of the manager in charge and of the head editor, the editing center or the publishing management address, the issue date, the price of each copy shown in the header of the issue that is ready for sale and the publication issue times and policy.

Based upon the decree the administrative body, that is concerned with publishing materials and libraries is the Ministry of Information based in Damascus and the governors in those governorates where there are no branches of the Ministry.

#### Establishing Printing Establishments and Libraries:

The applicant should address a statement to the Ministry of Information to be granted a license for establishing a printing establishment or a library, giving needed information such as the name of the publishing houses or the library's owner, Director in –charge, its name and location .In case any of the above-mentioned information has been changed, the Ministry should be informed within five days as of the date of change.

The Director in-charge will bear all consequences of violation committed via the printing establishment, whereas owner of the printing establishment bears the financial consequences for such violations.

The owner of the printing establishment should reply any request on presenting a statement on titles of the published materials and date of publication to the concerned administrative body.

The owner of the printing establishment should deliver the concerned administrative body a copy of the publication on the same day of publishing it.

#### Provisions of Publishing the Periodicals:

Procedure for publishing periodicals is done through a license to be granted by a Resolution passed by the Prime Minister, on the basis of a proposal presented by the Minister of Culture. Applying for a new license is permissible within a period no less than a year as of the date of rejecting the previous application.



If the purpose of the application for a license is to issue a daily political newspaper, the applicant should abide themselves to the instructions specified by a Resolution passed by the Minister of Information regarding number of editions, specifications, writers, reporters, correspondents, and subscription in news agencies.

The license will be cancelled by a Resolution issued by the Prime Minister based on a proposal by the Minister of Information in the following cases:

If the published periodicals has not been issued on the regular basis within three months as of the date of granting the license.

If two thirds of regular numbers usually published by similar periodicals has not been issued within consecutive three months.

If two verdicts have been issued against the published material during a year.

If one of the persons-in-charge proved guilty of one of the two crimes stipulated in article /55/ of this decree "Whoever has contacted a foreign country and received money from the country, its representatives, or clients in return for propaganda activities for the best interest of this country or its projects via published materials, or whoever has received, directly or indirectly, money from foreign companies or institutions with the aim of carrying out propaganda activities for the best interest of this country and its projects in Syria via these published materials".

Provisions for granting licenses mentioned in this decree are not applicable to the printed materials issued by the Public Bodies, Popular Organizations, Unions, and Syndicates. It would be enough to inform the Minister about that.

Law No. 12 dated 22<sup>nd</sup> of March, 2001 on protecting rights of authors, recognizes authors rights with regard to the periodical and non-periodical Prints.

The Syrian president published Legislative Decree number /63 / of 2009 stipulating (the creation of the Syrian Company for the Distribution of Publications that would replace the Directorate of Distribution at the Unity Foundation for journalism, printing, publishing and distribution, its task is to distribute periodicals, non-periodicals and books in all Syrian governorates and outside of Syria, as well as organizing and participating in internal and external fairs specialized for publications and books, in addition to importing publications and books from outside the country and distributing them within Syria and outside of it). By this decree the Syrian Company for the Distribution of Publications became the only body authorized with the previously mentioned tasks.

On 1/5/2014 the National Media Council presented in writing to the director of the General Directorate of Customs specifying the publications distribution companies that it had used within the framework of applying the media law that came out of legislative decree number /108/ of 2011 per its instructions. Publications distribution companies are all on an equal level, no one company has more power or preference or exclusivity, and the Syrian Company for Distribution of Publications should not have any tutelage or exclusivity of the distribution of publications as in this case it would be a clear violation of the law.

### 5.3.5 Architecture and Environment

The establishment of the Syrian Architects Association (a scientific and cultural body) was done by virtue of a decision issued by the General Meeting of the Syndicate of Engineers in 2008, is considered the latest development that took place in the Syrian architecture community. This association looks after the country's architectural heritage and seeks to develop Syrian architecture and elevate its educational, technical and professional standards. It also seeks to shed light on the role of architects in the development of society in addition to working on developing the skills of Syrian architects and raise their educational, professional, technical, cultural, and material standards.

Added to mentioned, this association seeks to employ architecture for the service of society and its environmental, urban, and social texture; preserves the architectural heritage, and promote the study of architecture.

The State Ministry of Environmental Affairs participated in the commission, established for setting an encyclopaedia for green architecture which **was completed in March 2013**. In addition, the ministry participated with the Ministry of Housing and the Ministry of Electricity in setting a project for spreading knowledge and consciousness in matters of using alternative power systems and green architectural standards<sup>1</sup>. **The Syrian president issued law number 17 of 2013 stipulating the creation of a Fund for solar energy domestic water heating at the Ministry of Electricity, the Fund would provide monetary support by "50" percent of the solar water heating device's price as long as the price does not exceed "20" thousand Syrian pounds.** In a related context, the administration council of Real Estate Development Commission had agreed, earlier in 2010, on granting the final permission for two companies while the initial one was given to five companies<sup>2</sup> during a project entitled, "green architecture".

**In January 2013 the Ministry of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection ratified its decision number 747 concerning the main structure of the "Green Initiative" limited liability company for architecture consulting and green architecture, the company aims to offer engineering consultancy, design, management services, studies and contracting as well as applying green standards and clean technology in the field of green architecture and energy, and clean energy.**

### 5.3.6 Cinema, Video, and Photography

First: Private Movie Houses:

Ever since cinema has been introduced in 1908, movie houses have spread, amounting to around 120 houses in 1963. According to the Syrian cinema encyclopaedia issued in 1997, the number of cinema halls decreased to 42 and most halls were built at the end of the forties and the beginning of the fifties, which faced an eruption of building big halls. We remember that the last cinema hall founded was As-sham cinema theater in 1982.

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<sup>1</sup>Website of Discover Syria <http://www.discover-syria.com/news/12052>

<sup>2</sup>Atthawra newspaper <http://www.thawraonline.sy/index.php/economy-and-markets-list/1246-q-q>

According to statistics, in 1965, the population in Syria was 4 million and there were 140 cinema halls, while in 2010, the population reached 22 million and there were 30 cinema halls, only eight of which are provided with high technical standards. Cinema production in Syria started in 1928 with the film "the Innocent Guilty", after only one year since cinema had started in Egypt (in 1927) with the film "Layla". Even so, Syrian total production of cinema throughout a complete half of a century was about a hundred films only, while in Egypt, the number reached about a thousand and five hundred films. In the first stage that proceeded the arise of the General Institution of Cinema, the first adventurers produced only seven fictional films with infamous companies that would withdraw from cinema production directly after achieving their first film, because they entered this industry essentially to quickly accomplish large profits without a sufficient amount of money, knowledge, or necessary tools. On the other hand, the second stage which started with the foundation of cinema circle in the Ministry of Culture, then the arise of the General Institution of Cinema, was, in terms of fundamentals, the biggest curve for cinema in Syria. It was characterized with the dimensions of the public sector cinema experience and the attempts to introduce serious cinema in the face of the contagion of cinema production in the private sector, especially after the decree of having cinema distribution and importation exclusive to the General Institution of Cinema. It was also characterized with owners of cinema houses entering the field of cinema production or contributing to fund it, support it, and showing its films in the halls they owned, instead of importing new films through the institution, which was a negative position officially unannounced to the decree. Although the decree made importation exclusive to the institution, it kept direct investments in those imported films in cinema halls as an open business done by the private sector, whose production was noticeably reduced and later in the nineties, completely stopped as a result, even though, there was no law making concerned in the production exclusive to the General Institution of Cinema.

However the figure declined reaching nowadays to less than 40, with more than 25 of them are located in Damascus and Aleppo. The number of seats has amounted to 15000, with an average of less than one seat per 1000 inhabitants. According to a study carried out by the General Establishment of Cinema, the current number of those who go often to movie houses is a person for every 8 days, whereas the total revenues of the cinema halls combined has reached 41 million SYP.

The reason behind the decline in the presence of cinema traditions amongst lives of the Syrian lies in a number of factors, the most important of which are the following hindering laws:

The law on Restrictions of Import: the law was issued in 1969 by Decree No.2543 prescribing restriction of import and distribution of films to the General Establishment of Cinema, prohibiting owners of the private cinema houses from importing Arab and foreign movies. It further obliged them to exhibit the movies imported by the General Establishment of Cinema. According to the General Director of the General Establishment of Cinema who pointed out on the 7<sup>th</sup> of September, 2005:"Restriction Law has hindered the import of qualitative movies, and the body who was entitled to choose the imported movies is comprised of three persons. In this respect, it is worth mentioning that big

companies prohibit exporting movies to countries that recognize Law of Restrictions on imports. This has resulted in the decline of the number of first class movies and prevalence of second or third degree movies throughout those years until we have reached this point". The law was cancelled in 2003, enabling every distributor or owner of a cinema house to import whatever films they wish.

The General Establishment of Cinema has imposed a tax on every imported film rising to 225000 SYP for importing Indian films, 150000 SYP for Arabic-speaking films, and 125000 SYP for foreign films.

Later, the Ministry of Culture has decreased the value of the tax and imposed 50000 SYP as a tax per every film no matter of its kind.

Percentages of taxes and dues, be it on the import of accessories and equipment for modernizing cinema houses or entrance tickets have been reduced.

Issuance of Law No. 4 prescribing exemption of any equipment imported by the newly-opened cinema houses following the issuance of instructions on exemption as well as the already-established houses of cinema from dues and customs for encouraging modernization and maintenance of these halls. A five – year period of exemption has been granted.

The Ministry of Culture deducts a 10% of revenues gained by owners of the private cinema houses, besides to a commission paid to the General Establishment of Cinema.

Other types of dues and taxes are paid to other bodies such as:

The General Establishment for Advertisement

Ministry of Local Administration (fees of stamps and cleaning).

Ministry of Finance (tax on profits).

The communiqué issued by the Cabinet in 1984 stipulating expropriation every cinema house that is used for other purposes.

The General Establishment of Cinema has demanded building one cinema house in each municipality. The Minister of Tourism has consented to impose on every modern tourist complex opening a cinema house. This has been in force since 2005.

Along with the start of the uprising in Syria in 2011 and as a result of the crisis intensity, the number of halls that were still working in Damascus had become less than ten. Their owners tried to adapt to the emergency situation by changing the times when films were showing, and reducing them so that shows would be finished before seven in the evening. While before the crisis, they used to stay open until one o'clock in the morning, however, this didn't seem to work out for them. Thus, Damascus became completely empty of any cinema hall, especially after the "Cinema City" compound closed its doors in the beginning of 2013, which was considered the last cinema hall still working in the capital Damascus, according to what was mentioned in many informational methods including Al Rai, Jordanian newspaper.

According to an investigation by journalist Ahmad Hajj on the Al Iqtisadi Al Souri website published on 9/3/2014 under the title “Damascus Cinemas are Empty”, cinema theatres in Damascus have become a rest stop for every citizen waiting for bureaucratic processing in a nearby area, or homeless looking for a place to rest, cinema theatres are losing money but have to go on as more than half of them are rented, and investors are obliged to continue with their work as stated in contracts. As for cinema theatres that are not rented their owners are not able to change the business because of decrees that prevent them from doing so, while Damascus Cinema which was established in 1955 and which had been privatised in 2009 and reopened under the name “Cinema City Complex” and closed down again in 2013 due to the worsening security situation in Damascus according to a statement made by business partner Haitham Al Atassi who lives in the US. The cinema reopened in July 2014 and according to one of the complex’s employees the decision to reopen it came after the relative stability and return to everyday life in the capital.

In June 2013 the People’s Council of Syria ratified the law concerning the cancellation of support for cinema wherever mentioned in law and regulations, as law number 96 of 2002 that imposed funding support for cinema from 10% of sold box office tickets “did not achieve the desired outcome taking into consideration the lack of revenue accruing from it” in addition to complaints from cinema theatre owners regarding the financial constraints the law imposes on them in a time of great losses and less cinemagoers in the current circumstances. The law seeks to save cinemas from closing down, spare their employees from unemployment and ease the administrative burden of the measures cinema owners are obliged to make in order to pay the amount.

#### Second: The General Establishment of Cinema:

The General Establishment of Cinema was established in 1963.

Since the start of its march, the Establishment has faced many serious difficulties. Amongst of those difficulties that badly affected were the economic crisis, the shortages in the technical aspects, beside to human effect, namely, the lack of qualified cadre, let alone the sharp dispute between the Establishment and the private sector directly after its opening and initiation of its activities whether in domain of production, importing, or distribution of films. The dispute between both bodies was raised due to conflicting interests, to different tasks, and different methods of work execution, and of work administration.

The strategic objectives of the works of the General Establishment and its means of work administration were represented in three main tasks:

Creating a solid, technical, materialistic, and economic base that allows developing for film production, increasing the number of long and short movies, boosting production in a way that goes in line with the available activities and ,exploiting them in a sound and correct way.

Creating specialized cinematic cadre through delegating and qualifying personnel in the different specializations of cinema industry.

Put an end to the conflict with the private sector in the field of cinema industry for the best interest of the public sector on the basis that the private sector does not enjoy sustainability in terms of production and other cinematic domains, taking into consideration that cinema is a cultural, educational, and political activity, on the one hand, and a sound and solid economy that contributes in increasing the national income, on the other. The private sector sees into cinema as just a profitable trade, and a means of entertainment and recreation with no other ideological task.

The General Establishment of Cinema invests its infrastructure through renting its technical equipments to individual and private establishments<sup>1</sup>. In 2003, the General

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<sup>1</sup> Tariff of Renting the technical Equipment:

:Tariff of renting the technical equipment as well as the technical operations are defined as follows

A- Tariff on all technical equipment and technical operations for long films with regard to: (technical equipment, lab, sound, montage, and except for cameras) till completing the production of the first copy is 330000 SYP.

B- Tariff on all technical equipment and technical operations of short films with regard to: (technical equipment of various kinds, lab, sound, and Montage) till completing the production of the first copy is 50000 SYP.

C- Advance payments for carrying out partial works.

- An advance payment of 90000 SYP on renting cameras and its accessories for long movies and advertisements as an insurance on the camera and its accessories. The fees are to be paid in advance according to the period of renting.
- An advance payment of 100000 SYP on technical equipment such as ordinary illumination equipment (electricity, Italian-made Crane, Italian-made Shario, etc) for long films, advertisements, or series as an insurance on technical equipment. The Fees are to be paid in advance according to the period of renting and quality of the rented equipments.
- An advance payment of 150000 SYP on technical equipment such as day-light and ordinary illumination, electricity, crane punter, Shario, etc... for long films, advertisements, or series, as an insurance on the technical equipment. The fees of the technical equipment are to be paid in advance according to the period of renting and quality of the rented equipment.
- An advance payment of the work of labs of printing and developing, defined as follows:
  - 30000 SYP For long films (raw material not included) including: negative developing, positive developing, various kinds of printing, copying from cinema to video, and negative montage. As for the fees of positive raw film, is to be paid according to the need determined by the Head of Labs Dept, on condition that the negative should not be delivered before paying all due fees for the whole work with regard to various services, various kinds of production and sound, in addition to the administrative fees mentioned in item /5/. Fees should be paid after 6 months at maximum after the date of initiating the process of developing the materials at the lab. Any delay calls for a legal action.
  - 10000 SYP for short films (raw material not included) including: negative developing, positive developing, various kinds of printing, copying from cinema to video, and negative montage. As for the fees of the positive raw material, is to be paid according to the need determined by the Head of Labs Dept, on condition that the negative should not be delivered before paying all due fees for the whole work with regard various works, various kinds of production, and sound in addition to the administrative fees mentioned in item/5/. Fees should be paid after 6 months at maximum after the date of initiating the process of developing the materials at lab. Any delay calls for a legal action.
- An advance payment on sound work:

Establishment of Cinema celebrated the Diamond Jubilee (1928 – 2003) of producing the first fictional film. This celebration was held simultaneously with two other anniversaries which were; the fortieth birthday of the General Establishment of Cinema and the thirteenth period of Damascus International Cinema Festival.

The establishment has only produced, in those four decades, forty fictional films of which the biggest part was not publicly shown. This indicates the poor production of the establishment in terms of quantity, therefore, it couldn't prove its existence. since 2011 until the beginning of 2014 eleven fiction feature films were produced, in addition to more than thirty films by young directors. There was an orientation, in this unfamiliar production, towards artists and directors known to be in favour of the political authority.

In June 2014 on the occasion of marking the General Organization of Cinema's golden anniversary, the organization launched the first "Youth Cinema and Short Film" festival that screened 40 short films at the Opera House and six films produced by the organization, as well as thirty films produced as part of the "Youth Cinema Support" grants which is a project launched by the organization in 2012.

Video:

Video art in Arabic (the technology of recording moving pictures which is mostly accompanied by audio recording). This is considered a new art in the world. It started between the thirties and the forties of the last century and was late to enter the Arab world, and specifically Syria. There aren't legislations especially for video art in Syria, only those related with surveillance and granting permissions to stores that buy and sell video

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- 20000 SYP an advance payment for renting recordings, Doubling, and Mixing, be it via AVD or normal recording, ( raw material not included) on condition that fees should be paid after the completion of the work.
  - 20000 SYP an advance payment for renting equipment of Nagra, DAT, and microphones, etc... on condition that fees should be paid after the completion of the work.
  - An advance Payment on Clothes and Accessories is 100000 SYP advance payment should be paid on renting clothes and accessories. Fees should be paid based on the value of chosen clothes. Fees are to be set by a committee formed by the Directorate of Production Affairs.

**:N.B**

1. The rented technical equipments are to be returned with the presence of a technician deputized by the Establishment. In the case of renting Crane Panter with Shario, three to four technicians must be present when returned. The renter should pay the fees of the technicians.
2. The renter is responsible for any damage or loose due to misuse or storing of the equipment, the technician should report on that.
3. Upon the end of the pre-requested renting period, the renter should pay in advance the fees for the extra period, Otherwise the equipment should be returned back upon the end of the renting period.
4. Upon completion of the first copy of the film, a financial settlement of all fees of the works for the production of the film will be carried out. The renter should pay the differences in amounts due to unexpected expenditures upon completion of production resulted from wages and insurance advance.
5. In case the renter wanted to make more than one copy of his film, he should pay the value of the desired copies before copying.

tapes which the Directorate of Surveillance in the Ministry of Culture<sup>1</sup> is in charge of. The “Art Now” private initiative was established in 2005 to support contemporary art in Damascus and held the “1st Video Art Festival” in 2009 screening 125 films from 45 countries.<sup>2</sup>

Third: The Directors:

Directors should have due work approval before starting shooting the cinematic or TV work.

The title of “director”(according to classification of the Syndicate of Artists) is a pre-condition for individuals working in film or television production. Legal solutions have been presented through the so-called a temporary work permit.

Fourth: The Government Directives to Develop Legislations and Laws pertaining to Private Cinematic Production:

Based on the 10<sup>th</sup> five-year plan, it is stated that the reasons that lay behind the poor cinema production are constant increase in costs of production, lack of financing, poor cycle of the cinema production, and the non-continuation of the project of cinema city.

The State Planning Commission has set up a number of projects with the view of introducing legalized changes that facilitate the participation of the private sector in the cinema production. Amongst these are:

Providing facilities and exemptions for Arab and international film projects intended to be carried out in Syria.

Establishing a national funds for supporting cinema within the framework of Chamber of Cinema and TV Industry.

Encouraging the private banks as well as other banks to finance and invest in domain of cinema production along with provision of required and encouraging facilities to boost the participation of the private sector.

### **5.3.7 The Cultural Industries:**

The private TV drama production in Syria is considered the sole cultural production that can be classified, theoretically speaking, within the framework of the “cultural industries” due to the profitable economic dimension of this sector and not because it has its own mechanisms and regulations that allow giving it the definition and/or characteristic of the cultural industry. What draws attention is that TV drama production<sup>3</sup>, in addition to

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<sup>1</sup>Website of E-governmental initiative in the Syrian Arab Republic

<sup>2</sup> Discover Syria website 18/2/2009

<sup>3</sup> Amongst the most important cinema and TV production companies, among of which some have completely stopped and some other are still producing, are: FaizSalka films-Damascus, TahseenQawadri Company for Cinema- Damascus, Mohamad Farouk Films- Damascus, Zanolbia Films-Damascus, Al-Zozo For Cinema-Damascus, Tarke Films-Damascus, SameerAnini Films-Damascus, ZiadMawlawi Films-Damascus, Al-Ghanem for Cinema-Damascus, Syria Films-Damascus Fitna&Ighra' Films-Damascus, Al-Haramoun for Cinema production-Damascus, Hiliou Films-Damascus, Arfan&Jalek for Cinema production-Aleppo, Bahjat Al-Masri Films-Damascus, Ahmad Abu Sada Films-Damascus, Al-Naem for Cinema Production, Al-Fursan for Cinema Production-Damascus, Khaled Al-Ghazi Films-Damascus, Sham Films-Damascus, SemirAmis Films-Damascus, Kablawi&Zalata Films-Aleppo, Mohammed Al-Sardar Films- Aleppo, Taira&Akta Films- Aleppo, Masters for Production-Damascus, Al-Dawlia for Production-Damascus, NadereAttasi Films- Damascus,



Plastic art, are the sole cultural domain where the private sector plays a greater role than the public sector.

In 2010, the General Institution of Television and Radio Production was established **by the provisions of law 16 of 2010** instead of the Television Production Directorate. This is a production institution of a private feature which is run on the public sector money with the intention of protecting and supporting drama by setting a kind of positive rule, and developing laws that help work production, **is linked to the Minister of Information and enjoys a legal personality and financial and administrative independence.**

Director of TV Production Directorate at the General Establishment for Television and Broadcasting (The body in charge of drama production in the public sector with an annual budget of around 200 million SYP) has declared that the role of the Syndicate of Artists, the Committee of Cinema Industry, and the TV Production Directorate is restricted to “sponsoring the production” without intervention in marketing issues.

Currently, the General Establishment is working, through developing the Production Directorate, on building a production establishment of a private nature and with funds of the public sector to boost the production cycle in Syria.

TV production of the private companies in Syria is affiliated to the General Institution of Television and Radio Production. The latter works on legalizing the work of the private sector and exercises its role through depending on a group of sub-committees for auditing budgets related to TV works and programs, design general strategies, and issue specific laws for regulating production of the private sector.

The legal and institutional goals of the 10<sup>th</sup> five-year plan in Syria aim to encouraging provisions of cultural, cinema, and artistic investment in the framework of Law No. 10 for the year 1991.

**In relation to plastic arts, the Union of Plastic Artists replaced the Syndicate of Plastic Artists as per the Ministry of Culture’s decree number 55 of 2004 as a legal framework for plastic artists’ work that also protects their rights. For the exception that the law concerning forming the union that was detailed in 72 articles has not been activated until the date of this research. Legislative Decree number 62 of 2013 concerning “copyright and related rights” stipulates the protection of plastic artists’ work in item 7 of article 2, and: (all applied and plastic art works including calligraphy, painting, sculpture, engraving, etching, adornment, and printing on stone, fabric, wood or metal and the like).**

### **5.3.8 Public Mass Media**

The New Informational Law:

The Year 2011 noticed issuing the new informational law by the legislative decree No.108. The law included complete cancellation of the publications law, issued by the legislative decree No.50 for the year 2001, law of communicating with the public on the web, issued by the legislative decree No.26 for the year 2011, and the legislative decree No.10 for the

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Ala'a Al-Deen for Production-Damascus, Jump for Production-Damascus, Al-Sham International for Production-Damascus, and Mlakani for Production-Damascus.

year 2002 that's related to private commercial broadcast stations. In addition, the law also cancelled all principles disobeying it in the law No.68 for the year 1951.

In order for this law to be issued, the Ministry of Information should modify its interior system to what's equivalent with the new law. The law also requested issuing the decision No.654/M.W. by the government cabinet which included the executive directions for the informational law on 21/1/2012.

Structure and Privileges:

Law No.3 includes specifications for administrative parties assigned with the Law, which are: the Ministry of Information represented by the minister, the National Council of Information, and the executive bureau of the national council represented by its secretary general.

The National Council of Information "enjoys a respectable character and administrative and financial independence, as well as being connected with the government cabinet and responsible for organizing the informational sector according to the principles of this law." It also practices the following privileges:

Working on protecting freedom of expression and information and expressing opinions on all the matters related with the drawing of informational policies.

Setting the fundamentals and restrictions guaranteed for organizing the informational sector according to the principles of this law and issuing the decisions and organizational lists that are necessary for this purpose.

Suggesting and providing opinions on the legislations related to the informational sector and contributing to putting them in execution.

Setting and executing technical standards and conditions books that are connected with granting permissions especially for informational methods, as well as, having committees specialized on this purpose.

Studying permissions requests for informational methods, according to the principles of this law, and or not accepting to issue or cancel them, as well as, creating committees specialized on this purpose.

Specifying alternatives and permissions costs for informational methods, in coordination with the Ministry of Finance.

Taking the necessary procedures for the guarantee of abiding the permission conditions that are specified in this law and the organizational decisions of the council by those given permissions to.

Encouraging and organizing fair competition in the informational sector and working on preventing acts that are disturbing to the competition.

Attempt to solve disputes that occur between informational methods peacefully.

Participating in representing Syria before States and international, regional, and Arab unions and organizations on all matters related to the informational sector.

Preparing and publishing an annual report on the situation of the informational sector and issuing artificial publications, articles, and news.

Supervising the execution of training policies, improving the level of artificial capability of those working in all informational methods, and giving license to and organizing the work of informational improving and training centers along with the ones of research and analysis.

Monitor the informational performance of all informational institutions and methods and their obedience of the principles of this law.

Supervising the granting of documents that prove identity to informational workers, according to restrictions which the Council sets.

Setting the bases and mechanisms necessary for deciding on correspondents and international and Arab informational methods that desire to practice any form of information activity inside the Syrian Arab Republic.

The Council should have an execution bureau.

Primary fundamentals:

The new informational law considers informational work one of the intellectual professions as for rights, assignments and a group of primary fundamentals of which comes first, "information by all of its methods is independent, performs its message freely and it's not allowed to restrain its freedom unless according to the principles of the constitution and law."

The law also concentrates on:

Freedom of expression and other primary freedoms guaranteed in the constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic, the International Declaration of Human Rights and the related international agreements endorsed by the government of the Syrian Arab Republic.

The citizen right of acquiring information related to the public affair.

National and nationalistic traits of the Syrian community and the responsibility of distributing knowledge along with expressing people advantages and protecting national identity.

Respecting the freedom of expression as to be practiced with consciousness and responsibility.

The informational workers right of acquiring and using information in respect of the principles mentioned in this law.

Abiding to honesty, trustworthiness, precision, fairness and objectivity in transferring information.

Respecting individuals privacy, dignity, and rights and keeping them away from violation by all means necessary.

Respecting the journalistic honor charter issued by the Journalists Union.

The prohibition of individualizing any form of informational method.

#### Restrictions:

The law restrained informational methods from publishing

Any content that may badly affect national unity and security, disrespecting religions and religious beliefs or igniting sectarianism.

Any content that may provoke homicides, acts of terrorism, aggression, hatred, or racism.

News and information related to the military and armed forces, except for what is issued by them and allowed to be published.

All of which that is restricted to be published in the General Punishments Law, legislations, and all of which that courts prohibit of publishing.

All of which that badly affect that State figures.

#### Licensing:

It was stated in the Law that each person has the right of issuing informational methods regardless of their kinds.

#### Publications:

Periodic and non-periodic publications undergo licensing according to the principles of this law. The Supreme Council of Information enjoys the privilege of granting permissions and must decide, regarding the request, within 30 days of its issuing date, as well as, informing the request owner within 10 days as the request would later be endorsed by the government cabinet.

#### Audio and visual communication methods:

This undergoes licensing, according to the principles of this law, any kind of establishing or igniting any of the audio and visual communication methods by any technology.

The council issues its decision regarding the approval or rejection of the request within a period of not more than six months since the submission date of the request, covering all its attachments, which is after coordinating with the organizing commission of telecommunication sector, established by Law No.18 for the year 2010.

Audio and visual communication methods that are permitted according to the content, are classified as the following:

Audio and visual communication methods of comprehensive content including news and political programs.

Audio and visual communication methods of specialized program content which they don't cross the limits.

The above law is considered advanced compared with the legislative decree No.10 for the year 2002 which added an Article to the Law No.68 for the year 1951 which did not include private or commercial stations in the decision of acquiring the right of using air broadcasting frequencies (Radio) exclusive to the military and governmental parties.

#### Communication Methods on the Web:

The National Council of Information should issue a document of agreement to the communication method on the web within a period of fifteen days from the date of acquiring the request. Publishing restrictions should be imposed on whatever content is published in communication methods on the web, whether the communication methods are recognized or not and whether the content is edited by any of the workers in the communication method or by another person. Also, a communication method on the web should abide to preserving a copy of the content which is published in it regardless of its form and preserve the movable data which allows to verify the identities of people who are contributing to uploading the content on the web.

#### News Agencies:

The permission request for news agencies is conditioned to be submitted by a considering person and which takes the type of a company with limited responsibility or an incorporated contributed one. The National Council of Information should issue a decision on the approval or disapproval of the permission request within a period not exceeding three months from the submission date of the request. The permission does not become effective unless endorsed by the government cabinet. The Council enforces news agencies to keep a copy of the news and informational content they present to their subscribers for a period of time assigned by the government cabinet. News agencies are considered responsible for any content issued by them.

#### Informational Service Companies:

The Council grants informational service companies a document of agreement within fifteen days from the date of acquiring the request, covering the conditions (set by the Council). The companies that are agreed on should submit the contracts signed with the foreign parties and the works included in those contracts before starting to execute them. The Council abides by replying to the proclamation by a decision within three days from the submission date, so if the period was finished without a reply, it would be considered a decision by the internal approval.

#### E-informational Law Draft:

During 2012, the Ministry of Telecommunication distributed an E-informational law draft to head editors of E-newspapers inside Syria. This law considers communication on the web to be free, and its freedom is not restricted unless in the frame of law, in a way that respects the rights of individuals, societies and their properties, and the necessities of sovereignty and national security.

The Law recognizes property and creator rights, as it's imposed to any web content, the laws that are related to the protection of the vicinity and creator rights and the protection of invention, industrial, commercial and intellectual property rights.

#### General Fundamentals:

Respecting the Country supreme interests and preserving national unity and public order and behaviors.

Respecting the dignity of States and Nations, their sovereignty, people private lives and others rights.

Working with honesty, precision, trustworthiness, and objectivity in spreading data, information, news, and documents and adopting legal and fair methods of achieving them.

Adopting sources of well-known identity and maintaining their secrecy unless in cases where law states the opposite.

Respecting the national and nationalistic identity and arising Arabic towards a society of knowledge.

Reinforcing the availability of Arabic digital content and the services connected to it.

Respecting the vicinity and creator rights along with the invention, industrial, commercial, and intellectual property rights.

Ensure the right to respond and acquire the needed correction of the damaged ones.

The Ministry of Information is the administrative body that governs media activity in Syria<sup>1</sup>. By cognizing the literary and legal documents of the Ministry, we see that culture and art have been given an utmost importance and a distinctive function, be it through defining tasks of the Ministry or through the activities exercised by the Ministry to carry out these tasks.

Moreover, by reviewing bylaws related to departments of the Ministry of Information, we see that special attention has been given to the cultural domain through the following bodies:

TV Directorate → Section of Cinema Affairs → Dept. of Cinema Production

→ Dept. of Cinema Services

→ Dept. of Sound and Doubling

→ Dept. of Animated Cartoons Production

TV Directorate → Channel 1 → Section of Cultural Programs

→ Section of Cinema Programs

TV Directorate → *Channel 1* → Section of the Cultural programs

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<sup>1</sup> **Article 9:** Ministry of Information comprises of the following bodies: The Central Administration- Affiliated Directorates and Departments at Governorates and following establishments: the General Establishment of Radio and TV, Syrian Arab News Agency SANA, Al-Wihda Establishment for press, printing and publishing, Tishreen Establishment for press and publishing, the Arab Syrian Establishment for the Distribution of prints, the Arab Establishment of Advertisement, Institute of Media Studies, institute of Printing and Publishing.

The goals of the Ministry: Spreading culture among the public, reviving the Arab heritage in all literary, scientific, and artistic domains, introducing the public with the accomplishments of the human civilization in all fields, upgrading level of arts of various kinds, encouraging talents in the intellectual and innovation fields, providing media and cultural services by encouraging the scientific, literary, intellectual, and artistic production as well as encouraging production in the mentioned fields.

Broadcasting Directorate → Section of the General Program → Dept. of the Cultural Programs

Broadcasting Directorate → Section of broadcasting Production- Dept. of series Section of Music

Broadcasting Directorate → Section of Radio of Peoples Voice → Dept. of the Cultural Programs and the Organizations Program

Printed Matter:

The first press law was adopted in Syria in 1865. After Independence, a new press law No.35 for the year 1949 was adopted, which eliminated a lot of restrictions on the freedom of publishing and ownership of independent and Parties-affiliated newspapers. In the 50's, publications in Syria reached an unprecedented number, amounting to 52 various publications until the date of the Syrian-Egyptian unity in 1958.

This approach was embodied in legal texts at the Ministry of Information. Article 3 stipulated that: "the task of the Ministry of Information is to acquire the optimal usage of all media outlets to enlighten the public opinion, firmly consolidating the Arab national principles, and strengthening relations with the Arab and friendly countries alike in accordance with principles of the Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party and the policy of the government. The two basic pillars in this respect are: the Emergency law and the 8<sup>th</sup> article of the Constitution. The monopoly of the State of all media outlets continued until 2001 when a new press law was issued under the legislative decree no. 50 which entitled, for the first time in four decades, the right to establish private media outlets.

Radio Stations:

After almost a year of the issuance of permission to publications of the private domain in line with the new press law issued in 2001, the Legislative Decree No. 10 was issued on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February, 2002 . It introduced a new article to Law No. 68 for the year 1951 where private and commercial broadcasting stations were excluded from provisions that restricts the right of broadcasting to the State and the military bodies in accordance with article 1 of Law No.68, 1951. Accordingly, article 2 of the Law No.68 stipulated that:

Commercial and private radio stations that transmit music programs, songs, and commercials are excluded from the provisions of this resolution on condition that they abide by the provisions of article 8 of Law No. 68. Licenses for these broadcasting stations are granted by a resolution issued by the Prime Minister based on a proposal of the Minister of Information.

Basics, terms ,and provisions of granting licenses to commercial private radio stations are prescribed in an organizational decision issued by the Prime Minister based on a proposal of the Minister of Information. The decision prescribes also provisions and conditions under which these stations would exercise their job.

Journalists Union: (Journalists Union Law No.1, on 14.01.1990):

At the time the Journalists Union was established, there was no private press in Syria, so the Legislative Decree No 58 for the year 1974 that restricts the right of membership in

the Journalists Union to workers in only few Government Establishments remained valid. The Legislative Law issued for establishment of the Union in 1990 did not stipulate to cancel this Decree.

The General Establishment For Printing:(Legislative Decree No.15, 2008):

Article 2 stipulates that:"A general establishment of an economic feature, called the General Establishment for Printing, a body corporate, financially and administratively independent, affiliated by the Minister of Education, and based in Damascus is to be established".

Article 3 stipulates that:"the Establishment aims to:

Print the schoolbooks and distribute them amongst Establishment branches at the Governorates, beside to printing all publications of the Ministries of Education and Information". Thus, all state-run newspapers are printed at this Establishment solely, with affiliation to Ministry of Education for sake of printing which indeed has nothing to do with newspapers printing domain.

The law has exempted the Establishment from paying taxes, and granted it big financial privileges. As stated in article 9: "Technical equipment, printing machines, and other printing accessories imported by the Establishment are exempted from taxes and from paying fees, custom dues, municipality fees, statistic fees, and other fees." Thus, this means that the Establishment will enjoy a preferential privilege compared to other printing houses, enabling it to be more capable on competition and, in return, more capable on controlling the market of prints in general.

The General Establishment For Prints Distribution (The Legislative Law No. 42 for the Year 1975):

On 1/9/2014 the Ministry of Information signed a protocol of cooperation with the Islamic Broadcasting Union in Iran with the aim to establish a relationship of media collaboration and establishing the first base for a Resistance Media Union.<sup>1</sup>

### **5-3-9: Legislation for Free Lance Artists**

No special legislations are applicable in Syria with regard to free lance artists or calculating the average rates of income or taxes except for the decision No.213 on 11/1/2011 that specified the wages of artists (participating in the art works produced by the General Institution of Television and Radio Production itself or by another) and with all of their specializations (writers, directors, actors and actresses, musicians, decoration engineers, make-up, fashion designers, etc...)<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://sns.sy/sns/?path=news/read/75137>

<sup>2</sup>Website of the "Syrian Law" in 2/2/2011



## 6. Culture Financing

### 6.1 Short general overview (funding trends and procedures)

In the year 2005, the Syrian government adopted the Baath Socialist Party decision (which used to be a leading party in the State and Society before 2012) to shift from the planned economy to the market economy in supply and demand, in addition to liberalization towards the global market, and attraction of international capitals to support the Country development.

The 10<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan (2005-2010) is considered a founding period for transition to the social market economy which represents the application of the supply and demand rules in the Syrian market and liberalization of economy, along with constructing of the so-called “the social security network” to soften the negative effects of the market economy.

The State anticipated the economic restructuring, creating changes in the overall economical policies, and achieving the planned growth rate which was decided to be achieved along two consecutive plans till the year 2015.

The figures of the 10<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan, which reflects a development vision, point out to a persistent increase in the amount of public expenditure to provide the public services (education, health, culture, etc...).

The total Government Budget Appropriation of funds increased in 2009 compared with 2008 by 85 billion SYP the total Appropriation of funds reached 685 billion SYP against 600 billion SYP in 2008, i.e. a 13.3% increase. 410 billion SYP have been allocated for current expenditures and 275 billion SYP for investment expenditures, i.e. an increase of 10.81% for current and 19.56% for investment operations (USD 1 = SYP 47). The budget volume for the year 2010 reached 475 billion SYP (10 billion USD) with an increase of 7.10% compared with the budget of the year 2009. The Appropriation of funds of current expenditure increased by 4%, while the Appropriation of funds of investment expenditure increased by 19%, therefore the budget of 2010 would have become the last budget for the years of the Tenth Five – Year Plan. On the other hand, the 2011 budget reached 835 billion SYP (17.7 billion USD) with an increase of about 12% compared with the year 2010. We are witnessing an unfamiliar jump in the 2012 budget to have become the highest in the history of Syria and its total amount 1320 billion SYP which is an increase of a half a trillion Syrian pounds compared with the budget of 2011. Some of the budget was set aside for investment expenditure by 3.28% and for current expenditure by 7.71% and it included 386 billion SYP set aside for social support by 1.29% of the total budget. It provoked, with its different numbers and ratios, opposing reactions and some researchers and academics expressed their worries that the increase would be fixed through insufficiently financing (inflation) which would negatively reflect on prices. The economic advisor, Ziyad Aresh, proclaimed that " there is a part of the investment budget whose resources are from foreign pieces, so where will we get the pieces from, and what is the government betting on, if it was betting on increasing the transfers of Syrians overseas,

indicators show that they're decreasing<sup>1</sup>. Recently, the Syrian government issued the general budget of the financial year 2013 with an overall amount of 1383 SYP billion (20.0 billion USD) and an increase of 4 % compared with the year 2012.

By the end of 2013 the total general debt had reached 126% of the GDP and reliance increased on foreign borrowing especially from Iran. Law number 25 of 2013 specified the budget for 2014 the fourth year of the Syrian crisis with a slight increase from 2013 reaching to 1.4 trillion Syrian pounds. As a result of the collapse of the Syrian pound – US dollar, the 2014 budget (USD 9.26 billion), approximating 44% of the budget allocated for support spending /fuel, electricity, bread, rice, sugar/ whereas the equivalent allocation of the 2013 budget was 37%. The Syrian government announced monitoring USD 250million from the reconstruction budget, and according to the law the budget must parallel the value of expenditure allocations but it does not specify the value of imports or deficit; and with the decline of Syrian expatriates' remittances from abroad and the decline of agricultural and industrial sectors, as well as the fuel and tourism sectors that are the main sectors for the Syrian government's resources, their returns have been almost none since 2011. The State's resources at the moment are limited to taxes collected from areas controlled by the regime.<sup>2</sup> In October 2014 the Syrian government issued the decision on the 2014 budget law and the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) reported the statement made by the Minister of Finance during the Cabinet's press conference stating "the numbers of the general state budget project for 2015 have reached to 1144 billion Syrian pounds for spending an increase by 134 billion from this year, and 410 billion for investment spending that is 30 billion increase from 2014."

An official report unveiled that the inflation ratio in Syria increased by 1% in 2010 and that the majority of food basket components contributed to lifting the inflation ratio, while the contribution of advertisement and culture was discouraging to the inflation by a little ratio. In 2011, the inflation ratio increased by 1.47% to which caused by the majority of food basket components, while the contribution of cultural advertisement lowered the inflation ratio by 0.07%. The Central Bank of Syria stated that the inflation in 2012 reached 30.77% which means that it increased by 28,3% and the Central Bank response to this increase is that all of the food basket components contributed to this increase, including culture and advertisement by 0.23% and education by 0.18%.

Statistics have revealed that the rate of inflation between 2012 and 2013 reached around 90%, while it was 37% between 2011 and 2012; this inflation goes back to the major rise in prices of goods some of which price has risen by 150%.

Percentage of the Government contribution to the budget allocated for culture

Syria was considered (before the uprising in 2011) a developing country; the state is responsible of making the necessary re-structural changes to achieve comprehensive development. Therefore State expenditure on culture (especially on basic cultural

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<sup>1</sup>Ath-thawra Newspaper- 9/10/2011

<sup>2</sup> according to a number of Syrian economic websites

services and necessary infrastructure) is a major indicator of the level of the in-process culture development.

The investment plan of 2009 was set in the light of the 10<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan (2006-2010) in terms of:

The optimal employment of resources to achieve sustainable development.

Investment in the social and environmental capital.

Investment in human resources through investment in all stages of education, public health and providing appropriate housing conditions.

The total Appropriation of funds of State budget (GDB) for 2009 amounted to 685 billion SYP with a share of 2,135 K SYP to the Ministry of Culture (MOC) broken down as follows:

1,555 investment

580 current

This means that the ratio of expenditure for the MOC to the State budget in 2009 was 0.3%, i.e. similar to ratios of previous years as shown in the following table:

Ratio of expenditure on other ministries compared with the expenditure on the MOC of the State budget

<b>Ministry</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
<b>Information</b>	0.8	0.7	0.7
<b>Higher Education</b>	2.9	3.7	3.6
<b>Education</b>	5.3	6.3	6.3
<b>Health</b>	2.13	2.1	1.3
<b>Social Affairs and Labor</b>	0.08	0.11	0.2
<b>Culture</b>	0.3	0.4	0.3

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics

Despite the increase in MOC funds in comparison with the funds of the previous years due to the increased State budget, the MOC has expanded its activities by setting up activities in all governorates of the country, beyond its planned budgets, such as: (foundation of the Youth Theater Festival, launching the cultural newspaper “Shurufat”). The Ministry received, out-budget, subsidy to cover the costs of the “Youth Theatre Festival” from the prime minister. Also, the Syrian Orchestra for Arab Music was founded by creative amateurs who are not employed by the Ministry, this activity has nothing in

the budget, and the same with Aleppo Music Band (Qadry Dalal Band). Inana Band, Mary Woman Music Band, Al-Ojaily Band for Folk Arts in Raqqah, have been affiliated to the Ministry. And recently, Mahmoud Al-Ajjan Music Band in Latakia and the Arab Music Band in Hama were founded.

Knowing that foundation of these activities has been added to the budget of the Ministry (there is a small margin to receive subsidy from the prime minister for unforeseen and casual activities).

An amount of 100 million SYP has been added to MOC approbation in 2008 to cover the Ministry activities addressed for "Damascus: Capital of Arab Culture 2008". (Note: a special committee for Damascus Capital of Arab Culture named –Secretariat General- has formed reports and sent them directly to the Prime Minister, worked independently from the MOC, on organizing the activities of Damascus Capital of Arab Culture with a separate huge budget).

Also, an additional Appropriation of funds has been added in 2009 to the MOC budget to cover the activities to be held in Syria under the banner of "Alquds, Capital of Arab Culture-2009" with an amount of 50 million SYP.

It's worth mentioning here, the policy that was adopted by Damascus Opera House and which was considered then (2009) a curve in the House policies for partially or fully supporting private theater bands in the stage of musical bands later which is according to the academic background (musical play) of the House administration. However, the new policy of the House was not clear in the level of planning and strategies.

Lately we haven't been able to find clear numbers on the Ministry of Culture's allocations from the Syrian budget. Attention mostly lies in sectors of health and agriculture. During a meeting of the High Commission for Economic Planning on 23 July 2013, concerning the adoption of the state budget for 2014, the Prime Minister called on the Ministry of Culture regarding the need to take necessary measures to control spending, and the necessity of activating cultural centres in the face of conspiracy, and at the same time the Prime Minister has increasing the Ministry of Information's allocated funds in order to launch new satellite news channels and produce cinematic and dramatic works that touch on reality. The Ministry of Information was allocated in the 2014 budget with 2.22 trillion Syrian pounds from the total budget of 1.39 trillion Syrian pounds. The Ministry of Culture's investment plan for 2014 reached 337 million Syrian pounds or the equivalent of approximately 2 million US dollars.

Household expenditure on cultural goods and activities

The composition of consumer price basket done by Central Bank of Syria recently in 2009 indicates that Syrian Household expenditure on culture is 1.7% from its monthly income, making it from the least goods and services spending. Also Syrian Household spends 0.97% on education and 5% on all types of communication such like land phones, mobile, and internet.

While the food expenses come first in the Syrian Household with share 42% followed by residence rental 16% then clothes 9%.

(The total average for Syrian Household expenditure (adopted in the study) is 25,000 SYP).

It is noticeable in 2014 and after nearly four years of the political crisis of Syria that private cultural activities are almost non-existent, and official governmental cultural activity is mostly free. The rate of poverty in Syrian society has increased and there are no studies nor private or public statistics on household spending on cultural activities and products.

## **6.2 Public cultural expenditure per individual**

(the year 2009 as a model of not having statistics that are more modern)

The total Government Budget Appropriation of funds increased in 2009 an amount of 685 billion SYP.

The Ministry of Culture shares of the total Government Budget Appropriation of funds an amount of 2135 million SYP. It was distributed as following: 1555 million SYP for investment, 580 million SYP Current Account, 2135 million SYP investment and current (total Appropriation of funds).

The share of Appropriation of funds for current expenditures for the cultural centers and directorates of culture, which report to the city councils from the budget of the Ministry of Local Administration (MOLA) in 2009 reached 812,140 k SYP.

The population of Syria according to the last census in 2007 is 19 million citizens (Central Bureau of Statistics).

Making public cultural expenditure per individual 155 SYP per year (US\$ 1 = SYP 47).

## **6.3 Public cultural expenditure divided by levels of government**

Analyzing the Appropriation of funds in the draft of overall State budget in 2009 with its current and investment sides sorted by functional classification shows that major blocks of Appropriation of funds are concentrated in the collective, social, and personal services which make up to 49.7% from the total appropriations in the state budget while the appropriations for economical services up to 38.37% from the total appropriations.

In the collective, social, and personal services block the Appropriation of funds are concentrated in education, high education, and culture with 34.1% while the Appropriation of funds for social care and health make up to 10.35%.

The amount of contributions and subsidize of overall state budget in 2009 in social and cultural activities and local administrative units and Directorates of religious endowments reached SYP 17,812 million.

While the overall budget of the Ministry of Culture (investment and current) reached 2135 SYP million in the year 2009, the budget of the Ministry of Local Administration & Environment (MOLAE) in 2009 reached about 94 billion SYP, divided into about 60 billion for current budget and 33.4 billion for investment budget. The share of current expenditure for the cultural centers and Directorates of culture, which report to City Councils, in 2009 reached 812,140 k SYP.

**Table 1: Public cultural expenditure by level of government 2009**

Level of government	Total expenditure in local currency (1000 Syrian pounds)	Percentage of total expenditure
Central government, (MOC)	2135000	0.3%
Regional - Local level (expenditure of cultural centers and Directorates of culture) from the budget of MOLAE	813140	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2948140</b>	<b>0.4%</b>

Source: Detailed State budget of 2009

#### **6.4 Public cultural expenditure distribution into administrative, assets, and program costs**

Increasing the (investment) expenditure rates in the overall State budget is an important governmental tool to achieve development with or without the global crisis, as it is well known planning the budget takes long time before starting its implementation.

Since the global financial crisis has appeared in the second half of 2008, the Syrian State budget for 2009 doesn't witness new or special terms to face the global financial crisis through the total investment State expenditure terms. Although the rule states that: the expansion of the investment expenditure during crises in the interference channel used by the state in order to solve the development problems.

As the current expenditure is considered steady and well defined that repeats every year (the increment occurred in this sector is tiny as compared with the other one), the dynamic part is the investment expenditure. The government can add terms to face a particular crisis, even if the budget doesn't contain them, by increasing the expenditure on public projects in the areas in need.

**It has been noticed that the state budget of 2014 includes a slight increase in spending as opposed to 2013.**

The observer of the changes in the State budget of Syria will see a noticeable increase in the last years at various rates in the public expenditure within its current and investment sides, showed in the following table:

Development of public expenditure (State budget) from 2003 to 2007 according to the following data:

(Amounts in billion SYP)

Year	Current expenditure	Investment expenditure	Total expenditure	Annual increase rate
2003	200.7	152.8	353.5	-
2004	248.5	156.6	405.1	14.6%
2005	277	154	431	6.4%
2006(*)	300	242.94	542.9	25.9%
2007 (*)	330	258	588	8.3%

**Population and GDP growth indicators and GDP per capita (2000 – 2003)**

Description	Year 2000	Year 2001	Growth rate 2000 /2001%	Year 2003	Growth rate 2001/2002 %	Year 2003	Growth rate 2002/2003 %	Growth rate in four years %
Population (x 1000)	16320	16720	2.45	17130	2.45	17550	2.45	2.45
GDP in current prices (million SYP)	903944	954137	5.55	1015451	6.33	1052921	3.7	5.22
GDP per capita in current prices (million SYP)	55389	57066	3.02	59226	3.78	59995	1.3	2.7
GDP in fixed prices (million SYP)	903944	938678	3.84	978482	4.24	1004348	2.6	3.75
GDP per capita in fixed prices (million SYP)	55389	56141	1.35	57121	1.74	57228	0.19	1.09

Source: Ministry of Economy and Trade; Statistical Abstract of 2004

## 6.5 Distribution according to sectors

The State budget plan in the field of culture during the year 2009 aims to (lifting the cultural level of the society and improvement of the cultural centers services and taking care of culture through the TV channels and Radio stations, also preservation, excavation, archaeological search and restoration of archaeological sites, construction of Latakia Museum and finishing other museums in other governances, provision of light and sound equipments for some theater stages in the country and completing the cinema and children theater equipments at the cultural centers).

Table 2: State cultural expenditure by sector (2003-2007-2009)

(Unit: SYP 1000 (USD 1 = SYP 47))

Domain / Sub-domain	State cultural expenditure by sector			State cultural expenditure by sector			State cultural expenditure by sector			% of total
Year	2003			2007			2009			2009
Basic financial indicators	Direct expenditure current	Transfers (to other levels of government) investment	Total	Direct expenditure current	Transfers (to other levels of government) investment	Total	Direct expenditure current	Transfers (to other levels of government) investment	Total	% of MOC total
<u>MOC</u>	Level of MOC - (and its Directorates)									MOC
MOC/General Directorate (including expenditure of: Fine Arts Directorate- Heritage Directorate- Cultural Relations Directorate)	156481	120767	277248	458330	177630	635960	283275	589530	852805	%48
General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums (Museums – excavation –historical documentation)	27091	100945	128036	49393	172118	221511	65655	23200	301855	%17



Art bands and theatres	30504	17987	48491	38685	73832	112517	54035	88730	142765	%8
Higher Institute for Dramatic Art	5025	10129	15154	5507	19193	24700	10595	20800	31395	%1
Assad library	15557	32856	48213	44157	20775	64933	10595	20800	31395	%5
Medium Institute for Antiquities and Museums	747	1106	1853	725	1575	2300	1175	2209	3384	%0,2
Medium Institute for Applied Arts	1488	3285	4753	2858	4902	7558	3875	9585	13460	%0,7
Higher Institute for Music	13930	18845	32775	11589	24684	36273	14955	1801	32965	%1
The National Film Organization	87000	23000	110000	9631	110216	119847	54500	22000	76500	%4
Dar Al Assad for Culture & Arts	-	-	-	24497	33530	58027	112570	55550	168120	%9
Syrian General Commission for Book	-	-	-	-	-	-	33545	52755	86300	%14
<b>MOC total</b>	<b>322139</b>	<b>259303</b>	<b>581442</b>	<b>651527</b>	<b>662705</b>	<b>1314233</b>	<b>165704</b>	<b>719975</b>	<b>885680</b>	
<b>At the level of other ministries and their subsidiaries</b>										
Arab Advertising Organization	-	-	-	-	-	-	One billion, one hundred and fifty million SYP			%27
Television production Directorate	-	-	-	-	-	-	200 million SYP			%4
General organization of Radio and TV	-	-	-	-	-	-	One billion, three hundred million SYP			%30
<u>Ministry of Education (MOE)</u>				36921760						% of MOE total
Educational activities: School Theatre	7 million			7 million			7 million			%0,02
<u>MOLA</u>						8975 4095	60 billion	billion 33,4	94 billion	% of the MOLA total
Cultural centers and Directorates of culture									813140000	% 0,8

Source: Overall variables and basic financial indicators (Statistic and Planning directorate/Ministry of Culture)

State budget law of 2007, 2008, 2009

Central Bureau of Statistics

Press reports

The viewer of the previous table can notice, the concentration of the biggest part of the budget of the MOC under the central administration term (48%) since the Ministry

contains many directorates that are not independent financially, and are funded from the approbation of the central administration with unfixed share for specific activities, paid through the central administration accountant, such as: (Heritage Revival Directorate – the Child Culture Directorate – Copyrights Directorate – The Elderly Education and Cultural Development Directorate).

While others have fixed share paid through the central administration accountant (don't have independent funding) such as the Fine Arts Directorate which is appropriated by 10 million SYP a year to perform work of arts. The other expenditures are paid form the (central administration share):

Cultural centers abroad and abroad missions (cultural relationship) 75 million SYP.

Festivals 27 million SYP.

Central administration employee payroll 153 million SYP.

General expenditures 40 million SYP.

Also 3% from investment approbations in every ministry is allocated for training and qualifying human resources in the public sector.

We can also notice in the budget of MOE the insufficiency of the amount appropriated to school theater 7 million SYP, at the rate of half a million for each governorate. Except of that the budget of MOE ignores a funding term for educational activities like (drawing, music, cultural festivals, etc...).

In the following, we adduce the program of the cultural sector in the 11<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan (2011 – 2015) with noting that the mentioned project has not been distributed nor activated. Instead, its priorities have been changed as a result of the crisis that Syria is witnessing. However, for not having documented or constant facts, we present the following for the purpose of inference and reading.

<b>Programs of the cultural sector in the 11<sup>th</sup> FYP (2011 – 2015)</b>					<b>Unit: SYP1000</b>	
<b>Programs</b>	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total
<b>Institutional Development</b>						
<b>Legislative Development</b>						
<b>Development of Local Cultural Bureaus (centres – libraries – folk cultural institutes)</b>	1684300	1533800	1551100	1441000	717100	6827300

<b>Adult Teaching Project</b>	10000	10000	10000	10000	10000	50000
<b>Developing books and delivering them to the widest group possible</b>	36000	15000	20000	0	0	71000
<b>Developing cinema products and promoting the situation of cinema</b>	35000	35000	10000	10000	10000	100000
<b>Development of theatre</b>	275000	330000	255000	200000	200000	1260000
<b>Development of plastic art</b>	85000	270000	300000	50000	50000	755000
<b>Developing children's knowledge</b>	40000	40000	40000	40000	40000	200000

<b>Caring for the diverse civilized heritage of Syria and promoting the situation of archeology</b>	770000	750000	778000	808000	839000	3945000
<b>Program of documenting Syrian Heritage</b>	35000	35000	40000	45000	45000	200000
<b>Program of arising with the situation of museums</b>	325000	300000	318000	338000	346000	1645000
<b>Program of preserving archeological pieces/sites and restoring them</b>	770000	750000	778000	808000	893000	3945000

<b>Building capabilities</b>	5000	5000	5000	5000	5000	25000
<b>Total</b>	2940300	2988800	2996100	2464000	1871100	13233300
<b>Total in US Dollars (USD 1 = SYP 68)</b>	43377705	43952941	43663235	36235294	27516176	19460535 2351

(US Dollar Exchange rate according to the Central Bank of Syria (SYP 148) - black market (SYP 149.9) in May 2013)

with the duration period of the fifteenth five-year soon coming to an end, we haven't found sources that would show the extent of achievements in this five year plan, or at least add minor adjustments to it considering the current crisis in Syria.

## 6.6 Private sector expenditure

The cultural sponsorship by the private sector in Syria is considered a new issue; it started to appear approximately around the year 2001, in comparison to other countries which entered the world of sponsorship years ago... While the cultural institutions and art groups in the European countries in general or partly adopt the concept of "sponsorship" or the box office or the cultural work -of commercial nature- income. That is still impossible in Syria.

So the state is still in 2014 the major sponsor and caretaker of culture, which provide cultural activities requirements and funding them in Syria.

The entrance of the private Syrian sponsor in supporting cultural projects is extremely slow since the government did not present any motivation till 2009. The big local firms are not similar to their European counterparts who reached an agreement with the government and the decision makers to deduct all private support presented for public culture work from their due taxes.

This matter applies to the foreign institutions and companies that were working in Syria because the money they pay in support for culture even in other countries are deducted from their due taxes at home. Therefore the most important sponsors of culture in Syria are the foreign oil companies working in Syria (Shell Oil Company – Total S.A. – Petro Canada) or large food companies such as Nestlé Middle East, which supports cultural and civilization fields like helping in restoration ancient monuments in Syria such as Citadel of Damascus.

Shell Oil Company was allocating one million dollar yearly to support long term society development (education – health - culture).

The three foreign oil companies stopped business in Syria during the last month of 2011. As for Nestlé, a fire destroyed the company's factory in Rif-Dimashq in February 2013. The factory's management moved its office to the Four Seasons hotel in Damascus. In July of the same year the Ministry of Labour issued a decision to completely stop the company's part-time work.

Most of the Syrian private sector support for culture is limited in advertising and promoting without direct funding. This is because of facilitations and discounts provided by Arab Advertising Organization for all economic leverages. As Arab Advertising Organization wants to convert the advertising to a service to all visions of the society. They were trying to make the commercial advertising a development service to support and enhance cultural activities by giving the advertising sponsor of the cultural activity a discount on the advertising.

The facilitation of advertising sponsoring provided by Arab Advertising Organization to Al-Mahabah Festival in Latakia city is the best example of this kind of support of cultural activities which is enhanced by requesting the private companies to sponsor cultural activities in the festival.

Direct financial assistance provided by the private sector to culture may not be considered a norm (given the very special cases in which such assistance is offered) since "social responsibility" is a fresh concept in Syria and not deemed part of the of the commercial sectors culture. Thus any financial assistance was offered according to the stardom of project owner and his or her personal relations, or if that project or cultural event is sponsored by high-profile official figures. Otherwise this assistance shrinks considerably, exempt of that, the direct financial support of culture by private sector is almost absent or very humble that does not go beyond a few thousand Syrian pounds by communication companies (mobile) or some food companies (Katakit, Manufacturer of Food & Beverages Products). The best example of the limited financial support by private sector is the amount provided by Syriatel Communication Company for Jableh Cultural Festival held by Adiyat Jableh Society (only SYP 150 thousand/USD 3000).

## **6.7 Independent (civil) sector expenditure**

There is a lack in the civil organizations working in the cultural field. The existing ones lack experience and knowledge in non-governmental work concepts.

The social participation is weak in expense of the dominance of receiving without giving culture; in addition to the weak financial capabilities and lack of donation for culture therefore there are foundations that still receive support from the Ministry of Social Affairs. The ministry appropriates for every foundation an amount of SYP 25,000.

Societies in Syria benefit a legal personality, which means they can own, express and litigate using their name as stated by Article 10 of the Constitution.

The government implies terms to get an external funding applied to all societies containing an estimative authority for formal administrative references.

These terms are: the funding should be really serving society purposes, the funding must be transferred through formal banks according to the currency regulations and other in force commercial decrees; such as the funding must not come from anti-Syrian party; or be originated directly or indirectly from countries in a state of war with Syria; the funding must be pre authorized by the Ministry of Social Affairs; the requested funding amount must suit the needs of the intended project that will use it in its implementation, (Refer to paragraph 2-6). In 2012, the Syrian government distributed the new law of societies on

the participatory website with all of its financial and legal details. In 2013, the State Minister, Joseph Swaid, proclaimed that the law project of civil societies, which organizes the works of non-governmental organizations and civil society institutions and which comes in place of the former law of societies, was going to be displayed on the cooperationist website with its new formula which he considered (one of the most elegant laws of organizations and it's parallel to the most elegant laws in the world which include the issue of organizations working in the civil sector)<sup>1</sup>.

Due to the growth of consciousness on the importance of civil society organizations and further away from official institutions after the people's movement in Syria flared up, the Syrian Centre for Research and Studies published a research titled "Civil Society Organizations and Their Reality in Syria"<sup>2</sup> on 26 March 2014. The research documented more than sixty civil organizations' and their activity directed inside of Syria from outside its territories due to the non-existent security. Regarding the importance of civil organizations' work the research stated (when the Syrian Revolution broke out in 2011 most civil society organizations' participation was minimal and did not exceed the organizing phase. But with the length of the revolution and the regime's use of immoral and inhuman means, civil society organizations began coming together to meet needs and fill the void of statelessness in most Syrian regions... civil society organizations networks that would carry through society in the current period and the coming transitional period, these networks protect the nation and the citizen from getting lost and falling into chaos).

In January 2013, the Syria Advisory Center was opened. In its facebook<sup>3</sup> page description executive director of the center Mohammad Al Saman states (the idea for the "Syria Advisory Center" came to a group of involved Syria competencies in order to address the effects of the national disaster that Syria is witnessing under repressive dictatorship and to overcome the period of destruction and devastation by way of reconstruction and development projects with the efforts of civil organizations and contemporary civil society institutions). The group was defined as (the "Syria Advisory Center" is an independent professional advisory body, non-governmental, non-politically affiliated and non-profit. The center aims at organizing and activating the highest levels of Syrian labour qualifications and energy inside and outside the country within a strategic institutional framework to establish and support non-governmental organizations and civil society institutions). The center also (will have an instrumental role in efforts to establish, fund and manage civil organizations and civil society institutions in order to overcome the disastrous effects of the immense destruction and devastation that has spread out across various fields and on all levels). The center was established (temporarily in the United States, the Center's headquarters to be located in the Syrian capital Damascus and has branches in several Arab and world capitals. The center's leaders and

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.alwatan.sy/view.aspx?id=1353>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.syriasc.net>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/SyriaAdvisory?sk=page\\_map](https://www.facebook.com/SyriaAdvisory?sk=page_map)

staff will be ready to actively work in Syrian territories as soon as an adequate working environment to do so becomes available).

However, the civil cultural organizations (that were still working in Syria up until March 2014, 127 organizations in total)<sup>1</sup> suffer from the seasonality of the cultural work and the absence of a cultural strategic plan which produces new working mechanisms leading to creating new forms of communication between the masses and the organizations, in addition to the weakness of the media and advertisement which introduces these organization is leading to weakening its magnetizing for the local fund.

The Syrian civil cultural organizations are still in the phase of foundation under the absence of civil organized work comprehension on various levels like defining its tasks, councils, mission, strategic plan, attracting volunteers and ensuring financial sources.

The best formal local grant for civil organizations may be the funding from the MOC to the projects of these organizations amounted to 300k SYP ((as a support for some activity held by the civil organization and sponsored by the Ministry)).

## **6.8 Foreign agencies expenditure**

To implement the Five-Year Plan, Syria relies on expanding the channels of cooperation in development and using it to bring more of the required foreign investment to finance the development process.

The financial grants that Syria receives are associated with help, experiences and training that contribute in building the national capabilities by transferring knowledge and settling it.

United National (United Nations Development Program - UNICEF) and the European Union were the most important partners of Syria in financing cultural activities.

The European Union

The European Union is the major donor to Syria in general. The value of the expected projects for 2007-2010 was estimated 130 million Euro.

There are two major cooperation fields: economic/institutional reform and social/human development. In the cultural field, the Syrian Government benefits from the funds of the 4<sup>th</sup> Program of the European-Mediterranean Heritage for which 13.67 million Euro have been allocated. There are also small cultural projects of 17,000 Euro and a project for the youth of 200,000 Euro. Additionally, the EU has allocated a budget for many projects, such as a project to improve the employment of Palestinian refugees with 2.5 million Euro, a project to establish village woman incubator business with 400,000 Euro. The EU specified 10 million Euro to reduce the negative effects of the economic transitional process witnessed by the Syrian economy. The European Union foreign ministers council announced, in May 2011, the suspension of bilateral cooperation programs between the EU and the Syrian government which are enlisted in the frame of European mechanism

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<sup>1</sup> According to the research "Civil Society Organizations and their Reality in Syria", Syria Advisory Center

for vicinity, partnership, and the mechanism of Euro - Mediterranean partnership, in addition to the suspension of all preparations for bilateral cooperation.

On 22/4/2014, in an attempt by the European Union to loosen the sanctions imposed on Syria an agreement to allow Europeans to buy crude oil from the Opposition was made, a decision made during the meeting of the EU's foreign ministers meeting in Luxembourg.

In September 2014 the Policy Officer at the European Centre for Development Policy Management, Greta Galeazzi, published a report on the cultural sector in Syria and cultural relations with Europe as part of the preparatory cultural framework at the EU Council of Foreign Relations. The report explains the current cultural situation and reviews the most important potential opportunities and possibilities in relevant countries, with special focus on strengthening cultural relations between Europe and Syria. The report also includes a description of the general cultural policy scene in Syria offering conclusions, predictions and expectations.<sup>1</sup>

#### European Commission

The EC in Syria specifies a budget of 200,000 Euro to support and fund cultural projects through a competition to carry out cultural projects, in addition to projects to commemorate the musician Solh Al-Wadi and some architectural projects.

Also the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Program presents an annual grant varies between 16-40 thousand Euro within the frame of (the Best Project Presented by Civil Organization Competition), "Shams" society received this grant in the year 2008 with its ultimate limit 40 thousand Euros for the funding of the "Euro-Mediterranean Youth Orchestra" project in cooperation with "Syrian Organization for Family Affairs". The works of the Commission in Syria, after 2011, was concentrated on human relief, because of the difficult circumstances Syrians are living under, inside or outside in the neighboring countries. In mid 2012 the European Commission makes a return to Syria without passing through the official Syrian government portal. The EC signed three main contracts with UN agencies for a sum total of 147 million euros for the necessary relief assistance to people directly affected by the Syrian crisis inside Syria and in neighbouring countries. The EC has doubled its aid to Syria and neighbouring countries with an additional 215 million euros, including 50 million euros that will be allocated for humanitarian aid and 165 million euros for the support of long-term development through supporting civil society organizations.

#### UNICEF

The total finance allocated to activities and projects funded by the UNICEF in Syria in 2008 amounted to 17 million USD in 2008, while it was 16 million USD in 2007.

The annual cooperation plan between the UNICEF and Syria for 2009, which will be implemented with cooperation of many bodies such as the Ministries of Health, Education, Information and Culture, included the two following programs:

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The Syrian Program: which consists of the following components:

The Child Survival and Growth Program;

Good Quality Basic Education Program;

Adolescents Protection from AIDS Program;

The Child Protection Program;

The Child Rights-Related Policies, Mobilizing Support to them and Building Partnerships Program.

The Palestinian Program: which consists also of the following components:

The Child Survival and Growth Program;

Primary Education Dissemination Program;

Adolescents Growth and Participation Program;

The Child Protection Program;

Promotion, Communication and Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating Social Policy Program.

The Syrian Program budget amounts to 909,500 USD and the Palestinian Program budget (for the Palestinian refugees resident in Syria) amounts to 522,000 USD. (Both are technical assistance from the UNICEF).

UNICEF and the Syrian government signed on the annual plan for the year 2011 with an estimated budget of 15 million USD, distributed on the following five fields: child survival and growth, efficiency of primary education, teenagers protection from HIV and children protection, and the policies and advertisement for children rights. More than 50% of the budget was set aside for supporting the Ministry of Education in developing educational efficiency and adopting the model of “school is the childhood friend” as a corporation model in the Syrian educational system, which was planned to reach 5000 schools during the 11<sup>th</sup> Five – Year Plan. As well as, training educational staffs on implementing human standards to those schools and providing all the supplies needed for them for the purpose of accomplishing the principle of “education is for the elite and the elite is for all” in all of their educational activities which care about the child growth, physically and spiritually, along with keeping them away from whatever threatens their health and insurance to all those working in the schools, job opportunities within the same team.

In October 2012 the UNICEF made an agreement with the Syrian regime to work on raising the level of its aid to families by providing heating with the onset of winter, children’s clothes, and pre-fabricated classroom buildings. On 11/3/2014 UNICEF signed two strategic implementation plans with the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment and the Ministry of Water Resources for a water and environmental rehabilitation program. The Ministry of Local Administration is committed to the implementation plan through rehabilitation of the drainage system in communities with populations less than 25 thousand hosting displaced persons and contribution to promoting and support of the solid waste management sector, as well as needs

assessment and rehabilitation and repair of water and drainage systems in temporary accommodation centres and schools. Regarding the Ministry of Water Resources the implementation plan includes securing reserve drinking water resources in all governorates by installing desalination equipment and securing private drinking water wells in addition to materials to sterilize and calibrate water. The strategic plan also aims to raise the capacities of non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations in helping affected children and families in order to build good practices in the fields of personal and environmental hygiene.

In terms of working with Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries, UNICEF in collaboration with organizations and various countries play an important role in the establishment of schools and providing support to meet the needs of Syrian refugee communities. Despite all the efforts made, UNICEF announced on 16/6/2014 according to its latest statistics that (the number of refugee Syrian children in schooling has not exceeded 47% from the total refugee children population in the five neighbouring countries to Syria: Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt and Turkey).

#### United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

The cost of the projects implemented by the Funds within an annual plan of cooperation with Syria, based on 7 agreements signed with the State Planning Commission in 2009, 3 millions USD; 1.1 million of them are the contribution of the Syrian Government and 1.9 million is the contribution of the UNFPA.

The Governmental and Non-Governmental Institutional Capacity Building Project include the integration of the gender-based violence issues in the national plans and strategies; the execution time is one year.

The project to be implemented by the MOI with a budget of 115,050 USD, (41,480 USD contribution of the Syrian Government and 73,570 USD contribution of the UNFPA) aims to involve the Information Committee in the implementation of the National Program Strategy on Communication for Family Planning, Maternal Health, Reproductive Health, Population, Development, Gender, Youth, Capacity Building of the National Information (public and private), and Domestic Broadcasting and TV Stations in order to enhance the communication of population issues, to contribute to the community mobilization initiative, and to provide the necessary support to implement the annual plan of the MOI through providing equipment, supplies and support staff.

The National Youth Strategy Project to be implemented by the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs with a budget of 134,600 USD (78,600 USD contribution of the Syrian Government and 56,000 USD contribution of the UNFPA) aims at translating the Policy Summary of the Youth Research into English and printing it in both Arabic and English, editing and printing the Quantitative and Qualitative Researches, as well as the five profound studies, and conducting a training course on the Youth and Reproductive Health and training courses on the MDGs with the International Youth Chamber and theater shows with the Syrian Development Trust-SHABAB Project.

The development projects implemented by the Syrian Government with the UNDP up until 2008 amounted to 40 projects, the budget of 7 of those amounts to 10.6 million USD. The UNDP technical assistances in 2007 amounted to 2.260 million USD distributed to many projects, mainly the Empowerment and Capacity Building of Young Media-persons to achieve the MDGs.

The UNDP contributes to the budget of the foregoing projects through donations and technical assistances, in addition to the contribution of the Syrian Government and other international donors.

On 30/5/2011, the UNDP announced the suspension of a project for assistances in Syria for five years, explaining in its statement that “it decided, due to the turmoil in Syria, suspending the aids program to the period of 2012-2017,” pointing out that “the decision was taken for the purpose of guaranteeing that the new program would achieve the needs of the Syrian people.”

In 2011, the UNDP was funding, in Syria, projects with an estimated amount of 1 million USD annually and in cooperation with the government for the intention of reinforcing economic growth and renovating the judicial and administrative bodies along with controlling environment, protection from catastrophes and fighting AIDS.

Being one of the largest development bodies existing in Syria before the crisis began, the United Nations Development Program works with affected communities by providing relief and reconstruction of its development assets, revival and protection. The United Nations Development Program also supports host communities in countries neighbouring to Syria. The development program focuses on the developmental crisis that will have a long-term impact on the horizons and future development of Syria.

#### UNRWA

This is a commission associated with the UN that works on relieving and hiring Palestinian refugees in the Middle East by funding from the European Union. UNRWA has executed a project with time-period of four years and which started in 2006. The project aimed to increase the possibility of employing Palestinian refugees in Syria through artificial education and employment guiding. The project started with two periods which had been prepared especially in the fields of mechatronics and graphic design. The project budget reached 2.5 million €.

The UNRWA has also executed the project of children musical centers in cooperation with the directorate of Arab music institutes and Bdakhli musical institute which is non-governmental located in Holland. This project is considered a creative method in reinforcing cultural education for children and supporting their personal growth. The program, which remained for three years, includes a comprehensive training on four musical instruments; lute, flute, drums, and Zither . In 2004, the first children center for music was inaugurated in the Yarmouk camp in Damascus. Graduates of those schools usually play their notes in events of high importance locally and internationally.

According to UNRWA’s statement published on its website on 2/9/2014 on the status of education: (in Syria, only 42 of the 118 schools affiliated with UNRWA are still operating,

some of these schools are working in three consecutive terms wherein the UNRWA also holds semesters of study in 36 substitute buildings.

#### JICA – Japanese Institution

JICA provides technical donations (instruments and equipment to theaters and halls of cultural centers) continuously depending on the needs of such institutions. JICA, also, organizes technical donations from Japanese organizations to the Syrian cultural sector; for example, the giant industrial Japanese institution, “Mitsubishi”, which specify part of its profits to support cultural activities, provided Dar Al Assad (the Opera) with a technical assistance and presented brass and wind musical instruments –double basses and high quality Musical instruments that serve the technical artistic infrastructure of Dar Al Assad. They, also, presented a financial assistance of 400,000 USD.

In 2011, Damascus University in collaboration with the Japanese Agency JICA held a training course for twenty-five trainees titled “Leader Information Officers to Promote E-government” within the framework of an agreement signed between the two parties that includes a number of training courses designed for personnel capacity building in information technology sections responsible development management, activation and overseeing information technology systems and governmental organizations.

#### Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

The Swiss support to culture amounts to around 190,000 Swiss Francs. It was presented by the Swiss Agency for Development to the Syrian MOC, especially for the field of antiquities. The Swiss side pledged to finance many projects to rehabilitate many paths for tourists in many historical cities in Samaan Citadel Zone in Aleppo governorate.

This project comes within the framework of a cultural agreement between the two countries, caring for mutual cooperation in the field of maintaining the Syrian architectural heritage.

#### Agha Khan network:

This is a group of international secular private agencies that work to improve the opportunities and conditions for people living in specific regions of the developing world. It includes a group of institutions of which Agha Khan Institution for culture concentrates on reactivating local communities in the Islamic world in architectural, social, cultural, and economic aspects. In 2002, Agha Khan network signed the agreement of cooperation for development with the government of the Syrian Arab Republic and worked later to prequalify a bunch of important archaeological buildings along with renovating three citadels.

The Network has activities in the field of education and early childhood, the most important of which is to achieve a data book for kindergarten teachers trainers which is a mutual project that was first operated in October 2008. The Network expressed its desire in cooperating with the ministry on the subject of training on implementing the data book and publishing it, as well as the possibility of relying on the ministry in printing the training data book which consists of seven pocket books after being issued by the ministry in the first half of November 2012.

The last we were updated on news from the Agha Network in Syria was regarding the continuation of providing funding in the form of microloans up until 14/8/2014. In February 2014 the Network honoured the Republic's Mufti and the Minister of National Reconciliation Affairs (for its efforts in accelerating the national reconciliation process).

#### Drusus Institution:

On the level of institutions sponsoring projects and institutions, Drusus institution did not renew, in September 2011, its contract with Syria Trust for Development in supporting the project of "interactive theater at public schools", which resulted in the project being stopped. The project had first been launched in 2009 with a partnership between both Syria Trust for Development, represented by Rawafid Project and the Ministry of Education, and Drusus Institution<sup>1</sup>. The duration of the project was two years and it was planned to be stretched for another three years before Drusus declared its intention in "postponing" the project due to the turmoil happening in Syria. The real reasons standing behind the decision were that the project was directly bonded with Syria Trust for Development, which had been founded and supervised by Asmaa Al Assad, the wife of the president of the current Syrian regime.

However, Drusus has still continued working inside Syria by supporting the project of "Ar-riyad Ad-damija" which was launched by the society of "Afaaq Arrooh for disabled women and the mothers of disabled children"<sup>2</sup>. The project, which was launched in 2011, aims to achieve equal opportunities for disabled children aged between 3 – 6 years old to join kindergartens with their relatives.

On 11/11/2013 director of media and public relations of the Ar-riyad Ad-damija Bassam Al Qadi resigned from the project without giving reason.

#### Friedrich Ebert Foundation:

A non-profit organization committed to social democratic values established in 1925. The organization supports building civil society and public institutions through its projects in more than 100 countries. Despite not having an official presence in Syria in the form of a representing office in Damascus, as in the rest of Middle Eastern capitals, the foundation works with specific partners in Syria. Throughout 2013 and 2014 the foundation held two workshops on civil society and strategic planning in Lebanon and Turkey, and a workshop on project design in addition to two workshops in management skills and team building. The five workshops targeted nearly 100 young Syrian activists residing in or outside of Syria, made up of twenty-one groups four of which received support from the foundation for completing their projects, and three projects received support from international organizations after completing the workshops organized by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

#### Foreign Cultural centres:

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<sup>1</sup>A funding institution located in Switzerland, conformed to having individuals capable of improving their lives, in addition to supporting talents and helping to create appropriate conditions that help people bear this responsibility.

<sup>2</sup>A Syrian development society, founded in 2005 with a declaration number 5522

Foreign cultural centers were considered an important source for funding independent and youth cultural activists and artists in Syria, however, those centers shut their doors and stopped all of their activities as a result of the turmoil in Syria, (as we've mentioned before) while a few remained funding activities of Syrian youth outside Syria such as the British Council.

Regionally and on the level of non-governmental funding institutions, an announcement was made regarding some programs which were especially for supporting Arab artists generally (particularly Syrians) in the time of transformations that some Arab states are witnessing and here we refer to two main examples:

Al Mawrid Cultural Institution<sup>1</sup>:

It announced shortly after revolutions had started “an exceptional program for productive grants”. It was said , according to Al Mawrid’s statement on its website, “responding to the Arab people movement demanding freedom and justice and as an assurance on the role of art as a political and social engine and a speaker for the revolution, Al Mawrid Cultural Institution launched an exceptional program to support producing creative works in all artistic and literary fields that reflect the initiative of Arab elites to express about popular uprisings and revolutions which the Arab region is currently witnessing.”

132 students from 14 Arab countries applied to the program and the number of artists who received the grants was 13, of which no one was from Syria. However, a number of Syrian artists (5 artists) were able to get various productive grants from Al Mawrid during the two periods of normal grants that the institution periodically announced during both years, 2011 and 2012.

In 2011, Al Mawrid Cultural Institution launched a program entitled “Abbarah” to support independent cultural institutions during the period of democratic transformation. The program intends to support the institutional structure of the cultural groups and make it more rigid and stable in pursuit of having independent cultural institutions play a major role in building democracy, in addition to their primary role in providing cultural and artistic services to a wide range of sectors in the society.

Two Syrian institutions received the program support: “Ettijahat. Independent Culture” and “Titano”.

**In 2013 six Syrian artists received productive scholarships from Al Mawred Al Thaqafy, and three Syrian artists received productive scholarships through the first cycle in 2014 from Al Mawred Al Thaqafy, in various artistic fields.**

The Arab Chamber of Culture and Art – Afaaq<sup>2</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup>A regional non-profit institution that intends to support art creativity in the Arab world and to encourage cultural exchange inside the Arab region and with developed countries.

<sup>2</sup>An independent institution, founded in 2007, that funds individuals and institutions working in the different fields of art, as well as, working on easing exchange, cooperation and research in the art field in the Arab region and the world.

During the years, 2011 and 2012, the Arab Chamber of Culture and Art launched a program with the name “Afaaq Express” and as the name reveals, it’s specialized in supporting artists in different Arab countries who have been negatively affected by what’s happening and lost all sources of money to become in desperate need of emergency financial aids to complete their cultural and artistic projects. A lot of Arab artists benefited from the program are from many different Arab countries, while in Syria six artists received the grant to complete their artistic projects. **Fourteen Syrian artists benefited from Afaaq scholarships during 2013 and also six Syrian artists up until the end of September 2014 in various artistic and cultural fields.**

Noticeably, the contents of artistic activities whose Syrian owners received artistic grants **in 2011-2012**, are not necessarily directly related to the concept of revolution that Syria witnessed and still hadn’t been announced at the date of preparing this report. **Subsequent grants were awarded to artists with different political leanings some of which were blatantly pro-Syrian Revolution.**

## 7. Cultural institutions and new partnerships

### 7.1 Re-allocation of public responsibilities

The State in Syria is considered **until now** the authority in-power of developing cultural work mechanisms and mainly planning its policies, the State performs that through its FYP's and what it includes of strategies and orientations.

Former FYP's kept their view to the cultural activities as a sector of consuming services to be funded by the general budget without considering profitability or any added value that may enhance economic growth rates. This made the cultural activity and its policy subject to the government work since the private sector and civil society organizations are not considered partners in planning the cultural policies. However, the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP planed its strategies based on a new vision in order to raise the cultural level through involving the private sector and encouraging and supporting the non-governmental cultural work and giving space for the civil community organizations to contribute to planning and executing the cultural policies.

This new vision has been reflected through a number of new projects and new institutions that use relatively new methods and mechanisms, the most apparent are: Syria Trust for Development, Makan Society and **Na7na Organization**.

Syria Trust for Development-STD:

1. Established in 2007 as a non-profit non-government developmental institution in Syria, (it is legally registered as a private association at the Ministry of Social Affaire and Labor in accordance with the associations law of the year 1958, it aims to take over development projects in three domains; education, rural development, culture, and heritage). This Trust works independently and in association with the government, the private sector, and international organizations in projects that have cultural and developmental dimensions.

(STD Board of Trustees is chaired by Mrs. Asma Al-Assad, as a citizen. The Board major responsibility is to periodically review and evaluate the STD objectives, activities and strategic performance to ensure fulfilling and executing its goals, management responsibilities are assigned to the executive management team.)

2. These organizations receive help and support from the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Local Municipalities and the Institutes concerned of cultural matter in addition to the margin of direct benefiting of the foreign funding and the international partnerships and that because of the privilege of the kind high level sponsorship it is enjoying, also it is not adopting the same management structure like the official culture institutes with regard to the working mechanism and governmental subordination, according to new management and organization structure which make it bypass a lot of obstacles and contribute in work success, (since the STD staff salaries are comparably higher than the salaries of those working with the Government).

3- The organizational and regulatory frame of the Secretariat of "Damascus Capital of Arab Culture 2008" was very remarkable. It enabled the Secretariat to overcome



administrative and procedural obstacles which often hinder the working mechanisms in official cultural institutions. Although the Secretariat was directly affiliated to the Council of Ministers and Ministry of Culture, it had financial and legal autonomy which ensured flexible working mechanisms and decision making. This was the major cause to achieve rewarding and fast results, which encouraged foreign cultural centers and donor organizations to support it. (Refer to paragraph 2-2 - Damascus Capital of Arab Culture 2008)

The Secretariat enjoyed freedom of choosing its staff through contracts that grant them bigger salaries than those of government employees (the government applies the regulations of the Labor Law and Employment Office to the salaries and employment). This enabled it to attract many expertise, names and technical qualifications.

## **7.2 Status/role and development of major cultural institutions**

Legal Development of the Cultural Institutions:

In late 2000, the Syrian government adopted a universal program for administrative, organizational and legislative reform, in order to develop and modernize the performance of the official institutions (Development and Modernization Project) through applying an ambitious and gradual strategy that aims to achieve economic and social reform, and introducing the social market economy.

On the cultural level, this program reconsidered reviewing the work of certain institutions, developing their performance, and reconstructing them in addition to training and qualifying the staff through ongoing courses in fields such as languages, computer, management, and other disciplines.

Moreover, the regulations governing the activities of major official cultural institutions were amended to help achieve the desired goals of cultural development (this process normally work through the issuance of presidential decrees and their implementation directives which clarify the legal and legislative framework needed to develop the working mechanisms in the institutions covered by these decrees, and clarify the suggested change). It also would give the official institutions more freedom to start new partnerships with civil and private sector institutions.

But despite of all these decrees that aimed to supporting and enhancing the cultural work through opening new horizons for it, in addition to restructuring certain official institutions while creating others that enjoy financial and administrative autonomy, and despite the fact that the cooperation with the private and civil sectors has been improved, observers believe that these laws have not been enforced in a way that might improve the cultural work environment. This is because of bureaucracy, lack of motives, traditional work methods, and the lack of managements with the ability to improve and develop the overall cultural activities in harmony with the ongoing regulatory and organizational changes. The weakness and incompleteness of official cultural institutions appeared evidently after the events started taking place in Syria, as they were only an echo of the political authority and were not able to deal with the cultural dimension of the uprising besides through the vision of the ruling regime.

In Syria's last cabinet formation, the "Ministry of Administrative Development" was introduced after which Presidential Decree 281 of 2014 was issued concerning setting the goals and tasks of the new ministry<sup>1</sup>. Its first article stated (the Ministry of Administrative Development aims to organize and develop the performance of public office and administration, improve its services to citizens and fight administrative corruption through modernization governing laws and legislations, institutional development, qualification of human resources and use of information technologies). The ministry's goals were set by Article 2 of the decree as (setting an integrated strategy for administrative development and growth – review of internal systems of government agencies – setting frameworks, models, rehabilitation programs, and human resources – proposing legislative and procedural amendments to enable necessary management development...). The first item of article 3 of the Presidential Decree stated the following (By decision from the competent minister or director general in each ministry or agency or province or public institution the Administrative Development Unit shall replace the current administrative development directorates and these units are directly accountable to the minister or governor or director general of the relevant bodies, the Units are also technically responsible to the Ministry of Administrative Development and shall determine its structure based on decisions made by the Ministry of Administrative Development). Therefore the Ministry of Culture and its bodies accountable to it will be incorporated and targeted within stipulated administrative development.

In an interview about the cultural situations, during 6<sup>th</sup> Amrit Festival for culture and arts in Tartous, Minister of Culture, Dr. Riad Naasan Agha said: "the MOC employees are professionals who have nothing to do with culture and their job is to prepare a good environment for talented people. They don't have to give lectures about Gorky, yet they have high education". He pointed out that, for six months, he had been "looking for a director for the Arab Cultural Center in Paris, but in vain! The same thing happened with Madrid and Bonn centers due to the lack of qualifications especially trust. This is a big problem and it is common in all ministries, which is the lack of qualifications".

The observer can notice that intellectuals and creators are far from public and tend not to cooperate with the existing institutions for many reasons such as weak coordination and low salaries and cash rewards. This is the main reason behind the drop in the cultural activities supervised by the government parties.

Despite the foregoing, Syrian cultural observers can notice that, after 2000, culture in Syria tends to benefit from administrative and legal changes which, if adequately enforced, would be able to achieve development and modernization objectives.

Impact of Administrative and Legal Development Program on the MOC Structure:

In the first decade of the twenty first century, the MOC organizational structure has significantly changed and many affiliated institutions have been restructured by means of a series of laws and decrees that give cultural institutions more freedom in action and decision making.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://parliament.sy/forms/uploads/laws/Decree/2014/mm281\\_2014.htm](http://parliament.sy/forms/uploads/laws/Decree/2014/mm281_2014.htm)

The Syrian General Organization of Book has replaced the Directorate of Authorship and Translation by virtue of Law 8 dated 19/2/2006.

Dar al-Assad for Culture and Arts and whose name became later, Damascus Opera House, created by Legislative Decree No.19 dated 07.05.2003, was turned into a public organization under Law 54 of 2006 (Creating of public organization called Dar Al-Assad for Culture and Arts with a legal personality, and administrative and financial independence).

Law No.12 was issued in the year 2001 to protect intellectual property (rights of creator and artistic and cultural works on the Syria soil). **Legislative Decree number 62 of 2013 stipulating the application of the law concerning “protection of intellectual property and related rights”.**

Working on changing the Directorate of Theatre and Music and Directorate of Museum and Antiquities to public organizations with administrative and financial independence to reduce the red-tape and bureaucracy and consolidate institutional performance. This hasn't been done as of **September 2014 (the date of completing this research)**

Working on amendments of laws concerning the General Organization of Cinema with the scope of renewal of its work mechanism and the work of Cinemas:

Decree (549 of 2000) allowing film import by anyone, repealed the old decree restrict movie import to the General Organization of Cinema.

Law (4 of 2001) exempts the movie theaters seeking renewal from customs duties and income and local administration taxes for five years.

Decree (2 of 2003) includes new customs duties exemptions and extension of the exemptions for eight years instead of five.

Law 69 of 2002 reduced the cinema support tax to 10% instead of 15%. **Decision number 16 of 2013 cancelled cinema support.**

Decree 61 of 2004 cancelled the nightclubs duty plied to movie theaters.

Allow the owners of old movie theaters to reconstruct their premises provided the renewal is no less than 30% of seats before demolition (Prime Minister letter No. 6064/1 of 2005).

Reduce the theaters advertising fees by 50% (Prime Minister Memorandum No. 6064/1 of 2005).

**Legislative Decree number 118 issued on 22/9/2011 stipulates waiving current and future cinemas from customs fees, income tax and fees of local government for five years in order to make it easier to receive imported equipment to modernize and develop cinema theatres. By effect the Minister of Culture issued decision 460 that included the executive list of the Legislative Decree.**

**Project for support of youth cinema launched by the General Organization for Cinema until now has been going for three seasons and has supported the production of 65 short films. The first Syrian Youth Film Festival was held in 2014.**

The MOC has adopted the development of performance mechanism of the Directorate of Child Culture and organizing child artistic competitions and children festivals, and through supporting other child-oriented projects based on diversified partnerships, through the MOC institutions in cooperation with civil organizations. An example of this is Adham Ismail Center for Plastic Arts, which has launched big child-art initiatives, in cooperation with child-oriented civil organizations or international organizations (UNECIF, etc...). One of these initiatives was the 25-m<sup>2</sup> Civilizations Mural, in cooperation between Adham Ismail Center, Syrian Arab Red Crescent, and UNICEF, in April 2009, to provide psychological support to Iraqi children in Damascus and help them integrate with their peers. Another example is the child museum culture project of 2008, a partnership between General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums, Educational Directorate, and the civil Rainbow Association.

Deploying Syrian cultural centers abroad, by creating both Madrid and Tehran Cultural Centers for Syrian cultural diffusion and Arabic language teaching.

The revival of Modern Art Museum in 2009 by allocating 250 million SYP in the MOC investment budget; implementing such projects as the Cinematographic City project, the Traditional Village in Rural Damascus and Dar Al-She'er [verses Home] through allocating necessary implementation budgets.

MOC adopted a collaborative and supportive strategy with non-governmental culture-oriented institutions. MOC undertook further opening toward partnership with the private sector and receiving financial support from this sector to cover some MOC activities, which was not usual before 2000.

In 2013 the Ministry of Culture had laid out a plan to publicize and spread the culture of reading in all regions and villages in Syrian provinces.

According to what was said by the Minister of Culture during a meeting with the Budget and Accounting Commission at the Syrian people's Council on 9/11/2013: (the Ministry is currently working on preparing a project for a law to protect cultural heritage in Syria and to promote archaeological sites, which also includes transforming the General Directorate for Antiquities and Museums into a public commission for archaeological heritage which aims to give licenses for opening new private museums).

Administrative Development of the Ministry of Local Administration:

The three-year EU-funded project "Modernization of Municipal Administration", which started in 2005 and targeted the councils of six major cities, is an important crossway at the Municipal Administration work level.

(Decentralization, local decision support center, institutional reform, financial resources management, property management, local development, center and twinning, urban Planning and informal settlement, old Damascus, geographic information system, public-private partnership, traffic and public transport, solid waste management, domestic agenda - gender, the vision and contacts). It ended on 10/6/2010 simultaneously with launching the program of non-centralism and local development, which is considered the second stage of the municipal administration renovation program with a budget of 22.5

million € and it remains for four years. **The last we updated on the decentralization and local development project was a workshop on introducing the programme held in the beginning of 2011.** On 24/8/2011, the legislative decree No.107 was issued which included the local administration law.

Administrative Development at the Ministry of Information level:

We should refer here to pre-2011, the starting date of the uprising and when the New Informational Law was issued as a result of the many changes that happened in the field of information. Laws that were issued prior to 2011 are:

In recent years, a series of laws has been issued to modernize the Ministry work mechanisms:

The Syrian Publication Act, issued by Legislative Decree No.50 for the year 2001, opened the door for the private media work, allowing private sector to work in the media and publish newspapers and magazines, after so many years of State monopoly. The MOI has licensed more than 200 private publications in different disciplines (political for The National Progressive Front parties, economic, cultural, social, health, scientific, advertising, etc...).

Decree No.10 for the year 2002 allowed the establishment of private radio stations, but restricted the scope of these stations to entertainment programs and songs, without political and news bulletins, which are still restricted to the government media. Accordingly, the MOI has authorized 13 private commercial radio stations. In a way that's against the decree that allows them to be established, these informational methods have worked, since the start of the uprising, on broadcasting news and political analysis programs.

Emergence of the first daily private political newspapers and magazines (that are in line with official trends) for example: Al-Watan and Baladna both daily newspapers, which publish official political news and focus on other sectors like: localities - economy, culture, and art. These newspapers operate in accordance with the free zone system.

Establishment and launching of 4 private Syrian satellite channels that broadcast from Syria (the Free Zone), these satellite stations licenses are limited to free zone, because the Publication Act does not allow private satellite channels, therefore, they broadcast in free zones (abroad) as a temporary settlement.

Premier letter No.6064/1 for the year 2005 reduced the commission of the Arab Establishment for Advertising from 50,000 SYP to 25,000 SYP.

Emergence of big private advertising and media groups like UG which turned to a stock company with a capital of 300 million SYP. It releases 10 publications on information, advertising, in addition to the road advertisement agency.

Support the Syrian drama-industry through establishing government Channel called Drama in 2009.

Emergence of Syrian social and news websites and private news websites. The Publication Act didn't not cover electronic media.

Turning the Syrian Arab News Agency "SANA" to a government TV news agency

Working on turning the Arab Advertisement Organization to a publicity institution.

Establishing the Syrian company for publication distribution, instead of the current one, within Al-Wehda institution.

The Issuance of the New Information Law 2011

Issued by Decree No.108, on 28/8/2011, which cancelled in the second article of 'law of communication on web' and Law No.68 for the year 1951 which was especially for the official system of television and radio, in addition to the publications law which was issued by legislative decree No.50 for the year 2001 and also legislative decree No.10 for the year 2002 related to private commercial stations.

1. The Supreme Council of Information works on finding syndicates for all informational professions that are joined in a well-organized way by workers in this field. Also, the Law considered in its eighth article that the profession of information is an intellectual profession as to rights and duties.

2. The legislative decree No.20 was issued for the year 2011, which stated that the Arab Institution of Advertisement should be the only party supervising advertising activities in Syria. It also stated that one of the Institution tasks is to set restrictions and standards that organize advertisement activities which contribute to improving the level of advertisement performance and quality, and the practice of surveillance over an informational product in all advertising and informational methods. One of the Institution tasks as well, is granting permissions and licenses necessary to practice informational work. The decree also stated that private parties should be represented by two members only in the Institution administration council.

3. In 2011, the government issued the E-informational law under the name, "Law of Communication with Public on the Web".

4. The National Council of Information has granted since it was founded in November 2011 and to present (according to a statement by the president) permissions to more than twenty publications, some of which are the daily social political cultural newspaper "Ash-sham" (whose owner is Amid Al Khouli who had worked before as the head editor of "Ath-thawra" Syrian newspaper), the weekly comprehensive newspaper "Al Manbar Al Hur", and two magazines one of which is a law-oriented magazine named "Awrakit Al Mahakim", and the other is a cultural and medical oriented magazine named "Al Kamal Attobbi".

5. The president of the National Council of Information considered that some private stations acted outside their natural work mechanism during the crisis in Syria and there is an article in the new law that states, "All the permitted informational methods should modify their situation in a way that's compatible with the new law, so to transform them, for instance, into comprehensive stations or other specializations. The time-period assigned is from 15/10/2011 to 15/10/2012. In case they were not modified, then they would be considered to be breaking the law. By this way, all stations can continue with what they have started or choose another specialization and abide to it."

Development through informal culture-oriented organizations:

- The establishment of the Syrian Publishers Association under Law 14 for the year 2005, issued by the president on 26/5/2005, was an important development of book printing in Syria.

On 27/6/2007, the country leadership of the Baath Party endorsed the election results and the appointment of representatives of ministries and Arab Writers Association. Thereby, the Executive Office was duly created.

- Emergence of private cultural projects and institutions through civil and individual initiatives trying to support the cultural work. An example is Mustafa Ali's (Al-Makan Society for Arts), which is a private, non-political and non-profit society; aimed to secure cultural and artistic exchange between East and West and support art projects, Echo Musical Culture, Serious Music Audiences Society, Music on the Road and Shams (orchestra concert organizer), to the deployment of public-music culture.

- Organizing some art meetings (sculpture, drawing) by some figures. An example is Fares al-Hilou who organized Mashta Al-Hilou Gathering to collect donations and funding in order to attract local and immigrant artists, in 2007, with a vision to establish an outdoor sculpture museum, and a plastic art museum in Mashta Al-Hilou in 2008.

- Financial contribution of some commercial and social figures through educational and artistic prizes. Those contributions are often for social prestige like Dr. Nabil Tomeh creativity prize, and (Nizar Kabbani Competition) introduced in 2008 by the Union of Arab Writers. All these contributions are within the frame of personal publicity.

- Syrian paintings have entered the international auctions through the emergence of a new type of private art galleries (Ayyam gallery).

- Appearance of several attempts to revive private movie theaters, for example, Damascus Touristic Cinema Project (Cinema City), with two halls: 280 and 180 seats.

### **7.3. Emerging of new partnerships or collaboration**

The 10<sup>th</sup> FYP plan has set a future vision setting a group of targets encouraging the formal sector to build different kinds of partnerships, of which the most important:

Linking between culture and other social sectors.

Openness to and interaction with other cultures, while preserving the Syrian culture identity.

The 2009-2010 strategy carried a set of objectives to develop cultural work and cultural activity, we notice the concentration on:

Developing cultural product and considering culture an investment sector.

Contact foreign cultural and artistic institutions and benefiting from their activities.

Although the projects of the 10<sup>th</sup> Five – Year Plan have not been achieved, the 11<sup>th</sup> Five – Year Plan comes with totally different projects:

1. Arising the cultural level of citizens and adopting the cultural development with its broad conception towards “culture for all”.
2. Preserving the diverse civilized heritage and promoting the reality of archaeology.
3. Developing the cultural product and publicizing knowledge and culture amongst citizens.
4. Facilitating the approach towards sources of knowledge and culture and reducing their expenses for the individual and the society.

Forms of Partnerships and Support:

Support for cultural activities and concerned ministries projects:

Locally and prior to 2011, the financial support for a joint project between government and private sector would be received on the basis of an agreement concluded between MOC and the private partner. The agreement defines clearly the type of support (financial, advertising assistance, prizes, or technical support) and the provision mechanism. Supports, particularly financial, cannot be received without the Minister approval (after informing the Legal Affairs Director). The MOC supervises the private sector support, according to the revenues of the beneficiary directorate. The private donor may not interfere in the cultural work they support.

Examples of private support to MOC:

Syriatel payment for the National Symphony Orchestra travel expenses to Germany.

Areeba payment for the expenses of the Syrian orchestra for Arab music concert.

Carlton Hotel in Idleb bears the accommodation expenses of the participants in the first theatrical youth festival.

Examples of support from non-Syrian companies:

Contribution of SHELL Company to the printing costs of a quality book for the most important collections of Damascus National Museum.

Contribution of the poet Abdul Aziz Al-Babtain institution (from Kuwait) to pay half the costs of the late poet Nizar Qabbani Symposium celebration.

Emerging joint projects and mechanisms of international support:

Remarkable increase in the number of joint cultural projects was noticeable during the years between 2000-2011, in cooperation with international organization and institutions (UNDP – UNICEF – UNISCO – EC, etc...).

Cultural partnerships between Syria and foreign organizations and countries are often done according to official cultural agreements, usually for renewable 2 years. Implementation is followed up by the MOC Cultural Relations Directorate, or by the related ministry under the supervision of Cultural Administration Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Agreements for projects with the Syrian government were concluded through the State Planning Commission (formerly) in collaboration with the donor institution or country.



They take the form of special memorandums signed in line with the international protocols.

International cultural joint projects are classified into two types:

Projects responding to Syrian needs (project objectives are drawn by the Syrian foundation in collaboration with the donor), for example:

“Syria Times newspaper support” project was signed between Syria and UNDP for the years 2007-2011 in the framework of through the 7<sup>th</sup> Country Program. The State Planning Commission signed the document of this project that will be implemented in collaboration between the Ministry of Information and UNDP. The budget of this project (completion time: 24 months) is 400,000 USD paid by the Ministry of Information and UNDP equally.

The project budget is 400,000 USD shared equally between UNDP and the Ministry of Information. Implementation duration: 24 months.

Ongoing projects (mapped out by donor) with Syrian participation (according to relevant cultural agreements with the donor after approval by the competent minister)

For example, Syrian participation in "Museum without Borders", this organization has an innovative and creative program which aims to establish cross-border huge museum, (e-portal) to enter the world of art, architecture, antiquities, and museums. Syria joined (Cross-Border Museum) project along with twenty European, North African, and middle eastern countries. **In collaboration with the Museums Without Borders organization and the General Directorate for Antiquities and Museums, the General Secretariat for the Damascus Capital of Arab Culture 2008 event launched the project “Discover Islamic Art” online.**

## **8. Support to creativity and participation**

### **8.1 Direct and indirect support to artists**

Direct State support for artists in Syria is evident through a group of laws and regulations, and the Ministry of Culture takes over administrative supervision of its implementation:

Article 31 of chapter 4 of the Syrian constitution stipulates: "The State supports scientific research with all of its requirements and guarantees the freedom of literature, cultural, artistic, and scientific creativity and provides the necessary tools for achieving it. The State also offers every kind of help to advance science and art as well as encouraging artistic and scientific inventions along with creative talents and efficiencies and protect their results."

MOC supported by the late President Hafez Al-Assad worked on issuing the Artists Law No.32 for the year 1973, which was issued to help artists by giving them job nature compensations and ranks in file higher than non-artists degree holders.

By virtue of a presidential decree, the Unified Labor Law of 1982 stipulates that artists may be exceptionally appointed at State institutions. Article 16 of Part 3 of Chapter 5 of this Law stipulates: "By virtue of a decree, and without observing the provisions stipulated in chapter 4, artists, athletes, and union leaders may be appointed in any of the five categories of State jobs".

The Ministry of Finance (MOF) grants the artists within the tax exemptions section in which persons who practice writing, composition, painting, or sculpture are exempted from the (tax on profits income). However producers of films, TV shows, commercials and the like, and distributors of imported and local art production shall be subject to the real profits tax.

One of the objectives of the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP is to promote the cultural standards of all citizens. For that purpose special terms were dedicated to the sponsoring of artists

Sponsoring talents in the fields of theatrical arts, music, and ballet and promoting all types of artistic creativity.

Promote the art movement; plastic arts, music, and theatre and develop all aspects of dimensions of the local art scene.

Copyrights Law 12 for the year 2001 was issued in Syria **followed by Legislative Decree 62 of 2013** to protect intellectual, literary, and artistic production: novels, poems, plays, books, software, databases, films, music works, dance designs, oil paintings, photographs, sculptures, architectural works, geographic maps, and other creative works. This Law also protects the creator rights, such as the rights of performers (actors and musicians), records producers, radio and TV broadcasters, and other.

#### **8.1.1 Artists special funds**

Most artists in Syria are affiliated to vocational and trade organizations (Artists Union, Fine Artists Association, Arab Writers Union, Journalists Association, etc...).

The emergence of associations was basically associated with the higher level of education and the increasing number of university graduates of all specialties at the beginning of the current century. The Syrian constitution endorsed special provisions related to unions work stressing the right of every citizen to take part in the country political, economic, social, and cultural life. The constitution underlines the right of the public to create a union, social or vocational organizations ,or production or services associations. The laws established the framework of these organizations, set their purpose and organized their relations (article 45, part 2, chapter 1 of the Constitution).

These organizations benefit from the affiliation fees of their members, in addition to other fees that go to their funds, and from the revenues generated from investing some of their facilities. This system allows members to enjoy some financial advantages (pension) but there is an ongoing heated debate about the type of support provided to members. This debate often spreads to newspaper and magazine, which illustrates its public impact.

The support provided by these unions and associations for each of their members is as follows:

#### Journalists Association

Job nature allowance (400 Syrian pounds) for journalists employed by public institutions.

Telephone line (landline).

50% discount on air tickets issued by Syrian Air.

Coverage by Journalists Pension Law.

Easy loans.

#### Plastic Artists Association

50% discount on air tickets issued by Syrian Air.

A decision project that stipulates the founding of plastic artists' pension fund was issued by the Syrian government's cabinet in 15/11/2011.

Artists Union (actors, musicians and directors)

Pension funds.

Health insurance (relative coverage).

50% discount on air tickets issued by Syrian Air.

Telephone line (landline).

Colleagues funds.

#### Arab Writers Union

Pension funds.

50% discount on air tickets issued by Syrian Air.

Telephone line (landline).

### 8.1.2 Grants, awards, scholarships

With the exception of production grants given by the organizers of "Damascus, the Capital of Arab Culture Celebration" in 2008 to some young artists to support their artistic product (for one time only) in specific fields; writing, theater, film, and cartoons, artists virtually receive no grants from the State or any sector. **The youth scholarships programme that were provided by the General Organization for Cinema since 2012 is still ongoing until the date of completing this research.**

In addition, the Country has no resident colleges program, and willing artists work on building up their experience via:

#### Scholarships

Graduates of the Faculty of Fine Arts, High Institute for Theatrical Arts, High Institute for Music and High Institute for Ballet, following the example of their fellow graduates from all Syrian universities, benefit from the grant system offered by the Ministry of Higher Education "MOHE" (students are dispatched overseas to complete their education in delegations formed according to the requirements of government ministries). Artists are often dispatched for the benefit of the ministries of Culture, Education, Information and Higher Education. The dispatched persons are treated as State employees and are given monthly allowance for the duration of their scholarship and they are required to work at the relevant ministry for a period equalling double the time of the scholarship period.

Students of community colleges affiliated to MOC also benefit from the agreements signed by MOC, which enables them to exchange expertise via short-term scholarships during their study or benefit from some longer scholarships (usually lasting several months). Graduates of the High Institute for Theatrical Arts, High Institute for Music, and High Institute for Ballet often benefit from the second type (study in Avignon, France in some technical theatrical specialties).

Syrian artists also benefit from the grants offered by some foreign cultural centers: French Cultural Center, British Council, Instituto Cervantes, and Goethe-Institute.

#### Prizes and competitions

Over the past few years an increasing number of awards competitions in the fields of literature, music, and plastic arts have been organized, such as Damascus Fair Poster - **which was discontinued since the beginning of the popular revolutionary movement** - and Lottery Design Competition organized annually by the Public Institution for Fairs, the International Caricature Competition organized by Al-Baath Newspaper and the Musicians Competition organized by the MOC's Arab Institute for Music. **Until the date of completing this research, their activity is still ongoing but within specific political directives wherein the Ministry of Culture announced in 2014 the competition for Arabic calligraphy that constitutes writing the first verse of the official national anthem "Defenders of the realm peace be on you/our proud spirits will not be subdued".**

And in addition to some literary competitions organized by MOC and some directorates of culture on governorate level, there are other irregular awards competitions organized by private agencies and institutions and international oil companies **that were** operating

in Syria. It is noted that **in the years before 2011** the number of children competitions has increased in the fields of painting, story, and music.

On 19/1/2012, legislative decree No.11 for the year 2012 was issued, which stipulates the foundation of two prizes in the field of literature and art for intellectuals, artists and the creative as these two prizes, which are an amount of money and a golden medal, shall be given annually and allowed neither to be shared nor granted to the dead.

1. An art prize in one of the following specializations “music, theatre, cinema, plastic and practical arts, visual communications”.
2. A literature prize in one of the following specializations “poetry, novel, short story, play, children literature”.
3. A prize in artistic and literature criticism, linguistic and literature study, translation and human sciences.

#### Medals

Artists in various fields (acting, literature, writing, thought, and painting) are often honored by awarding them presidential orders of merit in recognition of their works and accomplishments meant to serve art.

#### Honoring seminars

Several honoring seminars have been organized over the past few years in most governorates to honor men of letters, thinkers and prominent artists.

### **8.1.3 Support to professional artists associations, unions, and networks**

There is no state-sponsored grants awarding program on full-time art employment system in the country and there is no official or union approach to establish such system to look after art and artists.

However, efforts are currently underway at the Syrian Trust for Development (Rawafed Program) to create an patron for cultural programs launched by artists and art managers to train, support, and assist them for a limited period to be able later on to continue their art and cultural programs independently.

## **8.2 Audiences and participation**

Figures provided by the Central Bureau for Statistics (Prime Ministry), in addition to the figures provided by MOC indicate the changes that took place during the past few years concerning the county's cultural activities in terms o type and number of cultural institutions, number of cultural activities and participation rates.

The most distinguishing feature of Syria cultural activities (official, civil, and even activities conducted by foreign cultural centers) is that they are concentrated in the major cities (Damascus, Aleppo, Latakia, and Homs), and apart from of the activities conducted by the Syrian Trust for Development in the relatively remote governorates and cities, there is hardly any cultural event worth mentioning.

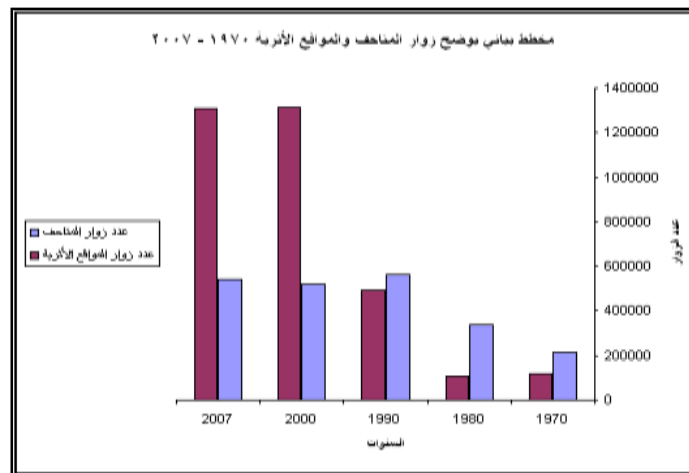
### 8.2.1 Trends and figures

1. Statistical data of activities strongly supported by the government

#### Number of visitors of museums and archaeological sites:

(Source: Central Bureau for Statistics "CBS")

Year	Number of visitors to museums	Number of visitors to archaeological sites	Total
2000	517645	1313729	<b>1831374</b>
2001	421868	898279	<b>1320147</b>
2002	341467	640520	<b>981987</b>
2003	306301	650834	<b>957135</b>
2004	474661	1169375	<b>1644036</b>
2005	549025	1212361	<b>1761386</b>
2006	505336	1119930	<b>1625266</b>



**Chart showing the number of museums and archaeological sites visitors 1970-2007**

In the absence of any official statistics we have to follow small pieces of news to find out the current state of tourism, museums and archaeological sites in Syria. The Syrian Minister of Tourism stated in front of the People's Council on 19/3/2014 that tourism has fell down by 98% as well as touristic investments as a result of what the country is currently going through; and the value of direct and indirect damages to the tourism

sector reached to 330 billion Syrian pounds, a rate of 25 billion pounds a month. The General Directorate for Antiquities and Museums published a detailed report<sup>1</sup> on the damages to museums and archaeological sites in Syria since the beginning of the crisis in 2011 until the end of September 2014, the number of damaged archaeological sites according to the report has reached (501) sites with various damages with recognition by the Directorate that some sites that have been damaged could not be documented due to the ongoing war in the site's region.

**Number of art activities staged at the Opera House (Dar Al-Assad for Culture and Arts) from 7 May to 31December 2008 (Source: Opera House – MOC, CBS)**

<b>Type of activity</b>	<b>Total number</b>
Theater	<b>74</b>
Theater-dancing + dancing activities	<b>58</b>
Solo	<b>42</b>
Classical and Arab orchestra and chamber music	<b>138</b>
Film festivals and screenings	<b>16 festivals / 382 films</b>
Seminars, conferences and lectures.	<b>24</b>
Singing performances	<b>92</b>
Fairs	<b>21</b>
Total number of performances	<b>771</b>
Total number of nights	<b>671</b>
<b>Total number of audience</b>	<b>704564</b>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=177&id=1440>

**Number of theaters and plays shown 2000-2007**

Year	No. of Audience	No. Of performing days	No. of Plays	No. of theaters
2001	78000	586	29	5
2002	54265	398	27	4
2003	54265	398	27	4
2004	63000	315	21	4
2005	30000	150	14	6
2006	111000	555	37	5
2007	75807	342	41	8

**Activity of cultural centers 2003-2007**

Type of Activity	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Cultural Activity					
Lectures & Seminars	6962	8069	8608	1386	10567
Authors Seminars	2361	2472	2506	3492	2660
Hearing Sessions	2980	3373	3642	3838	3742
Movie Shows	1267	1092	1472	1366	1336
Television Shows	5886	6798	6709	5890	6119
Social Activity					
Meetings	4040	4525	4882	5075	5972
Trips	99	117	160	133	158
Exhibitions	801	772	745	442	602
Performances	385	503	761	773	1009
Parties & Festivals	660	765	753	740	1645



No. of Books Readers	990431	1077628	1042821	1251780	1183716
Adults	681663	749010	707694	786422	837873
Children	308768	328618	335127	465358	345843
No. of newspapers and magazines readers	262090	303248	278161	636324	251175

**Overall variables and main indicators of MOC (source: MOC–Directorate of Statistics)**

Material indicators	Unit	Year 2000	Year 2001	Year 2002	Year 2003	Year 2004	Year 2006	Year 2007
Cultural centers	Center	320	348	370	396	330	421	438
Cultural centers' seats	Seat	23664	23664	-	-	-	29891	28898
Cinemas	Cinema	48	48	48	42	42	42	-
Cinema seats	Seat	25300	25300	25300	25300	26500	26500	-
Theaters	Theatre	2	2	3	5	5	5	5
Theater seats	Seat	24043	24043	27043	1350	-	1350	1350
Cultural prints	Title	124	124	133	115	150	172	111
	Copy	85280	100020	219100	230000	250000	175521	182500
Literacy classes	Class	4540	3788	5213	3099	2844	3628	55407
Literacy enrollees	Person	84536	67743	96834	62360	58630	60138	108328

### Students and graduates of high and intermediate institutes – 2008

Institute	Graduates			Students			Number of Institutes
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
The high institutes							
Theatrical Art	11	7	18	102	160	262	1
Music	16	6	22	84	29	113	1
Training Institutes & department specialization							
Applied Art	5	17	22	59	87	146	1
Ruins and Museums	6	28	34	52	76	128	1

### Students, university graduates & academic staff, classified by sex, university & faculty 2007/2008

Faculty / University		Students		Freshmen		Graduates		Academic Staff		
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Architectural Engineering	Damascus	514	665	10	5	163	106	82	48	38
	Aleppo	480	407	10	101	66	53	30	30	39
	Teshreen	239	265	3	51	30	45	29	30	30
	Al Baath	261	259	48	61	30	40	39	26	26
Fine Arts	Damascus	360	517	59	113	65	93	66	25	25
	Aleppo	125	177	71	60	-	-	-	-	-
	As-sweida	29	28	29	28	-	-	-	-	-
Music	Al Baath	141	73	21	22	11	11	6	2	2

The vision of the tenth project for the cultural sector was “Considering the cultural project as an investment in human resources and civilized heritage, and employ it to support the other service and production sectors for the purpose of preparing the national economy and society, and building the Syrian people to prepare them for the requirements of the

next stage. It also considered the cultural activity as a primary component of the ones of human rights and freedoms of expression, and enabling citizens, in general, and cultural ones, in particular, in the fields of development and creativity for the cause of establishing a society with a very high level of cultural consciousness that's characterized with creativity."

Eradication of illiteracy: the illiteracy ratio of the group aged 15 years old and older decreased from 19% in 2005 to 14% in 2010.

According to the regional report Education for All completed by UNESCO's regional office completed in 2014 (about 3 million Syrian children inside and outside the country do not attend school, and the rate of destroyed or damaged schools or schools that have turned into shelters of have been occupied by armed groups or forces is 20%). This report was a reflection of the political crisis and war that Syria is going through and therefore ahead of us is an unprecedented illiteracy rate in Syria society.

Cultural centers and forums: the number of cultural centers in 2005 reached 423 to become 510 later in 2010 which is an increase with 87 centers, although the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP had indicated achieving 73 centers only. Also, the number of cultural centers outside the country has increased to reach 5 after the opening of a centre in Yemen. In addition, cultural centers have been supplied with internet forums with an average of 10 annually in the years of the Plan.

On 17/2/2013 in an interview with the official Syrian newspaper Tishrin, the Minister of Culture stated that the Ministry of Culture has set up cultural centres at the disposal of the Ministry of National Reconciliation Affairs.

Folk cultural institutes: an increase, from 75 institutes in 2005 to 115 institutes in 2010. The Ministry has also worked on modifying the programs of folk cultural institutes to connect them with the needs of the labor market according to the kind and nature of the governorate or district and to encourage traditional industries and the works of ceramics and pottery that adopt statues and sculptures of Syrian archaeological instinct according to districts.

Theatrical plays, cinema, and children theatre: some indicators related to theatre and cinema during the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP: although the number of theaters had remained five until the year 2010, the number of theatrical plays and audiences increased by a good ratio and it reached its zenith in 2008 in the event of Damascus, the Capital of Arab Culture.

Books, publications, and public libraries: the most important indicator related to books and public libraries is "publications of the Ministry of Culture" during the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP: the number of open-air exhibitions increased from 10 in 2006 to 16 in 2010 and titles of publications increased from 172 to 244 titles, while the number of copies had a quantum leap as the number decreased from 1,775,521 in 2006 to 404,500 in 2010. What's worth observing is that the number of readers of Al-Assad Library had an unstable condition of increase and decrease and reached the bottom in the year 2008.

Archaeology and museums:

- Museums: the number of museums has increased during the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP by two to become 28 museums. Also, the number of visitors increased from 548,966 in 2005 to 811,765 at the end of 2010.
- Archaeological sites: the number of archaeological sites, those of incomes, has increased during the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP by three to become 28 archaeological sites. Also, the number of visitors increased from 1212361 in 2005 to become 2025779 at the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP. Also, the number of archaeological sites discovered reached 5: Tel Ash'irat, Tel Mabtouh, Tel Katana, Der Marian and Tel AL Hariri.
- Workers in the archaeological fields: the number of workers in the archaeological fields increased from 1,536 in the year 2005 to 1,933 at the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP.
- Expeditions: the number of expeditions that work in the field of drilling and restoration reached 123 in 2005 and the number increased to be 138 at the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP.
- Incomes of archaeology and museums: the incomes of archaeological sites and museums reached 85,520,630 SYP in 2005 and the number increased during the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP to become 193,669,090 SYP in 2010.

During the past four years there have not been any reliable statistics and studies with regard to the number of cultural centres and public cultural academies that are still offering their services; neither are there reliable studies in relation to theatre activity and foreign book fairs. The only reliable document regarding antiquities and museums is the report completed by the General Directorate for Antiquities and Museums which confirms 501 museums and archaeological sites damaged as a result of the ongoing war in Syria.

## 2. Data of activities not strongly supported by the government

The issuance of new daily, weekly and monthly private prints recently (after the passing of the Press Law, which officially endorsed the private information sector) did not increase or decrease the number of newspaper readers except in very limited margins since the same reader only replaced one newspaper with another.

In 2005 Ath-Thawra Newspaper published the data of the Public Establishment for the Distribution of Printed Material:

Number of official newspapers sold:

- Tishrin Daily: 21259 copies
- Al-Thawra Daily: 33233 copies
- Al-Baath Daily: 6700 copies

On 11/2/2007, Tishrin Daily published the results of a survey conducted by 10 of its editors that included around 800 samples from all social categories:

- Regular newspaper readers: 39%
- Irregular newspaper readers: 61%

Al-Thawra Daily came in the first position in terms of percentage of daily newspaper readers with 15%, while Tishrin came second with 14% and Al-Baath third with 10%.

Despite the abundance of (cultural and information) websites in Syria, there are no accurate statistics about the number of readers, bearing in mind that the number of internet subscribers in the Syria reached 844.000 via dial-up application while the number of ADSL broad band subscribers reached 13.955 by the end of the first half of 2009 according to the figures provided by the Syrian Telecommunications Establishment.

The number of internet users in Syria is estimated to be 10.8% of the total population according the latest statistics, which indicates that the number of beneficiaries of this service are very little and are from a specific social category.

According to the International Union of Telecommunication, the number of people who were using internet in Syria in 2010 reached 4,595,900 which is 20.70% of the total population, while in 2012, the percentage reached 22%.

In 2012 the rate reached 22%. According to the report made by IPSOS for the first quarter of 2013, the number of internet users in Syria aged above 15 reached 2,736,715 users. In 2014, Syria was listed number 17 in the Arab world and 185 internationally when it comes to internet speed.

### 3 Rate of participation in popular cultural activities

Pre-2011, there were around 56 festivals staged in Syria, and usually each city or governorate organizes its own festival. There are no statistics that reflect the number of masses participation in those festivals, but the Syrian public actively takes part in popular festivals such as Al Mahaba Festival in Latakia, which is a culture, art, and sport festival launched at first through official sponsorship and then by Latakia Governorate. This event is one of the biggest festivals in the country and it attracts wide range of people, in addition to Marmarita Annual carnival which also attracts a large audience. Assindian Cultural Festival in Almlaja village in Tartous whose first period was in 1996 and the fourteenth and last period (because of the crisis) in 2011. The festival had hosted important cultural and artistic figures throughout its consecutive periods.

Street performances are not a key part of Syrian culture and are often organized by the foreign cultural centers. The audience of these shows is normally the persons who follow the activities of these centers, some pedestrians and the everyday theater lovers.

Street music performances on the other hand has a large audience such as "Music on the Road Program" staged by SADA Foundation in cooperation with Damascus Governorate, and "Damascus Nights", which is a blend of music and singing shows performed by local musicians and bands first launched in the summer of 2009 and staged at the main squares of the city of Damascus on Fridays.

The saying that a good cultural activity attracts good audience applies on Syria since the number of people attending these festivals increases gradually by the continuation and variety of these festivals and their suitability to the taste of young people in particular. This fact was confirmed by the "Damascus Capital of Arab Culture" celebration since it attracted a large audience, particularly young people.

The size and appeal of advertisement about cultural activities also plays a part in attracting more people.

The "Cultural Diaries" Project, which is a monthly publication issued in Arabic and English (around 5000 copies distributed in Damascus for free) that covers all official and private cultural activities, was launched in the beginning of 2008 through an initiative from a number of artists and journalists supported by MOC and a number of European organizations (Euro-Med), SIDA and the EU, and local foundations, such as MAS. This program contributed considerably in expanding the popular base that follows the cultural activities staged in Damascus. It's worth to mention that all previous activities have stopped along with the start of the uprising, while cultural activities have gone down to those of the official institutions and within small areas that are not witnessing a political movement.

### **8.2.2 Policies and programs**

Most of the Country cultural activities are subsidized by the state. The prices of cinema, theatre, and museum tickets and public library subscriptions are symbolic and the State promotes book reading by very generous pricing policy and sometimes books are distributed with newspapers for free (the monthly free book distributed by the Syrian Book Agency in cooperation with Al-Baath Daily).

Students of the Faculty of Fine Arts and art community colleges are granted free entry to museums and students of the High Institute for Theatrical Arts, High Institute for Music, and High Institute for Ballet are granted a 50% discount on the prices of the second class tickets to the Opera House.

MOC seeks to establish cultural centers in all urban and rural areas in all governorates and also build internet symposiums in these centers to spread the IT culture.

In addition, the State seeks to eradicate illiteracy and is establishing a directorate for adult literacy and cultural development at MOC, the key organization in charge of fighting illiteracy, alongside the Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MSAL), Ministry of Agriculture, and State Planning Commission, in addition to a number of popular organizations such as General Union for Woman, Revolutionary Youth Union, and other. These organizations seek to implement literacy plans and attach more importance to adult literacy, particularly in areas with high illiteracy rates.

The illiteracy rate in Syria is 14.2% of the population (aged 15 and older) according to CBS figures published in 2007. The figures show that illiteracy is higher amongst females compared to males and is also higher in rural areas compared to urban areas.

Statistics shows that illiteracy rates in Syria dropped from 19% to 14.2% in 2007 and this drop was translated in reality by announcing the governorates of Qunaitra, Swaida and Tartous illiteracy free.

Literacy classes 2003-2007

## Enrollees and graduates by sex and governorate

Years	Number of Classes	Enrollees				Graduates			
		Basic Stage		Continuation Stage		Basic Stage		Continuation Stage	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2003	7626	2061	22400	6211	8441	2608	37103	13493	3094
2004	9220	2035	14755	8932	10057	2551	23146	20009	2844
2005	9825	2248	12366	9516	12644	1404	20549	16127	2356
2006	12498	1573	18111	8269	14965	1601	28609	14963	3628
2007	22501	2206	40568	12705	23702	1747	60589	22290	5547
By Governorates									
Damascus	178	89	331	499	365	104	788	1235	87
Rural Damascus	1605	109	2436	491	2013	135	2860	645	336
Aleppo	1140	268	5240	572	1302	210	14095	2017	890
Homs	1860	93	3910	77	1895	35	4496	126	416
Hama	1354	111	1032	66	1353	46	3069	209	319
Latakia	785	-	-	-	1034	-	-	-	107
Der Ezzour	1018	241	6286	1107	1139	280	7241	1314	617
Idleb	1599	126	3431	571	1755	102	3492	669	347
Hasaka	6330	136	7869	692	6886	63	8572	799	1081
Raqqa	1235	803	3718	2411	1144	668	8933	6025	482
Swaida	359	49	412	46	406	7	657	43	61
Daraa	4121	29	3852	52	3578	-	3405	20	361
Tartous	309	-	301	-	306	-	309	-	42
Qunaitra	608	152	1750	200	526	97	2672	450	243
Political Administration	-	-	-	5921	-	-	-	8738	158

Origin: Central Biro for Statistics

According to the same source, illiteracy among the same age group reached 31.5% in 2012.

A number of programs and initiatives had been launched until 2011 by civil associations in cooperation with government institutions to spread culture, particularly amongst children.

A national campaign to promote book trading was launched this year by the Funds for Integrated Rural Development of Syria "FIRDOS" in cooperation with Syrian Commission for Family Affairs SCFA in 2009.

In addition the Children Literature Development Program (Euro-Med Cultural Program) adopted by the Anna Linda Foundation was launched in cooperation with a number of civil society organizations in order to develop children literature.

This program began in 2007 and in the first two years of its existence in Syria it represented the Social Forum in Damascus, Arabic Language Academy, and RAINBOW

Association ,and later on the Antiquities Association, ATLAS Publishing House, and Smart Fingers House for Children Books joined in.

The program supported nine children libraries related to the Ministry of Culture, four of them in Damascus and the other five in Homs, Aleppo, Hama, Jableh, and Quara. Five reading clubs were established in Damascus, Latakia, Aleppo, Homs, and Jableh, within the frame of reading activities.

Also the program activities included holding a competition “The Syrian Child Book” which aim to the selection of the best author for children, and prepared a research about “the child image in the Syrian book”, and it included also special workshops for the evaluation of “Kids Stories”, technical and training courses for each of the Kids Painters, Kids Authors, and Librarians.

Throughout **the past three years**: UNICEF has continued supporting Syrian children (educationally, culturally, and socially) in their temporary residences inside and outside Syria. Also, Agha Khan Institution has offered three developmental initiatives to be executed in the temporary residential centers in Damascus. The first initiative “return to school” works on connecting children with schools through providing their needs, while the second one “my veiled story” concentrates on connecting children with books and the third initiative is “adhesion of temporary-residence children with children of hosting communities.”

**In 2013, the Syrian Secretariat for Development in collaboration with the governorate of Damascus launched the campaign “Education is My Right” that targets youth school dropouts and students living in shelters. But previous initiatives have not been effective in solving the problem, as UNICEF noted in a report published on 13/12/2013 that 2.2 million children inside Syria have been cut off from education compared to half a million Syrian children in refugee camps, most of whom are in their second or third year without schooling.**

### **8.3 Arts and cultural education**

#### **8.3.1 Arts education**

Art high education institutes and colleges are divided between the ministries of Higher Education, Culture, and Education as follows:

MOHE: The Faculty of Fine Arts in Damascus, Aleppo, and Swaida, the Faculty of Antiquities and Museums in Damascus, the Faculty of Architecture in Damascus, Aleppo, Latakia, and Homs; and the faculty of music in Homs.

MOC: High Institute for Theatrical Arts, High Institute for Music, High Institute for Ballet, Intermediate Institute for Antiquities and Museums and Technical Institute for Applied Arts (all located in Damascus).

MOE: The Institute for Plastic and Applied Arts Education and Institute for Music Education (exist in all governorates except Rural Damascus).



Important institutes without an academic certificate (it's considered, to those studying, a preparation level for entering contests of university faculties and high institutes).

The oldest faculty of art in Syria dates back to 1960 ( The Faculty of Fine Arts in Damascus). In 2006 and 2007 two other faculties of fine arts were established in Aleppo and Swaida respectively.

The establishment of an SMOD branch in Damascus in the late 1990s was one of the pioneering private programs in the country in the field of arts teaching outside official institutions. This step went further by issuing the law pertaining to the organization of Syrian universities in 2006, which allowed the creation of private universities and the establishment of art departments (painting, graphic design, fashion design, internal design, and architecture) in most private universities in Rural Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, and Raqqa.

The usage of modern technologies in education

The usage of computer in education first began in 1991 as planned by MOE to introduce IT to pre-university education (elementary and secondary stages).

Schools in the secondary and basic stages education (2<sup>nd</sup> cycle) are all provided with computer rooms. Each room is equipped with ten computers, few printers, and all other accessories needed.

In addition, a project to integrate technology into education (World Links Syria) was jointly launched by MOE and the Syrian Trust for Development, which is a vocational development project for teachers to provide them with technology qualification that will be in return passed to their students. Teachers teach students on how to search for sources of information other than school books. This project covered around 60 teachers in 14 schools and these teachers are interacting with more than 5500 students.

A number of IT culture promotion and awareness programs were also launched in the country, most notably the National IT Promotion Program, the International Computer Driving License Program, training programs organized by the Syrian Computer Society and private training centers and institutes and the Integrated Rural Development Program-mobile training.

The number of computers used in schools increased substantially reaching 12.800 by the end of 2002 and many specialized training programs are conducted, in addition to introducing computer to universities and the launching of SHERN (Syrian Higher Education and Research Network) Project.

A national initiative for remote university education was also launched in Syria in May 2002, which gave birth to the Syrian Virtual University (public university).

In the year 2011, the Ministry of Education ordered first-group and second-group teachers to abide by buying laptops for which conditioned loans were granted by the Ministry.

**It is worth noting that the issuance of Legislative Decree no. 6 of 2014 stipulating the creation of a general commission concerned with e-schooling in Syria as a legal person**

with financial and administrative independence, based in Damascus and accountable to the Minister of Education. The school would provide electronic distance learning with all requirements and education levels from the first grade until high school. The Decree was ratified in a People's Council session on 13/10/2014.

Extracurricular cultural programs (outside school)

Many extracurricular programs are offered by MOC to children during the summer break via its cultural centers and children summer clubs (offering language, painting and cultural competitions) are created and many fine and applied arts centers offer various art training courses (painting, sculpture, Islamic calligraphy and pottery), some of these centers sponsor talented children all year, kids also learn playing many types of musical instruments in musical institutes related to the ministry of culture and the youth organization/Al Assad Institutes.

### **8.3.2 Culture in education**

The Ministry of Education in the Syrian Arab Republic cared for developing the art-music curriculum for primary and secondary school levels. In 2010, the curriculum was put into experiment in some schools and later it was publicized on the other schools in the following year.

MOE is currently dedicating special attention to develop the art subjects and work in underway to finalize a special curriculum for painting and music for the basic and secondary stages. This curriculum is currently on trial at some schools and if proven valid it will be part of the curricula of every Syrian school by the beginning of 2010.

As for theatre, the Interactive Theatre Program is one of the most prominent initiatives aimed at integrating culture into education. This project was organized by the Syrian Trust for Development "Rawafed Project" in cooperation with MOE and is funded by the Swiss foundation DARSOS in an attempt to activate school theatre based on a scientific approach meant to stimulate students to enable them to creatively take part in the educational process.

The project was launched in the year 2009 by contribution of 18 Higher Institute for Arts Graduates and 6 from the School Theater Cadre from the Ministry of Education, with an aim to make the "interactive Theater" an essential part of the outside school activities, it depends on the scholar theaters available at many Syrian schools. In September 2011, Drusus Institute did not renew its contract with Syria Trust for Development in supporting the project which led to its suspension.

This 2-year project is being applied in more than ten government schools and is expected to include more than 390 children in its activities.

### **8.3.3 Vocational training for arts & culture**

Popular culture institutes are the body in charge of this field and they exist in most Syrian governorates and cities and are affiliated to Cultural Centers/MOC. The number of these institutes reached 95 by the end of 2007 and they offer specific cultural, scientific, literary and artistic knowledge to their students, in addition to various vocational skills (living

languages, music, Islamic calligraphy) and other specializations such as computers, needle-work and crochet.

These institutions offer courses in return for symbolic fees and students are awarded expertise certificates issued by MOC according to specialty after successfully completing a number of courses. During the current events in Syria, these institutes have had less students join the courses, to the extent that some of them have totally stopped.

In 2013 the Ministry of Culture issued a report stipulating the pardon of martyr's sons from enrolment fees in its affiliated public cultural academies.

#### **8.4 Socio-cultural interventions and community arts**

Sociocultural contributions were very little in Syria, except for some efforts that were carried out by some civil societies and which were concerned with the preservation of heritage.

In 2011, the Syrian society lived an exceptional political movement which different types of art were the most important forms of expression, as one of many forms of “peaceful struggle”. Civil activists and demonstrators created strong and effective forms of expressions whose intention was primarily political, that contributed to building a civil rhetoric through which activists address the rest of Syrians before the rest of the world. Artistic expressional forms became a property for all as any person could sketch caricatures and then be carried by demonstrators in the streets or any poet could write two verses of poetry and then be written on a sign, in addition to creating expressional forms like coloring the water of fountains in Damascus with red, as a strong hint to the Syrian bloodshed.

In the following, there is a description of some peaceful activities in which art and politics are combined together with the beat of the street that seems to be re-establishing the conceptions of art and culture and using them to oppose an excessive repression adopted by the Syrian regime to suppress the uprising.

The eye of the truth...when magic turns against the magician!

A different kind of targeting devoted by the Syrian security forces for “the citizen journalist” who has decided to cover the events happening on the ground by a mobile phone camera, then upload it to the internet, as works of arresting and sniping have included a huge amount of recorders/mobile phone carriers during the uprising. Simply...magic turned against the magician, post March 15, 2011.

“With no doubt, video stripes in the Syrian Revolution own an exceptional news and documentary quality resulted by prohibiting and having informational methods absent in the arena of events. However, aside with informational quality, these stripes own – with different ratios of course – a special expressive and artistic quality which deserves to be stopped upon and have their details deeply studied, especially that they seem as if they were establishing for a new Syrian cinema<sup>1</sup>. On another level, the role of the venturing

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<sup>1</sup>Culture Resists, Prince Klaus's Institution, issued in 2012, Pg.6, Mobile-phone Cinema, Image worth a Thousand Bullets.

recorder is represented in those stripes as a prominent role, as a mobile phone is considered not only a device but also a part of the recorder's body through which are reflected all circumstances of surrounding threats and killings, especially if we take into consideration that those who are carrying mobile-phone cameras are the same ones who are the number one target in demonstrations for snipers which makes the image in the Syrian case equal a thousand bullets instead of a thousand words<sup>1</sup>."

The image when it's beating with life:

"Art and Freedom" page on Facebook was founded in June 2011. One of its important founders is the plastic artist, Yousef Abdalki (he has been arrested and detained since July 2013 and as of completing the report) who's been famous for opposing the policies of the regime even before the revolution broke out. The case of "Art and Freedom" page is simply like the case of a large amount of artists inside and outside Syria who have decided to express their objection to what's happening using the color and form as a peaceful resisting act which has of an artistic quality what it has of a documenting quality now/here.

Some groups that are concerned with designing a political poster contributed to presenting posters of an informational welfare instinct such as (multimedia group) which is associated with the General Commission of the Revolution. Others intended to present a unique idea like the case of the initiative (stamps of the Syrian revolution) that works on reproducing stamps that carry pictures of the events and effective figures of the uprising. Amongst those groups, outstands a group that calls itself 'Syrian People Know Their Path'. This group has started launching meaningful posters along with the start of the Arab Spring in both Tunisia and Egypt, and then condensed its activity with the spread of revolution into Syria to present creative suggestions of opposing posters. Surprisingly, this group does not have any designers, however, on the contrary, it consists of a group of youngsters who have various educational backgrounds starting with philosophy and trade and extending to fine arts<sup>2</sup>.

Virtual space – free space for expression

Like all Arab revolution countries, virtual space was an important space to exchange. Privacy in the Syrian revolution (and as a result of its long duration and being far from being organized through social communication networks), is a drift of the virtual space which transforms by its majority and not all to a use more likely to be "free expression" whether through writing, visual arts or video, etc...

The new dealing with cities spaces

Clear artistic particles appear in most of the techniques of the popular movement in expressing itself and its opposition to the regime starting with slogans passing through signs and ending with forms of gathering and group movements. Because the need is the mother of invention, resorting to more creative solutions for expressing, delivering

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Culture Resists, Prince Klaus's Institution, issued in 2012, Pg.7, Mobile-phone Cinema, Image worth a Thousand Bullets.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Culture Resists, Prince Klaus's Institution, issued in 2012, Pg.45, Word in Face of Bullet, Political Poster.

messages and continuing the protest was increasing with the increase of repression and tightening by the regime's forces. After the two experiences, the Tunisian and the Egyptian, the Syrian regime realized quickly the importance of conquering the space of public squares to restrict any expected revolutionary extensions. "Who invades the square, invades the city", this is what the previous revolutions (the Egyptian in particular) have taught us. However, the regime got what it wished for through tightening the guard of big squares in the main cities from one side and through force in the demonstrations that started moving from the outskirts of the cities towards the squares (Abbasids square in particular) from another.

People started, after they were prevented from gathering in the squares, demonstrating in their neighborhoods and a lot of the revolution chanters started to appear and lead the demonstrations. Syrian protestors sang for freedom and swayed to the melodies of the chanting as video stripes showed swaying and chanting groups from far south in Dar'a, to far north in Idlib.

"The tasks of these chanting celebrations were not restricted to the visual amazement only, but worked as well on delivering significant political messages that strive to restrain the stories by the Syrian authority and its rhetoric legitimacy. Ahmad Qashoush, Hama's famous singer, might be one of the most obvious examples ever with his song that has become so famous<sup>1</sup>. "

Socio-cultural interventions in Syria are very rare, with the exception of few efforts carried out by civil associations, such the Damascus Friends Association which seeks to preserve the Damascene heritage in particular.

The Intangible Heritage Documentation Project launched by MOC's Popular Heritage Revival Department in cooperation with the directorates of culture is a key initiative in this field where these departments work jointly with a number of independent figures (writers, intellectuals, researchers and some interested individuals) and civil associations involved in the preservation of local heritage to form committees in charge of collecting and documenting various aspects of intangible heritage in all governorates.

In a period of three and a half years artistic forms of expression have proliferated and increased to an extent that needs to be documented and archived. Numerous websites have emerged that are doing the work, the last of which and most organized if the "Creative memory of Syria" website.

#### **8.4.1 Non-professional cultural activities**

The non-professional cultural activities in Syria were renowned for their good quality, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s. Many art assemblies and associations were formed comprising of the most prominent and famous Syrian artists, and despite the fact that these activities largely declined due to a number of factors one of which is the emergence of art academies, the activities of armature artists in the fields of theater, plastic arts, and music are still of significance value until the present day.

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<sup>1</sup>Culture Resists, Prince Klaus's Institution, issued in 2012, Pg.37, Revolution's Carnivals.

#### Theater level

Amateur bands linked to MOC are still active in a number of governorates and an amateur theater festival was launched in 2006 by MOC, this festival was originally launched in Al-hasakah, and moved to Idleb in the year 2007, then moved to Damascus in the year 2008, then to Tartous in 2009 and to Aleppo in 2010 in its fifth period. This festival played a key role in bringing amateur activities to light, in addition to the same role played by college theater (its twenty-fourth period was in Tartous in 2011).

#### Fine arts level

Fine arts centers affiliated to MOC (15 centres in most governorates), played a key role in developing the skills of amateur Fine artists of all ages (no degree is needed for enrolment and only an artistic skill is required) and to open the way for them to work and produce.

The effectiveness of these centers is evident through the good standard shown by the graduates in the exhibitions they stage, which proves their ability to compete with academic artists. Students in these centers study for two years and are awarded official art certificates issued by MOC after successfully presenting a graduation project.

#### Music level

Institutes affiliated to the Youth Organization play a vital role in spreading amateurs music education, particularly amongst children and teenagers, stage concerts for them and encourage them to pursue academic education.

### **8.4.2 Cultural houses and community cultural clubs**

There were around 510 cultural centers in 2010 in the country on governorate, city and village levels. These centers are administratively affiliated to the directorates of culture and are the property of, pursuant to the Presidential Decree issued 1982, Ministry of Local Administration (city and governorate councils) and MOC (established and funded by governorates and run and supervised by MOC).

According to their statutes, cultural centers perform the following duties:

Spread cultural awareness, introduce Arab and world culture and provide the means that help to create a vivid cultural movement by facilitating book reading, delivering lectures, conducting seminars and organizing reading sessions.

Develop the artistic taste and promote all types of art (painting, sculpture, photography, music, acting, folk arts and cinema) by staging fairs, concerts and music listening sessions.

Promote the establishment of culture and art associations and clubs, support them, and follow up their activities.

Facilitate the means of popular culture via popular culture institutes affiliated to the cultural centers and also via literacy centers and mobile cultural units.

Dedicate special attention to children's culture by staging activities, establishing libraries and conducting art courses.

Since 2011 new tasks have been added to the activity of cultural centres. In September 2011 the assistant to the Minister of Culture spoke to the Elaf internet newspaper stating (the Ministry worked throughout the month of Ramadan on holding a number of activities in line with the holiday spirit, such as Ramadan nights)

On 23/9/2013, presiding over the Higher Council for Economic and Social Planning, the Syrian prime minister asked the Ministry of Culture (to make more effort in order to activate the role of cultural centres, spread awareness and enlightened though, and fight against terrorist ideology).

Cultural centers consist of the following sections:

Cultural guidance

This section is in charge of delivering lectures, conducting seminars, staging exhibitions and displaying films.

Library

Each cultural center has a public library and a children's library. Subscription fees are symbolic and the number of books available varies from one center to another.

Book selling stand

Book selling stands in all branch cultural centers are authorized to sell books issued by MOC with the following discounts: 40% for the public, 50% for members of the Teachers Union and 55% for journalists and workers in the MOC and its directorates.

Each center contains a lecture room, cinema, theater, gallery and an internet room.

Most centers on the provinces level have mobile cultural units equipped with books and audio-visual equipment to spread knowledge in rural areas.

Despite the resources available in these centers, there was a strong debate about the effectiveness of the activities of these centers and their ability to attract audience and intellectuals.

Most of these centers have shut their doors and the infrastructure of some was damaged as a result of the ongoing events that started in Syria in 2011.

The current Culture Minister Dr. Riad Nasaan Agha also criticized these centers by saying: "The condition of cultural centers is unacceptable and I call upon all governors to come up with initiatives to turn these centers into active places by appointing dynamic directors capable of interacting with intellectuals, writers and various cultural activities".

The persons in charge of these centers on the other hand believe that they are exerting their full efforts to activate the centers but the problem lies in the insufficient funding, double administrative affiliation (Governorate and MOC), dependent decision-making and poor media coverage for activities.

## 9. Sources and Links

### 9.1 Key documents on cultural policy

Laws, regulations and decisions governing the Ministry of Culture and its Departments in the Central Administration and governorates (with amendments applied up to May 1985).

MOC Bylaw (issued by the Minister of Culture decision No. 1739, dated 19 Oct 2006).

Cultural and Artistic Harvest of the MOC for the year 2008.

Annual Statistical Abstract (Issue 61) Issued by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Central Bureau of Statistics.

Financial Policy in Syria, by Dr. KahtanSioufi, the Syrian General Organization of Book, Ministry of Culture 2008.

The 5<sup>th</sup> FYP and the previous FYP – State Planning Board.

### 9.2 Organizations and their Websites

Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA)	<a href="http://www.sana.sy">www.sana.sy</a>
Syrian E-Government website	<a href="http://www.esyria.sy">www.esyria.sy</a>
State Planning Commission	<a href="http://www.planning.gov.sy">www.planning.gov.sy</a>
Syrian Parliament official website	<a href="http://www.parliament.gov.sy">www.parliament.gov.sy</a>
Baath Arab Socialist Party	<a href="http://www.baath-party.org">www.baath-party.org</a>
Participatory Syria	<a href="http://www.youropinion.gov.sy">www.youropinion.gov.sy</a>
Ministry of Culture	<a href="http://www.moc.gov.sy">www.moc.gov.sy</a>
The Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums	<a href="http://www.syrianarchaeology.gov.sy">www.syrianarchaeology.gov.sy</a>
The General Association of Dar Al Assad for Culture &Arts	<a href="http://www.opera-syria.org">www.opera-syria.org</a>
Al Assad National Library	<a href="http://www.alassad-library.gov.sy">www.alassad-library.gov.sy</a>
Ministry of Local Administration	<a href="http://www.mlae-sy.org">www.mlae-sy.org</a>
Ministry of Information	<a href="http://www.moi.gov.sy">www.moi.gov.sy</a>
Ministry of Education	<a href="http://www.syrianeducation.org.sy">www.syrianeducation.org.sy</a>
Ministry of Higher Education	<a href="http://www.mhe.gov.sy">www.mhe.gov.sy</a>
Ministry of Finance	<a href="http://www.syrianfinance.org">www.syrianfinance.org</a>
Ministry of Economy and Trade	<a href="http://www.syrecon.org">www.syrecon.org</a>



Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor	<a href="http://www.molsa.gov.sy">www.molsa.gov.sy</a>
Central Bureau of Statistics	<a href="http://www.cbssyr.org">www.cbssyr.org</a>
Syria Trust for Development	<a href="http://www.syriatrust.org">www.syriatrust.org</a>
The Arab Writers Union	<a href="http://www.awu-dam.net">www.awu-dam.net</a>
Syrian Publishers Union	<a href="http://www.syrianpublishers.com">www.syrianpublishers.com</a>
Syrian Artists Union	<a href="http://artists-syria.com/">http://artists-syria.com/</a>
German Agency for Technical Cooperation	<a href="http://www.gtz.de">www.gtz.de</a>
UN in Syria	<a href="http://www.un.org.sy">www.un.org.sy</a>
United Nation Development Program	<a href="http://www.undp.org">www.undp.org</a>
Human Development Report	<a href="http://www.hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_20072008_AR_cover.pdf">http://www.hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_20072008_AR_cover.pdf</a>
Syrian Commission for Family Affairs	<a href="http://www.scfa.gov.sy">www.scfa.gov.sy</a>
General Organization of Radio & TV - Syria	<a href="http://www.rtv.gov.sy">www.rtv.gov.sy</a>
Al-Thawra Newspaper	<a href="http://thawra.alwehda.gov.sy/">http://thawra.alwehda.gov.sy/</a>
Damascus –The Capital of the Arab Culture	<a href="http://www.damascus.org.sy">www.damascus.org.sy</a>
Syrian websites directory	<a href="http://www.syrianwebsites.com">www.syrianwebsites.com</a>
Syrian Center of Research and Studies	<a href="http://www.syriasc.com">www.syriasc.com</a>
Cultural Policy in the Arab Region	<a href="http://www.arabcp.org">www.arabcp.org</a>
Syrian Network for Human Rights	<a href="http://www.sn4hr.org/">www.sn4hr.org/</a>
Creative Memory of the Syrian Revolution	<a href="http://www.creativememory.org">www.creativememory.org</a>