

that goes beyond the traditional socio-economic approach. We are now in the process of re-positioning our ICR activities to respond to these questions. Later this morning I will report on a meeting we had a few weeks ago in Louvain with representatives of the European Union, which fits into our approach of ensuring that higher education, research and training in Canada take place with an awareness of, and linkage to, the international community.

Perhaps it is paradoxical, but it seems to me that as borders become more porous, and as the economy, and the entertainment industry, become more internationalized, people yearn more than ever for a sense of cultural identity. People want a sense of their own values and their own place in the world. Through our International Cultural Relations program, which attempts to project Canadian culture abroad by supporting international manifestations of our performing and visual arts, as well as literature, we also help to define and strengthen our cultural sovereignty. I see such cultural sovereignty as perhaps the last frontier for a distinct national presence on the world stage. Our bi-cultural and bi-lingual status is both a blessing and a challenge in this regard. We have a natural affinity with, and entrée into the many English- and French-speaking countries in the world - at the same time our artists do not have the protection of a linguistic barrier which would assure them of a unique audience. Instead, they are open to the winds of competition from some of the most dynamic and creative societies in the world. Thus, in Canada, the concept of cultural sovereignty has many challenging aspects. For this, and many other reasons, we particularly value our contacts with non-anglophone and non-francophone countries. Particularly in the development of our cultural industries, such as film and television, we would like to facilitate linkages that can be given concrete expression in the creation of joint productions. Later on this afternoon, we can explore this topic in some greater depth.

The cultural sector in Canada is important. It represents almost 3 percent of our Gross Domestic Product and it comprises more than 425,000 jobs. The growth rate of the cultural labour force over the past 10 years has been 122 percent, more than twice the pace of the Canadian labour force as a whole. This development has taken place despite some considerable difficulties. Because of the size of Canada, cultural markets are fragmented and local audiences too small in many places to support a thriving cultural sector. Cultural jobs are often low-paid, and there is not much job security. Even our largest cultural organizations such as symphony orchestras and ballet and theatre companies are feeling the pressure. Both to grow artistically, and to expand their audience base, they must tour domestically and internationally to survive. For them, the International Cultural Relations program is not a luxury, but an essential element of their continued existence.