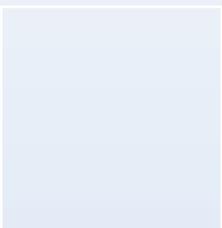
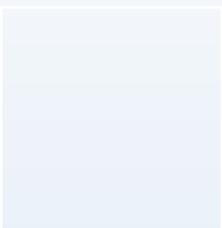




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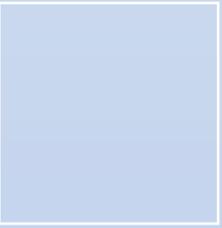
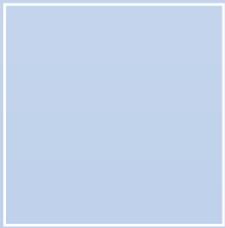


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POLICY

BRIEF



EU Cultural Diplomacy: Challenges and Opportunities

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Highlights

An organic development of international cultural relations is fundamental to engage all the concerned stakeholders - national governments, civil society and international organisations - into a constructive dialogue based on equality and mutual respect and to overcome the socio economic and power inequalities between the different countries and actors involved in traditional cultural diplomacy.

The new EU approach offers strategic opportunities for large and small Member States alike, as it allows them, in different ways, to actively co-create a diverse set of international cultural activities.

In order to make the nascent strategy for EU international cultural relations a success, it is fundamental to move beyond the crisis narrative by proactively engaging with the media, to achieve a multiplier effect and increase the impact of cultural projects and initiatives.

New digital technologies are key to facilitate start up projects, specifically tailored to youth, and to reinforce the people-to-people approach.

Co-creation and co-ownership with stakeholders (at local and national level) are of paramount importance to increase efficiency and sustainability of projects, but may present important value challenges.

Systematic monitoring to judge which kind of projects work best, and coordination at all levels are essential to make the EU strategy a success.

The European Public Spaces project represents a source of inspiration to develop cultural programmes in third countries.

During the next Multi Annual Framework negotiations funding for culture needs to be further prioritised as such funding has been on the rise among Europe's global competitors in the race for soft and smart power.



Introduction¹

Despite some positive signs of economic recovery seen in the last few years, Europe has yet to overcome the financial crisis. Turmoil in the Middle East, international terrorism, both refugee and economic migration pressures in the Mediterranean, the Brexit negotiation, as well as rising populism, mark this second decade of the new millennium.

Policy makers, stakeholders and civil society have been arguing for quite some time now, that the answers to be found do not lie, simply and solely, in more economic growth or lower unemployment rates. Culture, in fact, has an important role to play, as it can contribute to improving social cohesion within the EU and to strengthening its role as a global power in a multi-polar world.

The long drive to bring cultural diplomacy to the forefront of European Foreign Policy received a major boost during the last decade. Its latest manifestation, the [Joint Communication Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations](#), adopted in June 2016 by the European Commission (EC) and the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, set out a three pronged approach: supporting culture as an engine for sustainable social and economic development; promoting culture and intercultural dialogue for peaceful inter-community relations; and reinforcing cooperation on cultural heritage.

After having found favour with the EU Foreign Affairs Council back in October 2016, EU Culture Ministers adopted formal Conclusions on the Joint Communication on 23 May 2017. An overall positive report by the European Parliament is expected in July 2017 to encourage further ambition.

What is Cultural Diplomacy?

Cultural diplomacy is an ambivalent concept with blurred boundaries.

According to the first, more traditional definition, cultural diplomacy is a soft power tool through which states and/or international organisations pursue foreign policy objectives. It uses exchanges of cultural goods and services, cooperation and networking among museums,

1. This Policy Brief takes stock of debates and develops further ideas discussed by leading scholars and practitioners on the occasion of the Workshop [EU International Cultural Relations: A Strategic Approach](#) held at the EUI in May 2017.

cultural foundations and ministries, artists and curators from different countries and continents, to promote better and closer relations and extend their overall societal and political influence. It can also be, and in fact is, regularly used to advance specific geopolitical interests or to buttress trade policy.

By contrast, a second, more self-reflexive definition, conceives it as a policy area on its own right, which promotes quality of life, the arts, joint capacity building, economic growth and social cohesion by engaging citizens, both as producers and consumers of cultural activities.

Within the cultural diplomacy domain, an organic development of international cultural relations aims at engaging national governments, international and regional organisations as well as civil society actors into a constructive dialogue based on equality and mutual respect, over and beyond socio-economic and power inequalities between the different countries and actors involved.

The EU Approach to Cultural Diplomacy / International Cultural Relations

The new cultural diplomacy model embraced by the EU combines elements of both definitions.

As a soft and smart power tool it contributes to increase the global visibility and influence of the EU, but rather than asserting and exporting its supposed cultural superiority or normative power, it favours the EU's engagement into a constructive dialogue with third countries in a climate of mutual exchange and respect. In other words, the new model responds both to pragmatic and altruistic motives at the same time.

We believe that this balanced approach between seeking influence and engaging in respectful and equal dialogue is one of the EU's main strengths in marking itself off from the US – especially in the Trump era – and from emerging countries (such as China) that tend to see international cultural relations as a zero sum cultural power game. The EU thus could carve out a distinctive political and indirect normative role in the world for itself, provided that its Member States join forces unambiguously behind the new model.

The new approach promotes public-private partnerships, thus forging synergies between national ministries of



culture, local firms, artists, and cultural networks at various levels, for example.

It also privileges a ‘people-to-people’ approach that aims at bypassing ‘hard’ diplomacy at the inter-state level, to reach out to third countries and regions through the universal idiom of creativity and enjoyment of cultural consumption and expressions.

The European Commission is promoting a series of cultural pilot projects in third countries and fostering transnational relations to forge societal trust and hence resilience to societal fragmentation, apathy or radicalization in such countries as well as improving their relationships with the EU.

In fact, recent efforts to intensify the EU’s international cultural relations have been recognised by the wider [EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy](#) as well as by the new [European Consensus on Development](#), whereby culture has become an integral part of a strategic, cross-cutting approach to the Union’s international relations.

At the same time cultural diplomacy remains a distinct phenomenon, playing a crucial complementary role in supporting the EU’s development, trade, defence and security policies. It aims at making the most of the cultural domain through a grounded approach, by addressing directly artists, curators, cultural institutions, non-governmental organisations, local and national authorities, as well as by forging close cooperation with other key international cultural actors, such as the Council of Europe with its pioneering role in this domain, or the UNESCO building on its global influence and recognition.

Instruments, Actors and Projects

The real test of any grand strategy is to check how it could be implemented. In the last few years four main institutional actors have been advancing the case for a substantive EU strategy for international cultural relations with varying intensity. The European Commission (EC), the European External Action Service (EEAS), the European Parliament (EP), and the Council of the European Union, all have had their respective legal and political roles to play and their efforts have been complemented with an active stakeholder and civic community in the cultural field. Given the national sensitivities and the obvious EU competence limitations, the interplay among them has

been remarkably free of serious conflicts, even though progressing at a somewhat leisurely pace, partly also due to the nature of this subject.

Within the European Commission, in addition to the Directorate-General (DG) for Education and Culture (EAC), so far the DG for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO) and the DG for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (NEAR) have been the protagonists, the last two having the largest budgets at their disposal through their existing financial instruments. Recently the DGs have been cooperating closely with each other and the EEAS to plan ahead and to roll out concrete actions on the ground. Some of these actions (e.g. EAC drafting new legislation) require no, or only limited budgets, but still have a significant indirect financial, economic and societal impact. Other programmes require greater funding, but in return have a positive direct impact on the lives of many people across the globe. This is the case, for example, of large scale development programmes and partnerships run by DG DEVCO and DG NEAR with the active contribution of the EEAS and of the local EU Delegations, with the most comprehensive new type pilot scheme being developed in Tunisia.

As funding opportunities are currently scattered across numerous programmes and cooperation frameworks handled by different services of the EC and of the EEAS, currently no overall figure for culture related expenditure is established. The upcoming negotiations on the new Multiannual Financial Framework could provide more clarity and should give a response on how to finance the strategy from 2021 onwards. The amount and the financial mechanisms to be agreed upon will have an obvious impact on how to move forward with EU cultural diplomatic activities, and in that context should take into account the fact that culture related funding has been on the rise among Europe’s global competitors in the race for soft and smart power.

What Role for European Public Spaces in the EU International Cultural Relations Strategy?

The European Public Spaces were created by the EC and the EP in 2007 to host a broad range of events at the joint premises of the EC Representations and the EP Information Offices, attracting all generations with a special focus on youth. The European Public Spaces



network, which by now covers 18 EU Member State capitals, has favoured the development of synergies among national, regional and local authorities, cultural institutes, the EU National Institutes of Culture (EUNIC), cultural stakeholders, and NGOs in each participating country. Coordinated by the EC and EP, instead of imposing a uniform European vision, this network provides a space to 'host' European ideas, to support unity in diversity adjusted to the different national contexts.

In best performing countries European Public Spaces have developed into real European cultural hubs and neutral debate forums, stepping out of the conventional institutional image, and communicating European values to nurture a European identity. Many events are organised in close - and mutually beneficial - cooperation with cultural partner institutions, governmental bodies, embassies, European networks, and universities.

So far the European Public Spaces activities have proven to be able to mobilise youth, engaging high quality performers, artists and musicians with a solid circle of fans or community network, and thus reaching out to a large segment of the public who would not have been otherwise interested in EU affairs. With a 1.2 million euros budget allocated in the year 2016, 500.000 participants were registered at European Public Spaces events across Europe. But the outreach was far greater than that related to the number of participants, expanding further thanks to the multiplier effect of print, on-line and social media coverage generated by the regular reporting of the events, triggering a growing fan base.

Activities have involved both specific policy areas (climate change, migration, economy, etc.) and cultural themes (222 events focusing on culture in 2016) via debates, workshops, exhibitions, film screenings, concerts, theatre performances, training, thematic days and small thematic fairs, as well as EU-classes for schools and other visitors. European Public Spaces events enabled citizens to make a clear and direct link with the EU.

In the context of a nascent strategy for EU international cultural relations, the European Public Spaces project provides a number of best practices that could well be adapted to the local scenarios in third countries by EU Delegations. More specifically, given the controversies surrounding the idea of establishing new 'Houses of European Culture' in third countries, it might be worth considering the use of the European Public Spaces brand and methodology as an alternative.

Thus we could envisage a similar set of programmes outside the EU taking place at EU delegations if their infrastructure and security conditions allow. This could mean sharecasing (instead of showcasing) the EU's diverse cultures, heritage, languages and cuttingedge policies (e.g. climate, digital, etc.) with local audiences. In concrete terms, some of the best performing annual European Public Spaces events such as the Researchers' Night, book fairs (e.g. young European writers encountering local writers), European film festivals, targeted events on Women's Day, Saharov, Lux, and other EU prizes for authors, movies, books, etc. lend themselves to be organised also in third countries, complemented with new actions, like ERASMUS Mundus alumni gatherings involving local stakeholders. Naturally each programme would have to be tailored to the specific country and world region, fitting closely with local needs and aims.

Lessons Learnt – Challenges and Opportunities Identified

Past experience and recent policy analysis indicate that a number of challenges are to be addressed in order for the EU to become more efficient in furthering its international cultural relations and to ensure a more profound integration of culture into its foreign, security and development policies.

First, coordination is key both at central and local levels during the whole process and among all actors concerned. Beyond governmental institutions, such as ministries and national cultural institutes, the process should also involve non state actors at local and regional levels, such as cities, cultural associations, artists and curators, as well as the UNESCO and the Council of Europe. The involvement of such actors should help establish a proper overview and avoid overlaps and duplications of EU, Council of Europe and UNESCO actions.

Second, the involvement from the beginning of all cultural stakeholders in the co-creation and co-curation of products and services, such as film festivals, art exhibitions, fairs and laboratories, creates a sense of co-ownership of projects and initiatives, which is a basic condition for success.

There is no one size fits all model; each world region and country requires a different approach and pace. In some cases, for example, crucial demands, in terms of



livelihood security, education and basic infrastructure, need first to be met before it is possible to engage in any cultural activity. In other cases, creative and cultural industries become the main sources of livelihoods for people who would otherwise remain unemployed and marginalised. In some regions of the world a city level approach works best, in others the emphasis should be more on engaging with regional or national players.

Co-creation also presents important value challenges. The question that arises is whether the EU's cultural projects for development, mobility and exchange should have a common value basis or if, instead, they should have a common set of cultural creation goals and seek to build bridges and forge common values.

In addition, one should not forget that countries are internally heterogeneous, as they often embrace native and migrant minorities and may be composed of different regions. In this context the role of diasporas deserves special attention. Most importantly, in both Africa and Asia borders have been drawn by colonial powers cutting across or bringing together different ethnic and linguistic communities. Taking into account such variety and complexity and building it into cultural projects is a must for an EU strategic approach for international cultural relations to be successful.

Last, but certainly not least, sustainability, active communication and promotion should accompany all actions. Projects need to run for a certain period of time, or be repeated at regular intervals, in order to demonstrate and measure their impact on community relations and development. Selected audiences, beyond the participants, should be informed about concrete projects using targeted messages, directly as well as via social media and through audiovisuals, in order to increase their impact and create a virtuous feedback-loop.

Policy Recommendations

It is of paramount importance to build on the strength of EU Member States in specific world regions and countries. While this may be easier in smaller, remote regions with only a few national embassies, where the EU Delegations are prone to play a key role as cultural diplomacy hubs, it would be essential to forge synergies also in large countries using the potential of big players for a common purpose. Cutting down on red tape and taking advantage of existing programmes and projects

could facilitate sustainability, capacity building, and promote lasting cultural relations with third countries.

Digital technologies for cultural production and cultural consumption must be taken highly into consideration. They are fundamental for start-up projects that are specifically tailored to youth as they help cut out intermediaries and costs, while promoting creativity. As a matter of fact digital technologies facilitate the global youth intercultural dialogue and exchange on internet, social media, and interactive platforms, particularly nowadays with the increasing use of smart phones and other mobile devices.

Engaging with the media in making international cultural projects and networks known, diffusing information, and widening the impact of cultural projects can have a multiplier effect. In particular, electronic and social media allow to combat the elitist dimension that cultural activities can have, and further increase the impact of cultural projects and initiatives in terms of community cohesion and overall well-being of the population.

Monitoring and evaluation of existing projects should become systematic to facilitate the sustainability and continuity of effective projects and programmes, while reconsidering projects that do not produce the desired results and impact.

National cultural institutes are not equally developed nor equally resourced. Thus, the EU approach offers strategic opportunities for smaller Member States to actively engage in international cultural diplomacy activities. It is essential to increase the awareness and engagement concerning these opportunities. Successful pilot projects and the EUNIC network have a pivotal role to play in turning theory to practice.

There is a need to develop inter-sectoral approaches, bringing together, for instance, cultural industries with education institutions to generate new learning and employment opportunities.

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