



# Advocacy Paper

## Cultural Diplomacy or Cultural Relations

*NB (February 2017): This paper has been written by Ryan Perry under the supervision of Sana Ouchtati before the recent political developments in both the EU (victory of “Leave” vote in the Brexit referendum) and the USA (the election of Trump in November 2016 and his first weeks into office in January 2017). Still, it clarifies the notions of cultural diplomacy and cultural relations, and outlines arguments for cultural relations and their role in international relations, at a moment when the EU is discussing the Joint Communication “Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations”.*

*Today, it seems to us that these arguments are more important than ever, and should be*

*continuously reinforced. In times of growing skepticism and uncertainty, they should strongly underpin international relations. Cultural relations involving individuals on the ground and multi-background citizens are crucial to build mutual understanding, foster openness and build tolerant and peaceful societies. In this fast changing context, MORE EUROPE – external cultural relations intends to publish, in the coming months, a paper looking at how meaningful cultural relations supported by the EU, based on equal-footed partnerships and stakeholders multiplicity, could combat stereotypes, extremism, populism and enhance intercultural dialogue.*

**T**raditionally, cultural diplomacy has consisted of interactions driven by one state toward the citizens of another state. Governments have used such ‘cultural diplomacy’ to attain a myriad of other interests such as: public support for their policies in a given country; access to a country’s geopolitical position as well as its resources; and overall to increase the prospects of future cooperation coming from a country’s government and citizenry. In recent history, cultural projection has also been used as a weapon, to fight what Western Europe and its allies considered propaganda from the Soviet Union and its allies. However, the Cold War is over, and as Federica Mogherini said in her speech at the European Culture Forum in Brussels in April 2016, “...culture can also [apart from being ‘weaponized’] be the place where people meet and make the most out of their diversity.” (Mogherini, 2016) In order to make the most of this diversity, Europe needs to redefine its ‘cultural diplomacy’ and ensure the strength as well as stability of the relations that make up its diplomacy. These relations need to be: conducted in cooperation of both state *and* non-state actors; reciprocal, non-coercive, non-projective transnational interactions *between* two or more cultures; implemented on the ground to place themselves “...in the world of the people”; including a range of activities focusing on philosophy, literature, music, and art that will exchange ideas, beliefs, and also values. (Mogherini, 2016) If the European Union (EU) takes on a foreign policy with these kind of cultural relations in mind, then over

time greater connectivity, mutual understanding, and a beneficial, as well as enhanced, sustainable set of relationships will be established. This paper outlines arguments *for* cultural relations as well as to why cultural relations can participate in realizing Europe's foreign policy objectives. It will argue that culture is and should be an important part of international relations, and finally, give clear policy guidance to the EU going forward, drawing on specific country cases from the final report of the "Preparatory Action: Culture in EU External Relations", *Engaging the World: Towards Global Cultural Citizenship*.

Political and economic diplomacy have been the basis of international relations between countries for centuries, in one form or another, and still are largely today. However, in an ever-globalizing world in which people are becoming ever more connected, there is a need to improve relations between not only states' political elites and governments, but also their citizenry. This is not to say that geopolitics or economic interdependence are unimportant. In 2015, a study revealed, for instance, that the economic ties between the EU and the US, as well as Europe's geopolitical location, have caused the US media to portray "...the EU as an important partner, and Europe as a crucial continent to keep unpredictable Russia under control." (PPMI, NCRE, NFG Research Group, 2015) It also showed that in Russia, "...the EU is presented as a close 'other' able to impact Russia politically and economically, not least because of the close (albeit strained) economic relations." (PPMI, NCRE, NFG Research Group, 2015) This connection with the citizenry cannot be made solely with politics and money. As Higgott and Langenhove explained, "...two parallel and mutually reinforcing developments have turned the situation [of traditional diplomacy methods being sufficient] on its head: (i) the borders between domestic and international politics have become more and more blurred – a cliché but true; and (ii) diplomacy has become increasingly 'societized'." (Higgott and Langenhove, 2016) The world has become more connected through technology, including cell phones, e-mail, social media, and transportation technology (trains, planes, and automobiles). This connection has made the movement of goods and, more importantly, of people an easily, common, everyday occurrence. As the borders for goods and people blur, so do the borders for what once may have been solely domestic issues. Not only have physical borders disappeared, but also virtual borders: people from every corner of the Earth have now access to each other and information at the touch of a button through cyberspace. This access allows everyone to have a say in politics, including the topics of what are now international issues. The combination of these advancements and the increased presence of democracies around the globe create this 'societized' diplomacy that Higgott and Langenhove mention. This diplomacy as they mention, "...demand[s] new political strategies." (Higgott and Langenhove, 2016) These new political strategies for dealing with each other (country-to-country) calls for an approach that "...enable the diverse European actors concerned to truly 'engage the world' in a spirit of global cultural citizenship." (Isar, 2015)

Some may argue that culture in foreign policy and cultural relations sound great only on paper and in speech. The question however is what they bring to a country that engages in such actions, except more people and festivals. In fact, culture is not only a *necessity* in foreign policy. In Europe's case, it also brings its 'multiculturalism' to light. 'Multiculturalism' was the adjective used most in the US, Canada, China, Mexico, and Japan when describing the EU and it is important to note that stakeholders around the world "...highly value Europe's cultural diversity." (PPMI, NCRE, NFG Research Group, 2015)

The cultures within and of Europe can be enablers of that multiculturalism as well. Cultural exchanges and external cultural relations can assist a specific country, as well as the whole of the EU, in importing and exporting economic benefits. This can be mutually beneficial for all parties. Cultural relations are not a zero-sum game. For factual evidence, “global trade in creative products has more than doubled from 2004 to 2013 [...], cultural and creative industries represent around 3% of the world GDP and 30 million jobs”, and, “in the EU alone these industries account for more than 7 million jobs. In developing countries likewise, cultural and creative sectors make a substantial contribution to poverty reduction, sustainable development and inclusive growth.” (European Commission, 2016) These numbers show the economic gains due to the cultural sector, but culture can also bring ideas and people closer together to solve issues such as “the management of migratory flows, radicalization, the destruction of cultural heritage and climate change.” (European Commission, 2016) Improving cultural relations improves people-to-people relations between two or more countries. These relations include understanding and a willingness to work together. This is exactly what is needed today as the world sees its worst migrant crisis since WWII, radicalization that has caused the deaths of people from New York to Paris, Brussels to Ankara and Nigeria, the destruction of ancient manuscripts in Timbuktu, and the destruction of the planet due to human-made climate change. Problems of this world have been influenced in one way or the other by all of us, and it will take all of us to fix them. This will be done most efficiently and sustainably by fostering better relations through cultural exchange.

These relations will be sustainable after a long period of cultural exchanges, event by event or project by project, after which the majority of each citizenry will be connected by an understanding and respect for each other’s cultures. There are, in fact, different variables that effect this understanding. A major one is contact with Europe – in this case, and people having lived, visited or with relatives living in the EU “...usually have more positive attitudes, as well as those who felt sufficiently informed about the EU”, found by means of a study that compared perceptions of the EU in the ten strategic partners of the EU. (PPMI, NCRE, NFG Research Group, 2015) This contact can be established through cultural relations, building people’s understandings of each other through culture. There will be obstacles, however, on the path to strong cultural relations. As Higgott and Langenhove express, “EU state-led exercises in cultural diplomacy are always going to be difficult in the contemporary era. Target audiences, especially in parts of the Middle East and the developing world can, and often do, treat cultural diplomacy with suspicion.” (Higgott and Langenhove, 2016) Possibly rightfully so, as Europe and the West have in many instances used their ‘cultural’ programmes more as political messages or at the very least projections of their cultures, rather than true and equal exchanges. In order for there to be equality in exchanges, there also needs to be a willingness on both sides for an equal exchange. In fact, though, there are countries willing to have this new or enhanced relationship with the EU and its Member States. India for example, as the EU’s “Preparatory Action” has pointed out, has participated for years in cultural relations with EU Member States even and especially after colonization ceased. China has also used culture as a popular avenue in previous years, especially as its economy has driven the country into the international spotlight. (Isar, 2014) Other strategic or neighbourhood countries such as South Africa, Ukraine, and Georgia have shown a realization of the importance of culture in foreign policy and a willingness to work with their European counterpart. (Isar, 2014) Every country in the world has had a different history, political transformation, and relationship with the EU and its

Members. This brings up one of the most important recommendation for a foreign policy, with culture at the helm, going forward: Europe cannot use a cookie cutter approach.

Although India is actively interested in true cultural exchanges with the EU Member States, "... both governmental and non-governmental cultural find it difficult to imagine cultural cooperation at the overarching EU level." (Isar, 2014) Even as China has heavily invested in culture over recent years, investing in a 24-hour news channel and an international newspaper, "people in China lack awareness about the EU..." due to a system that still censors information. (Isar, 2014) There is also a need for more "...capacity-building, skills development, [and] networking..." in South Africa as well as many of the other strategic or neighbouring prospects for cultural exchanges. (Isar, 2014) The EU cannot always act on the same level, or with the same push, or even with the same objectives, with every country that it attempts to foster a stronger bond with through cultural means. Thus cultural operators and governments in Europe need to work with their people on the ground in third countries to develop policies that correctly address who is best to work on exchanges with, where is the best place to work on exchanges, and what else is needed for these exchanges (training, money management, event specifics, *etc.*...). A Dutch Member of the European Parliament, Marietje Schaake, wrote a report which recognized artists "as *de facto* cultural diplomats exchanging and confronting different aesthetic, political, moral and social values'." (Isar, 2015) The needs mentioned above are not absent from the artists' needs as well. However, policy-makers and other cultural actors also need to recognize that artists mostly do art for art's sake; for expression and personal fulfillment. Such recognition, when engaging with artists, will lead to mutual respect and the development of a better, long-lasting relationship. This better relationship is one in which the artistic content is not politically driven but artistically driven, by the artists, and policy-makers shall rather play the role of providing the instruments necessary for such important exchanges to take place; for example, funding.

Along with the two main themes for policy outlined above (a country or region specific approach to each relationship, and a relationship that is devised on the ground in the third country) there are also key themes for policy highlighted from the "Eight Key Messages" of the "Preparatory Action: Culture in External Relations". Europe's policies on engaging with the rest of the world need to address young people particularly and there should be space made to use digital tools and social media within these policies as well. (Isar, 2014) Young people are the future leaders, those that will be taking the reins of international relations for decades to come. Young people also devise the group that is most connected with others around the world, by the usage of digital tools and social media, so there needs to be space to use these, specifically in culture, to maximize potential gains. These two foci in policy are increasingly important. Apart from the specific group or item themes for action, there are ideas the "Preparatory Action" highlighted as they are instrumental in differentiating cultural diplomacy that has not maximized its potential and cultural relations that the EU needs for a strong sustainable future. "Listening, sharing, imagining and creating together..." needs to be the way that Europe, whether individually or as an institution, engages with the world, and the EU must foster cooperation not only with non-state actors in Europe but also foster those relations in other countries, working to allow the ground-up policy to be made in all places of the relationships. (Isar, 2014)

With a new Joint Communication “Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations” (June 2016), the EU should be able to engage with the world in a much more reciprocal, responsible, smart, and sustainable way. Each step of the specific policy-making and implementation needs to keep in mind the key themes outlined above. The EU has been taking baby steps in progressing towards a kind of diplomacy that is true, real diplomacy: a diplomacy that reaches the people, the average citizen. The average citizen is no better represented than with culture. Culture is the basis of everyday life in a country. It is the houses we wake up in, the food that we eat, the news we see, and the music we listen, to on whatever type of transportation takes us from home to school or work. Culture is the television or movies we watch with friends, the art museums we attend, and the drinks we have in celebration. Culture is everything about life in a specific place. These daily lives bring about the ideas we all carry about one another. The only way to truly understand a country or its people is by understanding their culture and this cannot be done without cultural exchange. By putting culture at the heart of its external policies, Europe would not only rely on the important but many times unstable, economic relationships or the political ones that can change at the whim of each election, but on relationships between people and societies as a whole, that can last for generation after generation. The West has many times taken advantage of its positions as economic and political powerhouses, thereby not fully diving into the culture of others – because there is no feeling of necessity to look outward, although the necessity is in fact there. To continue to be a prosperous globalized world, the Europeans need to understand the people whom it should and must work with. To do this they need to address: the young people – future leaders – to ensure lasting relationships; the issues that are most pressing but will have the most impact, such as terrorism or climate change; and the countries in places most different from their own to truly understand their people and become properly informed global citizens. Europe needs to start doing this now, not tomorrow, or after the next election, but now even if current voting outcomes have shifted relationships. Even after the vote for Brexit, the United Kingdom remains a country that holds a true historical, political, economic and cultural position in not only Europe, but the world as a whole, so Great Britain must be continuously integrated into and active in the cultural relations of Europe. If followed through with all of these points in mind, Europe will enhance its relationships with other countries, achieve its economic and political goals, and provide a framework for policy-making in all realms of foreign policy going forward. However, most importantly and at the heart of these relationships mentioned, there lies improved mutual understanding of one another as we continue sharing this world. As the EU’s High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini stated herself, “...our cultures are bound to meet. We have a duty to make the most out of this encounter.” (Mogherini, 2016) These encounters will be increasingly influenced by culture as the world continuously becomes more globalized, and therefore foreign policy must increasingly be *led* by culture.

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