

THE RELEVANCE OF EU EXTERNAL CULTURAL SYNERGIES: THE EXTERNAL ACTION STRATEGY AND INSTITUTIONAL INTERCULTURAL ATTITUDES*

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Abstract

European Union (EU) is a supra-ideological construct in permanent change. Changing times bring the European External Action Service (EEAS) to its cultural strategy. EU external cultural strategy with the complexity of political and social realities defines the two main steps followed in this study: a) EU intercultural strategy analysis, and b) the role and the place of EU Delegations (EU Dels) and the European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC). The basis of the analysis is the qualitative approach. It analyses various institutional manifestations of power and status discrepancies in the EU on macro and micro institutional levels. How does the

EU manage to communicate its values and identity in a context of potential cultural and ideological differences? Does “wanting to understand the other” seem neglected, whereas “wanting to get understood” seems to have become an EU intercultural attitude driver? The aim of this paper is to identify the process and relevance of EU cultural synergies and its external intercultural image through various involved actors.

Keywords: *Cultural diplomacy, External cultural policy, EU delegation(s), EUNIC, EU intercultural image*

1. INTRODUCTION

The research highlights the strengths and weaknesses¹ of the European international cultural relations reality. It also reveals the substantial added value that EEAS external strategy, which is also based on

culture, can offer consisting principles as a guide of EU in global cultural engagement.

To better understand the complexity of external EU cultural relations as a research topic: several reasons need to be considered:

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¹ <https://www.cultureinexternalrelations.eu>

- A standard EU external diplomacy, in general, is a recent phenomenon that is fostered by the Treaty of Lisbon (2009) through the establishment of the EEAS.
- Cultural action and intercultural dialogue have been integrated into EUNIC as instruments of public diplomacy since 2006.
- The organizational structures are still continuously evolving, which allows the changes to be tracked back to underlying causes and to foster understanding, despite a highly complicated set-up of the EU Del/EUNIC members mapping.
- The understanding of external cultural action varies significantly among EU member states, which leads us to the question regarding the agents' influencing power and the degree of their adherence to these values and norms.
- Decision-making processes seem to rely on national interests, political influence and economic power more than on a clear common European cultural strategy.

EU Member States have envisaged cultural cooperation since the EU was founded, as to stimulate interculturality, develop cultural interaction and promote diversity of cultural expressions. Within the EEAS service, there are four instruments, one of which is the Partnership Instrument (PI), which declares external cultural activities as a part of their mission to advance the strategic interests, while cooperating on global international challenges.

Through the Partnership Instrument², EU's primary orientation contributes

to the external projection of the Europe 2020 strategy, i.e. interpersonal contacts, academic and think tank cooperation, and outreach activities.

Before these recent developments, collaboration in external cultural action was based on the ad-hoc basis. Since the year 2000, National Cultural Institutes have started to cooperate in host countries on a project basis, elaborating initiatives around the arts, sciences and literature.

1.1. The rationale of EU external cultural relations

Since its recent establishment in 2011, the EEAS has pursued the goal of putting into place a common strategy for the European diplomacy with regard to political affairs, crisis response and security.

In the European Cultural Convention established by the Council of Europe (1955)³, the goal was to preserve and disseminate European Culture (UNESCO, 2005, art.1)⁴. On the EU level, cultural affairs are seen as an instrument, organizationally a part of the Foreign Policy Instruments Service, which is attached to the Secretary-General.

As described by Babaci and Martel (2017), the collaboration between the French and German cultural institutes, the "Institut français" and "Goethe Institute" respectively⁵, has been encouraged by both governments since 2004 and made explicit in a report from the French Senate in 2010. A co-localization and an alliance of these two national institutes were first initiated in the field, amongst others in Ramallah, then leveraged as pilot projects, before becoming official alliances. These cultural institutes

² https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/425/partnership-instrument_en

³ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/018>,

⁴ https://en.unesco.org/creativity/sites/creativity/files/2913_16_passport_web_f.pdf

⁵ https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/07669.pdf

join resources to work together with local partners and artists, to co-create new, seemingly more open and intercultural cultural actions, on a case-by-case basis. This bilateral cooperation between cultural institutes has evolved since 2006 to an increasingly structured multilateral network: the association of the EU National Institutes of Culture (EUNIC)⁶. This organization is about to become the operator for the EEAS⁷, as an instrument for the European diplomatic influence. Therefore, a political and a diplomatic dimension of the cultural network have become significantly important. Nowadays, EU Del is tightening its links to the EUNIC local clusters in host countries across the world, supporting and leveraging cultural projects for diplomatic means. National cultural institutes are partly civil society organizations and are partly state dependent.

1.2. The purpose of EU external cultural relations

The approach to intercultural relations started in 2016, and since then it has been continuously refined. The aims are to encourage cultural cooperation based on values such as freedom of expression, human rights, the rule of law and peace between the EU and its partner countries.

The EU Strategy⁸ for International Cultural Relations stands, among other areas, for:

- a) *Promoting culture* within the intercultural dialogue and
- b) *Reinforcing cooperation* on cultural heritage.

Creating and framing the official EU narratives about the shared history and the future can be an essential step for creating international memory in Europe. The EU's "A New Narrative for Europe" project, initiated by the European Parliament and implemented by the European Commission (2013/2014), highlighted a lack of consistency of the EU narrative and the inability to disseminate it. Therefore, the strategy, which aims to promote the diversity of the European culture and reinforce the *rational choice* in cooperation of cultural heritage, together with a more and more constructivist choice, has become a priority for the European external cultural relation policy.

As opposed to agent-centred *rational choice* theories, stating norms as a constraint on national interests, the constructivist approach identifies interests as endogenous to agent-structure interactions. It means that the national interests of power and wealth are not necessarily variables that are driving agents' behaviour only while interacting with the partners. Still, they emerge and are constituted by multidimensional interactions between various agents and institutional structures.

Recent discussions are characterized by questionings that go beyond cultural diplomacy. For instance, cultural citizenship can foster the privilege of intercultural dialogue and diversity reciprocity.

According to the "soft power" perspective (Nye 2008), the cultural diplomacy actions include:

- a) The aspects of culture that are attractive and engaging for the host

6 <http://www.frenchgermanculturalcenter.org/fr>.

7 https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/2017-05-16_admin_arrangement_eunic.pdf

8 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/documents/results_eac-s18-2013_selected_projects_en.pdf5

- b) The aspects of national politics that remain legitimate by the host
- c) The aspects of positive political values that are recognized by the host.

What would a European perspective entail in this case? Beyond the relevance of the political, economic and cultural impact on the international scene, symbolic power, as discussed by Bourdieu, is an “*overarching connector, acting as a legitimate device*” (Bourdieu, 2000: 297-303). Bourdieu identifies power as a capacity to conceal the capability to hide the relationship in which it operates through some of its “symbolic manifestations (cultural actions) that could also be analysed through the European external cultural events, both the planned ones (festivals) and the randomly organized ones (European year of intercultural dialogue 2008). The practice shows the existence of multiple relationships among cultural processes, the geopolitical dimension (EU strategic partners), economic conditions and economic negotiations (with local partners) and organizational and managerial dimensions (in the EU Del operational sections).

Cultural relations and artistic exchanges are the member states’ responsibilities, as the cultural policy within cultural projects remain organized at the member state level. EU cultural diplomacy efforts would not serve only to consider exchanges, but also to create the narrative about the intercultural EU image as a whole, based on the joint EU cultural diplomacy.

A significant contribution of such an action is to:

- Contribute practically to the global EU image abroad.
- Promote the EU motto (“United in diversity”) in an effective way.

- Increase equal opportunities for European cultural institutions.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research stakeholders

This study identifies indicators of various relationships throughout different dimensions: within the EU Del and in the field, among the EUNIC members, centrally in Brussels (official discourse); between local partners and the EU staff.

Qualitative data was generated during several study visits between 2014 and 2018:

- a) to the EU Delegations (Tanzania, Burundi, Gabon, Israel), through participant observation and action research and
- b) to the EU National Cultural Institutes based abroad - EUNIC that manages these institutes and - among the EEAS staff.

The studies were supported by secondary, desk research, which included analysis of documents and web resources, as well as relevant EUNIC and EEAS comprehensive project concepts, strategy papers and reports.

The choice agreed was appreciative enquiry - as an open, flexible and non-theory-based approach because the questions had to be adapted to the individuals’ roles (staff, managers, artists). The focus of interest here was to explore lessons learned from multicultural teamwork in the EU Del and the potential impact in the realization of cultural activities. With regard to the EU Del, the following methods were used in the evaluation process: flexible semi-structured feedback interviews based on focus groups – in person or over Skype/phone

– with participants and stakeholders in the project, according to their level and degree of involvement (e.g., Head of Delegation, Head of Sections).

The qualitative discourse builds on the analysis of:

- the institutional level, i.e. national member organizations: official external discourse on respective websites, characteristics of cultural projects in the field; on a consolidated institutional level (EU Del, EUNIC and EEAS): official external discourse
- Websites, during meetings and conferences, training and reports, joint cultural projects in the field.

2.2. Methods

Overall, the following techniques were used in the evaluation process:

- Desk research: Analysis of documents and web resources, e.g. project concepts and reports, relevant EU/EUNIC strategy papers, on-site field research.
- Semi-structured feedback interviews – personally or over Skype/phone – with stakeholders who were involved in project planning and management.
- Flexible feedback interviews, based on a catalogue of questions – personally or over Skype/phone – with participants and stakeholders in the project, according to their level and degree of involvement.

Overall, 140 interviews were conducted, most of them via Skype, phone and in person, in the period 2014 - 2018 with:

- Three EU Del Head of Delegations: Tanzania, Jordan, Gabon;

- Three EUNIC clusters: Tanzania (Dar El Salaam), Jordan (Amman), Gabon (Libreville);
- Eighteen EU Del Heads of Operational and Political sections;
- Four trainers from the EU Del;
- 120 staff members of the EU Del.

Based on previous observations, action research and qualitative approach, this study follows three main steps: document analysis, empirical studies that analyze manifestations of power and status discrepancies on various institutional level, i.e. in the EU Del and EUNIC, and discourse analyses in credibility and applicability of the European external cultural policy.

The first step, document analysis, aims to show how EU external cultural actions reframe and position the EU cultural, diplomatic context. The literature review includes references on the influence on strategies and cultural diplomacy, allowing some hypotheses for future research to be established.

The second step compared the intercultural aspects of the role and place of EU Del action and EUNIC's mission. Individual interviews were used to identify potential barriers in applying specific intercultural issues of the EU cultural diplomacy. The context will first illustrate how the EU external relations approach emerged and then past empirical studies from the field will be summarized into discourse analysis. Finally, the study examines the link between the official discourse and the informal discourse focusing on the challenges in terms of intercultural image, its credibility, coherence and consistency in the European external cultural policy.

The raw data was consolidated and analyzed with regards to EU- and

interaction-related variables. Regarding the EU Delegation, the process of research was initiated halfway through the research action. Regarding the EUNIC network and its member cultural institutes, an inductive research approach was followed, which identified the critical constituents of the growing multilateral collaboration among national cultural institutes within the EUNIC network: the need to nurture it as a learning network, as a laboratory of intercultural cooperation, in co-creation of a common approach to cultural action and diplomacy.

It proceeded to qualitative discourse analysis:

- on the individual level: semi-structured, fully transcribed interviews with the Head of Delegations and Directors of institutes and agents of EUNIC and the EEAS, conducted in English and French.
- on the institutional level, i.e., national member organizations: official external discourse on the websites, characteristics of cultural projects in the field
- on websites and during meetings and conferences, internal meeting notes and reports, membership charter, joint cultural projects in the field, training, workshops, coaching.

3. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Scholars identify the dichotomy between 'the cultural relations' on the one and 'soft power' and 'politics' on the other hand. Nye (1990) illustrated in his work what often 'real hard power' stands for, in comparison with intangible expressions of arts as 'soft power'. His investigation brought the notion of multilateralism of culture and power within the foreign policy.

European cultural external actions previously did not take into account this interactive, dynamic vision, but it tended to use a more structural, static approach. It has an impact on how the EU cultural actions are perceived abroad, on how 'the other', the local partners perceive the EU and Europe in general. It seems relevant to unveil that the emerging close collaboration between European political bodies and cultural operators from the civil society is about to dilute social interaction and shift it towards politically influenced action.

Whitman (2013) suggested 'normative power' as the concept of supranational institutions and just like the EU, adding the fact that the cultural identity is not static and is in permanent change.

4. THE PRINCIPLES OF EU CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

Cultural diplomacy, when applied at all levels, possesses the ability to influence the ideology of various communities. The respect for cultural diversity enables intercultural dialogue and potentially brings equality in human rights that enables, in turn, the principle of peace and stability. As Nye observed, "*political leaders have understood the power that comes from setting the cultural diplomacy agenda. The ability tends to be associated with intangible power resources such as culture, ideology and institutions*" (Nye 1990: 32). The role of 'soft power' as a form of cultural diplomacy is significant to political and economic diplomacy. Supranational organizations, such as the EU, apply the variety of cultural cooperation practices.

Reviews of the literature on cultural policy implications often include descriptions of the governments and discourses about

culture as soft power. Nye also identified an *“element of the American ethos that was of ‘meta-soft power,’ which is a nation’s capacity and reflective ability to criticize itself that contributes to its international attractiveness, legitimacy and credibility”* (in Isar, 2010: 367).

Cultural Diplomacy leads us on a path of shared understanding. Dialogue, listening and community orientation are characteristics that can keep the potential of togetherness in representing the EU logo – “United in Diversity”. Therefore, the meaning and purpose of cultural diplomacy are in the EU core policy, strategy and concerns of all involved actors in the international scene. The main driving forces for constructing a European identity and creating a EU narrative is a cultural exchange and international relations. The meaning of “Europeanness” as a narrative construct is not imaginary or symbolic any more.

4.1. The EEAS intercultural strategy

The strategy on intercultural relations was only defined in 2016, aiming to encourage all types of cultural cooperation between the EU and its partner countries, promoting EU values, such as being united in diversity. It focuses on:

- a) Development: supporting culture as an engine for sustainable social and economic development;
- b) Dialogue: promoting culture and intercultural dialogue for peaceful inter-community relations; and
- c) Heritage: reinforcing cooperation on cultural heritage.

The strength of EUNIC is in the infrastructure of its members and extended contacts with the local stakeholders and civil society. A growing interest among the

members to adopt a common European approach can be an opportunity, too. On the other hand, the threatening fact could be of the same nature and reason, as previously mentioned opportunities. A lack of a common EU approach and potential instrumentalization by the EU institutions that are not always culturally, but rather economically oriented. Limited EU funding or limited participation of some member states can also cause the threatening elements of effective functioning. A lack of financial and human capital, together with insufficient quality control and evaluation of cultural projects, can influence the final impact of external intercultural EU relations.

The EU has engaged with art and cultural practitioners for many years in a fragmented way. Apart from isolated programmes for culture in developing countries managed by the European Commission, there has been no EU policy framework for culture in external relations for many years. This happened, because culture is a competence of the member states. The culture has been often viewed from the perspective of cultural heritage.

EU’s engagement in cultural initiatives starts from the proactive, dedicated staff, often based in EU Delegations (e.g. Jordan, Tunisia, Gabon). The latter recognised the potential of culture, together with local cultural operators. Only from 2014, Preparatory Action emphasised the role and place of EU Delegations on culture in external relations.

Since 2011, when the European Parliament reported on culture in external relations, some initiatives have contributed to shaping the importance and impact of the role of culture. It continued in 2015, with the publication of the FPI-funded research on the perceptions of the EU and Europe in the ten strategic partner countries, and

Horizon 2020 call for tender on science and diplomacy, which was a direct follow-up to the Preparatory Action. The Luxembourg Presidency set up an informal task force, and the relevance of culture in external relations and development became the theme at the European Development Days (EDDs) in 2015 and 2016.

The EC and EEAS made the first joint policy document in 2016 on creating strategies, policies and awareness of the culture in EU external relations. The leadership of EU institutions showed the importance of communication towards an EU strategy on culture and its place in international relations. It followed by strategy documents and directions to the entire area of EU foreign policy.

4.2. Political power within the external cultural context

The observations are going to be mirrored with a few theoretical and empirical frameworks, Mintzberg's power theory, Honneths' postulate for recognition in a power-laden context, as well as Checkel (1998) constructivist approach to international relations theory. Political 'power plays', as named by Mintzberg (1983), might allow new merging power bases, which go beyond organizational, formal power structures. Along the lines of Mintzberg's approach, identified indications allow the framework of EU external cultural relations to be described as an 'ideological power system'. Referring to cultural differences seems to fulfil an alibi function, by being put forward in the case of difficulties or conflict, within the power discrepancies. Viewed through field observations and interviews, the distribution of power seems to be a taboo within multicultural project teams. EU cultural diplomacy aims to balance power stability internally, amongst partners.

5. THE COMPONENTS OF EU INTERCULTURAL ATTITUDES

5.1. Previous research on intercultural attitudes

Scholars from different disciplines have been conducting studies on assessing the meaning, role and importance of attitudes. Karakas (2013) studied intercultural attitudes as well as Stepanovienė (2011), who wrote that "*attitude is an inclination to favour or disfavour a specific entity with explicit or implicit indications of avoidance or approach. Intercultural attitudes could be described as those which emerge in contexts where contact among culturally divergent individuals is unavoidable.*" Krosnik et al. (2005) gave importance to "*an entity or object rather than all objects and situations with which it is related.*" While Hamburg (2011, quoted in Karakas 2013) perceived indications for intercultural attitudes, at the same time Osch and Brugelmans (2011) defined intercultural attitudes only as a result of interacting with different others. There are indications such as openness to, curiosity about and readiness for an individuals' behaviours. What Byram et al. (2001: 5) refer to as the ability to 'decentre' is used to explain the intercultural attitudes (*savoir-être*) such as "*curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other culture and belief about one's own. [...] It means a willingness to relativize one's values, beliefs and behaviours. It is not to assume that they are the only possible ones, but also how they look from the perspective of someone else with a different set of values, beliefs, and behaviours.*"

In this paper, intercultural attitudes are taken as EU's institutional readiness, eagerness, openness and willingness to learn

other cultures. As attitude is a psychological construct, which also considers individuals' practices and preferences, while working in teams (e.g., liking, disliking, empathy, tolerance of ambiguity, uncertainty avoidance, behavioural flexibility) which helps to evaluate institutional intercultural attitudes.

Stepanovienė (2011) analyzed students' perceptions, opinions, problems and curiosity related to intercultural communication in different countries. The study showed that students applied openness and willingness, while being engaged in intercultural communication. Still, some culturally bound topics were not addressed, such as personal affairs and religious beliefs. Other topics remained accessible and applicable. The study also showed a lack of intercultural knowledge. Following Stepanovienė's findings, mixing with other cultures in conversation exchanges creates positive attitudes. There is a certain hesitation, when personal and cultural issues (traditions, habits) are discussed. Xiao & Petraki (2007) identified the challenges in intercultural attitudes towards perceptions of others in communication preferences based on nationalities.

In another attitude survey research, conducted by Shaftel et al. (2007), the two-fold data tool in cross-cultural adaptability inventory brought 11 items, when collecting information about attitudes. They proposed three values: a) to learn about other cultures (willingness), b) to interact with foreign cultures (acceptance), c) to increase intercultural knowledge (openness). Attitudes change if there is an intercultural communication, following a positive direction towards tolerance, open-mindedness and emotional flexibility. EU external cultural strategy is becoming more aware of the importance of intercultural attitudes and their impact, among the staff and local partners.

Following findings of Karakas (2013), an intercultural attitude, is an inclination to favour or disfavour a specific entity with explicit or implicit indications of avoidance or approach. In the institutional contexts, intercultural attitude describes contacts, which inevitably happen among culturally divergent individuals.

6. DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS

6.1. EU Delegations – EU DEL

The EU Delegation, at the same time, represents embassies without a state and those with the supranational state. They have the particularity of their political situation in the host country. Still, all 27 EU Member States keep their embassies. The EU Delegation staff does not always consist of trained diplomats, although they perform diplomatic tasks. There is an adequate EU institutional training that helps staff to be more ready to perform in a specific foreign context, but there is no cultural diplomacy training, appropriate in a structural and a systemic way, except for the intercultural competence building. This training aims to build up staff awareness of the complexity, while working in multicultural teams, but still does not address the cultural project management.

a) Procedure challenges - cultural workers (artists/managers)

Cultural project managers, who have experience in project functioning and its outcome evaluation emphasize the procedural aspects of EU projects and their goals:

“I am a project thinker... I like the idea behind the European Union because if people talk to each other and then [they] also try to set up a plan for Europe.”

To be able to put into practice a complex and complicated EU collaboration among local partners, the EU Del and EUNIC, interactive relational strategy and focus on intercultural communication would confirm the underlying message from one of the participants.

b) Structures challenge - politics / economic interests of cultural actions

In many EU Del, staff members who are in charge of cultural affairs work in the press or operational units (sometimes the Deputy Head of the EU Del has this task). They are not qualified to design and manage cultural projects, with some exceptions (e.g., Japan, the USA). Cultural projects often promote the EU and are shown to the local audience with limited impact (with film festivals being an exception). Cultural operators, cultural organizations and cultural networks could bring bigger different reality in line with its diverse, professional and rich cultural offer.

6.2. National cultural institutes - EUNIC

EUNIC has been in existence since 2006. The aim has been to strengthen the Member states' cultural presence. Working together, it would enable the cultural projects to increase their impact and meaning of their presence. Today, EUNIC has 36 members. EUNIC is building together with EEAS the importance of the cultural dimension in the European Union's external relations.

The position of national cultural institutes abroad, their historical and political motives are not only related to their geographical priorities. Their presence in third countries has enabled them to create a network of offices.

The oldest national cultural institute abroad is the *Institut français* with a first office opened in Florence in 1907. The second was the *Instituto Italiano di Cultura* created in 1926, and the British Council came in 1934.

Cultural operators from different EU member states independently elaborate various cultural actions abroad. They do not necessarily share the same vision and understanding of what a cultural action is, what a cultural exchange means or cultural diplomacy entails.

Most activities carried out by the *Institut français* consist of providing access to another culture, thus encouraging intercultural dialogue promoted by the French cultural diplomacy operators. Events and support are initiated by the EU institutions as well as from the EU Del. This is the occasion to publicly recall the importance of shared European values, such as cultural diversity. "*The Institut français promotes French culture internationally, in dialogue with foreign cultures. It promotes initiatives related to various artistic fields, intellectual engagement, cultural and social innovation, and linguistic cooperation. It promotes the French language around the world, as well as the mobility of works of art, artists and ideas.*" (*Institut français*)

The main mission of the *Goethe-Institut* is intercultural dialogue through the medium of cultural and educational programmes. They help develop dialogue and mutual understanding between two or more cultures and countries. It enhances interpersonal contacts between country in which they operate and the EU, as to promote mutual understanding and exchange of best practice. When presenting its strategy on European cultural affairs, the *Goethe-Institut* stresses that transnational influences as important steps in strategic pan-European cultural

planning. *“We promote knowledge of the German language abroad and foster international cultural cooperation. We convey a comprehensive image of Germany by providing information about cultural, social and political life in our nation. Our cultural and educational programmes encourage intercultural dialogue and enable cultural involvement.” (Goethe -Institut)*

Intercultural dialogue is embedded in the very mandate of the *British Council* too. Its aim is to promote mutual understanding and foster social change. *“Our goal is to build bridges of trust and understanding among people around the world. Through our programmes, we give opportunities to hundreds of millions of people worldwide to learn about British culture and creativity.” (British Council)*

The Cervantes Institute works in collaboration with the European Commission through the creation and selection of partnership projects. They pay particular attention to intercultural dialogue, since sharing and exchanging between different cultures is seen as very important for the achievement of the Institute’s main objective. Therefore, the Cervantes Institute allows each centre to manage and to create the activities adapted to each location. There is no formal mention of EU values in the statute of the Instituto Cervantes. *“The Cervantes Institute, a government agency, is the largest organization in the world responsible for promoting the study and the teaching of Spanish language and culture.” (Instituto Cervantes).*

The cultural institutes’ official missions may vary from one to another. The British Council goal is expressed using the words “trust” and “understanding among people around the world”, while the Goethe Institut is looking “to cooperate internationally” with a service-oriented approach.

They also clearly stated the words “inter-cultural dialogue” and “cultural involvement”. The *Institute français* claims “to promote French culture” and various fields of arts and also social and intellectual innovations. Interestingly enough, the *Instituto Cervantes* in its mission statement uses the word “government” that shapes the image of nation-state agency in teaching the Spanish language. Difficulties lie in mixing up various levels of their images of what needs to be done nationally without mentioning the European dimension.

The question is how to go beyond the national interests, beyond defending the traditional views of external cultural actions. In this case, the observed approach of cultural diplomacy is the one that seems to be the one used in the past models, often inspired by a few EU member states, such as the model of French cultural diplomacy.

Even more importantly, the question of how and whether cultural action is connected to or depended upon politics and diplomacy is a matter of inconsistency among EU stakeholders (Babaci et al., 2013). It means that the nation state funds only a minor part of their budget and the institutes’ headquarters, regional networks and local institutes develop strategies with little or no guidance coming from the nation state. They are not separated from the policy in power, which means their strategies are determined by the respective national governments.

EUNIC’s mission statement is *“Building trust and understanding between the people of Europe and the world through culture”*.

The aims of EUNIC are:

- bringing different partner countries together

- working on joint European projects
- providing a platform to smaller partners offering visibility
- aiming to have a voice in policy development and
- influencing policy-making institutions.

The EUNIC network agreed to consult with the EU Del and to be supervised by them, which has been following the arrangements with the EEAS (2017). They agreed to have the pilot activities testing phase (between headquarters and cultural institutes, partner countries). It included various aspects of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Since 2012, EUNIC has received €970,000. In 2014, the budget was allocated by the Creative Europe Programme, which was again renewed in 2017 for an additional cycle until 2020. A total of 119 Cluster Fund projects benefited from this financial support.

With regard to the above mentioned EUNIC network of national cultural institutes, which unites national cultural institutes through a dense network of “clusters”, nationally influenced perspectives sometimes lead to conflicts and antagonism among partner institutes, as illustrated below by their directors (Babaci 2013):

- *“There is an issue of vision and different understanding of the ambitions of cultural relations. It always seems to be the lowest common denominator, and it tends to be a film festival or a book festival or whatever.” (British Council);*
- *“We still have not been able to realize a common vision of cultural relations with EUNIC yet.” (Austrian Cultural Center);*
- *“In fact, the main problem with EUNIC is a consequence of institutional egotisms.” (Goethe Institute).*

6.3. EU cultural project management

Curricula and training modules that could help diversify and increase the complexity of potential intercultural collaborations need to be further developed. Cooperation between cultural institutes and higher education establishments could be encouraged. The participation of cultural operators and artists from partner, host countries, who would not be able to follow otherwise, could be fostered. Furthermore, it could all be supported by an e-learning platform. There are three dimensions of EU cultural project management, namely procedure, structure and power, which have their respective challenges:

a) *Procedural challenges - cultural workers*

The practices and needs of the EU Del and artists are not the same, but the interest is - to promote diversity in joint participative cultural projects. It is of significant importance to take into consideration cultural, national differences, as they become a significant marker of diversity in EU projects.

a) *Structural challenges - economic interests of cultural actions*

The reality is that cultural institutes are fighting for funding, and are seeing opportunities in the EU calls for projects. Those who managed to get information on calls for proposals and who have the human resources to respond have an advantage. Many partners perceive the EU as a complex organization and a demanding financial partner. Cultural operators claim that it is complicated to cooperate, because of the bureaucratic nature of the institutional procedures.

b) *Power discrepancies: conflicts as indicators*

Several indicators can be considered relevant to develop insights into power balance. From the communication point of view – the high and low contexts of sharing the information within the team become more present from the linguistic, hierarchical, and value aspects. Furthermore, a specific kind of power distribution between the “local staff” and the “Europeans” can be observed.

Several participants said that people had to change and adapt their communications styles and humor. A Dutch participant responded:

“... It is both the language and culture. When he came in, there was this typical kind of Dutch-accepted humour, making jokes, but the very second week he realized, when he saw the face of the other [person], ‘Oh, damn, this is so Dutch.’ They did not get it, and somebody could have even interpreted as offensive.”

The *hierarchy conflict* is presented in the context of power distance, e.g., by mentioning the lack of fairness and imposing national culture from the manager as the use of stereotypes within a network of people from the same national background, when referring to others, outside their group.

The *value conflict* stated significant discrepancies between Europeans’

self-perception and the perception of the others. European staff listed European values (self-perception) that are very close to the overarching institutional values on a macro level (Simic et al., 2017).

6.3.1. Case study - Tanzania delegation

As the following example shows, interaction and collaboration modes in EU institutions seem to be strongly affected by the institutions’ nature, vision, mission and goals and consequently by the agents’ roles and expected contributions to the European project. In the EU Delegation in Tanzania, there is a significant discrepancy between Europeans’ self-perception and the perception of others (see Table 1). European staff listed European values (self-perception) that are very close to the overarching institutional values on a macro level. Those values are in the European treaties or the UNESCO convention, and are promoted and seen by the EU institutions and partners through diplomacy and cultural action. Local, Tanzanian staff (an outsider view) perceived the most prominent “European” values that seem to link back to specific situations at work, as well as attitudes and behaviours of their European colleagues; they used adjectives rather than nouns.

Table 1. Main values perceived by Europeans and Tanzanian co-workers

Tanzania, September 2016	Perceived by expats (European official of EU Del)	Perceived by ‘locals’ (Tanzanian employees of EU Del)
Main values of European culture (s)	freedom (movement, expression, religion, media); equality; tolerance; education diversity; well-being; history	time management; straightforward; liberal/flexible; sensitivity; individualistic; stereotypical biases/perceptions; respectful; goal-oriented; fun/adventurous

Main values of Tanzania culture(s)	family/community (responsibility/roles); tolerance/respect (consensus/courtesy); national identity/pride (Swahili culture); avoid open conflict at all costs (problems stayed unresolved); religion's importance in daily life	greetings/respect; friendly/hospitality; compassionate; one common language; extended family; equality/not arrogant (humble); generous; peaceful
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Source: Simic (2016)

Regarding the “local self-perception”, i.e. values of the local Tanzanian culture, the Tanzanian self-image also varies quite significantly from the European staff’s perceptions. Individual statements from the expats (European staff) reveal that the “perception of the other” is seen through the lenses of personal experiences, but even more so through the filter of institutionally determined EU values. Statements from the European staff on Tanzanian values are interpretations and often even judgements of the behaviour: “they avoid open conflict at all price”, which can be seen as a judgmental interpretation based on EU determined values like freedom of expression or transparency. They also interpret pride as an indicator of national identity, a notion that is not accept by Tanzanians, and possibly does not even exist in their concept of social belonging. However, it expresses the concern for the European staff on different positions and the meaning that the team gives to the national identity.

7. DISCUSSION

It would be relevant to explore how common denominators interact among various partners, such as the EEAS or EUNIC with its 36 national institutes, national ministries and local partners. However, cultural differences seem to fulfil an alibi function by being put forward in the case

of difficulties or conflict within the power discrepancies present. Observed frequent diversity tensions and challenges are a consequence of miscommunication and stereotypes, e.g. among agents in the EU Del or between EU and local agents. The paper illustrates how the current approach and structures, as well as an understanding of power relations within this context might have emerged over the past few years.

The exploratory study provides insights using descriptive examples; however, without statistical relevance the research represents a particular limitation in the global overview of the topic. On top of discourse analysis and interviews, there are also shared insights from daily fieldwork from several other EU Del, such as Burundi, Israel, and Ukraine.

As a practical implication, the one-way communication from “dominant” to “dominated” nations/stakeholders and individuals appears to be a barrier for deeper grounded intercultural dialogue between potential change agents, whether they are local, national or at the EU level, and goes beyond their cultural differences. Raising awareness of the perceived status gaps among key stakeholders and change agents in the field might contribute over time to a more balanced collaboration mode in European external cultural relations.

7.1. Model of cultural diplomacy

Isar (2015) focuses on the agenda-setting complexity processes in the evolution of the Culture in External Relations agenda by the need of reshaping the European narrative “in a pattern rather distinct from how national governments elaborate cultural diplomacy”. It looks like a unique occasion to promote the EU cultural diplomacy values.

There are seemingly not yet enough visible signs that EU values will converge towards a global cultural citizenship. EEAS, together with the EU Del and EUNIC, have to do better in dealing with otherness and consider the importance of EU intercultural diplomatic relations without defending EU values exclusively. Finding ways of reflecting on the gap between the European self-image and the way Europeans are perceived through external actions might help to raise awareness on persisting obstacles. This paper shows there are power asymmetries in the EU cultural diplomacy, inhibiting a common, intercultural open evolution. Weber (2008) identified the notion of new dimension within the transnational networks where he explains the meaning of territoriality which is situated permanently on the crossroads between transnational dynamics and local logic. This can involve “*different forms of expression, between conformity and deviance, order and disorder*” (Weber, 2008: 7-10).

European cultural networks, since they have been set up, have adopted different ways of collaboration. In complex situations, they need to explore different ways of collaborating and interacting collectively towards common goals and vision with different partners. The notion of cultural diplomacy is a prerequisite for developing a supranational model of cross-cultural exchange. Cultural diplomacy equally valorizes the general interest as well as

strategic national interests. Is it the role of and opportunity for the EU to enable cultural diplomacy to move beyond the member states’ national interests? Only if this move itself also becomes the (inter)national interest.

In the context of European external cultural relations, the notion of power and influence is visible on the macro level, simultaneously building up a common European image and increasing cultural, but also political influence. On the other hand, daily interactions in the field among European representatives (the EU Del and EUNIC) and non-European partners and staff are also affected by national interests, local conditions and constraints.

It is essential to consider the question of how local partners would like to see the cultural exchange with the EU and how a new EU narrative and image would emerge and develop. Analyzing intercultural interactions not only on the macro but also on the micro/institutional level is also relevant.

The EEAS might become a platform to trigger a change in the new international cultural relations paradigm. Different EU players, such as the EEAS, European Commission and different directorates, EU Del, European Parliament, European Council, European Cultural Foundation, EUNIC, various local authorities, NGOs need to find ways to put into effective practice their common cultural experience and richness, together with cultural managers, artists and other cultural workers.

8. CONCLUSION

The commitment to diversity cultural expressions worldwide through the network of EU Del and EUNIC presents an ambiguous challenge. EU’s external cultural

relations encourage intercultural exchanges to become more balanced and inclusive partnerships between countries.

Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, held a speech at the European Culture Forum Conference: Culture at the heart of Europe's External action in Brussels⁹, in 2016, where she stated that culture can be the place, where people meet and make the most out of their diversity. This is the choice made, when the EU was founded. Exchanges made Europe richer, not weaker. Culture in Europe is always plural – because so many different cultures belong in the continent. European culture means diversity.

Cultural diversity is becoming a strategy, among others, in the EU geopolitics. The future direction of EU Del/EUNIC will depend on the balanced power commitment of multiple stakeholders, so as to constitute a European vision of cultural action and intercultural dialogues in Europe and the world. For future intercultural research, the scope conditions for future EU external cultural action need to be explored:

- Regarding constructivist approach: how do the cultural project conceal the ethnocentric desire for cultural assimilation?
- Regarding power rivalries: how do actors, individual or institutional ones refer to their local partners, how do they treat to each other?

In the context of European external cultural relations, the notion of power and influence is visible on the macro level, as the mission behind cultural action is, among other tasks, to build a common EU image

and to increase the cultural, but also political influence. On the other hand, daily interactions in the field among the European representatives (EU Del and EUNIC) and non-European partners and staff are affected by national interests. They also mirror the local conditions, constraints and influences of external alliances and personal relationships.

The recognition of the strength of a bottom-up, new, co-created vision might be a way to reduce dependencies on political and economic interests regarding cultural activities, to establish authentic intercultural dialogue and interpersonal interactions.

The EU image is based on European values and is influenced by an interaction with non-European partners. The image of EU is also the self-image that the Europeans develop as a fundamental component of their political identity. While analyzing the discourse of EU institutions on the macro, meso and micro levels, observations show the persistence of an essentialist and a relatively static approach. Identities in multicultural societies deserve to be permanently and continuously conceptually revisited.

The research has demonstrated the added value of EEAS/EUNIC/EU Del strategically envisaged cultural diplomacy. It brought up the arguments that would highlight the EU's external relations while significantly: a) enhancing intercultural dialogue, b) promoting cultural diversity and c) strengthening solidarity between different communities. The research also revealed the substantial values of the EU external strategy. The research framed the impact of external EU image through various involved actors and their intercultural

9 <http://www.federicamogherini.net/my-speech-at-the-european-culture-forum-2016-brussels/?lang=en>

attitudes by identifying the process and relevance of cultural synergies. Moreover, it showed the strengths and weaknesses, with a view of the contribution to the EU image abroad. It identified partners' similarities, while promoting the EU as united in diversity and while increasing opportunities for Europe to develop connections between all macro and micro actors.

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VAŽNOST VANJSKE KULTURNE SINERGIJE EU-A: STRATEGIJA VANJSKOG DJELOVANJA I INSTITUCIONALNI INTERKULTURNI STAVOVI

Ljiljana Simić

Sažetak

Europska unija (EU) je nadideološki konstrukt u trajnoj mijeni. Europsku službu za vanjsko djelovanje (eng. the European External Action Service, EEAS) su promjene tijekom vremena dovele do razvoja kulturne strategije. Vanjska kulturna strategija EU-a koja uzima u obzir složenost političke i društvene stvarnosti definira dva osnovna koraka prikazana u ovom istraživanju: a) analizu interkulturalne strategije EU-a i b) ulogu i mjesto delegacija EU-a (eng. EU Dels) i mreže Nacionalnih instituta za kulturu Europske unije (eng. European Union National Institutes for Culture, EUNIC). Analizi, koja se temelji na kvalitativnom pristupu, podvrgnute su različite institucionalne manifestacije razlika u moći i statusu u EU-u na makro i mikro institucionalnoj razini. Kako EU uspijeva prenijeti svoje vrijednosti i identitet u kontekstu potencijalnih kulturnih i ideoloških razlika? Čini li se da je „želja da se razumije drugi“ zanemarena, dok je, čini se, „želja da nas netko razumije“ postala pokretač interkulturalnog stava EU-a? Cilj je ovog rada identificirati proces i važnost kulturnih sinergija EU-a i njihove vanjske interkulturalne slike putem različitih uključenih aktera.

Ključne riječi: kulturna diplomacija, vanjska kulturna politika, delegacije EU-a, EUNIC, interkulturalna slika EU-a