EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Abstract
The objective of the study is to have a better understanding of the role that the national cultural institutes of EU Member States could play in a European strategy for culture in the EU's external relations. It analyses the strengths and weaknesses of their missions, structures and resources. This analysis is aimed at determining whether their activities have a European dimension and whether they would be able to assist the EU in further promoting its priorities and fundamental values in third countries. On the basis of this analysis, the study sets out a number of policy recommendations, including a set of guiding principles for the effective pooling and sharing of resources between the cultural institutes and the EU institutions to achieve scale and thus increase the visibility of EU actions abroad. Furthermore it proposes models of cooperation, incentives and commitments, eligibility criteria for EU-funded projects as well as pilot projects.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The European Union (EU) should endeavour to use its cultural and creative assets to better assert its influence around the world. Today, this is as important as its political and economic power. To do so, it should fully embrace culture in its external relations with a view to reaching out more widely to local populations and organising collaborative events to promote its values and priorities. Cultural relations with third countries can be broad and cover the cultural and creative sectors, civil society, education, development as well as the sharing of fundamental values with people in different countries.

The EU institutions are currently reflecting on a European strategy for cultural diplomacy. The process is still in its early stages and investigations into a potential European mechanism of cooperation are underway. These reflections come at an interesting time, when paradigm shifts are occurring at both European and national levels. There is a growing interest in developing collaborative projects to increase mutual understanding and trust with people outside the EU. Events that merely showcase national culture or focus on nation branding are becoming less relevant, as they are no longer seen as an effective tool to improve (cultural) relations outside the EU.

The objective of this study is to have a better understanding of the role that the national cultural institutes (CIs) of EU Member States (EU MS) could (potentially) play in a new European strategy for cultural diplomacy and to make a number of recommendations for a feasible model of cooperation with the EU institutions.

Among the CIs of the EU MS there is great variety in terms of size, governance and management (centralised or decentralised models), budget, number of offices outside the EU, staff employed as well as their involvement in EU projects and promotion of the EU's values. Jointly they represent a diverse and extended network of offices in and outside the EU. Altogether, the 29 CIs selected for this study have 914 offices in the EU and 1,253 offices outside the EU, employing approximately 30,000 people worldwide and producing a global turnover of more than EUR 2.3 billion per year.

Research has shown that the mission and mandate of the vast majority of these CIs operating abroad are still focused on the promotion of their national culture and language(s) (e.g. through the organisation of cultural events such as exhibitions, concerts, film screenings and conferences targeting a local audience). This represents the core of the activities carried out by 25 of the 29 CIs chosen for this study. Although the mission statements of the CIs do not prominently promote the EU and its values, the European dimension of their activities and their interest in increasing collaboration at European level in cultural relations can, to a certain extent, be witnessed through their membership in the European Network of National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) and MORE EUROPE as well as through their participation in EU-funded projects and programmes in third countries.

Collaboration with the CIs would have a number of advantages for the EU institutions, partly compensating for some of the weaknesses manifested by the EU delegations when dealing with cultural relations. The main benefits are: access to a wide network of offices and skilled staff around the world; the strategic awareness of the heads of the CIs operating in third countries; more opportunities to develop trusted and credible partnerships with civil society; good relations with EU delegations; expertise in cultural projects; and the potential alignment with the EU's strategy for cultural diplomacy as well as its geographical and thematic priorities.

There are also potential risks for the EU institutions in cooperating (exclusively or predominately) with CIs. Their main weaknesses are that they have no mandate in their
statutes or mission statements to carry out EU-relevant activities. They are national organisations whose main mission is still to represent and promote their national interests. European issues and diplomatic priorities are rarely integrated in the overall strategies and work programmes of each individual CI. The CIs also still lack a common approach/vision to cultural diplomacy/cultural relations. Other weaknesses include budgetary constraints on the financial and human resources of the CIs, and the lack of capacity and experience in carrying out EU-funded projects among some of the smaller CIs. There is also a risk of monopolising EU cultural resources and funds for cooperation with the CIs to the detriment of other cultural stakeholders which are genuinely European organisations and networks in the cultural and creative sector.

The study concludes that CIs are already participating in several EU projects on cultural relations in third countries. Pooling their expertise and resources would therefore work in the interests of the EU as well as individual EU MS. More joint activities would contribute to increasing the visibility of the EU around the globe. The study recommends that cooperation between the CIs and the EU institutions should be based on the following four principles:

1. **CIs should be given a clear mandate by their national governments to be able to act as a European network or as an operator of EU-funded programmes.**

2. **CIs should carry out actions that are in line with the key messages of the Preparatory Action for Culture in External Relations, by engaging in a new way with people outside the EU through collaboration, listening and dialogue rather than national projection, and encouraging a true spirit of mutuality and reciprocity in all projects and activities implemented.**

3. **CIs should respect certain obligations before being entrusted with an EU-wide mission. Such obligations could be listed in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the European External Action Service/European Commission and a European representative body of the CIs.**

4. **CIs should be encouraged and incentivised to work with NGOs and public/private organisations to contribute to pan-European networking and to increase opportunities for European cultural operators to be active in third countries. EU-funded projects should mainly be implemented by cultural organisations and professionals.**

Provided CIs are in a position to develop European projects and support policies as part of their activities, the following types of incentives could be considered:

1. **Closer consultation** of the CIs (not excluding other European cultural stakeholders) in the development of a European strategy for cultural diplomacy/cultural relations and its action programme.

2. **Setting up of a consultation** vehicle enabling a permanent dialogue with EU institutions and delegations to discuss initiatives, exchange experiences and consider joint actions.

3. **Financial support** to encourage joint actions and the pooling of resources (via match-funding) to reward projects with a European dimension and promoting European values.

Finally, a list of pilot projects is proposed to determine the most appropriate form of cooperation between CIs and the EU institutions.