

The role of cultural diplomacy in the integration process - an Eastern European perspective

From cultural diplomacy to cultural relations: Designing a pedagogy for a European public space

Introduction

The latest developments of ongoing debates around the cultural dimension of European foreign policy and also around the need for a common European cultural policy bring about in Eastern Europe (be it in EU member countries or not) a number of questions that we must address.

Firstly, we believe that the broad diplomatic circles in Europe are still victims of a 'cold war' mentality and, despite serious efforts of restructuring the intergovernmental and national agencies in charge with foreign affairs matters, these mentalities represent one of the important obstacles in revisiting notions related to common European values.

Secondly, we believe that the 11th of September and the war in Irak revealed to the international arena the dimension of hidden divides between ways to understand the meaning, the instruments and the limits of what we call democratic behaviour.

Last but not least, the homogenous notion of national cultural policy, so relevant during the last century, needs more and more to be replaced by trans-national patterns, based on the natural acceptance of connective cultural diversities, co-existing inside the same state.

What is our objective

We would like to launch a long term process of:

1. bottom up analysis regarding the degree of awareness of these common issues among the foreign diplomacy and cultural cooperation institutions that presently deal with them;
2. voice the specific concerns of the Eastern European region in this respect;
3. determine a full range of institutional, not only individual, degree of participation in the European integration process;



ECUMEST ASSOCIATION

14 Batiștei St., 020937 Bucharest, Romania

Tel / Fax: +40 21 212 21 00 E-mail: ecumest@ecumest.ro Website: www.ecumest.ro

4. facilitate an autonomous standing position of Eastern European cultural diplomacy within the already mentioned debates;
5. offer a space of neutral debate about these issues to all European cultural diplomatic and cooperation agencies, whose functioning has registered only slight changes compared to the pattern of pre-fall of iron curtain or of pre-Irak events;
6. offer to processes already engaged by the British Council, French and German institutes, another opportunity to mutualise the complexity of the efforts for change engaged at institutional and human resource level.

Cultural diplomatic agencies seem to us the most adapted example of existing institutional actors that should be concerned with the notion of European values, democratic behaviour and cultural diversity, and the various interpretations given to these notions by 'old' and 'new' Europe, by new EU members or by those aspiring to become one.

General questions to address

The questions that we would like to address regard broadly the role of cultural diplomacy and cultural relations agencies in the EU integration process and in the design of the emerging European public space.

How do these agencies define their role and mission after the fall of communism and which are the instruments they employ in order to implement the new guiding values they are bearers of?

Who is in charge of designing the gradual pedagogy that helps integrate these processes and who is in charge of designing and leading the new 'philosophical' and visionary dimension of cultural diplomatic agencies?

What are the approaches of Eastern Cultural diplomacy agents towards critical matters such as:

- Cultural values and the free market
- The notion of democracy / the models of democracy
- The role of cultural cooperation in the enlargement process
- The specificity and importance of Eastern European regional cultural cooperation
- The risk that new EU borders will produce more exclusion than inclusion
- The Euro-Atlantic issue
- The European identity and Turkey

What kind of institutions exist for cultural diplomacy in Eastern Europe, what changes did they go through in the last decade?

What kind of cultural diplomacy would suit the radical transformations in the Eastern Europe?

Planned schedule

The process we engage is supposed to be developed on the long term and produce a raising of awareness, at institutional levels, on the strong need to more consistently and systematically address these matters.

Therefore, we launch this process in a bottom up, informal way, through: expert consultation, meeting of existing cultural agencies in Romania, building of a core content resulted from cross fertilisation between debate, consultation, feedback from diverse participants, publication of articles and arguments on the issue. (January-September 2005)

After this first phase, a number of conclusions are going to be drawn and a task force on the matter set up. The follow up actions are going to be designed in accordance with the results and ideas that had emerged and they are going to be planned between autumn 2005 and autumn 2006, in preparation of the new enlargement phase.

This programme is part of the ECUMEST Association action line:
European integration facilitators