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Corporate Cultural Diplomacy: the cultural ecosystem within which Cyprus should pursue cultural sustainability in an interdependent world with a scent of polymerization and regionalism ^[1]

Editor's Note: This article has been published in two parts. For part 2, please click [here](#).

Part 1: The transition from cultural promotion to Corporate Cultural Diplomacy

The digital forms of human interaction have given rise to a completely new phenomenon in the area of intercultural communication. This type of communication, as opposed to traditional governmental forms of cultural diplomacy usually applied by states, advocates cosmopolitan, supranational messages and values, well beyond any obsolete unilateral promotion of national civilizations and traditions. What is more, this new form of cultural diplomacy has a powerful economic component which, on the one hand, ensures an autonomous character of international activity, removed from the government's direct control and, on the other hand, brings into play a new corporate policy. Nevertheless, just like governmental forms of diplomacy, the online expression of contemporary cultural diplomacy has two dimensions: cultural promotion and public relations.

At the same time, the accelerated digital reality appears to open new horizons in terms of the dissemination of the museum cultural "product," acting *mutatis mutandis* as a multiplier of nation and/or corporate branding. In the case of the *New Museum* in Cyprus - an architecturally distinctive building that is scheduled for construction - taking into account the plethora of profitable digital technology companies seated on the island, a model of corporate cultural diplomacy could very well be applied, whereby such companies contribute to this specific sector through a carefully structured legal framework regarding the attraction of foreign investors. Such an initiative would provide a win-win situation both for Cyprus itself, in terms of practicing public diplomacy and promoting its nation brand, and also for the involved companies' brands. This would result in the development of museum diplomacy which, according to [Priewe](#) , has the potential to reshape the diplomatic landscape, in terms of a country's acceptance within the international system.

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accompanying provided services.

In neighboring Greece, cultural diplomacy is by and large implemented and developed by private bodies and enterprises, outside state level. The will, but also the ability, of these companies to engage with cultural diplomacy is truly significant. In the case of Cyprus, if such engagement takes place in a coordinated way, through collaboration with national bodies in alignment with national and EU laws, we believe that it will not only significantly change the country's cultural promotion and nation branding, but it can also partly modify the cultural chessboard of the wider region. In other words, the organizations and/or businesses seated in Cyprus, or contemplating to establish a regional seat on the island, in line with the European corporate governance framework and legislation, could provide a cross-border basis of cultural collaborations with equivalent agencies in neighboring countries. Such an initiative could curb the expansion of cultural prejudices and replace them with a genuine framework of respect, tolerance, collaboration and inclusion.

In the following paragraphs, a stream of specific sectors and initiatives are proposed in the form of brainstorming, to be considered as possible undertakes on the level of corporate cultural diplomacy in Cyprus. First of all, Renewable Energy Companies could contribute to environmental education in partnership with the competent department of the Pedagogical Institute, in the context of a private initiative to provide seminars on green transition. Also, education scholarships could be offered in collaboration with universities, and temporary exhibitions set up together with museums in Cyprus, possibly on the subject of energy transition from the Industrial Revolution to present day or on digital green transition and Renewable Energy Sources.

At the same time, companies/organizations may opt to develop Corporate Social Responsibility bi-communal programs, such as that of the *Stelios Philanthropic Foundation*, aiming to create a Cyprus problem resolution culture - which we consider to be an excellent form of public diplomacy - and a common path to development through joint cultural events: joint exhibitions, joint theatrical performances, concerts, museum exhibitions, etc.

Nevertheless, the sector that we believe is best fit to launch Corporate Cultural Diplomacy initiatives is the maritime sector and companies seated, and active, in Cyprus. According to data provided by the Deputy Ministry of Shipping, 46 large shipping companies are active, contributing 7% of Cyprus' GDP. The Registry of the Republic of Cyprus is ranked third in Europe and eleventh in the world, which significantly enhances its competitiveness based on a favorable legal framework for taxation, and relevant incentives, drawing the picture of an extroverted business culture with its accompanying provided services. Therefore, these companies could join forces to either establish or sponsor a School of Maritime Studies or a Ship Captain School within a state university. Moreover, energy tycoons active in the Exclusive Economic Zone of Cyprus could also focus on CSR programs. Worthy of note is the fact that Eurobank S.A., the second largest bank in the world financing Greece-owned or Cyprus-owned shipping companies, is largely devoted to Environmental Society & Governance (ESG) programs within Greece, sponsoring, among other things, prestigious artistic productions, more particularly of the Greek National Opera. The same could be applied in the case of Cyprus, given the parallel sponsoring of shipping companies. All things considered, it must be understood that the drafting and implementation of a strategy covering all three axes of ESG stands to benefit the business itself but also its human resources and society. What is more, a significant aspect of ESG programs is associated with Diversity, Equity and Inclusion while, as pointed out by the International Chamber of Shipping, there is a

paradox at work in the shipping sector, concerning gender inequality in terms of employment, in spite of the diversity of nationalities in crews and employees. Integration and inclusion make up another significant aspect. Therefore, shipping companies could enlist the help of experts to draw up specialized programs focusing on diversity and inclusion. If this is achieved and the disproportionate gap is tackled, companies are bound to become more profitable, whilst attracting more talented human resources, increasing their efficiency and therefore, drawing on higher profits, make greater cyclical contributions to society, the environment and, of course, culture.
