

Implementing the EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations— Toward a New Paradigm

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Abstract

Despite the generalized recognition that culture can support diplomatic efforts, authors are divided as to whether all forms of cultural action in this context are compatible with public diplomacy. Specifically, some authors propose that cultural relations (CR) can be understood as an example of “new public diplomacy” (Melissen 2005: 21-22). Other authors disagree with this assessment. They suggest that the practice of cultural relations opposes the self-interested aims of public diplomacy and is, therefore, in tension with it (Ang, Isar and Mar 2015).

We see this divide as an interesting tension that is sidestepped—but only seemingly so—by the European Union’s own approach to cultural relations, which is articulated in the Strategy for International Cultural Relations (European Commission 2016, henceforth referred to as ICR). The document advocates for the integration of cultural action within the EU’s foreign policy instruments and has been gradually taking over European public diplomacy.

Although it is growing, the academic literature dedicated to cultural relations and the EU’s ICR is limited. Additionally, the practicalities surrounding the implementation of this transnational model remain mostly unexamined (Rose 2017). This report addresses this gap by joining an emerging body of international relations scholarship that is aligned with practice theory (Lechner and Frost 2018), following the foundational work of Alessandro G. Lamonica for Isernia and Lamonica’s forthcoming publication. This allows us to focus on the *practice* of the EU’s approach to CR.

This report asks the following questions: What are the main fields of knowledge, skills and competencies that ICR managers must hold? To what extent does the management

of ICR projects differ from that of public diplomacy and cultural management programs? What should be the main learning outcomes of continuing professional development programs aimed at training ICR managers? Having answers to these questions will help practitioners respond to the challenges that are likely to emerge during the implementation of ICR in third countries. In the future, it may also help experts develop effective training programs to strengthen the design and implementation of cultural relations programs beyond the context of the EU's foreign action.

Based on interviews with fifteen ICR experts as well as cultural actors, members of EU delegations, and staff of cultural institutes involved in six European Spaces of Culture pilot projects in Benin, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, Mongolia, Sri Lanka and the U.S. (2019–2021), whose findings were triangulated with academic research and gray literature, the report concludes that the successful delivery of the EU's approach to cultural relations requires a combination of knowledge, skills and competencies that cannot be provided by either diplomatic or cultural management training alone. This leads us to identify what we name the International Cultural Relations Management paradigm.

Introduction

The relation between diplomacy and culture has become increasingly complex. This results from broader changes to diplomacy. Transnational challenges (such as climate change, global inequality and the COVID-19 pandemic) highlight the limits of states and official actors to provide solutions by working on their own. This has reinforced the importance of global policy networks, combining public and private actors (Reinecke 1999), and consequently has strengthened what some have identified as a network approach to diplomacy (Hocking 2005).

In practice, this has led to a multiplication of the models that are available to embed culture in foreign affairs. Diplomats can now choose between two main paradigms: cultural diplomacy (broadly, a top-down, one-sided practice illustrated namely by the French Alliance Française and the Spanish Instituto Cervantes; we will refer to it as CD) and cultural relations (broadly, a bottom-up, two-sided, collaborative process employed by the United Kingdom and Germany, as aforementioned referred to as CR in this paper). A bottom-up approach is by definition more inclusive, but its management and the demonstration of its impact is more complex; conversely, a top-down framework is easier to design, deliver and evaluate but less likely to have a transformative, long-lasting impact on the relationships between states (or transnational entities) and peoples in foreign countries. Therefore, the difference between CD and CR is not merely semantic. CD supports a traditional approach to diplomacy while CR is profoundly revolutionary. The latter redefines who are the actors of diplomacy, the timeframe in which it operates, and how its success should be measured. Additionally, the CR paradigm makes a conscious shift from the national to the transnational domain as its main point of reference. That is, they support

profoundly different understandings of the actors and aims of diplomacy.

This said, despite being strongly aligned with the CR approach, the EU's 2016 Strategy for International Cultural Relations (European Commission 2016), which embedded culture in the the Union's foreign action, does not question the ability of Member States (MS) to engage in CD. Instead, the document stresses that the use of culture for diplomatic purposes by its MS is to be accompanied (and not replaced) by the EU's own work in this domain. The choice of the CR paradigm is consistent with this supplementary approach; with it, the EU is able to respect requests from the Parliament and the Council to strengthen ties among EU actors and to reinforce cooperation with existing partners across the planet.

Indeed, the ICR approach (which states that "the respect for cultural diversity and freedom of expression that is fostered by culture provides important support for democratisation processes," European Commission 2016: 7) makes a link between diversity and democratization that is informed by UNESCO's Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2003, and see Dâmaso and Murray 2021). Although an evaluation of the continued relevance (or lack thereof) of the idea of soft power (Nye 2004) vis-à-vis the ICR framework is outside the scope of this report, it should be noted that the EU's ICR, both in light of its governance and of the aims that it serves, changes the main function and the focus of the diplomatic use of culture away from persuasion or attraction (of third countries by the EU's values) toward strengthening civil society from the bottom-up (in third countries through the shared design and enactment of EU-funded activities in collaboration with local organizations, EU actors and the cultural institutes of its Member States).

This situation provides multiple challenges for cultural actors on the ground, who must navigate the demands of a not yet well-known policy with a complex governance model that serves ambitious, long-term foreign policy goals. Additionally, in some cases (e.g., when an ICR project is co-led by the cultural institute of MS, as we will discuss below), staff must navigate within the same institution the logic of national interests and one-sided CD on the one hand, and transnational, dialogue-based ICR on the other hand. Finally, as our findings suggest, staff members working in Delegations must also negotiate the emerging division between opposing priorities: short-term strategic communications (which focuses on the dissemination of positive messages about the EU) and long-term ICR (which builds trust through collaboration).

Despite these tensions, a systematic discussion of how to prepare ICR managers has yet to take place. This process can begin with the identification of the main knowledge fields, skills and competences (henceforth known as KSC) that are required to successfully manage ICR projects by the EU in third countries. To identify them, we interviewed ICR experts as well as cultural actors and the staff of EU delegations and cultural institutes involved in six European Spaces of Culture pilot projects in Benin, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Ethiopia, Mongolia, Sri Lanka and the U.S. (2019–2021).

Our findings suggest that the management of ICR must be understood 1) as a distributed *practice* whose main node differs according to the specific project and its context and that 2) to be consistent with the aims and values of the ICR, there is a need for flexibility in the identification of the KSC that are required for its management. This is why we propose to design specialized Continuing Professional Development (henceforth referred to as CPD) around a flexible set of modules to be understood as a toolbox.

Before advancing, it is important to briefly explain the relevance of practice theory to the analysis of ICR. Silviya Lechner and Mervyn Frost state that a practice “constitutes a meaningful framework for interaction” (Lechner and Frost 2018: 3). The ICR corresponds to this definition in that it is a policy regulating the interactions between the actors of a multilevel institution and external stakeholders based on their commitment to collaboration as a pathway to strengthening trust. That is, the ICR provides a “common framework of rules governing the interaction of a multitude of individuals” (Lechner and Frost 2018: 14) who “understand themselves to be jointly following the rules” (Lechner and Frost 2018: 127) and, therefore, work as partners with a shared purpose. Finally, a practice is “common to its participants in a ... normative sense” (Lechner and Frost 2018: 14). Importantly, the ICR is value-driven.

Although our conclusions and recommendations are designed with the ICR (and, therefore, with the EU) in mind, the flexible approach that we propose is likely to be relevant in other contexts. Specifically, the report’s findings may support the work of non-EU diplomats guided by the aims of strengthening long-term trust between peoples and working collaboratively with civil society actors to achieve common aims, e.g., the Sustainable Development Goals.

Methodology

The findings of this report were achieved with a triangulation approach. The research started with a desk-based literature review; this was followed by fifteen semi-structured interviews via Zoom or Skype and email in June 2021. Finally, the findings of both research phases were combined.

First, to identify the particularities of the paradigm of International Cultural Relations Management, we examined academic literature focused on public diplomacy, EU diplomacy and cultural relations studies as well as a variety of documents and reports authored or commissioned by the European institutions and national cultural institutes, among other organizations. This desk-based literature review was inspired by the broad typology of public diplomacy, cultural management and cultural relations, which supported a process composed of the following elements: “the identification of a research topic, question or hypothesis; identifying the literature to which the research will make a contribution, and contextualising the research within that literature; building an understanding of theoretical concepts and terminology; ... analysing and interpreting results” (Rowley and Slack 2004: 32).

Second, the stakeholders who were interviewed are listed in Appendix 2 and combine diplomats, members of national cultural institutes, the directors of local organizations that contributed to six ICR pilots in 2019–2021, and selected ICR experts. Interviewing such a diverse group of stakeholders allowed us to combine the perspectives of individuals who are or were directly and indirectly involved in the preparation and implementation of the ICR at different levels, from different perspectives and in different countries. In doing so, one of our aims was to avoid a Eurocentric approach to the identification of the KSC that are needed to implement ICR projects. The interview questions focused on the specificities of ICR management, the knowledge, skills and competences (KSC) need to manage ICR projects, and the main needs of CPD training in this area. The main list of questions asked can be seen in Appendix 1. To support their answer, we provided them with a table that combined the KSC that had been identified by the EU’s ESCO platform (European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations) as being

associated with the roles of diplomats and cultural policy officers.

Interviewing is a method that is particularly useful “when there is sufficient objective knowledge about an experience or phenomenon, but the subjective knowledge is lacking” (Richards and Morse 2007). Considering the dearth of empirical research focused on the implementation of ICR projects, the relevance of developing interviews with such a multiplicity of actors should be clear. Although interviews focused on stakeholders’ perceptions, they were framed and developed in light of “objective knowledge” (McIntosh and Morse 2015: 1)—in this case, the policy and institutional constraints that ICR managers and partners must navigate.

Both the literature and the findings collected during the interviews were analyzed according to thematic analysis, a “method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun and Clarke 2006: 79). We used a theoretical approach derived from the literature review to identify such themes. Subsequently, triangulating interview findings with the information collected from the review of the literature allowed us to uncover fresh insights from the interviews, while also addressing the most common downsides of qualitative methodology, such as “conscious and unconscious biases, influence of dominant ideologies and mainstream thinking” (Diefenbach 2009: 875). Using these methods allowed us to identify: 1) the main characteristics of the paradigm of International Cultural Relations Management; 2) the main KSC that ICR managers must hold; 3) the key training needs in this regard; and 4) the main learning outcomes of future CPD directed at such professionals.

The EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations: Context, Actors, Challenges

Understanding the EU's ICR: Context

Culture is mentioned in the Treaty of Rome (European Economic Community 1957, effective since 1958) and in the Maastricht Treaty (Council of the European Communities 1992, effective since 1993). Both treaties were amended by the Treaty of Lisbon (European Union 2007, effective since 2009), whose numbering we follow. Article 167(1) TFEU states that the EU "shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States ... and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore" and Article 167(2) TFEU proposes that the EU can develop "action aimed at "encouraging cooperation between Member States." As for foreign action, it became part of the EU's policy field with the establishment of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy under the Maastricht Treaty. However, it was only when the EU's role in foreign policy was reinforced by the Treaty of Lisbon that the Union embedded the promotion of cultural cooperation within it. Article 167(3) states that "the Union and the Member States shall foster cooperation with third countries and the competent international organisations in the sphere of culture."

This became official EU policy in 2007, when the Commission's European Agenda for Culture included the role of culture in EU external relations as a specific objective (Commission of the European Communities 2007). It was followed in 2013 and 2014 by a Preparatory Action requested by the European Parliament, which led to a set of recommendations on how to proceed strategically in regard to the establishment of the EU's external cultural relations. They foregrounded the importance of mutual learning, dialogue, co-creation and the involvement of local

stakeholders (that is, not only cultural but also civil society organizations) (European Union 2014). As the network of the EU National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) later recognized, this marked a “paradigm shift” (EUNIC Global 2019: 30).

The Joint Communication

In June 2016, Federica Mogherini, former High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission, announced the European Council and the European Commission’s Joint Communication “Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations” (European Commission 2016), the main document that structures the EU’s approach to culture in foreign affairs.

The Joint Communication is innovative in several ways. First, it supports an anthropological understanding of culture, identified in the document as including intercultural dialogue, tourism, education, research, creative industries, heritage, new technologies, artisanship and development cooperation (European Commission 2016: 4). Second, the document argues that the CD of Member States is to be accompanied by the EU’s joint cultural relations approach (ICR), which focuses on “global solidarity” (European Commission 2016: 4) rather than on “projecting the diversity of European cultures” (European Commission 2016: 4). In other words, the EU’s approach to CR (ICR) does not reject CD; however, it sees it as the domain of action of MS. Third, the Joint Communication identifies four main principles of international cooperation. These include engaging in dialogue, mutual listening and learning; a people-to-people approach and partnering with local stakeholders; a bottom-up approach based on partners’ needs; co-creation and joint capacity-building. That is, the ICR understands cooperation

as connecting not only the EU and local actors but also the MS and the EU's institutions and policies.

The Joint Communication was endorsed by the European Parliament and the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council in 2017, whose conclusions recommended the development of a roadmap to identify forms of joint cultural action (Council of the European Union 2017). This roadmap was subsequently defined in a set of Council Conclusions approved by the Foreign Affairs Council (Council of the European Union 2018). Its conclusions asked EU Member States, the European Commission and the External Action Service to implement common projects and joint actions in third countries "based on a common strategic vision developed at local level by the Member States, their diplomatic and consular representations, their cultural institutes, EUNIC, EU delegations and local stakeholders" (Council of the European Union 2018: 8). Through these conclusions, the MS supported a flexible, inclusive, decentralized, bottom-up approach, which, by definition, questions their own central role in EU foreign action. This makes the EU's approach to CR (ICR) highly particular.

EUNIC as a Key Actor

There is a certain ambiguity within the ICR regarding the roles of EU Delegations and the national cultural institutes of MS. Additionally, coordination between EU institutions has been limited so far. This has given EUNIC the responsibility to manage pilot programs to identify models of collaboration. In 2017, EUNIC, the European Commission and the EEAS signed an Administrative Arrangement with the aim of enhancing cooperation in ICR (EUNIC Global, European Commission and EEAS 2017). In practice, it established a strategic partnership leading to the design and management of such pilot activities. In 2019, the Joint Guidelines (EUNIC

Global, European Commission and EEAS 2019) added further detail to this partnership. They were updated in January 2021. In June 2021, a Joint Statement called for “European cooperation in culture” to become “a structural, integrated part of EUNIC’s and the EEAS’ operations” (EUNIC Global and EEAS 2021: 2). We discuss these documents in more detail later in this paper.

Challenges

Considering that one of the main aims of the ICR is to ensure that Member States co-deliver projects in third countries serving the long-term aims of ICR rather than their own national interests, the decision to provide EUNIC with the management of ICR pilots is understandable. Working with (rather than against) cultural institutes to enact this shift increases its likelihood of success.

However, one must ask to what extent one can expect diplomats and cultural attachés to be prepared to co-create and co-manage projects with the aim of promoting “a global order based on peace, the rule of law, freedom of expression, mutual understanding and respect for fundamental values” (European Commission 2016: 1), that is, transnational values. Indeed, the national foreign services of EU Member States often interpret the emergence of the EU’s diplomatic service as challenging “the state’s ... monopoly of symbolic power (Adler-Nissen 2014: 657). We will return to this point later.

Public Diplomacy, Cultural Diplomacy and Cultural Relations: Differences and Overlaps

Public Diplomacy

Public diplomacy (PD) has a long history. The term was first used by Edmund Gullion in 1965 (Pamment 2012: 20-24) to refer to the use of PR techniques in an international context.

The revolution created by information and communication technology innovations led to a renewed attention to the term by international relations and diplomacy scholars. Bruce Gregory defines public diplomacy as “an instrument used by states, associations of states, and some sub-state and non-state actors to understand cultures, attitudes, and behaviour; build and manage relationships; and influence thoughts and mobilize actions to advance their interests and values” (2011: 353).

However, contrary to what would be suggested by Gregory’s definition, which focuses on the goals and uses of PD, the scholarship around PD remains state-centric. Jan Melissen’s entry on the term for *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy* (2013) is paradigmatic of this trend. The author cites Gregory, rejects the idea that public diplomacy is “a form of country promotion and brand projection” (Melissen 2013: 441), associates PD with dialogue and “long-term relationship-building” (Melissen 2013: 441) and identifies “a rising collaborative public diplomacy, boiling down to more official cooperation with non-state actors and greater involvement by civil society” (Melissen 2013: 450-451). However, he also adds that “states arguably remain the principal actors in international society” (Melissen 2013: 445).

More, the entry refers to EUNIC and the EU’s External Action Service (EEAS) as “collaborative public diplomacy initiatives that are breaking new ground” (Melissen 2013: 447). However, the author adds they “are early examples of a kind of supranational collaborative public diplomacy that is likely to develop gradually during the 21st century, as long as it serves greater efficiency without eroding the national profile of member states” (Melissen 2013: 447). In the eight years that have passed since the publication of this text, EUNIC and the EEAS have begun to collaborate in the

management and the delivery of the ICR. The latter denies the centrality of MS and their cultural institutes; in fact, its aim can be understood as to “erode,” to use the author’s words, the latter’s national profile. This makes the continuity between PD and the ICR questionable. We return to this point below.

Public Diplomacy and Cultural Diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy emerged in the 17th and 18th centuries in France (Kim 2017: 307). The concept is indissociable from the dissemination of cultural influence through cultural institutes—a practice evident in the 19th and the 20th centuries (Paschalidis 2009).

Influential scholarship on CD sees it as a subset of PD. For example, Patricia Goff argues that cultural diplomacy supports foreign policy, namely by strengthening the ability of diplomats to listen and learn (Goff 2013: 422). Another well-known definition sees cultural diplomacy as “the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understanding” (Cummings 2009: 6). Cultural diplomacy emerges, then, as a practice that may have the goal of supporting foreign policy and/or fostering mutual understanding. In any case, it is carried out by the government, hence its compatibility with the PD approach.

This said, we want to note that “there is no general agreement among scholars about cultural diplomacy’s relationship to the practice of diplomacy, its objectives, practitioners” (Mark 2009: 4). Although an examination of this relationship lies outside the scope of this paper, the following comparison gives a sense of the complexity of CD today, which remains hitherto mostly unacknowledged in the literature. In the U.S., cultural diplomacy is part of the

State Department's PD work. In the EU, CD is one side of a spectrum that also includes (I)CR. The former supports national interests; the latter is guided by transnational interests. However—in what is perhaps unique to the EU—serving the Union's interests is understood by the MS as also being in their national interest.

Public Diplomacy and International Cultural Relations?

Whether ICR and PD are compatible is an even more difficult question. Some authors suggest that "new public diplomacy" (two-way and relational diplomatic practices, including "an emphasis on greater exchange, dialogue, and mutuality" that operate "through networks and people-to-people connections," Cull 2013: 124-126) establishes a theoretical bridge between them. For clarity, "new public diplomacy" is broadly opposed to "old public diplomacy" (one-way and focused on state-to-state relations, Melissen, 2005: 5). This interpretation is consistent with the definition that is provided by Gregory (2011: 355–356), who sees engagement as one of the four core concepts associated with PD (see also Cull 2013).

In an analogous manner, Brian Hocking (2005) argues that traditional theories of diplomacy assume that the state remain its central actor and are unable to acknowledge the impact of information technology in changing diplomacy. Hence the author's proposal that there are two approaches to diplomacy: a hierarchic and a networked approach, which coexist. Diplomats fulfil a function of outreach, but they also work within and manage networks. In doing so, they manage "increasingly complex public environments through the promotion of communication and trust" (Hocking 2005: 37). This explains why Jan Melissen writes that culture's focus on dialogue not only places it as a relevant tool of PD but, in fact, "the new PD could [also] be considered an expansion

and generalization of well-established cultural relations communication models into other PD components" (Melissen 2005: 46).

However, the idea that "the diplomat practising it will of course always have his own country's interests and foreign policy goals in mind" (Melissen 2005: 18) does not sit easily with CR, which, both in its general version and in the European model (ICR) is not guided by the national interest. Additionally, some authors suggest that the practice of CR is by definition bottom-up and, therefore, incompatible with the framework and the aims of public diplomacy (Ang, Isar and Mar 2015).

In fact, ICR expands the traditional opposition between CD, which is state-driven, and CR, which tend to be seen as organic and hence independent of the state (Murray and Lamonica 2021: 10). Rather, ICR is a model "practiced by state actors when they prefer argumentation over co-optation" (Murray and Lamonica 2021: 13), "in the interest of the governmental actor but at arm's length from it" and "primarily concerned with cross-border and transnational 'people-to-people' interactions" (Murray and Lamonica 2021: 14). The ICR approach fulfils the EU's interest to establish dialogue and trust; however, it is not state- nor EU-driven. Therefore, its theoretical compatibility with PD is questionable.

There is also empirical evidence suggesting an emerging discontinuity between PD and ICR: recent changes to the EU's engagement with foreign audiences. A briefing by the European Parliamentary Research Service (2017) states that it used to be "organised under three main pillars: public diplomacy, economic partnership and business cooperation, and people-to-people links. However, as a result of "... propaganda and disinformation practices ... , strategic communication ... has emerged as a dominant new

approach" (European Parliamentary Research Service 2017: 3).

To understand the relevance of this shift, it is helpful to know how EU institutions differentiate between PD and strategic communication. The former is defined as "the process whereby a country (or an entity) seeks to build trust and understanding by engaging with a broader foreign public" through "education and research cooperation ... as well as civil society engagement" (European Parliamentary Research Service 2017: 4). The ICR is mentioned as an example of this approach; however, the latter's anthropological definition of culture makes it very likely that it will soon either become the policy frame through which the EU's PD is implemented or replace PD altogether. As for strategic communication, it fosters "a better understanding of [the EU's] goals, policies and activities" (European Parliamentary Research Service 2017: 4). Strategic communication focuses on "outreach and engagement as a tool ... to develop positive and effective messages on EU policies" (European Parliamentary Research Service 2017, 4) and is seen as a security priority. That is, PD aims to build trust and understanding in the long-term by developing direct relations with foreign audiences, while strategic communication is a short-term security tool focused on dissemination.

In practice, this is reflected in a growing tension within the work of the EEAS, which is symptomatic of a symbolic conflict regarding EU foreign policy. Indeed, although this field remains associated with the MS, the EEAS brings "together ... national diplomats, civil servants from the Commission, and officials from the Council secretariat" (Adler-Nissen 2014: 659). This results in a "quasi-supranational diplomatic corps – leading to uncertainty about the future of national foreign services" (Adler-Nissen 2014: 672). The relations between

strategic communication, ICR and the challenges faced by EU diplomacy are examined in a forthcoming paper.

Such a tension is not solved by EU Delegations, which represent the EU abroad; rather, it is reflected in the work of their sections. As the EUNIC/EEAS Joint Guidelines explain, among other units, “Delegations are composed of the Head of Mission, the political section which includes a press unit, and the cooperation section” (EUNIC Global, European Commission and EEAS 2021: 21). The priority of the Political Section lies in “culture for political dialogue with third countries’ stakeholders, especially governments” while that of the Press and Information section lies on “culture for strategic communications;” in the case of the latter, there is no relationship with the ICR. Instead, the focus lies on “visibility” and a “good image of Europe” (EUNIC Global, European Commission and EEAS 2021: 21). This might explain why the Commission’s Foreign Policy Instrument continues to support the Cultural Relations Platform (originally called Cultural Diplomacy Platform) and EU Film Festivals—an example of CD. At the same time, on the side of the Cooperation Section, its priority lies in “culture for development,” which aligns it with the ICR. This suggests an emerging division within EU Delegations between one-way, short-term strategic communication (with which CD is compatible) and the ICR approach. This is confirmed in recent work by Abratis (2021), who identifies the key messages of EU delegations as “informing about the EU,” “promoting a friendly image,” “communicating EU values” (all of which are consistent with PD) and “partnerships on development” (aligned with CR) (Abratis 2021: 20).

In summary, there is an emerging chasm between academic literature on PD and the EU’s use of culture for diplomatic purposes. Rather than “old” versus “new” public diplomacy, in the European Union the emerging division is

between short-term strategic communications and long-term ICR. Additionally, although the ICR states that the EU's own projects (co-developed by its Delegations) are framed by the ICR model, EU Delegations continue to employ both terms and approaches (ICR and CD). This reflects the gradual taking over of European PD by the ICR and the emergence of strategic communication as a parallel priority.

Managing ICR: Diplomats or Cultural Managers?

The European Commission's Directorate General Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) runs ESCO, a platform that classifies 2,942 occupations and identifies the main skills required for them. To test our hypothesis regarding the particularities of ICR Management, we provided our interviewees with a list of KSC that combined ESCO's description of the roles of diplomat and cultural policy officer. Originally, we had imagined combining the KSC associated with diplomats and cultural directors. However, ESCO defines the latter as a role that is mostly independent of local communities. Considering the particularities of ICR as a bottom-up practice, the role of cultural policy officers as defined by ESCO (which also apply, according to the platform, to cultural policy directors and culture directors) provides a more relevant model to confirm (or deny) our hypothesis regarding the management of ICR as requiring a set of skills that is neither held by diplomats nor by cultural actors alone.

Diplomats

Diplomats are defined as those who "represent their home nation and government in international organisations. They negotiate with the organisation's officials to ensure the home nation's interests are protected, as well as facilitate productive and friendly communication between the home

nation and the international organisation" (ESCO, no date, "B"). ESCO identifies the essential knowledge associated with this role as: diplomatic principles, foreign affairs, government representation and optional knowledge as: foreign affairs policy development, government policy implementation and international law. As for the essential skills and competencies associated with the role, they are: analyze problems for opportunities, apply diplomatic crisis management, apply diplomatic principles, assess risk factors, build international relations, coordinate government activities in foreign institutions, develop international cooperation strategies, establish collaborative relations, maintain relationships with government agencies, make diplomatic decisions, observe new developments in foreign countries, perform political negotiation, represent national interests, show intercultural awareness and speak different languages.

According to this profile, diplomacy management represents a government implementing its policies. This requires the ability to build or coordinate relationships with governments and political actors while representing national interests. Cultural knowledge, civil society and the media are mostly absent from the core KSC of the role. Therefore, ESCO's understanding of a diplomat places the role closer to "old" than to "new" public diplomacy.

Cultural Policy Officers/Cultural Directors

The role of a cultural policy officer/director is described as to "develop and implement policies to improve and promote cultural activities and events. They manage resources and communicate with the public and media in order to facilitate interest in cultural programs and emphasize their importance in a community" (ESCO, no date, "A"). ESCO provides the following alternative names to this role: arts administrator, arts worker, cultural policy director, cultural

policy worker, culture director, culture programs officer, culture policy officer, cultural programs officer, cultural policy coordinator. ESCO identifies its essential knowledge as cultural projects and government policy implementation, and its optional knowledge as project management principles. The platform identifies the following essential skills and competences associated with this role: advise on legislative acts, build community relations, create solutions to problems, develop cultural policies, develop media strategy, establish collaborative relations, establish relationship with the media, liaise with cultural partners, liaise with local authorities, maintain relations with local representatives, maintain relationships with government agencies, manage government policy implementation and provide improvement strategies.

According to this profile, cultural management has the aim of implementing existing culture and government; this requires maintaining relationships with cultural partners and local authorities, and local representatives and government agencies, which is consistent with ICR. However, skills such as coordinating government activities in foreign institutions and developing international cooperation strategies, making diplomatic decisions and performing political negotiation, which are key in the management of a multilevel, multi-institutional policy such as ICR, are not identified by ESCO as being central in this role. In other words, ESCO's understanding of the role of the cultural manager sees it as being fully independent from diplomacy. While ICR functions, as we saw, at arm's length from political actors, it implements nonetheless official foreign policy. Therefore, the KSC that are associated with cultural management according to this EU platform are likely to be insufficient to manage ICR projects on the ground.

Case Study: The European Spaces of Culture

Considering the high number of cultural projects in third countries financed or co-financed by the EU, it was necessary to select a case study to test our hypothesis. We decided to contact all partners involved in the six pilots of the first phase of the program European Spaces of Culture (ESC) in 2019–2021 and to interview those who responded positively.

Context and Implementation

As we mentioned earlier, the EEAS and the European Commission/EAC established a partnership with EUNIC to define best practices regarding the implementation of the ICR. EUNIC is a network of networks; its members work in clusters with three-year strategies based on local needs. This decentralized approach is “implemented in concertation with local cultural stakeholders ... and with the EU Delegations through a relationship on equal footing” (EUNIC Global 2020 a: 2). Regular workshops are organized for the members of the network. They are also accompanied by job shadowing opportunities. These programs are built on the principle that sharing knowledge creates trust and mutuality between practitioners and that this is reflected in their work.

In the context of the international dimension of its strategy, the Commission’s European Agenda for Culture called for the establishment of European Houses of Culture in third countries, subsequently changed to European Spaces of Culture to highlight the intended process-based focus of these projects. Later, the Commission/EAC invited EUNIC to submit a proposal to test this idea, and the project was launched in late 2018. This said, one should note that the initiative for the European Houses of Culture as a

Preparatory Action came initially (and formally) from the European Parliament. Since then, EUNIC implemented the ESC with support of the European Commission (DG EAC, EEAS) (EUNIC Global, no date, "B"), namely to identify best practices in light of the continued implementation of the ESC.

A call launched in April 2019 focused on "finding and testing new innovative ideas for models of European Spaces of Culture or to retest and scale up already identified models" (EUNIC Global, no date, "B"). It resulted in 42 eligible applications, from which ten ideas were developed into concrete proposals. In January 2020, an international committee selected five proposals that received 50,000 euros; subsequently, a sixth project was awarded 10,000 euros (EUNIC Global 2019).

The selected projects tested models of collaboration until April 2021. They were in Benin: Urban Cult Lab'Africa (extended to cultural and creative activities in Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritania and Togo); El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras: Triángulo Teatro (Central American European Theatre Circuit); Mongolia: Nagoonbaatar (The Green Hero), an International Eco Art Festival; Sri Lanka: "On Language and Multitudinal Belonging," a project part of the interdisciplinary arts festival Colomboscope; U.S.: the festival "The Grid;" and Ethiopia: Tibeb Be Adebabay.

Governance and Tensions

Applications had to combine three EUNIC members, one EU delegation and at least one local stakeholder (e.g., "an NGO in the field of arts, culture, education, etc. or it can be a public institution, like a local or regional authority" (EUNIC Global no date, "A:3"). Additionally, the projects had to "encourage people-to-people contacts through a

bottom-up approach, based on local consultation and co-creation; go beyond projection of the diversity of European cultures; focus on the process as well as on outputs and outcomes: a new spirit of dialogue, mutual listening and learning, where partners are on equal footing and engage in a joint capacity building process; facilitate learning from and across experiences, including cross-fertilisation between the different collaboration models tested" (EUNIC Global no date, "B"). Although the EC was defined as focusing on "collaborative process more than outputs and outcomes" (EUNIC Global no date, "B"), the pilots were also asked to deliver:

"...new concepts or ways of working with local cultural sectors, including digital cultural relations; projects based on contexts and needs of local communities; partnerships with new stakeholders, or brought to a new level by bottom-up approach and equality; ideas on entrepreneurship, profitability and sustainability; culture as a means for the promotion of values such as artistic freedom (of expression), social cohesion and equality" (EUNIC Global no date, "B").

There is a fundamental tension between the explicit rejection of outputs and outcomes as the focus of the ESC on the one hand and the high expectations that are placed on these projects on the other hand.

More, although "each partner should have a clear role and the partnership should be based on equity," that is, being "involved in the design, preparation and implementation of the project from the start" (EUNIC Global no date, "A:3"), supporting "an equal partnership between EUNIC members, EU delegations and local cultural stakeholders" (EUNIC Global no date, "A:4"), this principle coexists uneasily with

the requirement (explained by the fact that EUNIC can only subgrant its members and/or affiliate entities), that “only a EUNIC full member (headquarter or cluster level) can act as lead partner in the team. Additionally, this needs to be an affiliated entity ... whose headquarters signed a Declaration of Honour in the application submitted by EUNIC Global in 2018” (EUNIC Global no date, “A: 2–3”).

Additionally, EUNIC states that “quality of the project and partnership and relevance to (local) are ... important” (EUNIC Global no date, “A:4”) but, at the same time, it also requests that models of collaboration “be transferrable to other countries” (EUNIC Global no date, “A:4”). The idea that projects are to respond to local needs and maximize local resources while their collaboration models are to be transferrable to different contexts sits uneasily with the idea of ICR as being rooted in local contexts and needs.

Finally, although the Council had asked, as we mentioned earlier, that EU Member States, the European Commission and the EEAS implement joint actions framed by a common strategy developed by namely EUNIC, national cultural institutes and local stakeholders (Council of the European Union 2018: 8)—suggesting an equal relationship between all partners—we note that the recent Joint Statement between EUNIC and the EEAS, in calling for the implementation of “common cultural relations projects ... based on a common strategic vision developed at local level between EU Delegations and EUNIC clusters and together with local stakeholders” (EUNIC Global and EEAS 2021: 2), suggests that local partners are de facto secondary in such processes.

Further tensions were identified by expert Julia Sattler in June 2021. She saw the main strengths of ESC pilots as being, namely, the recognition of local context and needs and the inclusion of partners with different strengths and

networks (Sattler 2021). However, Sattler also identified several challenges, such as the need for increased communication, uncertainty about the particularity of the CR approach, insufficient human resources, the focus on national objectives and the need to involve local partner organizations equally. That is, is it necessary to improve knowledge of the ICR approach and its implementation, both by removing barriers (such as a national worldview and insufficient human resources) and by strengthening emerging practices (such as the equal involvement of local partners). This suggests that there is a need for focused training to support ICR managers in their role.

Findings

Our findings, which we summarize below, confirmed that ICR projects require a particular management approach and a specific combination of KSC.

What is an ICR Manager?

A Combination of Sensibilities

ICR managers must work with multiple stakeholders: diplomats, the staff of cultural institutes, cultural actors, the media, etc. As an interviewee noted, "relations with the art community are interpersonal. We need to transition to CR. For that transition you need people able to build networks." Another interviewee stressed the need for ICR managers to have a political understanding of their work context. ICR managers must be able to bridge the functioning, language and needs of EU, national and local actors. They are "experts in different cultural fields" with a "diplomatic intuition."

Neither Too Global nor Too Local

As one interviewee stated, if ICR managers are too embedded locally, they cannot work effectively with and take the most from cultural institutes partnering in these projects. At the same time, actors who do not know their local context well, such as the heads of embassies or cultural institutes, would also be unable to manage ICR projects successfully. The ICR manager must understand the foreign policy aims of the EU while also, as another interviewee stated, “empowering artists to establish a dialogue with the community.”

The Importance of Operational Autonomy

Several cultural actors stressed the need for projects to be perceived as autonomous. The idea of government representation in particular originated comments around the tension between national governments and the ICR’s transnational values. Crucially, some interviewees saw independence as a requirement for trust, especially considering the relations of power that surround diplomacy and the historical relations between Europe and the Global South. Others disagreed and stated that full independence from institutions would lead to gaps in understanding, namely of the political context. There was also disagreement regarding the importance of having close connections with local politicians. Some interviewees stated that this was a prerequisite in the countries where they worked; others stated that doing so would make projects lose trust. This echoes the complex position of ICR: it serves the EU’s foreign policy aims but does so at arm’s length from its political actors.

The ICR Manager as a Node within a Network of Networks

ICR managers are network managers. They should be able to not only navigate cultural differences but also connect their partners' civil society; cultural, policy and political networks; expert know-how; and multiple audiences, building teams based on a common vision. This requires being "capable of bridging differences between societies while promoting cultural diversity and EU values"—which, as an interviewee stressed, "are not neutral." Another interviewee called this ability "teaming."

Additionally, ICR managers are likely to occupy different nodes within such networks depending on the specificities of the project, local contexts, institutions and their roles within them, and the dimension of European cooperation that is being enhanced.

The ICR Manager's KSC

The following fields of knowledge were highlighted by most interviewees as key in this role: budgetary principles, cultural projects, diplomatic principles, project management principles, cultural relations versus cultural diplomacy and collaborative project management. Other fields of knowledge were also mentioned as secondary: government policy implementation, the principles of EU foreign action, and specific knowledge such as fundraising, budget management and media relations management.

Most interviewees also identified the following skills and competencies as crucial: relationship building (build international relations and community relations; liaise with cultural partners, event sponsors and local authorities; and maintain relations with local representatives and government agencies); management (ensure cross-department

cooperation; maintain operational communications; manage staff; establish collaborative relations; apply conflict management; and perform project management and resource planning); program development and evaluation (coordinate events; develop cultural activities; work with cultural venue specialists; and evaluate cultural venue programs); outreach (develop media strategy and relationships; create cultural venue outreach policies; conduct public presentations; and present arguments persuasively); intercultural skills (show intercultural awareness and speak different languages); risk management (assess risk factors and analyze problems for opportunities). Several interviewees also mentioned transversal skills such as critical thinking, strategic thinking and analytical thinking; and personal skills such as adaptability, agility and openness to experimentation.

Finally, actors with diplomatic experience or training tended to highlight their own fields of knowledge and professional skills as crucial for the deployment of the role of ICR manager, while those with backgrounds in the cultural sector tended to highlight their own.

Training Needs

Most interviewees provided general answers regarding existing training needs. This likely reflects the recent emergence of the role of ICR manager and the limited opportunities for reflection on its improvement that most interviewees had been offered so far. Nonetheless, the following fields of knowledge were identified by most: budgetary principles, cultural projects and project management principles. Other fields of knowledge were also mentioned by several interviewees: knowledge of the ICR approach and its policies; the differences between EU and national approaches to culture and diplomacy; and

leadership. As for skills in need of training, several interviewees highlighted the following: coordinate events, maintain operational communications, manage administrative systems, manage staff, perform project management and perform resource planning. Interviewees also mentioned intercultural competence, speaking local languages, and applying context-specific monitoring and evaluation.

Considering the multiple sites in which ICR projects will operate, we also propose strengthening skills in capacity building. As is stated in a report by EUNIC, challenges faced by operators in fragile contexts include “a limited network of local partners with professional skills” (EUNIC Global and British Council 2020: 7). Therefore, its recommendations suggest involving local partners through “co-creation and project management, including CSOs, NGOs, other non-state groups, through better partnership building” (EUNIC Global and British Council 2020: 9).

A master’s program in ICR training (“before recruitment or as in-service training”) was suggested. Additionally, several interviewees argued that ICR managers would gain more from short-term internships, fellowships for senior professionals or, one could add, shadowing opportunities. Other interviewees suggested that the European cultural sector provided opportunities for exercises in small-scale, cross-cultural and interdisciplinary collaboration, training ICR managers into “the European approach,” as one interviewee called it.

These findings echo some of the recommendations made by Sattler. They included equipping “all partners to take on the strategy for international cultural relations” and “expenditure for staff ... as the forming of connections is based on internal knowledge and experience and cannot be easily outsourced to external projects” (Sattler 2021).

Developing an ICR Ethos: A Holistic but Flexible Training Program

Core modules strengthening the main knowledge fields and skills needed by ICR managers could be supported by specific modules to strengthen the personal qualities required to embed mutual understanding throughout the project's cycle. The management of ICR projects requires a "personal attitude," as an interviewee stated—that is, an ethos of curiosity, authenticity and self-improvement.

Crucially, as we mentioned before, the Commission, the EEAS and EUNIC signed the second edition of their Joint Guidelines in 2021. This document includes among its long-term priorities the development of a joint training program, recognizing that "a more in-depth and targeted leadership training programme on cultural relations for staff should be developed. Training should include topics such as cultural relations policy and practices" (EUNIC Global and EEAS 2021:8). Although our findings confirm the need for specialized training, we question the assumption that it should only "target EU Delegations' staff ... and EUNIC cluster presidents and representatives" (EUNIC Global and EEAS 2021:8)—a point echoed in the Joint Statement, which proposes to "continue joint capacity building between staff of EU institutions and EUNIC" (EUNIC Global and EEAS 2021:2). Rather, all actors involved in the management of ICR projects should have access to it.

Learning Outcomes

Based on these findings, and following Bloom's *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (1956), the main learning outcomes of the core modules of CPD aimed at ICR professionals could include:

- Remember the main characteristics of the EU's strategy for ICR;
- Understand the differences between CD, CR and ICR, as well as the priorities and strategies of the EU and national institutes;
- Understand and apply the principles of collaborative project management, relationship building, program development and outreach;
- Analyze the potential impact of the EU's ICR in key priorities of external EU action, namely foreign policy and development;
- Evaluate the relevance of different monitoring and evaluation models to specific contexts;
- Create mockups of bottom-up, collaborative, multilevel projects based on the principles of ICR, including the identification of potential challenges and risk responses.

Recommendations

Our findings suggest that the particularities of ICR management require dedicated CPD programs. We propose below a set of principles to approach their development.

1. International Cultural Relations: Neither Public Diplomacy nor Cultural Management

The goal of ICR is not to support short-term foreign policy goals. Additionally, the EU's ICR projects reject the centrality of the state that underlies academic understanding

of PD. Similarly, the main priority of ICR is not cultural advancement, as would be the case if such projects were developed by cultural managers. Rather, in the case of ICR, cultural collaboration is the tool through which civil society is strengthened and trust is built. This requires seeing the management of ICR as a paradigm that combines elements of PD and CM—but that is, in fact, a unique approach on its own.

2. Cultural Relations Management: An Ethos of Collaboration

The implementation of ICR projects is dependent on simultaneous changes at multiple levels: governance, organizational and individual. ICR management requires embedding collaboration throughout the project cycle, and this may demand profound organizational change. Additionally, managing such a collaborative framework requires personal traits such as empathy, curiosity, flexibility and intercultural competence. The successful practice of ICR is dependent on a mutualist ethos.

3. From the National to the Transcultural: ICR Management as a *Networked Practice*

Diverse models of collaboration require different models of management. Therefore, the managers of ICR projects will hold different positions within these collaborative networks. The development of CPD should be needs-focused and outcome-oriented.

4. A Modular Approach that is Adaptable and Context-specific

Considering the multiple contexts in which the EU's ICR operates and the many stakeholders that it involves,

it is important to develop targeted ICR training that is 1) specific to the situated needs of ICR as a bridge between the EU and third countries and 2) adaptable to the needs of different stakeholders (diplomats, cultural attachés, cultural managers, etc.).

We identify the key modules within the toolbox of CPD training as supporting knowledge and skills development regarding the differences between CD, CR and EU and diplomatic principles; EU foreign policies; collaborative project management; relationship building; program development; outreach; and context-specific evaluation. We also suggest that such CPD should contribute to the development of an ICR ethos. This could take place through internships for advanced professionals, shadow interdisciplinary placements and collaborative role-playing scenarios.

Existing training offered by academic, cultural and other organizations in the EU and in third countries could contribute to this modular CPD offer, supporting the emergence of a transnational ICR community of practice.

Conclusion: The Future of EU Diplomacy

Using a practice-based approach, this report argues that the successful delivery of the EU's ICR requires a combination of KSC that are unlikely to be provided by either diplomatic or cultural management training alone, confirming our hypothesis and contributing to the developing field of ICR scholarship. Our research also uncovered an emerging tension between the goals of PD in the academic literature and in the context of the EU—where it is now increasingly replaced by transnational, bottom-up, arm's-length ICR—as well as an emerging tension within EU Delegations between the latter's aims and approach and those of strategic

communication. This practical chasm runs the risk of further dividing, if not weakening, the EU's foreign action in the future.

Lurking beneath the issue of the continuity or lack thereof between PD and ICR lies another question: what is the future of European diplomacy? Debates around strategic autonomy have focused on supporting geopolitical and political power through reinforced defense capabilities and diminishing external dependence in economic and industrial terms. Paradoxically, however, "the EU's quest for strategic autonomy could risk undercutting, not driving, the projection of geopolitical power as well as its support for liberal-democratic values" (Youngs 2021). By including bottom-up relations in the EU's diplomatic toolkit, the ICR introduced a paradigmatic shift not only in terms of the actors and the governance of diplomacy but also in the theory of change that underpins its efforts. While the political leadership of some of the EU's neighbors tends toward unilateralism, strong relations with the civil societies of those countries can be directly maintained and even reinforced from the bottom up, maintaining support for liberal values and, in the long-run, contributing to geopolitical resilience (Higgott and Proud 2017). In other words, the EU's ICR highlights the fact that, increasingly, "going beyond the national interest is in the national interest" (Ang, Isar and Mar 2015: 378, original emphasis).

This is not to suggest that short-term crises be addressed with complex, long-term, multilevel projects. But if the aim of strategic autonomy is to strengthen the EU's resilience as a bastion of liberal values, and if one way to ensure autonomy from illiberal forces lies in building relationships with citizens from third countries based on mutual trust, the strategy should explicitly include ICR as one of its central axes. The EU's aim of strategic autonomy will only succeed

if, alongside being “open” to others (European Commission 2020), the Union recognizes that it is dependent on the strength of civil society in third countries.

Appendix 1: Questions

We interviewed several relevant stakeholders using a semi-structured approach. Extra questions were added to clarify any particularly interesting points made by interviewees.

- Q0. Could you briefly describe your role (if any) vis-à-vis the design, management or implementation of the ICR?
- Q1. Broadly, based on your experience, what makes/ will make an excellent manager of International Cultural Relations projects (that is, cultural projects funded by the European Union in non-EU countries with a collaborative, bottom-up, process-based approach)?
- Q2. What Knowledge, Skills and Competences are required in this role? Please state if: (E) Essential; (S) Secondary; (N) Not Needed; (NO) No Opinion.
- Q3. What knowledge, skills and competencies (from those identified in your answer to the previous question) are more likely to require professional training? Please state if: (Y) Likely; (M) Maybe; (N) Unlikely; (NO) No Opinion.

- Q4. Finally, what type of training do you think would be most helpful to address such needs and prepare professionals to manage ICR projects?

	Q2	Q3	Other comments (if relevant)
Fields of Knowledge			
budgetary principles			
cultural projects			
diplomatic principles			
economics			
foreign affairs			
foreign affairs policy development			
government policy implementation			
government representation			
international law			
project management principles			
Skills and Competencies			
advise on foreign affairs policies			
advise on risk management			
advise on legislative acts			
analyze problems for opportunities			
analyze foreign affairs policies			
assess risk factors			
apply conflict management			

apply diplomatic crisis management			
apply diplomatic principles			
build international relations			
build community relations			
conduct public presentations			
coordinate events			
coordinate government activities in foreign institutions			
create cultural venue outreach policies			
create solutions to problems			
develop cultural activities			
develop cultural policies			
develop defense policies			
develop international cooperation strategies			
develop media strategy			
develop professional network			
develop promotional tools			
ensure compliance with policies			
ensure cross-department cooperation			
establish collaborative relations			
establish relationship with the media			

evaluate cultural venue programs			
facilitate official agreement			
fix meetings			
liaise with cultural partners			
liaise with event sponsors			
liaise with local authorities			
make diplomatic decisions			
maintain operational communications			
maintain relations with local representatives			
maintain relationships with government agencies			
manage administrative systems			
manage cultural facility			
manage government policy implementation			
manage staff			
observe new developments in foreign countries			
perform political negotiation			
perform project management			
perform resource planning			
present a cause			
present arguments persuasively			
promote cultural venue events			
protect client interests			

provide improvement strategies			
represent national interests			
respond to inquiries			
speak different languages			
show intercultural awareness			
think analytically			
train employees			
work with cultural venue specialists			

Appendix 2: Respondents

European Spaces of Culture

- Gantuya Badamgarav, Curator, Mongolia, Nogoonaabaatar (in writing)
- Eva Bañuelos Trigo, Director, Cultural Centre of Spain in Guatemala, Triángulo Teatro
- Dr. Clara Blume, Curator, The Grid: Exposure, Open Austria's Head of Arts and Science, president of EUNIC Cluster Silicon Valley, The Grid
- Isabel Boavida, Camões Institute Lector and Cultural attaché of the Portugal Embassy in Ethiopia, Tibebe Be Adebabay
- Addisu Demissie, dancer and company manager, Destino Dance Company, Ethiopia, Tibebe Be Adebabay
- Natasha Ginwala, Artistic Director, Sri Lanka, Colomboscope

- Guiako Obin, Executive Director Baby Lab (Fab Lab), Ivory Coast, The Urban Cult Lab'Africa
- Jan Ramesh de Saram, Colomboscope Festival Advisor and Cultural coordinator, Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka, Colomboscope
- Diarra Sylla, Founder of Sahelfablab, The Urban Cult Lab'Africa
- Majbritt Le Courtois, Deputy Head of Press and Public Diplomacy, EU Delegation in Washington, The Grid
- Jaime Gómez Lara, Political, Press and Information, EU Delegation in El Salvador, Triángulo Teatro (in writing)
- Cecil Mariani, member of the independent jury selecting the projects European Spaces of Culture (in writing)

EU Cultural Policy and Cultural Relations Experts

- Dr. Rebecca Böttcher, Personnel Consultant for Executives, HR Management, Goethe-Institut Head Office
- Elisa Grafulla, Independent International Cultural Relations expert
- Dr. Andrew Murray, former Director of EUNIC Global_

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