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PONT A KULTÚRÁÉRT

Gabriella Szabó-Pap

One? Two? Or more? The levels of cultural cooperation in Europe

 OKTATÁSI ÉS KULTURÁLIS MINISZTERIUM
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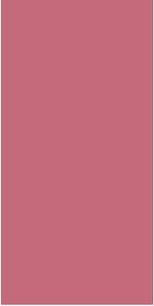
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Information publication

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Introduction

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Introduction

In January 2004, we organised a conference within the framework of the Central European Initiative to review the possibilities of planning and financing multilateral international cultural projects. The conference lectures were followed by interactive professional training. The head trainer put the following question to the participants: "What uses do you think multilateral cultural projects can be put to?" After a number of replies, one of the participants (a senior civil servant) gave the following pat answer: "To propagate our own national cultures!"

There was dead silence.

We all felt this was a bad answer. It was a completely wrong way of thinking. The person who said this had either utterly misunderstood the point or had simply failed to realise there was one. But then, what if it was not such a bad answer after all? What if there is a point to it? If so, what is it?

Then and there we did not have the chance to think the matter through. I myself, however, had been wondering for years about possible correlations between, and the intersections of, the various levels, structures and forms of international cultural relations, what role these could have in increasing efficiency, and how they could be put to optimum use in order to realise our objectives. It was the case just mentioned that prompted me to attempt a summary of my views on these issues.

I am not an academic researcher, nor am I a political scientist. I am a civil servant who has been engaged in Hungary's cultural diplomacy for more than thirty years. I will approach the question from the perspective of workaday practices. My aim is to represent these relations in some kind of a system. I also want to help readers in selecting tools and methods that match their intentions. What I put down are not unalterable truths but what I have distilled from my own experience and what I consider useful with regard to quality work and real results. It is my hope to inspire the reader to give further thought to the matter.

Do not forget that international cultural relations are continuously developing and new levels and new relations are appearing every day. Let us be open to every new idea, but let us never forget to examine the place, value and role of every new solution in our own given context.

February 7th, 2006, Budapest

Gabriella Szabó-Pap
Advisor
Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Hungary

Who is this paper written for?

It is always a pleasure to read and be informed. The flood of information available today nevertheless calls for selectivity in reading too. Who is then this paper especially recommended to?

It is primarily aimed at our ministerial colleagues, both at home and abroad. Those working in the cultural, education and foreign affairs ministries have scant opportunity in the course of their everyday activity to clarify for themselves the concepts elaborated here, or to gain an overview of the relations, though they are the ones who need to find solutions in practice. In many of the new European states that have been formed since 1990, the appropriate administrative structures have not even been finalized, when staff and decision-makers already need to make informed decisions to avail themselves of opportunities that could serve the interests of their countries. The lack of experience often prevents them from doing so. It is always good to know what resources need to be allocated for what task; what kind of decision-making scenarios and challenges can be expected in our daily work; what the basic principles of decision-making are, and how they can be translated into practice. How to select the level and structure of diplomacy the best serves our objectives? It is for the benefit of foreign colleagues that this English translation has been prepared.

Colleagues in other ministries may also benefit from this paper, as they may find analogous solutions in their own professional fields. There are increasing demands for sectoral diplomacy, especially from the Council of Europe and the European Union. It is therefore necessary that in addition to the foreign affairs corps that provides the diplomatic framework, professionals in other ministries should also become better versed in basic principles of international cooperation.

This paper is hoped to benefit the staff of NGOs who have some sort of experience in international cooperation, but who need to find financial support for their initiatives within the appropriate framework, at the right place and time, in the right manner. For applications to be successful, it is vital that the projects comply with criteria and expectations, and the means of realization be available.

This paper is aimed at staff at local and regional self-governments, as well as various institutions, who deal with international (cultural) relations. They act on the same levels of international cooperation as the others, yet must deal with a more complex structure, as they have to take into consideration sectoral and institutional frameworks simultaneously. As it is well-known, for example, self-governments also run sectoral programmes that fit their budget, which may have international implications. For them, an interdisciplinary approach to the various themes is especially important, as when developing complex development programmes.

As this paper has a diverse potential audience, the text remains as theoretical as possible. One of its objectives is to enable the reader to see clearly all the levels of cultural diplomacy, the most expedient use of each level, as well as the internal demands and external expectations the level generates. Its other objective is to assist the reader in decision-making and in creating conditions conducive to high quality work.

I. The role of culture in shaping a country's international image

We are always happy to think about a country or its people along the lines of tried and tested stereotypes. Stereotypes are mostly derived from everyday culture: behaviour, customs, dressing, etc. These are the first to strike the foreign observer, but they also lead to the temptation to generalise. Consider only the title of Graham Greene's novel *The Quiet American*. In contrast with other boisterous, big-mouthed and conceited American figures in the novel, this unusual, "quiet" character (dangerous in his very innocence) is in the focus of the events. Which is to say, we cannot settle for stereotypes or superficial impressions if we want a valid image of a person, a country or its people. The question is what enables a more profound knowledge? What is the greatest value of a country or a people in international comparison? What makes the greatest impression on the outside observer? In some cases it is industrial or economic achievement, in others the beauty of nature, in others again it is political or military role that has the most influence on this image.

However, the image formed by the outside observer is different from what we entertain about ourselves. What we consider a value, may well be regarded with indifference or even hostility by the outside observer. Aurélien Sauvageot, the renowned French Finno-Ugric scholar, who spent many years in Budapest during the interwar period, lists several examples in his memoirs. He was dismayed, for instance, to find that Hungarians venerated Attila the Hun as a legendary hero, giving his name to individuals and public places, while in Western Europe he is remembered as the representative of barbaric power that wreaked havoc on the civilised world.

If we are to consider the international image of a country, we have to examine our position from the standpoint of what it is in an international (or at least European) context that we regard as a value, and what it is that others see or can see as a value. To see clearly in this issue, a measure of self-critical thinking and extensive knowledge is needed. It also helps a lot if the opinions of objective, outside experts are taken into consideration: it is worth devoting attention to e.g. the reports made by the international monitoring working parties of the Council of Europe, or to the comparative data from within the framework of the Compendium Programme, which can be obtained from the Internet. However, in the case of works of art, only experienced, informed experts with good taste, are able to make a worthy comparison. Although, experience shows that such analysis is a new and difficult task even for the experts.

It is common knowledge in diplomacy that culture is – beside power politics – the most important and useful medium of shaping a country's image in international relations. Culture is the one to cross borders the most easily; it can create bonds, earn appreciation or trigger lively debates. It has a favourable impact on tourism, transport and economic cooperation. It is thus understandable why culture has a distinguished role in diplomacy, though the development of international cultural relations should not be a mere device of image building, a servant of diplomatic interests. This could hardly be reconciled with the freedom of culture and its role of conveying values.

However, in the international system of relations the two factors are undeniably interdependent: when one or the other criteria comes to the fore

and acquires a dominant role, it is largely deliberately engineered, but such criteria can come about in unpredictable ways too. The question is nevertheless also dependent upon the existence of financial and technical resources, and this is especially so, unfortunately, if such factors gain a dominant role. Let us consider for example just how damaging it is if a good plan cannot be implemented due to the lack of financial means, or due to the apparatus lacking the capacity required to solve a given problem. Let us also consider just how dubious the result is if a prestige event, requiring significant financial means and extravagant circumstances were to take place, but would be nevertheless professionally of no interest or worthless. Every player in international cultural relations must take this three-fold relationship into account, exactly because of the magic and often unexpected effect mechanism of culture.

There is no single formula for the perfect national image: each country and nation should find for themselves the most appropriate means.

Typically, Hungary's international image today is shaped, first and foremost, by its culture, understood in the broadest sense: not only its art, but also the system of cultural institutions, the laws regulating culture, the cultural industries and the related interdisciplinary research work, as well as its role in international cultural life and cultural organisations. The Hungarian intentions in this respect meet with international interests and the judgement of the world, earning considerable success for the nation, a trend that will hopefully continue. It is thus especially important for us to be able to find our position in the international cultural context, and make the best use of our potentials and opportunities, both for the sake of professional development and the ongoing task of shaping our country image.



2. The various levels of international cultural cooperation

2.1 Unilateral cultural activity

As I mentioned above, culture is the chief element in the shaping of Hungary's international image. We must not forget, however, that the foreign image of Hungarian culture and its values is incomplete and influenced by stereotypes. The fact that foreigners associate Hungary with Hungarian culture is largely due to conscious efforts, which began in the 1920's. (An entire volume could be devoted to the history of this process, not to mention its evaluation. There is some literature on some areas, but these articles and studies have never been collected, nor has a evaluation of the entire process been attempted.) It follows from this and the country's diplomatic interests that Hungary must act on its own initiative to present its cultural values abroad. These actions can make the general picture more complete, reducing "white spots" and presenting interesting new features. This activity has two main forms:

- a) the operation of Hungarian institutions and cultural centres abroad, which have continuous if more modest programmes, maintain professional links, provide information and prepare background analyses;
- b) the organisation of complex cultural programmes abroad that often run for months (e.g. Europalia, Hungarian cultural festivals in France, Italy, England, the Netherlands, Russia, etc.) On these occasions we are free to present our values the way we want to, although it is also true that only those presentations can expect to be successful which offer the local audience something new and interesting, or even unique in Europe. Musical events, for instance, are guaranteed to bring

success, but if they are combined with a presentation of Hungarian musical education and/or our experimental music, the aforementioned objective can also be served.

Cultural programmes should always be linked to educational and academic events that are dedicated to the Hungarian language and history, as they can highlight, and often explain, the peculiar features of Hungarian culture, both for the public and professionals. These auxiliary events help people to place Hungarian culture in the appropriate context, and to appreciate its real value. It goes without saying that on these occasions well-written foreign language publications, attractive websites and audio material form an indispensable part of the programme.

Both forms – viz. work at cultural institutions to promote and enhance knowledge, and complex cultural programmes that seek to provide entertainment – require planning, considerable funds, well-trained professional staff, and significant diplomatic preparatory work, either over a long period, or in the case of the institutions, continuously. Conscious efforts in the field should be backed by appropriate professional staff, the necessary funds and diplomatic support.

There is no doubt that this level is the most appropriate for shaping the image of a country, but only if the conditions described above are provided. Any deficiencies will soon become visible.

2.2 Bilateral cooperation

2.2.1. *Theoretical approach*

Bilateral relations rely on the sovereign decision of two parties (the sender and the recipient), and enable the realisation of activities developed

on the basis of mutual agreement and shared professional interests. Dialogue is the simplest and most effective form of human communication, the easiest to put into practice, and one that can be maintained until an agreement is reached. It is a way to express primary interests. Bilateral relations are in fact the “basic model”: there is a given culture that another wishes, or is encouraged, to learn about. There are two parties: the sender who has intentions, and the recipient who, in a favourable case, becomes the audience and/or a long-term partner. Even if the initiative is unilateral, there are two parties present, in the hope of intellectual and emotional influence. Should the effect fail to occur, the effort is fruitless, if not downright damaging.



It is then vital that the recipient does not merely suffer or tolerate the other’s programme, but find it attractive or even beneficial. To ensure this is the responsibility of the sending party. The process of getting to know each other is the result of a decision by two independent parties, but for it to be successful, the two parties need to approach their views, determine what and how they will present

through negotiation and agreement. Preparatory negotiations will benefit both from preliminary information gathering and a measure of empathy. Empathy is essentially a personal skill, which can be developed to usable capacity only through the extension of one’s knowledge of the other party. In the age of the Internet, the chances of gathering information about others are endless; nobody can claim to be short of information. The Internet, libraries and specialist literature are available for everybody. More specialised knowledge can be obtained from research institutes, university departments, or from the cultural centre of the given country, if there is one. Neglecting this work will lead to decreased efficiency and expenses that could otherwise be saved.

Diplomacy can support these efforts by furthering consensus without uneasy compromises, and by calling attention to other-than-cultural factors (e.g. planned high-level diplomatic visits which can be coordinated with the cultural event) or to local features (e.g. the Ramadan in Islamic countries or regions).

Furnished with the essential information and aware of our own achievements and values, we can start planning our initiative. The following are of equal value within our initiative:

- elements that can expect positive reception;
- elements that represent a new, added value for the other party;
- elements that are created jointly, or rely on interaction.

Take, for instance, the interest of Slovak experts in the Hungarian practice of folk tradition preservation. Both parties are familiar with the rich tradition of Hungarian folk music and dance, and the popularity it enjoys with audiences. The preservation of this tradition – through research, processing and the education of young people –, represents an added value for experts in Slovakia, where interest in the study and preservation of the folk tradition has been renewed since when the country became independent. Exploring interaction, motifs shared or borrowed, will often lead to new

- sometimes strikingly new - discoveries for the students of linguistic and material folk heritage. The professionally founded method in which the contents, form, and implementers of cultural relations/programme/co-operation is fundamental, but not sufficient for useful co-operation between the two parties.

The organisational competence of the people partaking in the realisation of plans, the venue of the programme, its time, as well as its financial and technical conditions must be investigated. The film club of a small town can hardly have the opportunity to organise an internationally recognised domestic premiere of a film - except perhaps in a special case where the film or its makers have special ties to the town in question.

During co-operation it may well be discovered that the other party has values and results in the given field or area, that are worth finding out about. It is for our benefit to be open to receive new things where there is good reason to do so. It is also expedient to study the realisation of the plan from a diplomatic aspect, as every event is realised in a particular international context and could therefore have an equally positive or negative effect on the whole of the relations with a given country.

Thus, in coming to a decision about an initiative the professional, diplomatic as well as financial and technical aspects have to be taken into consideration. Sometimes one or the other of these three aspects takes on a determining role. However, if this occurs, effectiveness is always endangered. Conflicts can also develop among the three main aspects, e.g. a plan which is well developed in a professional as well as a financial and technical sense, must still be disregarded if unexpected, unfavourable diplomatic developments come up.

2.2.2 Practice

Throughout the centuries, a rich tradition of bilateral relations has evolved in Europe. One could describe at length the role of itinerant

apprentices, artists serving at aristocratic households, travelling merchants and foreign students in transmitting culture.

Getting to know others, discovering their cultures, exploring their new ideas and deriving inspiration from them for one's own work was for a long time a worthwhile pursuit only in such European centres of culture as Paris, Vienna or Rome.



In the wake of the political changes that followed World War I there arose (for a variety of reasons) the desire to disseminate, in a conscious and structured effort, knowledge about the culture of individual nations and countries. Lesser-known cultures, including those of small European nations, came to the fore. This was the time when cultural diplomacy - i.e. the initiation, organisation and financing of cultural relations by the state - began to outweigh the former, spontaneous processes.

This was also the time when European intellectuals started to discuss in earnest the role of culture and science in attaining peaceful relations between states. (The discourse continues to the present day, and is the theme of numerous important conferences.) Attempts to exploit international cultural relations for the sake of diplomacy began then. The trend reached its summit between 1970 and 1990.

The past seventy to eighty years saw the emergence of the instruments of bilateral cooperation.

Hungary took the first steps in this regard as early as the interwar years, but for well-known reasons the system could be extended only from the 1960's on. Hungarian-Finnish cultural relations and the Finnish friends of the Hungarian language and culture played a historic role in this positive change.

Bilateral cultural relations can be built with the following means:

- intergovernmental cultural agreements (a political declaration of intent with regard to the long-term, systematic development of the cultural relations of two countries);
- intergovernmental work plans, exchange programmes and other contracts (jointly selected cultural programmes to take place during a specified period, the description of their legal, financial and technical requirements, the organisation of experts' study trips, the specification of previously agreed financial and technical requirements);
- agreements between institutions (with specifics similar to those described above);
- financing and managing cultural centres;
- the activity of NGOs, professional associations and churches, local governments and individuals;
- the foreign trade of culture (including arts management).

Today, when multilateral cultural cooperation is a real opportunity, even often favoured over other forms, we must give some thought to what should be realized, primarily or exclusively, in a bilateral framework. If you recall the above discussion of the theory of bilateral relations, you will see that the candidates are:

- studying cultural administration, the legal and financial regulation of culture in the partner country (institution, organisation), utilising the experience;
- studying the operation of the system of cultural institutions/one of its segments;
- studying the partner's language, linguistic culture, literary translations;

- comparative studies (e.g. Balzac's influence on Russian literature), the examination of cultural interactions;
- presenting cultural values in a commercial or non-commercial framework;
- discovering and studying transnational cultural values, including minority cultures;
- exchanging information, professional knowledge and documents.

Which leads us to the function of bilateral cultural cooperation as it is understood today.

Some of the cultural activities listed above can only be realised with support from the state, as they demand the appropriate diplomatic atmosphere, years of systematic preparatory work and considerable funds. They include the co-organisation of large, expensive exhibitions of classical art, or that of complex cultural programmes. It is of course possible, even necessary, to involve non-governmental entities in such projects, but the professional, financial and diplomatic responsibility for initiation and realisation should rest on the respective governments.

In the case of Hungary, bilateral relations still rely mainly on inter-governmental agreements and work plans, the network of Hungarian institutions abroad, and cooperation with Hungarians living outside the country. At present, Hungary maintains regular relations with more than 50 countries within the framework of various agreements and work plans, and has 18 cultural institutes in the world.

Hungarian Cultural Centres in the world (18): Berlin, Bratislava, Brussels, Bucharest, Cairo, Delhi, Helsinki, London, Moscow, New York, Paris, Prague, Roma, Sofia, Stuttgart, Tallinn, Vienna, Warsaw.
Website: www.magyarintezet.hu

It follows from the above that neglecting or terminating bilateral cultural cooperation (or never starting it, as in the case of newly established states) entails irreparable losses for the given

country, and hinders the development of cultural life in Europe at large. In developing bilateral relations, it is necessary to establish the role and competence of governmental and non-governmental actors (NGOs, local governments, regional authorities, etc.). It is also important that professional, financial and diplomatic criteria be given equal weight during consideration. Cooperation at this level is suitable for shaping a country's image in many respects. Keep in mind that this is not limited to the dissemination of information on your own cultural values. Partners will always appreciate an interest in their values, and will form a favourable view of us if we act considerately, as fair partners under all circumstances.

2.3 Multilateral cooperation

2.3.1 Theoretical approach

Today, when the European Union, the Council of Europe, the various regional organisations, funds and foundations are willing to support financially only those joint projects that involve more than two partners, it is of fundamental importance to see clearly what is actually meant by multilateral cultural cooperation. What can be realised at this level? What should it be used for? Which level should be selected and when? What is the difference between the bilateral and the multilateral levels of cooperation, and what are their correlations?

As I pointed out above, neglecting or trying to do without bilateral cooperation can be extremely damaging. All the more so, as multilateral cooperation is based on bilateral relations: only if we know each other, can we identify potential partners. Only then can we see similarities and differences in others, determine what constitutes the similarities and differences. Only then can we identify the benefits of exploring, experiencing or even adapting the similarities and differences.

Complete identity among cultures is rare indeed, and even if existed, it would be of no interest from the point of view co-operation. At the same time, discovering or presenting fundamental similarities or the local colours, and smaller or bigger differences complementing similarities, may make co-operation more interesting and professionally more successful. If we take a pan-European context, for instance, and art forms born in Europe such as the opera or the short story, we find that each nation contributed valuable, original elements. Both forms reveal signs of cultural interaction and the migration of motifs. Individual solutions within major styles and trends are even more conspicuous in the case of the visual arts. (It fills us with pride to see József Rippl-Rónai in the Musée d'Orsay, in the company of the great Impressionists.)

Beside similarities, alternative versions and major differences can also become the starting point for the introduction of the "smaller culture," though the approach has its own risks: instead of inviting recognition, the partner with the more modest achievements may appear a mere epigone. It is through bilateral cooperation that the common starting point, the shared motifs and tolerable differences can be explored, just as it is in this framework that competent partners can be discovered and chosen for a future multilateral partnership.

Valuable, high quality and useful multilateral cultural cooperation thus means that it is possible to represent within the same programme the shared cultural element or the shared root, together with unique individual differences that have their own cultural value. A wide-ranging knowledge and acute analytical skills are necessary to professionally identify these features and evaluate their value, both in relation to one another and to international developments. The higher the number of participants, the more careful our work has to be when identifying similarities and differences, and selecting the

appropriate cooperating partners. Should we fail to do so, we miss an opportunity during joint action to properly present values, to exploit the full potential of the action. This can be a disadvantage when applying for financial support, can even result in the programme being rejected and potential partners staying away.

It is the implicit, but very important and real aim of multilateral co-operation to foster in-depth intellectual preparatory work and urge participants to attain sufficient knowledge in order to fill the gaps regarding their partners. It is thus clear that bilateral co-operation of a satisfactory standard is an absolute prerequisite for successful multilateral co-operation.

Professionally speaking, multilateral cooperation represents a higher quality in comparison with bilateral cooperation. For this reason, the role of those experts who do intellectual preparatory/analytical/comparative work will become more important, just as those organising the actions will have to live up to higher

professional standards. Similarly, in the case of the classic, diplomatic forms of cooperation, such as the drafting of joint documents, the harmonization of positions must be given a higher priority, which is to say consensus can be reached only through the continuous monitoring of as many opinions as possible, both within and without the apparatus. This is what increases the quality of multilateral cooperation, this is what adds to its utility and value.

Let us now return to the question posed in the Introduction: can multilateral cooperation be used for the international promotion of our own culture? In the light of the above mentioned ideas, the answer seems both affirmative and negative. It cannot, because the cooperation is based on a cultural factor all participating countries share. It can, if we consider quality, that fact that we can add to the common core, and this enhancement will highlight our originality, creativity and innovativeness. As a thread may shine out from a colourful textile, so should an element of our own culture appear in a multilateral programme – if it is suitable for the purpose. This is what the audience, the recipient, the partner will notice, this is what they will appreciate. Thus, multilateral cooperation can be used to shape the image of our culture, our nation, provided we are ready to accept the value judgement of international audiences.

However, improvisation or pseudo-solutions based on misconceptions are not altogether rare in the case of multilateral cooperation. To give but a few examples:

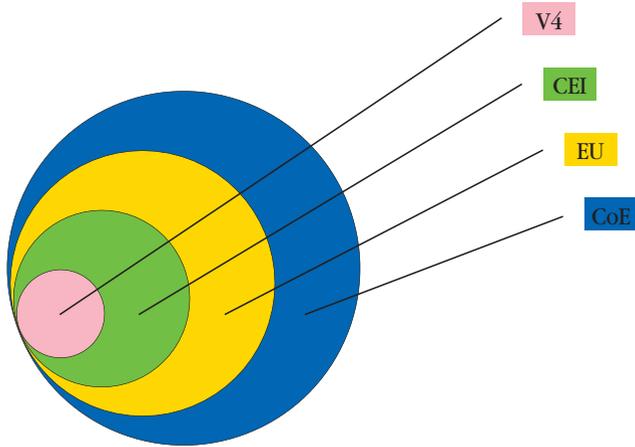
- A cultural action is put on at various venues simultaneously or consecutively, without any professional justification or result (the only result being having more participants – which is the bare minimum). For example, organizing a poet's nights in four or five foreign cities which were selected only because they had willing partner organisers, and not because of any awareness of good translations or a local interest in contemporary poetry, etc.



- A multinational team of artists undertakes a single production. The result can be of exceptional value without inspiring participants for further joint work - as in the case of festival productions.
- The initiator of multinational cooperation “steals” the limelight. (If the other partners have no significant individual achievements to show, or they are forced into the shade, the high professional quality characteristic of multilateral cooperation cannot be expected.)
- More than two partners undertake a project that can be optimally realised at a bilateral level, as in the case of translation projects. A trilateral seminar in literary translation, for instance, became a failure because the organisers invited translators from two very similar languages, but ignored the significant differences between the dominant literary forms in these languages and the taste of the two audiences. Despite the similarities between the two languages, the translators were unable to engage in the translation of the same Hungarian works.
- Due to insufficient knowledge of cooperating partners, the initiator recruits partners who do not have sufficient competence. (This is especially harmful if what is lacking is organising skills and financial potential.)
- An ill-chosen venue or date may result in the failure of an otherwise quality joint action (as when summer storms force organisers to cancel several outdoor events in a small town).
- Existing joint documents are ignored when drafting new documents on the same theme (e.g. plans for regional agreement in a subject already treated on in a European agreement)

2.3.2 Practice

Creating multilateral cultural cooperation is thus far from being an easy task. Anyone who wants to realise a multilateral cultural programme must be ready to engage in work that takes more time, more thought and more careful planning than the preparation-agreement-planning process typical in bilateral relations. The task becomes especially difficult when we



■ Visegrad Four Countries (4) ■ Central European Initiative (17) ■ European Union (25) ■ Council of Europe (46)

want to access resources available for multilateral cooperation; to submit, that is, an application. Deadlines and the need to start planning in time also call for consideration. It is therefore practical to work in a team: required are an expert who will develop the professional aspect, a financial expert to work out the budget and deal with the accounts, a person responsible for international relations, perhaps even others with diverse expertise, such as press and PR, image and application management, etc.

It is far from being simple. The more co-operating partners there are (and the less the available financial resources), the more difficult it is. Our job may become easier if we exploit the opportunities offered by regional cooperation, if we are advancing, as it were, through concentric circles, even staying within a particular circle when necessary. We need to be familiar with these circles, and we should weigh their usefulness for the given objective.

Visegrad Four Countries

Applications for support to projects: see the homepage of the International Visegrad

Fund: <http://www.visegradfund.org>



Member states (4): Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia

For Hungary, the first circle is the Visegrád Four. Thanks to bilateral cultural cooperation of many decades, Czechs, Poles, Slovaks and Hungarians we have gained a mutually deep understanding of one another's culture. Each capital hosts cultural centres of the other three countries, providing up-to-date information. Cooperating NGOs and institutions can draw on the International Visegrád Fund, which provides

financial support in semi-annual competitions. Austria and Slovenia often join the Visegrád Four as extra partners. We are "acquainted," if not as closely as with the others. The International Visegrád Fund recognises this, and is empowered to extend the scope of its support to involve the Austrian and Slovenian partners.

Central European Initiative

Homepage: <http://www.ceinet.org>



Member states (17): Albania, Austria, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine

The second and larger circle is the Central European Initiative, with seven of its seventeen member states already members of the European Union, and a further two being close to joining the EU. In this framework, bridging gaps to reach European cultural norms and assisting preparations for the EU accession are especially interesting and valuable activities. The most pertinent forms of cooperation here concern cultural management, the operation of institutions, and legislation. This is a joint task of special importance for the two big groups: the members of the EU and those outside. The Central European Initiative (CEI) provides support for projects with the participation of at least 8 member states, twice a year, in a tender system. A special feature of CEI is that it provides full financial support for those partners who come from member states with a less favourable economic background (e.g. Albania).

Council of Europe

Homepage: <http://www.coe.int>



Member states (46): Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom

Candidate for membership: Belarus

Observers: Canada, Japan, Mexico, United States of America

The guidelines for professional European level co-operation based on shared European cultural characteristics, can be studied by attending the Council of Europe fora and by reading the relevant documents and internet homepages. It is at the committee meetings and other events of the Council of Europe, where, in a truly democratic way and maintaining a high level of quality, it is formulated what can be regarded in cultural policy and its institutional system, as well as found the common European cultural values, without violating the cultural sovereignty of the member states. Issues raised at these events may inspire multilateral co-operation where high quality and an approach to values manifest themselves, and which can produce progressive results pointing towards European cultural

development, beneficial to all the participants.

The financial resources of the Council of Europe are limited, which makes the organisation more helpful in terms of illustrating the European concept of, and legal approach to, culture. All the same, the committee meetings and events are also very useful in terms of network building. Upon request of any member state, the Council of Europe will analyse its cultural life, or any segments thereof, to test its compatibility with the European set of values. If all parties concerned agree, the documentation of the investigation is made public, and can function as a resource when designing specific projects in bilateral or multilateral cultural cooperation.

European Union

Homepage: <http://europa.eu.int> or the website of the Cultural Contact Point in your home country, e.g. in Hungary visit <http://www.kulturpont.hu>, where you can obtain information on websites of the other Cultural Contact Points in Europe.



Member states (25): Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.

Candidates for membership: Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Turkey

In the extended European Union, cooperation is in principle possible with as many as 24 partners. Furthermore, since the EU wishes to take an active part in bridging the gaps between itself and non-EU countries, more than 25 states may

be involved in any particular action, if the legal background is available. (For further details cf. Attila Zongor's "Cultural Activities in the EU," in this series.) At present the Union is the most comprehensive European forum for multilateral cultural cooperation, one that also provides financial means.



3. Instruments and actors in the shaping of international cultural relations

In the field of culture I call instruments all the financial means required for the realisation of an action, the available institutions and expert capacity. I call actors all those legal and/or natural persons who take part in the realisation of a given action.

Such requirements of international cultural cooperation as a favourable diplomatic background, continuity, methodicalness, financial resources and professional work can be best provided by governmental instruments, especially in the case of more cost-intensive forms of cooperation. It is not by chance that building cultural relations through governmental instruments has remained a valid option even in countries where private sponsorship, individuals' support, the professional work of NGOs and small enterprises represent a viable alternative to governmental instruments and initiatives.

Hungary has been developing cultural relations with the help of government instruments since the 1920's (with the exception of the Cold War years). The importance of non-governmental cultural diplomacy started to grow only in the past

fifteen years, with the removal of political and legal obstacles. The slower development is more due to the financial difficulties of the civil sector than to a lack of interest or demand. If private sponsorship could grow in popularity, it would have a favourable influence on civil sector initiatives.

A peculiar in-between solution is represented by the relations of institutions, which in the case of state-run establishments rely on governmental instruments (management, labour), as well as the professionally independent use of the institutions' own revenues (as in the case of Hungarian Academy of Science, universities and public collections).

In Hungary, it would be desirable to increase the weight of non-governmental instruments in the building and maintenance of cultural relations, even to attain their dominance, but this requires non-governmental actors to improve their professional competence and language proficiency. The courses of KultúrPont (Culture Contact Point) Office provide good opportunities to improve these areas. (For contact details see the inner cover).



4. Horizontal and vertical influences

The professional result and outcome of a given international cultural action can be considered as a horizontal relation, where unilateral impact, development, or mutual interaction can take place; furthermore, depending on the particular objective, decisions regarding joint work in the future may be taken. The most important horizontal relation is at a multilateral level: cultural values need to be examined next to each other at an international level, and deviations and differences, both positive and negative, are to be viewed in comparison.

Horizontal is the relation of the professional, financial and diplomatic elements in the decision making process: which is to gain the upper hand? Which one will be dominant when the decision is made, and which when the results are analysed? Do the elements required for decision making come from one or more sources? If the latter, how do the various elements interact with each other? (E.g. there may be professional reasons for involving an external sponsor, and these reasons may have a positive or negative effect on the professional element.)

There is a similar relationship between the governmental and non-governmental actors in a given action. When their work is coordinated and harmonised, they can be very successful. Issues to consider during the initial phase of such joint work include the sharing of professional knowledge, the division of coordinating and logistical tasks, the possible pitfalls of organizing team work, the assumption of responsibility in both professional and financial terms.

However, even if the division of labour is optimal, a certain degree of verticality (hierarchy) must enter the equation: the responsibility of coordination can only be assumed by one actor.

The level of cooperation may be considered a primarily vertical relation: are we talking about a unilateral, bilateral or multilateral, regional or European action? How do the various levels join within a given action? Is it possible to find a common ground for pan-European cultural actions, or is cooperation between Euro-regions or regional organisations a more feasible option? The question of professionalism needs to be examined in a horizontal as well as a vertical context. Are we satisfied with superficial results, one-time successes, or do we go for spectacular achievements? Is “being there” enough? Or do we aspire for more, such as further cooperation, the exploration of new, shared aspects, progress, development with joint effort, or perhaps the involvement of new partners?

All this is worth giving a thought. Even a conference could be organised on these questions. All we need to decide is whether it should be a bilateral or multilateral event? Who could be the partners and the sponsors? When and where should it take place? Should we apply for financial support, and if so, to whom and when? And so on... There are no ready-made formulas in cultural diplomacy. We always need to adapt our knowledge to the given situations. So the author herself refrains from laying down the law, and bids farewell instead, repeating only her first idea: it is always a pleasure to read and be informed

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