JACQUES DELORS PRIZE

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HOW THE EU TAKES INTERCULTURAL RELATIONS INTO ACCOUNT IN ITS WESTERN BALKANS ENLARGEMENT POLICY



Summary

Since the release of its 2016 Strategy for International cultural Relations, the EU is renewing the engagement with its partners in the cultural policy field. In the framework of the enlargement to the Western Balkans countries which seems to have entered a stalemate, these new sets of policies could help the EU to reinforce and maintain the credibility of its actorness in the region, ensuring structural engagement with them. In this ambition of cultural cooperation, EU partners' expectations of mutual relationship poses the question of the degree to which the EU effectively considers intercultural differences in its external cultural action. This acknowledgement is highly relevant in a region to which ethno-cultural diversity is particularly definitional.

Cultural cooperation could allow the relationship between the EU and the region to move from mere crisis management to a pre-accession process. It indeed paves the way for reciprocal commitment between the EU and the Western Balkans, following Jacques Delors' call to engage with the "affective dimension of Europe's integration".¹ EU's effort to foster Western Balkans' independent cultural sectors and open participation to its cultural programmes are concrete actions raising South-East Europe's cultural profile. This is however to the condition that the most diverse and independent cultural entrepreneurs can afford participation to EU cultural programmes, which is far from being the case of the initiatives currently held by the EU gathered under "Creative Europe". Besides, the mutual enrichment hoped for in intercultural relations is limited by the approximation requested in the enlargement process, posing the EU as a cultural regulator. And cultural diplomacy sometimes assimilates cultural cooperation to stability objectives, entailing the risk of securitisation of cultural relations, denaturing their objectives of mutual understanding.

Focusing on the implementation of the Strategy for International Cultural Relations, this paper argues that where the EU is involved in culture, it does not necessarily engage with the intercultural dimension, limiting reciprocity and local appropriation. It especially calls for **EU engagement with the Western Balkans local cultural agencies who have a real power in resilience and reconciliation** but are disregarded in the State-driven methodology of the enlargement process.

1. J. Delors, "Appeal to Church leaders for cooperation" quoted in K. Houston, "Religion and European Integration: Predominant Themes and Emerging Research Priorities", Religion Compass 5/8, pp. 462–476, 2011, p. 462.

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INTRODUCTION

The European Union's actorness in the Western Balkans is marked by the underpinning objective of stabilisation of the region with an ultimate promise of accession. Last decades geopolitical evolutions have however posed strong obstacles to the prospect of enlargement. Major influential players such as Russia potentially exploiting ethnic tensions in the region, or China through the economic and commercial impacts of the Balkan Silk Road, challenge EU's attractiveness in the region. Besides, the Balkan road in the migration crisis physical walls erected at EU's boundaries added to other barriers to Western Balkans' integration. In this context, new sets of policies and approaches could help the EU to reinforce and maintain the credibility of its engagement in the region.

The institutions are defining the Union's principles in the field of culture since the 2016 Joint Communication of the European Commission and High Representative, "Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations". This realm is increasingly being acknowledged as an integral and central part of EU external action. So far, culture as an EU policy field is a *supplementary competence* wherein "EU institutions have to respect member States' sovereignty with regard to national external cultural action, thus focusing on EU added value in respect of complementarity and subsidiarity principles. Consequently, the EU is perceived as an 'enabling power' in the cultural field".2

As President of the Commission, Jacques Delors ranked culture in the category of policies which constitute driving forces for the Union's "will to live together, to make an ensemble able to prosper internally but also to hold its rank externally". As early as 1985, he therefore labelled culture as an essential policy field for EU existence and external action. In the framework of culture mobilised in external action, EU develops "cultural cooperation" and "intercultural relations" targeting at "mutual understanding and visibility of entrepreneurs". Concrete aspects of such relations include "exchange of ideas, information, art & other aspects of culture [...] and peoples in order to foster mutual understanding" led by cultural organisations and operators.

In the ongoing process of enlargement negotiations with the Western Balkans countries, the mobilisation of cultural dimensions connecting societies may be an answer to the integration-stabilisation dilemma: stabilisation is achieved by rapprochement on a common ground (e.g. protection of shared cultural heritage), by socio-economic development (through cultural trade) and regional cooperation among Western Balkans Six⁶ in this field. However, in this ambition, **EU partners' expectations of mutual relationship in cultural cooperation raises** the question of the degree to which **EU cultural external action effectively considers intercultural differences**.

This paper addresses the role of cultural cooperation in the enlargement process and its impact on the EU-Western Balkans countries relations: factor of rapprochement or alienation? facilitator or obstacles to enlargement? adding to the diversity of the Union or necessary 'EUisation' of candidates? It more precisely assesses the accountability of cultural differences

- 1. European Commission & High Representative, "Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations", JOIN(2016) 29 final, Brussels, 8 June 2016.
- 2. D. Helly, "Europe's enabling power: an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations", CEPOB série de Collège d'Europe, Policy Brief #2.17, College of Europe, 27 February 2017, p. 1.
- 3. J. Delors, Speech at the First Intergovernmental Conference, Bulletin of the European Communities, September 1985, No. 9, Luxembourg.
- 4. D. Helly, "More Cultural Europe in the World", More Europe, Brussels, 2012, p. 6.
- 5. M. C., Cummings "Cultural Diplomacy and the United States Government: a Survey", 2003, quoted in Y. R., Isar et al. "'Culture in EU External Relations': An Idea whose Time Has Come?", International Journal of Cultural Policy, Vol.21, No. 4, 2014, p 82.
- 6. Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo.



in the EU cultural actorness towards the Western Balkans countries and analyses the (reciprocal?) relation created by the EU-Western Balkans' cultural cooperation.

A first part focuses on the process of 'EUisation' of Western Balkans candidate countries through their approximation to EU cultural acquis in the enlargement process which encourages them to articulate their national cultural action with that of the EU. It presents the risk of overlooking the cultural differences of candidate countries, in the paradigm of self-defined "EU soft power and cultural superpower" and raises the question of an instrumentalization of culture by the EU as a foreign policy tool. 7 The second part assesses Western Balkans' participation to EU cultural programmes. It puts forward an EU priority to create an independent cultural sector in its partner States which is beneficial to the affirmation of their cultural diversity, but shows that EU cultural programmes are less sensitive to the specificities of Western Balkans's cultural environment than to their EU-like programmes. The last part looks more specifically at EU's attempts to translate the objectives of its Strategy for International Cultural Relations in the region (socio-economic development, cultural heritage preservation and reconciliation by intercultural dialogue). Such encompassing objectives are colliding with the realities of the region marked by multiplicities of identities, making it almost impossible for the Strategy to reflect them all. The EU then falls in the pitfall of overlooking minorities which might raise as obstacles to the enlargement process.

FIGURE 1 . Map of the Western Balkans



^{7.} Federica Mogherini quoted in R. Higgott, L. Van Langenhove, "Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations: an initial, critical but constructive analysis", VUB, Brussels, September 2016, p. 2.



1. APPROXIMATION TO EU CULTURAL ACQUIS AND APPROACHES, BETWEEN CULTURAL UNIFORMITY AND INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF CULTURE

The paradigm of 'EUisation' of candidate countries through their adoption of EU acquis strongly encourages them to articulate their national cultural policies with that of the EU. Yet, this demand for approximation raises the question of acknowledgement of cultural differences, as it provides the EU with a role of cultural regulator, echoing its controversial self-definition as a cultural superpower.

1.1 EU cultural regulation through enlargement

For Serbia and Montenegro who have started accession negotiations, adoption of EU's acquis in the sphere of culture was not expected to cause any major difficulties. Chapter 26 was opened and closed for Serbia in the same month. It explains by the limited scope of the acquis in the field which foresees low level of ambition in EU-Western Balkans cultural cooperation and more margin of manoeuvre for Western Balkans national programmes.

BOX 1 - Enlargement chapters of the acquis - Chapter 26: Education and culture

"The areas of education, training, youth and culture are primarily the competence of the Member States. [...] As regards cultural diversity, Member States need to uphold the principles enshrined in Article 151 of the EC Treaty and ensure that their international commitments allow for preserving and promoting cultural diversity."

Source: European Commission, "Chapters of the acquis: Culture", European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, retrieved 17/12/2017

Yet, enlargement triggers unbalanced cultural relations by a demand for approximation of candidates to EU cultural actorness. EU progress reports reveal that negotiations are merely aiming at guaranteeing that the Western Balkans share the same understanding of culture and cultural activities as the Union, while making no mention of the potentiality of mutual enrichment. Negotiation terms basically praise the Western Balkans countries' participation to EU programmes. Screening Reports of the candidate and potential candidate countries welcome their definition of culture as an area of public interest and emphasise their national programmes to the extent that they integrate into EU programmes. Moreover, the chapter devoted to culture closes with a section "Assessment of the degree of alignment and implementing capacity" merely focusing on the necessity to avoid any discrimination between nationals and EU citizens in the future in terms of culture, hence safeguarding the interests of EU citizens.9

In this approach of culture as an external action policy field, **EU-Western Balkans intercultural relations are marked by an expected alignment rather than mutual enrichment**. This call for approximation and homogenisation resonates paradoxically with the emancipatory power that one grants to culture as well as with the EU acknowledged respect for complementarity and subsidiarity in this field.

^{8.} European Commission, "Bosnia and Herzegovina 2016 Report", SWD(2016) 365 final, Brussels, 9 November 2016, p. 52.

European Commission, "Screening Report Montenegro Chapter 26 – Education and Culture", MD 4/13, 5 February 2013, p. 8.



Its supplementary role is even more undermined by enlargement as a State-driven process which tends to hamper a much-needed decentralisation of cultural policies in the Western Balkans Six. The noticeable absentees in the enlargement process are the citizens and civil societies, although they are central to cultural cooperation. Intercultural relations are first and foremost State-driven and "it is from the [central institutions] that a future social contract is expected to emerge, rather than from local agency, which is instead expected to be compliant with the Europeanisation process."¹⁰

This is particularly problematic in the South-Eastern Europe region wherein remnants of former Yugoslavia have fostered a problematic State centralisation of the cultural sector. In the words of an EU official from the EEAS "although there is a very diversified cultural environment in all the countries, these States still have a problem of nation-building and tend to use religion and culture as an identity tool with all the excesses that this implies." ¹¹ In the 2018 Progress Report for Serbia, the Commission accordingly notes that the Ministry of Culture drafting of the "Strategy of the Development of Culture 2017–2027 was criticised for lacking consultations with stakeholders". ¹²

Overlooking participation of civil society, the enlargement process is perpetuating this centralisation of cultural policies instead of tackling it by forging an independent cultural sector. The EU deviates from its role of enabling power.

1.2 EU self-definition as a "cultural superpower" compromising reciprocity in the relationship¹³

This warning of Higgott and Van Langenhove that "if Europe is to be successful in its quest for enhanced international cultural relations it must be nuanced, constrained, coordinated and modest even" seems particularly accurate to the enlargement process, overall lacking caution and reciprocity in its cultural dimension.¹⁴

The hypothesis of an instrumental use of culture by the EU as a foreign policy tool for 'soft power' can be raised, as culture is increasing its profile and being mainstreamed within EU foreign policy. The European External Action Service is for example openly promoting culture as a field of action *per se* and has granted one staff member in its delegations with the task of cultural diplomacy (for the Western Balkans, the Deputy Heads of Delegations). This inscription of culture in the traditional foreign policy realm and patronizing tendency of the EU in cultural cooperation have already initiated debates in other regions where the EU is engaged, following this statement by the High Representative: "We should not be afraid to say we are a cultural superpower." Cultural cooperation in this light resembles more a tool for EU cultural diplomacy than cultural interrelations.

The defensive answer of an official from the EEAS questioned on potential exercise of cultural diplomacy towards WB6 highlights the institutions' awareness of this reproach: "In our terminology actually, we avoid to say "cultural diplomacy", we say 'culture in EU external action'. Our task according to the treaties is not to produce a culture of our own, to have a European cultural agenda but to support Member States in their cultural policies. What we can do is to be facilitators in support of their own national culture."¹⁷

- **10.** S. Kappler, O. Richmond, "Peacebuilding and culture in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Resistance or emancipation?", Security Dialogue 42(3) 261–278, 2011, pp. 266-267.
- 11. Interview with an Official from the EEAS (2), 27 March 2018, Brussels.
- 12. European Commission, "Serbia 2018 Progress Report", SWD(2018) 152 final, 17 April 2018, p. 78.
- 13. Federica Mogherini quoted in R. Higgott, L. Van Langenhove, op. cit., p. 2.
- 14. R. Higgott & L.Van Langenhove, op. cit., p. 5.
- **15.** D. Helly 2017, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
- 16. Federica Mogherini quoted in R. Higgott, L. Van Langenhove, op. cit., p. 2.
- 17. Interview with an Official from the EEAS (2), op. cit.



Yet, the exercise of normative power is not absent from EU cultural relations with the region. The same official acknowledges that culture can be used in diplomacy as a facilitator of dialogue "because when you have a market, you have a dialogue, ties between countries and understanding and this, in a wider framework, is nonetheless a tool of promoting our values, our model of coexistence and principles in which we believe." The Director of EUNIC Global Office in Brussels, confirms that "yes, it is cultural diplomacy. This is why the Ministries of Culture, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, the EEAS are all involved." But instead of a tool to gain influence, he presents the use of cultural diplomacy as legitimate in so far as it serves as mediation for intercultural relations in a subsidiary manner: "Rather than vertical, it is people to people. Institutions are involved because they organize and fund, but then, on the ground, they step back and we create a space for civil society to work together cross-borders, without control and censorship." Cultural diplomacy is then exercised to create a frame within which cultural actors could work.

But in practice, the European Union seems to be oscillating between cultural diplomacy as a facilitator of grassroot dialogue and a soft power tool.

1.3 Strategic approach and instrumental use of culture in EU foreign policy to the Western Balkans

A risk run by culture and shared by many other domains of EU external action is that of instrumentalization for objectives of prevention and management of conflict, in a 'securitisation' process. This approach denatures the equalitarian and reciprocal relationship between the EU and its candidate countries that culture should offer. **The linkage culture-security is expressly made in the Strategy for International Cultural Relations** by the High Representative: "Culture can help us fight and prevent radicalisation. It can strengthen diplomatic relations and mutual understanding. It can help us stand together to common threats and build partnerships and alliances".²²

The EU is particularly suspected of 'stabilitocracy' in the SEE region-i.e. putting forward unrealistic enlargement prospects for achieving security reforms, and as the enlargement process was announced temporarily stopped by the Juncker Commission, the EU was gradually suspected to "value stability over democracy in the region".²³ In the potential diplomatic use of culture stated above, the suspicion of an EU 'stabilitocracy' through cultural relations can only be reinforced among Western Balkans Six.

The instrumental use of culture encourages the EU to overlook the diversity of cultural reality among its partners and hampers the intercultural dimension of the relation. It has been criticized by commentators as creating a selective EU engagement in culture: "the EU has a tendency to treat culture as an instrument that can only be taken into consideration when doing so is conducive to the Union's political projects in the region."²⁴ In this approach, the EU only acknowledges the fringe of civil society compatible with its liberal society model which is conducive to an undifferentiated approach of cultural identity simplifying the reality on the ground: "the EU tends to ignore collectivities or groups that do not fit into its liberal-rights or market-economy framework."²⁵

- 19. Interview with an Official from the EEAS (2), op. cit.
- 20. Interview with Andrew Murray, Director of EUNIC Global Office, 5 April 2018, Brussels.
- 21. Ibid.
- 22. European Commission & High Representative, op. cit. p. 1.
- 23. N. Ristić, "Mogherini: Berlin Process is not a substitute for the EU enlargement", European Western Balkans, 12 July 2017.
- 24. S. Kappler, O. Richmond, op. cit. pp. 261-278.
- 25. *Ibid*, p. 265.

^{18.} I. J., Manners, "Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol.40, No. 2, 2002, pp. 235-258.



Rejection reaction of the Bosnian local operators who did not meet such requirements enough to be regarded as privileged interlocutors in the cultural cooperation was summed up under the motto: "We don't do choirs and football clubs". They thereby claim the existence of organisations and cultural expressions in their country aside those resembling the EU's.²⁶

In the enlargement negotiations with the Western Balkans, the EU deals with culture as a policy field, not necessarily the intercultural dimension. The same deficit is identifiable in the cooperation emerging from Western Balkans' integration into EU programmes.

2. 'EUISATION' BY WESTERN BALKANS': THE RISK OF OVERLOOKING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

The objective of 'EUisation' of candidate countries through their participation to EU cultural programmes incites them to articulate their national cultural action with that of the EU. It is openly encouraged by the EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations: "The EU should continue working closely with Enlargement countries to [...] promote the development of their cultural and creative industries and foster their participation in existing EU cultural programmes."²⁷ This part assesses the extent to which these programmes contribute to the development of Western Balkans countries' specific cultural and creative sectors.

2.1 "Creative Europe Programme", socialisation in pre-accession

"Creative Europe Programme", specifically in support of Europe's cultural and creative sector was launched in February 2016 with a budget of €1.46 billion (9% higher than the former Culture and MEDIA Programmes).²⁸ Article 8 of the Regulation establishing the programme ensures eligibility of countries other than EU Member States.²⁹ Since 2014, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia are full participants to the programme and host national Creative Europe Desks.

Networking is a major asset of Creative Europe and corresponds to what Balkans cultural actors are striving for, as a relay for local artists to work with EU member States.³⁰ Dimitrije Tadic, head of Creative Europe Desk Serbia explains that most of their work is targeting at helping Serbian cultural organisations to connect with organisations from all over Europe.³¹

A sub-program raising significant interest from the Western Balkans is MEDIA, which specifically supports the European audio-visual industry. Participation of Western Balkans countries seems an opportunity for audience development and mobility of their cultural entrepreneurs, including less well-known local ones. This programme was also deemed necessary because the rise of digital technology has transformed the sector creating "additional issues, such as the protection of intellectual property".³² This enables participants to adapt to the changing requirements of the cultural and creative industries markets, benefitting from the EU expertise.

- Ibid.
- 27. European Commission & High Representative, op. cit., p. 6.
- 28. European Commission, "Eligibility of organisations from non-EU countries", Brussels, 21 August 2018.
- **29**. *lbid*
- **30.** T. Boudaud, « L'Union Européenne et la culture dans les Balkans: En quoi les programmes culturels européens structurent-ils le milieu culturel dans les pays d'ex-Yougoslavie? », Mémoire de Master Université Grenoble Alpes, Sciences Po Grenoble 2017, Sous la direction de Pierre Brini, p. 22.
- 31. Dimitrije Tadic, Head of Creative Europe Desk Serbia quoted in T. Boudaud, op. cit. p. 22.
- 32. European Commission, "Sub-programme of Creative Europe: MEDIA", European Commission Website.



"Creative Europe" convenes conferences with all the Western Balkans Desks and organizes workshops with professionals from all over Europe, training local cultural organizations. This professionalisation of Balkans cultural operators appears as one of the major benefits of EU programmes. This learning-process inscribes in the objectives of the enlargement policies and is emphasised in the 2016 Bosnia and Herzegovina's Screening Report, where the Commission welcomes the fact that "both Creative Europe offices, in Sarajevo and Banja Luka, organized workshops and information days across the country." But to what extent is this concretely beneficial to Western Balkans cultural actors?

2.2 "Creative Europe": co-creation?

As communicated by an official from DG NEAR, Western Balkans have received 106 grants under "Creative Europe" 2017. According to him, this means that they are very successful in applying for EU funds: "There is a good market in the Balkans for cultural activities, they gain from it, and they are successful because it is competitive."³⁴

However, this **competitive approach of the programme has a detrimental effect for local entrepreneurs**. If in total, 73 beneficiaries from the Western Balkans have received funding from EU cultural programmes since 2014, a detailed overview reveals that only 20 of them are large scale projects.³⁵

TABLE 1 ...

Projets à petite échelle Tableau N°1 Nom Pays Code Pays Project Leade ct Leader pro Total Project 2014 2015 2016 2017 2014 2015 2016 2017 2014 2015 2016 2017 2014 2015 2016 201 11 Croatie 17 XK 0 0 0 0 0 0 1 0 0 0 MK 1 0 4 0 0 1 1 Macédoine 0 0 0 0 0 2 Monténégro ME 0 1 0 10 RS 8 erbie 4 SI 14 18 7 6 4 11 53 52 34

Projets à grande échelle

Tableau N°2																		
Nom Pays	Project Leader				Project Leader proposed				Partner				Total Project				Tota	
		2014	2015	2016	2017	2014	2015	2016	2017	2014	2015	2016	2017	2014	2015	2016	2017	
Bosnie	BA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
Croatie	HR	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	6	1	4	5	6	1	- 4	5	16
Kosovo	XK	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Macédoine	MK	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	2	2	0	0	2	4
Monténégro	ME	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	2
Serbie	RS	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	6	3	3	1	6	3	3	1	13
Slovénie	SI	0	0	1	0	0	2	6	2	11	- 4	2	3	11	4	3	3	21
	0	0	1	0	1	4	8	7	25	9	11	11						

Source: Boudaud, Thibaut, « L'Union Européenne et la culture dans les Balkans : En quoi les programmes culturels européens structurent-ils le milieu culturel dans les pays d'ex-Yougoslavie ? », Mémoire de Master Université Grenoble Alpes, Sciences Po Grenoble 2017, Sous la direction de Pierre Brini, p. 21.

In Montenegro's Progress Report for 2018, the EU indeed deplores that "participation in the Creative Europe programme could be improved, with only 4 submitted applications in the last 4 calls without any selected project so far." This low result is due to the fact that, lacking financial, institutional and political backing as well as appropriate training, cultural operators do not have enough capacity and resources to successfully apply for calls for proposal, in

- 33. European Commission, "Bosnia and Herzegovina 2016 Report", SWD[2016] 365 final, Brussels, 9 November 2016, 83 pages, p. 25.
- 34. Interview with an Official from DG NEAR, op. cit.
- **35.** T. Boudaud, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
- 36. European Commission, "Montenegro 2018 Report", SWD(2018) 150 final, Strasbourg, 17 April 2018, p. 79.



particular those with large-scale funding.³⁷ According to Miljenka Buljevic from Clubture Network, an organization of independent cultural actors in Croatia, "the beneficiaries of Creative Europe are State institutions (Goethe Institute, British Council etc.) who do not collaborate."³⁸

Moreover, non-EU members must pay a contribution based on their GNP to participate, and although DG NEAR covers "90% of the participation fees of the countries by digressive reimbursement (up to 0)", expensive admission fees represent the biggest obstacle.³⁹ Yll Rugova, a Kosovar local cultural activist explains that local cultural associations have long lobbied for the Ministry of Kosovo to join Creative Europe, but the central administration has remained reluctant and sceptical with regards to the high costs of admission fees.⁴⁰

Professionalisation of cultural actors should then include information and training in project management so that they can respond to calls for proposal and access EU funds.⁴¹

2.3 "Creative Europe", no panacea for Western Balkans cultural entrepreneurs

If non-State actors are ill-equipped to access funding, it is also because participation to such programmes assumes a common understanding between the EU and South-East Europe of what cultural expression and creative industries represent. Yet, **culture statistics reveal a distance in terms of significance and role of culture**.⁴²

The ambition of these programmes to promote exchanges of cultural goods is less significant for the Western Balkans than for the EU in terms of economic benefits. On the period 2008-2014, while the EU28 growth rate of exports as well as imports of cultural goods reached 3%, Serbia scored a negative one of -2.5%. This adds to the fact that EU countries are not WB6's only privileged partner as the latter export and import overall as many cultural good intra-EU and extra-EU, with only 11% of Montenegrin exchanges going to the EU. 44

In terms of public interest for such goods, Western Balkans cultural consumption also differs. In Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, consumption behaviours for cultural goods concern more traditional cultural goods (52% newspapers journals and periodicals, 15% CDs DVDs) than participation to cultural activities (cinema and live performances) who are the most popular in the EU, accounting for above 50% of total consumption. Favouring visibility of EU-like or EU-compatible cultural projects from the Western Balkans, the content of "Creative Europe" programme is therefore less adapted to cultural consumption behaviours within the Western Balkans and does not appear as beneficial to their cultural entrepreneurs.

However, this does not mean that Western Balkans have no interest in acceding such market. Their cultural entrepreneurs strive to be distributed and access a wider audience. Jacques Delors saw what he called this "desire for universal" as intrinsically linked to neighbours' decision to apply for joining the EU:

When we analyse what is happening in some countries – Yugoslavia, Hungary, Algeria to take few examples [...] when these countries have the mean to express, they speak to us until exhaustion [sic] of their propension to universal. And universal is here, at their door.⁴⁶

- **37.** T. Boudaud, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
- 38. Miljenka Buljevic, President of Clubture Network, cited in T. Boudaud, op. cit., p. 25.
- 39. Interview with an Official from DG NEAR, op. cit.
- 40. Yll Rugova quoted in T. Boudaud, op.cit. p. 24
- **41.** T. Boudaud, *op. cit.*, p. 18
- 42. Eurostat, "Culture statistics 2016 edition", European Commission, 6 July 2016.
- 43. *lbid*, pp. 103-101
- 44. *Ibid*, pp. 105-106
- **45**. *Ibid*, pp. 108; 133
- 46. J. Delors, Closing Speech at the Jean Monnet Symposium, 10 November 1998, Brussels.



The EU shall focus on more inclusive forms of cultural cooperation which would go beyond those promoting types of creative industries who are the apanage of EU member States and would fill WB6's "desire for universal".

2.4 "Fostering trust and understanding between the peoples of Europe and the rest of the world through culture" 47

Another significant translation of EU programmes in candidate countries is the presence of The European Union National Institutes of Culture (EUNIC). EUNIC is settled in Serbia since 2007 where it gathers 15 European cultural centres and institutes and in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It endorses a privileged position of reaching out to the local sector.

A crucial objective of EUNIC is that of guaranteeing a sustainable independent cultural sector in Western Balkans countries. Mr. Murray warns: "We have to be careful not to get the State too involved in what happens on the ground", therefore EUNIC is trying to build "independent cultural sectors possibly linked together regionally and cross-border." ⁴⁸ This idea follows Delors' 'cheval de bataille' i.e. the application of the subsidiarity principle to the cultural sector. ⁴⁹ In his Speech at the Opening Session of the 40th Academic Year of the College of Europe, he explains the centrality of the entrepreneurs of subsidiarity to the integration process as "small entities naturally rooted in a solidarity of interests and a convergence of feeling". ⁵⁰

A strong asset of EUNIC is the trust it is granted by these independent actors "because a lot of its institutions (British Council and so on) have been there for a long time; they've been there through good time and bad times. They are not the State, they are not the delegations and are not in the embassies. That's why they are very useful intermediators and they are interface between the Ministries and cultural sector."51

Raising South-eastern Europe's profile toward the rest of the continent is the network's other ambition. The most concrete project of EUNIC-Serbia is the preparation of the year 2021 following the election of the Serbian city of Novi Sad as the European Capital of Culture. This choice of Novi Sad, "the Serbian Athens" is *per se* a positive sign sent by the EU and is qualified as a turning point in the European cultural history:

Behind the European capital of culture appellation, a unifying ambition is hiding. Its role is to reinforce the 'rayonnement' of European cultural cities and to favour linkages and interactions among European citizens through appealing cultural programmes. The choice of Novi Sad inscribes Serbia in a European dynamic, with culture as a pulse to form a feeling of EU belonging among local citizens.⁵²

Mr. Murray admits that it is difficult to say what to expect from the programme which has had various outcomes in the past: "it is increasing hotel booking but often there is not much left of a legacy so it depends how each project team prepares, gets funding." ⁵³ The Maribor experience (Slovenia), is regarded as a missed opportunity since very few cultural infrastructures and long

- 47. EUNIC's motto, EUNIC Website.
- 48. Interview with A. Murray, op. cit.
- 49. J. Delors, Speech at the Opening Session of the 40th Academic Year of the College of Europe- Bruges, 17 October 1989," EC Commission Document, Ref. Speech/89173, quoted in K. Endo, "The Principle of Subsidiarity: from Johannes Althusius to Jacques Delors", Leiden, 1992, p. 75.
- **50.** *Ibid*., p. 75.
- 51. Interview with A. Murray, op. cit.
- 52. L. Gourdon, « Novi Sad, capitale européenne de la culture 2021 », Eurosorbonne, 7 December 2016.
- 53. Interview with A. Murray, op. cit.



term employments were created by the term of its mandate and has shown that success is not automatic.⁵⁴

The Bosnian cities of Banja Luka, Zenica and Mostar should apply for such programmes in 2024 and 2027, which opens the path to regional cooperation by exchange of best practices.⁵⁵

3. 'EUISATION MULTI-FACETED WESTERN BALKANS AS THE "CRASH TEST" TO IMPLEMENT A ONE-WAY CULTURAL STRATEGY

As soon as the enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe, Delors strongly called the EU to understand different mentalities and histories of the candidates:

We are about to welcome old nations nevertheless marked by discontinuity, young States whose ethnic boundaries do not always coincide with political ones and are striving to affirm their returned sovereignty. Let us acknowledge this reality: beyond economic and legislative adaptation, there are political and cultural misunderstandings. Therefore, we shall learn to acknowledge differences to respect them and draw some lessons.⁵⁶

Among the Balkans, multiplicities of identities might be colliding with the EU attempt to uniformly translate the principles of its strategy. Political and emotional significances of these identities in the region make it difficult for an "Agenda for culture" to take them all into account.

3.1 Culture-economic development nexus applied to the Western Balkans: EU's undifferentiated approach

The Strategy draws an intrinsic link between developing the cultural sector and an economy based on sustainable development through the "global trade of creative products". ⁵⁷ According to UNESCO's Culture for Development Indicators (CDIS), cultural trade contributes to "7% of GDP of developing countries, which is more than many other traditional industrial sectors." ⁵⁸ In Western Balkans countries entrapped in a state of "interminable transition" to a functioning market economy, **strengthening the cultural market could foster economic development** and thereby facilitate enlargement. ⁵⁹ Acknowledging this virtuous linkage, the Strategy expressly insists on the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) which financially supports Western Balkans applicants in their implementation of the EU acquis. In its February 2018 Strategy for the Western Balkans, the European Commission accordingly proposes to increase these funding. ⁶⁰

- **54.** T. Boudaud, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
- **55.** *Ibid*, pp. 30-31.
- **56.** J. Delors, « Le pardon et la promesse. L'héritage vivant de Robert Schuman », Speech for the Commemoration of 50 years of the Schuman Declaration, Luxembourg, 9 May 2000.
- 57. C. Figueira, "A Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations by the European Commission", *Cultural Trends* 26(1), 2016, p. 82
- **58.** European Commission Fact Sheet, "A new strategy to put culture at the heart of EU international relations", Brussels, 23 May 2017.
- 59. J.-A., Dérens, L. Geslin, Comprendre les Balkans. Histoire, sociétés, perspectives, nouvelle édition, Paris, Non Lieu, 2014, p. 8.
- **60.** European Commission Press release, "Strategy for the Western Balkans: EU sets out new flagship initiatives and support for the reform-driven region", Strasbourg, 6 February 2018.



What economic opportunity does the cultural market actually represent for the countries of the region? Here again, in the ambition to develop the creative industry, the big differences between the EU and the Western Balkans Six in terms of cultural markets shall not be ignored. In 2014, if cultural jobs accounted for 7% of EU employment, it represented only 2% of total employment in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.⁶¹ Besides, the contribution of culture to socio-economic development seems no reliable sustainable path in the region due to politics. Indeed, **national cultural policies are short-term and always the first portfolio to be subject to budget cuts**.⁶² In Serbia, following the crisis, the budget for culture was divided by three until 2017 and now represents 0.6% of the total budget.⁶³ Its 2018 Progress Report shows mixed efforts in this regard, the Commission noting that the Serbian Ministry of Culture's Strategy of the Development of Culture has the "very ambitious and potentially unrealistic increase of the budget for culture from the current 0.68 % to 1.68 % of GDP by 2027".⁶⁴

Tourism appears as an opportunity to capitalize on culture for socio-economic development. It is so far underdeveloped in the WB6, last statistics of the beginning of the 20th century showing that it represented only several hundreds of persons per year.

TABLE 2 • External perceptions and tourism

In the 1970s and 1980s the growth rate in international visitor numbers to the region, particularly the Adriatic coast, was comparable to that of Spain. The collapse of the communist system and its aftermath dented figu es across much of the area; the wars saw a catastrophic collapse in numbers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and Croatia – as the table below demonstrates.

Table 1 - South-East Europe: International Inbound tourism

and the second second	Number of visitors (1000s)										
Country	1968	1978	1988	1992	1996	2000	2004				
Albania	n/a	n/a	n/a	111	119	317	383				
Bosnia and Herzegovina	170	250	394	1	99	171	153				
Bulgaria	1 783	4 570	7 594	1 3 2 2	2 980	2 785	5 563				
Croatia	2 083	3 853	5 621	1 271	2 6 4 9	5 831	7 912				
Greece	879	3 961	7 564	9331	9 233	13 096	14 308				
Macedonia	94	215	221	219	136	224	216				
Romania	1 451	3 685	5 142	3 798	2 834	3 274	4 793				
Slovenia	678	877	1 137	616	832	1 090	1 484				
Serbia and Montenegro	718	1 190	1 272	156	301	239	481				

Source: Bold, John, Cherry, Martin, (eds), "The Politics of Heritage Regeneration in South-East Europe", Council of Europe, Strasbourg, March 2016, p. 46.

The unfavourable political context and so far low economic significance of the cultural market makes economic benefits drawn from culture highly speculative for the WB region.

4.2 Protection and rehabilitation of cultural heritage as a manifestation of cultural diversity

Cultural heritage is currently at the core of EU actorness in the field of culture, which was emphasised in the context of the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage. The Strategy for International Cultural Relations identifies it as a vector of enhanced cooperation with partner countries.

^{61.} Eurostat, "Culture statistics - 2016 edition", European Commission, 6 July 2016, p. 58.

^{62.} Milena Dragićević-Šešić Professor of Cultural Policies and Management at the Belgrade University of Arts quoted in T. Boudaud, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

^{63.} *Ibid*.

^{64.} European Commission, "Serbia 2018 Progress Report", SWD(2018) 152 final, 17 April 2018, p. 78.



This EU focus emerges from the conviction that culture can become a crucial element of peacekeeping, especially in the potentiality of illicit trafficking of cultural heritage goods and deliberate destruction of cultural heritage.⁶⁵ During the Yugoslavian wars, cultural heritage became highly politicized as a mirror of national identity and destruction of heritage participated to "cultural cleansing".⁶⁶ "Figures range from 1 700 cultural heritage sites damaged or destroyed in the former Yugoslavia – to 2 771 in Bosnia and Herzegovina alone – where targeting at symbols of others' beliefs was systematic".⁶⁷

The Western Balkans Cultural Heritage Route recently launched by the EU and encompassing diverse initiatives related to preservation of cultural heritage carries the objective to make the populations from the Western Balkans and the rest of Europe sense a common history through shared cultural heritage. This idea of building bridges and mutual understanding is an essential part of the EU Strategy for the Western Balkans, especially in the light of enlargement potentially put under referenda in Austria, France and the Netherlands. Cultural heritage appears as a tangible asset to this end.

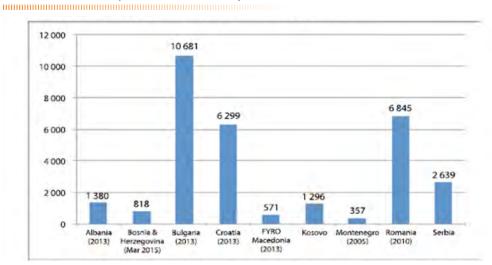


FIGURE 2 - Total number of protected immovable heritage entities

Source: Bold, John & Cherry, Martin, (eds), "The Politics of Heritage Regeneration in South-East Europe", Council of Europe, Strasbourg, March 2016, p. 165.

It is indeed the chosen priority by Western Balkans and EU stakeholders but, as underlined by Mr. Murray, not the safest. Far from being a neutral element of culture, **cultural heritage is indeed a double-edged sword** in terms of rapprochement:

They think about buildings that can be renovated but they don't think about identity politics. You have to be very cautious, tangible and intangible can be dangerous and we need to approach it the right way. Much safer would be the development of the creative industries sector. ⁶⁹

EU institutions therefore have cultural heritage as a resource for stability by privileged collaboration while keeping an eye on its possible instrumentalization by communities.

^{65.} European Commission - Fact Sheet, "A new strategy to put culture at the heart of EU international relations", Brussels, 23 May 2017

^{66.} Francis Violich, 1998 quoted in J. Bold, M. Cherry, "The Politics of Heritage Regeneration in South-East Europe", Council of Europe, Strasbourg, March 2016, p. 34.

^{67.} J. Bold, M. Cherry, op. cit., p. 39.

^{68.} EEAS, "Western Balkans: EU promotes Cultural Heritage Route", EEAS Official Website, 6 February 2018.

^{69.} Ibid.



However, as strategic as these policies are, they meet low interest in most Western Balkans administrations due to the weak agency of the Ministries of culture, undertrained personnel and high level of administrative corruption leading to minimal legislation. According to the latest individual Progress Reports, Macedonia is in need for a "more systematic approach and appropriate budget allocations for protection of cultural heritage." Although Albania has approved a "draft law on cultural heritage", the country is facing high levels of theft and vandalism. Serbia's ever decreasing budget in culture is particularly detrimental to cultural heritage projects. Besides, overall, the process is so slow that it cannot prevent the deterioration of sites. All these elements make it difficult for the EU to make of cultural heritage a favoured field of cultural cooperation.

Yet, despite a weak national legislation these initiatives meet favourable public receptivity. Significance attached to cultural heritage is welcome by Western Balkans and EU public who share "an awakening sense of the importance of cultural heritage and of a shared understanding of histories within the region". This is a favourable momentum that the EU is ready to undertake through its Strategy as a tangible and intangible dimension of "united in diversity".

But this receptivity of public opinion needs to be nurtured by accessible information on initiatives and awareness raising campaigns. This is urging in a context of growing urbanization that might lead to the vanishing of many heritage sites.

4.3 Promoting inclusive intercultural dialogue for peaceful inter-community relations

Nowadays, the reconciliation process is being threatened by nationalist disputes increasingly coming back on front of political life. Balkans elites looking westwards are enticed by the attempt of authoritarian EU leaders' to write a new narrative based on "ethno-nationalism" in their countries, within which national history exclusively corresponds to one ethnical memory. Cultural programmes and education are then used to feed official nationalistic discourses.

Besides the intensive promotion of Cyrillic language by the Serbian regime, the most conspicuous attempt is the 'Skopje 2014' project launched by the former Macedonian Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski (2006-2017). It was planning the construction of 137 monuments on an Antiquity style supposed to reshape a national pride based on a fictional architectural historical memory. The project that has been qualified as an attempt from the leading party to claim ownership over Macedonian history and a tool to distort attention from socio-economic issues gave place to massive spending amounting to more than twice the announced budget. The newly elected government of Zoran Zaev (social democrat) announced the stoppage of the construction of these "kitsch monuments that no one wants and for which all pay the hard price", his predecessor being currently prosecuted for corruption.

Therefore, in its cultural engagement with these Balkans interlocutors, the EU should pay specific attention to instrumentalization of history and memory, counter-productive in terms of reconciliation, as well as find leverages to have leading parties endorse significant cultural cooperation.

^{70.} European Commission, "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", SWD(2018) 154 final, Strasbourg 17 April 2018.

^{71.} European Commission, "Albania 2018 Report", SWD(2018) 151 final, Strasbourg, 17 April 2018, p. 85; J. Bold, M. Cherry, op. cit., p. 36.

^{72.} J. Bold, M. Cherry, op. cit., p. 36.

⁷³. *Ibid*, p. 181.

^{74.} Catherine Lutard-Tavard quoted in T. Boudaud, op. cit. p. 18

^{75.} M. Santora, "Dancing Nymphs and Pirate Ships: Notes from a Capital of Kitsch", The New York Times, 28 March 2018.

^{76.} M. Santora, op. cit.



At the grassroot level, **EU** peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts in the Western Balkans countries might have fallen in the pitfall of "romanticizing" the society. It has so far mainly engaged with the dominant power structure and disregarded 'local local' agencies which have developed their own "peacebuilding strategies relating on peoples' everyday life". Religious actors, ad hoc social movements, mayors, professionals, activists and students" are then mostly excluded from EU programmes while they could increase the accuracy of EU's "universal blueprints" actorness. Indeed, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, these local agencies are framing a "social contract":

They are actively participating in the process of peace-building not just with discussions of governance, power and institutions, but with basic needs, cultural empowerment and non-ethnicized identities, in order to facilitate a civil peace.⁸⁰

The EU would gain a lot from cooperating with them, but for commentators, only actors fitting in the neoliberal agenda of local governance are being voiced in EU cooperation, which reveals its preference for conditionality over local legitimacy. In response, local cultural agencies have developed their own alternative of bottom up civil society-building which has "emerged as a strategy for circumventing political stagnation" of the accession process.⁸¹

4.4 Supporting the "regenerative powers" of local cultures 82

Gordana Yovanovich's comment on Emir Kusturica's awarded film *Underground* (1995) analyses its central message as praising the strong resilient power to the local agency. It argues that, in the Western Balkans identity-building following the dissolution of Yugoslavia, beyond the two options of joining the EU or to fall back to ethnic nationalism, "Kusturica's personal choices [...] offer yet another option that meshes the local and the global, with local cultures being recognized as fountains of empowerment." ⁸³ Under this prism, the foreign involvement (e.g. US 'humanitarian' military campaign) appears counter-productive in local peace-building and overthrown by the "regenerative powers of local culture" embodied by the characters: ⁸⁴

The characters' madness is a "festive madness" [...] which has survived in folk songs and rituals of local communities, preserved in local culture, while in the larger globalized world, local forces have no place and regenerative powers of local culture are lost. [...] [Kusturica's] highlighting of neighbourhood identities and local ways of life is not a form of nationalism but rather a simple recognition that marginalized cultures survive because they have their own ways of gaining agency.⁸⁵

In this view, celebrated and shared identities trigger local agency which has escaped the global or State- promoted culture, especially the current above-mentioned nationalist narratives. To this regard, local expressions of culture position as central and most powerful to implement the guiding principle of culture for resilience and reconciliation laid in the EU's Strategy for International Cultural Relations. This essential dimension granted to local culture echoes

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77. S. Kappler, O. Richmond, op. cit., pp. 262-270
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^{78.} Ibid.

^{79.} Ibid, p. 269.

^{80.} *Ibid*, p. 270.

^{81.} *Ibid.*

^{82.} G. Yovanovich, "Neighbourhood Identity and the Larger World: Emir Kusturica's Underground", in D. B. Mac Donald, M.-M. DeCoste, Europe in Its Own Eyes, Europe in the Eyes of the Other, pp. 227-243, Wilfried Laurier University Press, Ontario, 2014, pp. 227; 236-237.

^{83.} Ibid, pp. 228-229.

^{84.} *Ibid*.

^{85.} *Ibid.*, pp. 227; 236-237



Delors' conviction of **the vital role of cultural life "to create a humane society in which the individual can blossom through contact and cooperation with others".** Beyond self-fulfilment, preserving local cultural life is salutary to the extent that it empowers ordinary people, giving them agency: "In their local milieu, they have a function and the love of their neighbours, which may not be much for the "global elite", but for them is life and dignity." By

Although they tended to develop in "hidden spaces" to resist international donors, engaging with them to empower them is a way for the EU to go beyond artificial dialog and escape from banalization of the civil society.⁸⁸ It would allow the Union to capitalise on the richness of local values for resilience:

the "irrational bliss of living", the ability to invent or be flexible, and the ability to care for one's family or a group of friends as life-giving and life-sustaining cultural aspects that keep local communicates and ordinary people from becoming "human waste".89

CONCLUSION

Culture as a policy field is very specific in external action as it initiates a real engagement rather than a transactional relation of benefits and obligations. It gives a substance to EU relations with partners based on the acknowledgement of the importance of cultural life for individuals' development and local resilience. This approach can allow the EU to win public opinions' trust as inviting cooperation to move "from a Europe of necessity to one of heart and ideal" in an interdependent relationship. In EU's enlargement policies, mobilization of the cultural dimension moderately considers and emphasizes the cultural differences of Western Balkans Six. Where the EU takes culture into account, it does not necessarily engage in the intercultural dimension.

The request for approximation of Western Balkans cultural policies to EU practices calls for uniformization of national cultural programmes. The EU thereby poses as a strong cultural regulator, despite its supplementary competence in the realm. When using cultural relations as a tool for cultural diplomacy and 'stabilitocracy', its actorness contravenes the reciprocity and mutual enrichment of cultural relations, excluding the local cultural entrepreneurs.

Western Balkans' participation to cultural programmes has had mixed results on EU recognition of cultural differences of its partners. On a positive note, it has initiated professionalisation of local cultural operators and fostered cross-border cooperation with EU members, increasing their visibility and distribution of their work. On the other side, in this 'EUisation' process, Western Balkans cultural market and creative industries' specific profiles are not well fitted for EU programmes and struggling to access call for proposals. These are mostly the EUcompatible projects who are benefitting from it, while other cultural forms are disqualified.

Finally, EU's cultural involvement in preserving diversity for socio-economic resilience and reconciliation among the Western Balkans Six has had a limited effect. EU's current and coming efforts to implement the objectives of the Strategy for Intercultural Relations might have the opposite effect of rapprochement and mutual understanding. Its undifferentiated

- 86. J. Delors, Speech at the Opening Session of the 40th Academic Year of the College of Europe- Bruges, 17 October 1989, op. cit., p.
- 87. Bauman 2004, 41G quoted in G. Yovanovich, op. cit., pp. 227; 236-237.
- 88. S. Kappler, O. Richmond, *op. cit.*, p. 262
- 89. G. Yovanovich, *op. cit.*, p. 240
- 90. J. Delors, closing Speech at the Jean Monnet Symposium, 10 November 1998, Brussels.



approach in the development of cultural market and its promotion of cultural heritage that lacks cautiousness with regards to nationalist exploitation might have a segregation effect. In the face of its inability to reach out to local cultural agencies, the latter developed in contestation of EU and external actors' model, limiting the rapprochement power of culture.

The Union has all interest to go beyond the model of its 'competitors' displaying culture as a tool for influence. It should rather favour a 'personal' commitment in cultural relations under the paradigm of the 'cultural gift' understood as "reciprocity, mutuality and shared responsibility". ⁹¹ Fruitful intercultural relations are particularly calling for the EU to engage with humility and sincerity with its partners.

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