



**Call for Papers "Geopolitics & Values: what is the real power of the EU?"**

**GIVING EUROPEAN SOFT POWER A "ROOF"**

**Towards new innovative models for an enhanced European global actorness amidst  
COVID-19**

**Author: Gabrielle BERNOVILLE**

**Brussels, December 2020**



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Rue Montoyer 25

1000 Brussels

Belgium

Web: <http://www.iedonline.eu/>

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With the financial support of the European Parliament





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Amidst COVID-19, this paper aspires to present new thinking patterns and ground-breaking cultural relations models to rejuvenate European Soft Power overseas and encourage horizontal processes among the wide-spread networks of National Cultural Institutes. This paper focuses on its most promising on-going materialization: the European “Houses” of Culture project. Launched in December 2018, the preparatory action, European “Houses” of Culture, has been implemented under the network umbrella European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC), that selected six pioneer pilot spaces, scattered across the world. Each of these pilot expressions has answered EUNIC’s challenge to explore the interconnection between culture and one of the local large-scale issues. Through the empowerment of their local settings and conveying of European values, European “Houses” of Culture champion international cultural relations both in their understanding and practices. This paper highlights that the European Spaces of Culture should receive greater emphasis as they embody ways to reinforce European values. Furthermore, this project fills the role of a missing feature of the EU Cultural Relations Framework: a permanent, strategic, world-wide project.

### Short bio

Gabrielle Bernoville is a graduate of the College of Europe and Sciences Po majoring in European Affairs, with work experience in Latin America, the United Kingdom, and Europe. Currently undertaking a Blue Book Traineeship at the European Commission (DGEAC Unit D.1 Cultural Policy), Gabrielle also serves as a Junior Researcher of Culture Solutions and as the Director of the Public Relations and Communications Department of European Horizons.

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Table of acronyms	
CAC	Cultural Affairs Committee
CULT	Committee on Culture and Education
CSS	Cultural and Creative sectors
EC	European Commission
EUR	Euro
EU	European Union
EUNIC	EU National Cultural Institutes Network
EYCS	Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council
OMC	Open Method of Coordination
US	United States of America



## GIVING EUROPEAN SOFT POWER A "ROOF"

### Towards new innovative models for an enhanced European global actorness amidst COVID-19

#### Introduction

*Our work on culture shows who we really are, and what we believe in. It shows our values, and our vision of the world. It is our identity card (...) culture is an integral part of our European foreign policy. (...) We are by definition, as Europeans, a soft power*  
Federica Mogherini, Frankfurt Book Fair (2018a)

This paper seeks to contribute to the research on the interplay between culture in the European Union's global actorness (European Commission, High Representative, 2016) and re-investigating the aforementioned assumptions of the former EU-High Representative of the Union, Federica Mogherini. It provides an analysis of the EU's external cultural action, understood through the perspective of European "Houses" of Culture pilots' projects. Finally, it will draw upon the European Commission (EC)'s attempts to refresh its cultural relations framework, taking account of the peculiar, broader context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Seventy-years after the Schuman Declaration, the European Union (EU) intends to champion its norm-driven political order as to turn it into a fully-fledged international actor following Joseph Nye's soft power theory (1990). This neoliberal concept of international relations refers to the power of "attraction" and "persuasion" of one state towards others, through non-constraining competences, like democratic values, human rights, and above all, culture. The United States of America (US) was traditionally considered as the titleholder of this concept (Börzel T, Risse T, 2009). Yet, the EU Institutions have strived, in a cumulative manner (Helly D, 2017), to bolster their global actorness by adopting a more coordinated and strategic approach to their cultural relations toolbox, while enhancing funding opportunities to their thriving Cultural and Creative sectors (CSS). In spite of these endeavours, the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak reflects the need for a refreshed approach on external cultural relations (Culture Action Europe, 2020 – UNESCO, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically worsened the vulnerability of the cultural sector, with massive loss of jobs, as well as closure of cultural facilities and programmes' cancellations both in Europe and third countries. Crossing over disciplines, sectors, and nations, this pandemic has revolutionized the entire toolset of cultural relations practitioners, as well as the whole creative chain and traditional cultural businesses. Not only has it quickly re-invented the programming and showcasing of cultural performance or facilities, but it has also remodelled the ways in which stakeholders interact, learn, and transmit culture.

A concrete example of this statement lies in the rapid digitalisation of cultural management and content, and the blossoming of new tech: AI, mobile applications,



virtual exhibitions, and stages (EUNIC, 2020). Another underlying consequence of the pandemic remains the erosion of transnational and inter-communal solidarity in an ever polarized and fragmented world.

A strategic and coordinated effort from the member states and EU institutions remains fundamental to design and implement joint actions addressing this cultural revolution at the core of the COVID-19 pandemic. European Treaties only conferred a narrow scope of action to the Commission in the cultural field (Denuit, 2017). Yet the EU institutions fostered the creation of brand-new cooperation and dialogue methods. The EC interacts with the Member States through the Council of the European Union's Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council (EYCS) and "Cultural Affairs Committee" (CAC). In the cultural field the Commission also relied on the "Open Method of Coordination", or OMC, since 2008. The OMC brings together national experts and uncovers new categories of coordination and action to be taken by member states.

In a similar fashion, including artists, cultural and creative practitioners within the EU decision making processes have always been a claim of the CCS (Culture Solutions, 2019b). Harnessing their voices has remained a prominent aim of the EC to ensure an adequate public answer. To facilitate their communications and bring them at the core of the EU's cultural policy making, the European Commission has launched a structured dialogue with 35 representatives from civil society: "Voices of Culture". Since 2015, "Voices of Culture" has aimed at discussing and brainstorming the actions the EU should adopt on a particular matter, where the role of culture and creative sectors can be enhanced. These professionals act as witnesses of the growing cultural trends and gatekeepers of the EU's cultural relations values in this globalized digital world. Artists can provide rightful and innovate perspectives and support the EU Institutions' work in this area. "Voices of Culture" therefore balanced the state-centered approach on the EU cultural actions and the OMC processes.

Building on the aforementioned, this paper strives to present new thinking patterns and ground-breaking solutions to empower European CCS stakeholders and encourage horizontal collaboration processes among the wide-spread national cultural institutes networks. To this end, it focuses its research on one of the most promising materialization of the EU's soft power: the European "Houses" of Culture carried out by the umbrella organization of European cultural institutes, "EU National Cultural Institutes Networks" (EUNIC) (EUNIC, 2020). Through raising awareness of EUNIC's European "Houses" or Spaces of Culture, this paper seeks to support the development of European cultural relations projects in third countries and prevent the rise of inward-looking anti-democratic narratives. Our research will address the interplay between EU geopolitics and European values amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

Looking into the role of cultural diplomacy platforms and networks, this research aims at opening new debates about the EU International cultural relations and the potential of projects delivered by third parties. The European "Houses" of Culture pilot project reveals to what extent the EU's external perceptions and attractiveness could benefit from





these “Home for all” (High-Representative, 2018b). This paper, therefore, advocates that the EU needs a “roof”, a structure, as the European “Houses” of Culture’s one to trigger new ways of bringing artists and creatives into the EU's policy-making process.

This assumption is grounded in a thorough deskwork investigation of the European external cultural actions and qualitative methods as interviews of the “Houses” of Culture’s projects leaders and EUNIC’s representatives. It primarily reveals the necessity to shift the focus from the traditional understanding of "soft power" (I), to qualify the EU’s cultural actorness (II). Secondly, it uncovers the project’s core principles and aims (III) and highlights innovative models of cultural cooperation that these “Houses” have brought forward (IV). Finally, it will discuss, this project’s potential to act as a vehicle of a renewed, fairer and sustainable cultural relation model for the EU's external actions, taking due account of the multi-headed repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic (V).

### 1) The search for a European Soft Power: overcoming three intrinsic hurdles

The renewed calls by EU officials for an enhanced European soft power (High-Representative Mogherini F, 2016, 2018a, 2018b) underline the impediments that prevent the EU from redefining its global actorness through the classic notion of soft power (Nye J, 1990). Indeed, although the EU has endeavoured to enter the global cultural sphere throughout its historical development, the obstacles at stake have remained threefold.

Firstly, one has to underline the narrow scope offered by the Treaties. The Lisbon Reform Treaty (2009) does not provide the EC with an exclusive competence to legislate in the field of culture. The EC’s action is limited to *supporting, coordinating, or complementing* the action of the Member States (Article 6, Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union). The EU’s cultural actions remain, therefore, subordinated to the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality (Article 5, Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union). As Renaud Denuit demonstrated, (Denuit, R, 2017) stakeholders had to wait through a long period of *frustration* until 1973 before witnessing a reference to culture in European Communities’ document, at the Copenhagen Summit (Denuit, R, 2017). *Frustration* was followed an era of *modesty* as the EU cultural actions were characterized for a long time by scarce resources and small-sized projects up to 2014 with the creation of the framework funding programme “Europe Creative” laying the ground for enhanced cultural actions - internally and externally.

Subsequently, the EU’s global cultural agency could be seen as hampered by the National Cultural Institutes’ own influence. At first glance, National Cultural Institutes appear as a major stream of the highly sensitive and competitive cultural diplomacy field. They might have overshadowed the birth of similar pan-european projects (Paschalis, 2009 and Minnaert T, 2014.) Firstly sewed in the 19th century national awakenings and *Herderian* nation-building strategies (Thiesse AM, 1999), National Cultural Institutes aimed at either alleviating postcolonial frustrations *Cultural nationalism*, as well as burnishing young nations’ narratives *Cultural propaganda*, or promoting their cultural exception



*Cultural Diplomacy* between cold-war zones of influence (Paschalidis G, 2009). In a similar fashion, Wyszormirski's comparison of National Cultural Institutes highlighted the structural and political discrepancies among nine EU countries' cultural policies. These diverging DNA also impede a sustainable and efficient European soft power.

Undermined by the long tradition of its member states in this field, the EU's Cultural Diplomacy was hitherto a grey zone for European integration.

The formulation of the EUNIC consortium and the launch of the *European "Houses" of Culture project* are, therefore, ground-breaking steps forward. They precisely intend to overcome the initial competitiveness of national cultural institutes and offer them to pool their resources together in a common sustainable and co-owned project.

The third intrinsic hindrance to an enhanced European soft power lies in a fragile external understanding of the EU's action. In the last decade, the EU's multifaceted crisis, internal dimensions, and growing contestation forces have been tantamount to the external pressures, hindering the third millennium's Europe.

This fragile external perception is thereby a combination between an external capability-Expectations Gap (Hill C, 1993) and an internal lack of input legitimacy (Schmidt V, 2013) "The EU still has a long way to go to become "loved" (if not ignored) by the world and by European citizens themselves" (Culture Solutions, 2019a). These hindrances stressed the inherent tensions between the EU and its Member States. This bone of contention in the construction of Europe also permeates the EU external cultural actions.

## **2) From state-centred models of public diplomacy to international cultural relations**

These trends counter the development of an influential and positive image of the EU in a dynamic similar to the one of its member states. The EU has, therefore, pragmatically, yet ambitiously, drawn apart from Nye's theory of soft power.

Delving into the remit of its competencies and the values at the core of its institutionalization, the EU has developed a specific theory of global actorness (Joseph Nye, 2019): operating a shift from the too state-centred soft power to cultural relations. Adopted by the European Commission and the two co-legislators in June 2016, the Joint-Communication "Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations" enshrined "cultural relations" at the core of the EU Strategy. Cultural Relations therefore supplanted soft power in the EU Institutions political agenda. The term itself (soft power) is furthermore, totally missing from the 2016 Joint-Communication (Szucs, 2017). For Tamas Szucs, "this is to signal through the language that the new strategy aims to go beyond simply projecting European cultures".

Rather than the historically too-state-centred soft power and 20<sup>th</sup> century rooted-cultural diplomacy, the EU preferred the term "EU international cultural relations".



It looks at Culture as a driver for change, as a key area supporting society-building and sustainable development goals. Together with the Council's Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022 (Council of the European Union, 2018), the 2018 New European Agenda on Culture (European Commission, 2018), and the European Parliament for an enhanced EU's International Cultural Relations' framework (European Parliament 2011, 2014, and 2015), the Joint-Communication embodies a milestone in the EU action in external cultural relations history.

More than old wine in new bottles, this semantic change announced a drastic operational and conceptual swift. Cultural relations differ from Cultural Diplomacy, not only in its means but also in its aims and outcomes (Rivera, 2015). Contrary to soft power, it "intends to generate a new spirit of dialogue, joint capacity building, and global solidarity" (Szucs, 2017) and to "grow naturally and organically, without government intervention" (Rivera, 2005). Far from constraining stakeholders or relying on career-diplomats (i.e. "Cultural Diplomacy"), it experiments with human-centred, coordinated, cross-sectoral, and inclusive cooperation models.

EUNIC has demonstrated since 2006 its informed experience in coordinating international cultural relations projects: "Through culture, EUNIC strives to build trust and understanding between the people of Europe and the wider world. We work to make culture count in international relations." (EUNIC, 2020). It has emerged as a partner of choice to coordinate and explore innovative cultural relations cooperation models in third countries. Among its points, the 2016 Joint-Communication prominently advocated for the establishment of "European Culture Houses" by the umbrella network. According to the parties of the communication, these "Houses" are foreseen to form new partnerships enabling "cultural institutes and other stakeholders to come together and provide services to the local population" (European Commission & High Representative, 2016).

These "Houses" of culture are the prime expression of the EU's cultural actorness. They are expected to establish non-polarising spaces for dialogues, trust building and establishment of commons around the arts and the European values, becoming: a "Homes" for all.

### 3) "A home for all": European Houses and Spaces of Culture

*"We are starting to build "Houses of European culture" around the world, as a home for all" - Federica Mogherini Frankfurt Book Fair (2018a)*

The European "Houses" of Culture have emerged as a preparatory action for a larger scheme upon the request of the European Parliament. Later implemented by the European Commission, mediated by the EU National Institutes of Culture.

It aims at delivering a set of European's values and principles through innovative cultural projects whose aims and outcomes would be strongly embedded in the local context. The European "House" can therefore be understood as a symbolic, metamorphic space either physical or digital for dialogue. They act as trust building spaces, promoting the European Value on the international scene. Faithful to a human-centred participative bottom-up



governance they embody this long wished “new spirit of dialogue”. These “Houses” therefore aim to establish “homes for all” and create shared places “where people come together on an equal footing” (EUNIC Brochure 2020).

EUNIC has officialised its partnerships in 2017 with the EC and the EEAS. Either its scope, funding capabilities, or ambitions, turn it into the most ambitious contributor to the EU's International cultural relations (culture Solutions page 72). Another reading could be, EUNIC's readiness to address as a path-finder: "age-old problems of inter-European antagonisms" with the final aim of precipitating this transitional cultural momentum. As an umbrella network, EUNIC gathers unparalleled, yet complementary, models of cultural diplomacy (i.e. Institut Français), cultural relations (i.e. Goethe-Institut), or cultural development (i.e. Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation - AECID).

Nonetheless, there are good reasons to believe that the network acquires an indirect power through these ties with national foreign affairs authorities. EUNIC's dexterity therefore lies in its meticulous balance between centralized, state-centred actors with more independent actors. This thin balance also guarantees it an overall freedom of speech and action, while ensuring access to national public funding schemes. Officially launched in December 2018 under the call for action (EAC/S09/2018), the European “Houses” of Culture launched its first for two-year long call for ideas in April 2019 in a pre-pandemic time with a total budget approximating EUR 830,000.

The human resources and communication enhanced strategies of the Brussels-based EUNIC Global team underlined EUNIC's aim to act as a *path finder*, as a reference in this field, and finally as a partner of choice for the EU. Among the 42 proposals received, 10 shortlisted projects were granted EUR10,000 to pursue their action. On completion of a two-phases selection process, the final 6 pilots projects also received EUR 50,000. This grant and assistance cover the delivery of activities throughout 2020. These funds represent a major investment for the teams carrying out the awarded projects locally. They are often complemented by their own resources or cooperation with private companies.

The six selected projects experimented with different ways of doing cultural relations: scaling up already existing models (Colomboscope, Sri Lanka) or creating new innovative creative projects from scratch (Nogoonbaatar Eco-Art festival, Mongolia). Similarly, some pulled their attention on a specific region (the Silicon -valley, for the Grid, U.S.) or a city (Tibeb Be Adebabay, Ethiopia) or on cross-borders and regional projects (Urban Cult Lab'Africa, West Africa or Circuito Europeo Teatral Centroamericano in Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala).

They are finally taking place in different continents, pointing out the jury's attempt to maintain a balance between regions and involved parties and members.

### **The European “Houses” of culture – Six selected projects**



Continent	Projects	Countries
American Continent	The Grid'	U.S.
	The 'Circuito Europeo Teatral Centroamericano'	Honduras - El Salvador - and Guatemala
Asiatic Continent	Colomboscope Festival	Sri-Lanka
	Nogoonbaatar - international eco art festival	Mongolia
African continent	Tibeb Be Adebabay	Ethiopia
	Urban Cult Lab Africa	West Africa: Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso, Ivory-Coast, Mali Mauritania

Source: EUNIC Website

The data collected illustrate quite tangibly to what extent each of them embodies a different model of cultural relations. They strive to embody valuable inspiring ideal types, serving as a dataset of best practices for future cultural relations projects.

Yet, a question mark remains about whether these six pilots "Houses" were able to deliver their missions, as enshrined in the 2016 Joint-Communication amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

To evaluate this question, we have passed the six pilots projects through the below list of indicators

### The European "Houses" of culture – Nine evaluation criteria

1. Participation/involvement of national agencies and local partners: Co-ownership
2. Prominence of the local settings and Understanding of local needs
3. Multidisciplinary and Cross-sectorial approach
4. Path-finder and social engaged Art Culture's "Silent War"
5. Type of cultural relations models considering the following: <i>Festival, Art Fairs, Competition, Awards, Digital Space, Artists Residencies, Networks, Capacity Building, Twinings, Artists' Mobility scheme, Building up a community of Interest, Cultural FabLabs.</i>
6. Outcomes (processes, partnerships opportunities)
7. Outputs (products, creations)
8. COVID-19 Impact on the outcomes and outputs



9. Ideals Types of external cultural models, considering five main ideals types of cultural relations projects: *National and state-centred, Decentralized and based on the role of local cultural professionals and local authorities, Complementing national strategies* (but EU-centred and consisting of mainstream culture into EU policies) *Empowering cultural networks and private actors to conduct cultural action, Organised around coalitions of the groups of states willing to act together*, following Damien Helly’s analysis of Cultural Relations (More Cultural Europe in the World op.cit, 39.)

Source: Compiled by the author

The first finding of this analysis concludes to successful understanding and incorporation of Cultural Relations principles by the project leaders.

Each pilot project team advocates for a specific cultural relations model in line with EUNIC’s vision and the 2016-Joint-Communications’ values.

If the models of cooperation differ and diverge, they all share the same values set and DNA: “Find new ways of cooperation and co-creation that would be important to everyone”, “build a shared experience so we can do good together with local cultural actors” (EUNIC Brochure 2020). Paramount to this paper’s aims, it transpired through the analysis that each of the selected Spaces of Culture projects targeted one of the *Art’s Silent Wars*.

This finding echoes EUNIC’s aim to address age-old unanswered issues at the core of the European Union legitimacy.

**The European “Houses” of culture – Ultimate core projects’ aims**

Project	Core aims – “Art’s Silence Wars”
The Grid, U.S.A	“Cultural versus de-humanized tech” “Culture for Community building”
Circuito Europeo Teatral Centroamericano Honduras - El Salvador - and Guatemala	“Culture versus unfair artist remuneration” “Culture for Creators Mobility”
Nogoonbaatar - international eco art festival, Mongolia	“Culture versus “Ecological Emergency”
Tibeb Be Adebabay, Ethiopia	“Culture for Community building” “Public Spaces for Culture”
Colomboscope, Sri-Lanka	“Culture for transnational exchanges and innovation”
Urban Cult Lab Africa, West Africa	“Culture for innovation and social cohesion” “Culture for economic and political stability”

Source: Compiled by the author



Secondly, this first analysis raised the question of the *Europeanization* of these “Houses” of Culture. In other words, whether they contributed to reinforcing the positive narrative of the EU in third countries. The European Commission did fund 90% and co-defined in its call for proposals, the scope and frame of the entire project.

Previous analysis tended to conclude to a limited *Europeanization* of EUNIC representatives and projects: a “gap between reality and a narrative (...) EUNIC’s *Europeanization* process is still very much work in progress.” (Culture Solutions 2019 Composing Trust, Annual Report).

This finding picked up on the words of Mrs. Gitte Zschoch (EUNIC Brochure 2020), according to who, the spaces of culture are not “about exporting European spaces all over the world” nor showcasing the EU values in other countries.

In line with the principles of Cultural relations, neither EUNIC representatives nor the project leaders have attempted to impose a narrative (Culture Solutions 2019 Composing Trust, Annual Report) nor a vision on this EU-co funded project.

Through ensuring the “co-ownership” of these spaces, ensuring “mutual listening”, European “Houses” strived to be less centralised and imperious than their national counterparts. This resonates in the renaming of the project. Entitled “Houses” of culture until 2020, the overall framework was rebranded “European Spaces of Culture” in September 2020. Robert Kieft, EUNIC Global’s project manager, stressed in an interview the confusing meaning of “Houses” understood as real, touchable spaces rather than as virtual or temporary frameworks developed by the local project teams. Secondly it echoed EUNIC’s desire to draw away from the usual Cultural Diplomacy models.

Thereafter, the outputs and activities of the European “Houses” of Culture may not - in themselves - contribute to enhancing the EU image and values. Nevertheless, cultural relations goals transpired throughout the entire cooperation process. The selection stage took account of the project leaders’ willingness to attune their project with the 2016 Joint-Communication’s criteria (“people-to-people approach, co-creation and showcasing of European cultural diversity”), and work in co-creation with local partners and the EU Delegation.

At the programming and designing stages, the pilot projects intertwined European artists or pieces of art with local creatives and artworks crossing over disciplines and methods. By doing so, they intended to contribute to the emergence of fairer, inclusive, and not-polarizing narratives for the EU. At the showcasing and exhibiting stages and throughout the entire creation, European “Houses” of Culture pilot projects also involved the European delegations. This close cooperation reinforced the latter’s visibility and impacts. EUNIC clusters’ presence is henceforth a great asset for the EU institutions, acting as with local based practitioners (Culture Solutions, 2019 Composing Trust, Annual Report).



As aforementioned, European “Houses” of Culture focused as equally on the outside as on the processes. Therefore, it is possible to extract from the data collected a whole set of “ready-to-use” transferable, replicable models of “cultural cooperation processes” for the EU cultural relations. These models of “cultural cooperation processes” are structured around European and local shared set of values, and are characterized by their impact both locally and internationally:

### The European “Houses” of culture – Cultural Cooperation models

Projects	Cultural Cooperation Model put forward
The Grid, U.S.A	Cooperation Model to build up a community of Interest and bringing segments of the society (Art+Tech) together
Circuito Europeo Teatral Centroamericano, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala	Cross-border mobility scheme model and Cooperation Model to foster mutual understanding and political rapprochement countries of a same region
Nogoonbaatar - international eco art festival, Mongolia	Cooperation Model to address ecological emergency in a particularly affected area – and Cooperation Model to empower civil society and build up a community
Tibeb Be Adebabay, Ethiopia	Cooperation Model to enhance intercultural dialogue through share public-space, urban regeneration and audience development via digital means
Colomboscope, Sri-Lanka	Cooperation Model a cross border artists residency programme and Cooperation model for a festival in contemporary art Cooperation Model for cross borders network
Urban Cult Lab Africa, West Africa	Cooperation Model Cooperation Model for cross borders network. And Cooperation Model for the Developing entrepreneurial & innovation potential

Source: Compiled by the author

#### 4) Tuning EUNIC’s instruments to the “new normal”: European Spaces of Culture amidst COVID-19

*The EU strategy for cultural relations confirms this more than ever and therefore needs to grow by expanding and improving the models of European Spaces of Culture.*

Oliver Rentschler Director Inter-institutional Relations, Policy Coordination and Public Diplomacy at EEAS, EUNIC, (2020)

The COVID-19 catastrophic impacts on the CCS and the global scene have reshuffled the cards and brought on an equal foot European Member States and EU Institutions, addressing similar concerns. Taking stock of the European Spaces for Culture achievements and practices, this paper advocates in favour of a more coordinated and strategic EU action in the Cultural relations field.





The cultural revolution provides new incentives to transfer cultural relations into the digital realm. EUNIC's survey certifies that 81% (EUNIC Brochure 2020) of its members seek to implement and test hybrid meetings and creating formats, redesigning their entire relationships to culture.

To date, success of the projects' digitization depended mainly on their degree of agility and digital literacy prior to the crisis. The quality and effectiveness of their answer were also correlated to the local settings, the quality of their partnerships as well as to the project's DNA itself. It acknowledged that some cultural disciplines or topics were more easily transferable than others.

While some projects successfully overcame their digitalization conversion, the pandemic threatened entire projects such as festivals (Nogoonbaatar) or performing arts ones (Circuito Europeo Teatral Centroamericano).

### The European "Houses" of culture – Adjustments made in reaction to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Grid, U.S.	<p><b>Consequences:</b> Particularly quick to answer and digest COVID-19 new "normal" and post 1st wave reality</p> <p><b>Adjustments:</b> Four main projects: <b>Nodes - Art + Tech Encounters:</b> A series of monthly talks aiming to bring together artists and technologists, scholars and researchers, <b>Solidarity Grid:</b> An international solidarity Fundraising campaign 100% of the donated proceeds will be distributed among local art institutions. <b>Exposure - Art + Tech + Policy Days:</b> An art + tech showcase in Silicon Valley in September. <b>eVe Award</b> to honours collaborative projects at the intersection of art and technology</p>
Circuito Europeo Teatral Centroamericano, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala	<p><b>Consequences:</b> The launching of the festival has been postponed to early 2021</p> <p><b>Adjustments:</b> Discussions for and with the performing arts in Central America facing the coronavirus crisis, virtual meetings about theatre in times of quarantine. Theatrical capsules, created at home: Improvisation, introducing the selected plays' characters, and contextualizing them to the current situation</p>
Nogoonbaatar - international eco art festival, Mongolia	<p><b>Consequences:</b> Festival postponed to 2021. The festival has been adjusted to pressing needs, and new issues triggered by the Covid-19 Pandemic</p> <p><b>Adjustments:</b> Not Applicable</p>
Tibeb Be Adebabay, Ethiopia	<p><b>Consequences:</b> Adebabay Festival Team was quite quick to respond to this covid 19,</p> <p><b>Adjustments:</b> Tuning planned activities: Interactive art production festival with 30 selected multi-talented artists.</p> <p>Online panel discussion "Creative Experience of a City" Street festival   City   Culture   Migration</p> <p>Virtual exhibition "Who am I? - Telling Migrating Stories": all works co-produced during the festival will be exhibited online</p>



Colomboscope, Sri-Lanka	<p><b>Consequences:</b> Reschedule their format and offer. The project team launched a series of small online art projects under #HeldApartTogether and #EssentialServices on Facebook and Instagram</p> <p>The series features previews of works of 5 local and 3 international artists on how they are affected, influenced, and inspired by the lockdown reality</p>
Urban Cult Lab Africa, West Africa	<p><b>Consequences:</b> the launching of the festival has been postponed to early 2021</p> <p><b>Adjustments:</b> Designing and producing much needed face masks, Raising awareness among young people on health issues during Covid-19, Developing animation films and comics to promote young health volunteers' experience fighting Covid-19</p>

Source: EUNIC Website

Based on the lessons learned from the European Spaces of Culture, the digital transformation shift has led to an increase of online content and interactive communications, it also contributed to:

- More efficient ways to interact and build up skills, a renewed and more concrete perspective on 'the international', the global.
- New Spaces for dialogues, spanning over culture, ethnic divisions, and nationality, make it easier to exchange best practices and peer learning.
- EUNIC has hosted since the first wave of the pandemic a series of interactive online workshops and webinars, offering new virtual spaces for dialogue and trust building opportunities for its members.
- New narratives for the EU as a global actor, the digital shift facilitating the promotion of EU Institutions overseas and bridging the gap between National Cultural Institutes worldwide.
- Broadening the scope, and exporting the projects on new markets, audiences, or partners, creating unforeseen opportunities for growth and development for the Spaces of Culture.

Through digital platforms exchanging best practices for fair and sustainable cultural cooperation models was also easier.

Yet, local settings' realities and cultural disciplines also influence the success of the shift toward digital cultural relations.

The qualitative study conducted by EUNIC "EU national institutes for culture: digital practices in response to the covid-19 crisis" concluded that it has deepening of European partnership through: a better intensification of their local partners while their headquarters interest were directed at national matters, the delivery of a strong message on the importance of cultural relations in times of crisis, and renewed opportunities for experiences and knowledge-sharing (EUNIC has led a total of 23 webinars and workshops in 2019 and has increased its offer in 2020).



Nevertheless, embracing the digital transformative and gearing up their models to the “new normal” will not be evident. More than a case-by-case approach EUNIC’s endeavours will have to be backed up by other authorities and to unleash the potential of these “Home for all” in a pandemic world.

## 5) Policy recommendations and conclusions

In September 2020, taking due account of the pandemic’s consequences , the six pilot projects obtained an extension of deadline, enabling them to fully carry out and implement these experimentations.

Yet, political measures should be adopted to further foster the potential of these pilot projects and encourage the creation of similar ones in a new spirit of dialogue.

Their conclusions and outcomes will be presented in an international conference bringing together EUNIC members and the EU institutions officials. First conclusions and analysis of the burgeoning creative and business models put forward by the local teams call for an enhanced political interest and financial support. Additional support would be required to leapfrog the project and move beyond its experimental status. Political will is equally crucial in ensuring the coherence of the multiple initiatives taken by the local project leaders. The European “Houses” of Culture champion the status quo of International Cultural Relations. Yet to evolve from their current pilot status they will have to be backed up by the European Commission, EUNIC and the Member States.

### Policy recommendations

#### European “Houses” of Culture

Status quo:

- Maintaining partnerships and commitments by shifting the offer to digital means
- Rescheduling their main activities and festival after the pandemic
- Monitoring audience’s needs, engaging more on social media
- Pursuing the next phases of the project while taking account of the lessons learned during the crisis

Mild-Change

- Accommodating the pandemic in their long-term strategy and starting to evaluate and quantify its consequences for their activities
- Tailoring and Adjusting their monitoring and evaluation processes to better fit the “new normal”
- Reinforcing collaborations within the EUNIC Network
- Encouraging best practices review and peer learning exchanges among the six pilots’ projects to assess their achievement
- Investing in coordinated awareness and PR campaigns that will increase their global agency as a “brand”
- Advocating within EUNIC for a greater European Sovereignty in terms of new technologies tools

Major-Change



- Identifying ways to pursue their activity after the end of the EU Co-funded projects
- Adopting common policy priorities and set of core missions that will orientate their activities
- Hosting an annual conference which would assess the progress made and gather the European "Houses" together with policymakers and experts

## EUNIC

### Status quo:

- Articulating, supporting, and monitoring the delivery of the European "Houses" of Culture requests
- Offering some alternatives activities and rescheduling the programming of the European "Houses" of Culture to 2021
- Investing in digital tools and evaluating the needs of the network and funding capabilities

### Mild-Change

- Re-thinking in collaboration with all the stakeholders the set of missions and values of the European "Houses" of Culture in light of the pandemic's effects
- Assessing the capacity building and digital literacy needs of the project leaders
- Developing a case-by-case flexible approach to understand and closely fit their expectations

### Major-Change

- Mutualising ideas, resources and strengths with like-minded organisation and key stakeholders in the external cultural relations field to foster enhanced partnerships and action worldwide
- Triggering a broader reflection on the remuneration and working condition of cultural practitioners online with key partners and institutions
- Formulating guidance and training to EUNIC members on various aspects of their digital transformation
- Encouraging ideas and peer exchanges, dialogue, knowledge with the local and clusters local networks and clusters
- Investigating alternative funding sources beyond the EU co-funded programme to develop and pursue their activities in a more interactive and innovative way

## European Commission

### Status-quo:

- Putting forward support measures and emergency mechanisms to react to the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Mapping and evaluating the potential areas of development and needs of the EU external cultural actions field

### Mild-Change

- Reprogramming in consultation with EUNIC the entire length and timeline of the project, providing the stakeholders with extra time to deliver the overall "Houses"
- Consulting the practitioners and stakeholders on the development made



- Assessing the compliance of technologies used by National Cultural Institutes with the European law and data protection scheme
- Assessing the degree of digitization of the "Houses"

#### Major-Change

- Renewing the EU-Joint Communication on External Cultural Actions
- Co-creating common policy priorities and direction for the European "Houses": including some EU's cross cutting policy and programme within their mandate
- Reforming the functional and legislative basis of the programme, enlarging the missions and the scope of action
- Providing the Commission with extra competences in this field
- Establishing a OMC group on the topic of external cultural action to advance the cooperation of Member States in this field
- Launching a Voices of Culture brainstorm exchange to nurture political decision makers conclusion
- Supporting new reflection and debates on the fair remuneration of artist with key partners and institutions
- Creating additional scheme of ideas sharing, assessing the added value of a well-coordinated approach to International Cultural

#### Members States

##### Status quo

- Mitigating the effects of the crisis by developing additional support measures to the National Cultural Institutes
- Investing more in a common or standardized digital transformation and tool set among the National Cultural Institutes
- Evaluating the capacity building needs and digital literacy of the European "Houses" of culture professionals

##### Mild-Change

- Refreshing the European Commission toolkit in this sector
- New monitoring and evaluation processes to assess the degree of digitization of the "Houses"
- Triggering a broader reflection on the remuneration and working condition of cultural practitioners online with key partners and institutions
- Transfer core competences to the EU in the field of culture and external relations

##### Major-Change

- Exporting the "houses" models and first responses
- Convening an international summit to further discuss the replicable models developed by the "Houses"
- Allocating greater and longer funding capacities to the project beyond the scope of the EU-funded programme
- Renewing the EU-Joint Communication on External Cultural Actions
- Co-creating common policy priorities and direction for the European "Houses": including some EU's cross cutting policy and programme within their mandate
- Reforming the functional and legislative basis of the programme, enlarging the missions and the scope of action
- Providing the Commission with extra competences in this field



- Establishing a OMC group on the topic of external cultural action to advance the cooperation of Member States in this field
- Launching a Voices of Culture brainstorm exchange to nurture political decision makers conclusion
- Supporting new reflection and debates on the fair remuneration of artist with key partners and institutions
- Creating additional scheme of ideas sharing, assessing the added value of a well-coordinated approach to International Cultural



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