



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

UNITING CULTURES AS THE CATALYST FOR MULTILATERALISM

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The paper aims at analyzing how multilateralism can be catalyzed by the promotion of cultural policies and Europe's values through connecting cultures of different societies. It proposes two policies that create a bottom-up approach connecting societies first and then driving governments to strengthen the cooperation and agreements with the EU. First, an international co-production film program and prize award. Both are focused on bringing cultures closer to each other — facilitating their understanding—, on the illustration of European values and on sparking the reflection on the importance and implications of these values. Second, a temporary exhibition of art pieces in their country of origin through the creation of a museum cooperation program, building a common heritage between the EU and third countries.

Short bio

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List of Abbreviations

EEAS	European External Action Service
EU	European Union
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization



I. INTRODUCTION

In the international sphere, beyond the unidirectional and coercive military policies, the sharp policies are taking the space and economic policies seem to reign in the relationship between states. These economic strategies based on multilateral trade deals—and not the coercive economic sanctions closer to hard policies— seem to govern today. The normal approach of these strategies start with bringing together two governments either bilaterally or under an organization; then they create and sign a trade deal; both markets open to each other moving goods and services; businesses start operating in the other country, and people start moving and making business agreements, facilitating the movement of individuals with visa facilities and tourism. Therefore, this brings both countries together, creating interconnection between their societies and interdependence between both countries. Although this strategy has been successful in enhancing multilateralism, it has also created a rivalry between countries and sparked devastating conflicts between one economic partner or another.¹

Today, the Covid-19 pandemic has shifted the lifestyle of the global society, where drained quarantines at home have taken the place of our daily extravagant consumption habits. The business, economic and trade model was not fitting, nor for the state nor in society. The state was not able to produce the required equipment to protect and combat the Covid-19; and the business model was not helping society, which at home it has used the time to connect with others in different ways. The connector that has helped society to cope with the pandemic and to connect with each other has been Culture.² Culture’s attention has long been ignored, and now it can have its space in connecting society.³ Could culture become the key policy in the re-emergence of multilateralism?

Together with the flaws of hard and sharp policies focused on a top-down approach, together with the actual need of culture to connect with one another, a cultural soft policy with a bottom-up approach is the most effective strategy towards the expansion of multilateralism. Policies between countries through connecting cultures inverts the normal approach of economic policies towards a bottom-up path, creating more resilient, rooted and longstanding relationships between countries. Focusing on sharing one’s culture and learning the other’s culture, both cultures will get closer together connecting both societies. The wonder and understanding of the other’s culture will envisage the common similarities of both societies; and as both societies will tend to relate and understand the other, societies will relate with one another. Consequently, this creates a positive public opinion and sentiment between both countries that will push their respective policies and governments to align and make agreements in the international arena; therefore, finally enhancing the cooperation and multilateralism between both countries.

¹ See Bryane Michael, Christopher Hartwell, and Bulat Nureev, “Soft Power: A Double-Edged Sword?,” *BRICS Business Magazine* (Moscow, 2014), 64, <https://bricsmagazine.com/en/articles/soft-power-a-double-edged-sword> (Consulted on 15.11.2020).

² UNESCO, “People are turning to Culture for support,” 2020, <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/cultureresponse> (Consulted on 01.11.2020).

³ UN Cultural Agency, “Even during COVID-19, Art ‘Brings Us Closer Together than Ever’,” 2020, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1061802> (Consulted on 30.09.2020).



For this reason, this paper proposes two cultural aspects as new tools to enhance the will of non-European societies to connect and relate with the European society—and vice versa—; thus, pushing their respective governments to strengthen the cooperation, reciprocity and agreements with the EU. The aim of this paper is to provide a policy paper and recommendation towards re-emerging the multilateralism facet of the EU in the international arena promoting Europe’s values through connecting cultures of different societies.

To increase multilateralism, the EU should implement two cultural policies: First, uniting cultures through the film industry, with an international co-production funds program and prize — both built upon the pillar of the European values—; second, uniting cultures through a common heritage, with temporary exhibitions in the country of origin of the art pieces by creating a museum cooperation program. Both policies exposed here are presented focusing on the reasons for the necessity of this policy, the concrete programs proposed, how to implement them, and, finally, the effect of this policy and the result that will be achieved.

II. FILM INDUSTRY: AN INTERNATIONAL CO-PRODUCTION PROGRAM AND PRIZE

Movies, series and documentaries have been successful winners of this pandemic. During the beginning of the lockdown, European countries such as Austria and Spain saw how the time spent on streaming platforms skyrocketed by 40% compared to the same period in 2019, and other countries such as Germany by 30%.⁴ The film industry is the perfect tool to connect directly with society, to promote European values through storytelling, and connect the diversity and beauty of both regions. The European Parliament rightly shares that the cinema is “an ideal platform for debate and reflection on Europe and its future,” can raise “awareness about some of today’s main social and political issues,” and can help to spread European values.⁵ Consequently, interconnecting the film industries of the EU and third countries can promote the European values, reflect upon today’s main social and political debates, and approach both societies.

The purpose of these two cultural policies is, on the one hand, to unite cultures and societies through the film industry. In order to connect the societies of different countries, it is necessary to understand the beauty and diversity of the other’s culture; the film industry exposes the culture and connects it to others, glimpsing the common similarities of both. On the other hand, to understand the European values through connecting society and cultures. These programs unveil the European values, through the common work between societies of different countries. Thus, the intangible European values that vertebrates the whole EU go beyond the Treaty, and both societies—the European and the third one— will be able to see directly the European values in practice, in their societies, comprehending these values and internalizing its reasons and effects.

The first concrete proposals consist of an international co-production funding program. The success of Creative Europe in boosting and financing culture is bringing the countries and societies involved closer together. Thanks to its sub-program Media, focused on the European co-

⁴ Ivana Katsarova, “Coronavirus and the European Film Industry” (Brussels, 2020), 12.

⁵ LUX Award, “Why and What ,” <https://luxprize.eu/why-and-what>.



production of the film industry, European co-productions films have gone from 20% of the total film production to achieve 47% in ten years.⁶ Data has also shown that a co-production has 2.3 times higher circulation potential than a film produced in only one country.⁷ This subprogram — Media— funds the development, promotion and distribution of European cinema with the aim of improving the access of these films bringing them closer to citizens. Although this program also funds international co-productions, it focuses on these aims and not on uniting societies and their cultures, nor on promoting European values. Thus, there is a need to connect this internal cultural agenda with an EU external agenda focused on multilateralism.

The international co-production funds program proposed will be based on three main requirements: First, the funds will be given to European and third countries co-productions filmed in the EU or in the third country; second, the topic of the movie portrays the culture and society of one country or the exchange and enrichment of both cultures and societies; and third, it does not only illustrate the fundamental values of the EU but invites to reflect upon its significance and its implications. The main difference between the existing programs and this one is that the actual ones are open to general creativity, and this new one precisely targets the cultural exchange and reflection of European values.

Regarding its implementation, as Creative Europe Media has a special program focused on funding international co-productions, the proposed new program could be integrated under this existing structure. Creative Europe Media is a consolidated program that has been supporting and operating since 1991, and its budget has been already approved for the period 2021-2027 with €1.081 billion. The new program can complement the existing program for international co-productions, using its channels, structure and institution. Both programs are complementary as they form two categories inside the international co-production program⁸: a general program—the existing one— and the cultural and fundamental values program. The introduction of this new program does not disturb the existing structure. In order to illustrate this, the recent French-Algerian co-production “*Papicha*” received funds from Creative Europe Media, as it was an international co-production. However, as the topic of the movie is related with portraying the culture and the intricacies of a society —Culture—, and illustrates the social struggle of human dignity, equality, freedom, non-discrimination, tolerance, and inclusion —reflecting on the European values—, then it will be eligible to access the funds of the new program. Hence, regarding the funds, there are two ways of implementing the new program effectively: one, dividing the existing funds already established in the budget between the two programs; or , two, adding new funds to the existing budget taking into account that this is not only cultural but an external action policy, therefore, it should receive a budget from the EEAS. In both ways, the implementation of the new program is feasible as the structure already exists and there is a special program that can include it.

The second concrete proposal consists of creating a Prize to award the best film in regards to portraying or connecting culture, and illustrating the European values. After the creation of a program that aims at incentivizing the international co-production of films connecting culture,

⁶ Julio Talavera Milla, “Film Production in Europe Production Volume, Co-Production and Worldwide Circulation” (Strasbourg, 2017), 15, <http://www.obs.coe.int>.

⁷ James. Rampton et al., “Contribution of the Creative Europe Programme to Fostering Creativity and Skills Development in the Audiovisual Sector Final Report” (Brussels, 2017), 11, <https://doi.org/10.2759/35784>.

⁸ Creative Europe, “International Co-Production Funds,” 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/media/international-coproduction-funds_en.



society and European values, one of these funded movies or any other international and European co-production could win the award.

Currently, the LUX Film Prize highlights the films that “go to the heart of European public debate”.⁹ It pursues unlocking dialogue, to confront stereotypes and to build bridges between different cultures.¹⁰ This has proved to effectively put those films in the European spotlight, and they have helped to spread the fundamental values and consolidate a European identity. Thus, with the same spirit, this new award aims at the same goals but with third countries. Whereas the LUX Film Prize is awarded to films produced in the EU or Iceland, Norway, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro; this new award targets co-production between EU countries and any other third countries —however, the region and development of the country can be taken into account.

The prize will be awarded to the film that goes straight to the heart of the connection between cultures and the fundamental values, sparking the social debate reflecting on these values. In contrast to the LUX Film Prize where the European Parliament and the public —each by 50%— selects the winner among the films chosen by the selection committee,¹¹ the new Prize will be awarded by the European Film Academy among the films that have presented their candidature. Producers will send its candidature by filling an online form, where beyond the requirements and uploading the film with English subtitles, they will justify and explain in detail the reasons of, first, portraying or connecting culture, and, second, illustrating the European values. The European Film Academy will select one movie and this will be screened during the LUX European Audience Week. The prize, as for the LUX Film Prize, consists of the publicity as well as funding for having the film subtitled into the 24 official languages in the EU.

Due to the similarities of the LUX Film Prize, the creation and implementation of this award will take the existing structure and channels of the LUX Film Prize as well as of the LUX European Audience Week. The budget will come from the funds of the new international co-production program.

In essence, the implementation of the international co-production program and the prize compose a key cultural policy to connect the cultures and societies of the EU and third countries. Concretely, the effects of this cultural policy allow putting the European values into practice permitting production companies in the field of creativity and education to cooperate and work together. Their work will illustrate European values in different cultures or in between them, being able for both societies to see, reflect and understand the essence and implication of European values. This understanding and the similarities in cultures sparked by the film will bring both societies together, therefore, the public sentiment towards the other society will drive policies and governments to work together, cooperate and align in the international arena. Thus, it will boost the multilateralism between the EU and third countries. The wonder, understanding and connection between the European society and culture and others will be rooted in society, establishing a close relationship between countries not only from the institutional level but also from the social grass-root level—a bottom-up approach. In addition, beyond the promotion of European values and multilateralism, the EU could change its image in third countries as well as European their

⁹ LUX Award, “Why and What ,” op. cit.

¹⁰ European Union, “Catalogue of Films | LUX Award,” 2019, 7, <https://luxprize.eu/content/view-films-catalogue>.

¹¹ LUX Award, “Selection Process ,” <https://luxprize.eu/content/selection-process>.



perception of third countries, connecting not only countries but also improving the social and cultural image of the other.¹²

III. COMMON HERITAGE: A MUSEUM COOPERATION PROGRAM OF TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS

In the construction of a *European heritage* as well as in the cultural cooperation with other countries, the EU encounters a common challenge: the artifacts which ownership is disputed — i.e. *looted art*—¹³ that arise from the colonial past. They are pieces of art that were looted in the colonial era that are now displayed mainly in museums across Europe, being in the spotlight of the colonial reparations debate on whether to restitute the artifacts to their original country or be preserved in the European museums. In order to prove the values that Europe promotes, the EU has the opportunity to share the civilizational art in the countries of origin so its people can directly enjoy it. This means that instead of focusing the questions on the restitution of the looted art and the state-ownership discussion, the EU can go further and currently center on the temporary exhibition of this art in the country of origin. To connect societies of different countries, we need first to respect each other’s cultures and try to understand, therefore, bringing the art of those looted art closer to its people will prove that standing upon European values is effective and has an impact. Precisely, this cultural policy follows the Council’s conclusions in “bringing cultural heritage to the fore.”¹⁴ European values such as solidarity, justice and equality can be put into practice in this field by bringing the common human heritage to its original place so the direct people of those art pieces can enjoy first-hand the beauty and wonders of them.

The concrete proposal consists of creating temporary exhibitions through a museum cooperation program in the countries of origin. This temporary exhibition will be based on the common heritage exposing the looted art and other local artifacts. Progress has been made in the restitution of looted art, a recent case is the Edo Museum of West African Art. With the Benin dialogue Group, created to restore the cultural heritage of the artifacts from the Benin Kingdom —founded in the 12th century— and focused on the Benin Bronzes which are displayed in the British Museum, the Edo Museum will open in 2021 receiving these and other art pieces as a loan.¹⁵ Although the restitution in terms of property is not restored, the items will be physically displayed in the country of origin for its direct people to enjoy—without knowing the time of this loan.

¹² Anna Lindh Foundation, “EUROMED intercultural trends - The Anna Lindh report Euro-Med Intercultural Trends 2010,” 2010, 32, <https://www.annalindhfoundation.org/what-we-do/intercultural-trends-report>.

¹³ Looted art refers to looted cultural goods. They are defined by the European Parliament as “public or private property considered as constituting an artistic creation or cultural property, which were plundered in wartime through acts of violence, confiscation or by apparently legal transactions or auctions.” See <https://www.lootedartcommission.com/european-union>.

¹⁴ Council of the European Union, “Council Conclusions on the Need to Bring Cultural Heritage to the Fore across Policies in the EU,” (2018/C 196/05), 2018, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/>.

¹⁵ Alex Marshall, “A New Museum to Bring the Benin Bronzes Home,” *The New York Times*, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/13/arts/design/david-adjaye-benin-bronzes-museum.html>.



In 2020, in the light of this loan concept and the Edo Museum, the idea of focusing on exposing the art pieces and not on the ownership will bring the art back to its original place and closer to the people—to the direct heirs of the art’s history that could not have enjoyed them until now.¹⁶ Thus, the proposal of a museum cooperation program from the EU consists of creating temporary exhibitions with a similar concept. The temporary exhibition proposed will receive EU funds and the EU will coordinate the Member States and public museums, private holders, third country governments and local organizations.

Concretely, the temporary exhibition will consist of the exposition of both the looted art in the hand of European museums or individuals and local artifacts. The topic and idea beneath the temporary exhibition is the exposition of common cultural heritage. The narrative will be based on, first, the common history of the countries—the third-country in relation with the European or European countries—; second, the story of these artifacts and how they ended up under one ownership or the other; and, third, the conservation and research process of this artifact in the country of the owner. Through this, one could see the history of both countries interlinked, discover its story, and understand that the conservation has permitted the art piece to exist today and that the research has granted the opportunity of knowing about the past. This links the negative and positive historical consequences but also allows both the owner and the reader to empathize, wonder, and understand the other. Understand that, thanks to the other, the artifact was created, and to the other, we know about it and we can appreciate it today. This unveils the common human heritage, building the sentiment of common heritage, understanding and appreciating both cultures, both societies. And, as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: “Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.”¹⁷

The proposal recommends that the implementation of this policy rests on the EU delegations in the third countries and the budget of the EEAS, with the possibility of assistance from the cultural budget of Creative Europe. The temporary exhibition will be directly coordinated by the EU delegations, under the supervision of the Ambassador of the EU delegation. Likewise, the temporary exhibition will take place inside the EU delegation. Due to previous impossibilities for governments to protect the content of the museums,¹⁸ and in order to prevent robberies, the EU delegations offer the utmost guarantees of its safety. Beyond entrusting the headquarters of the EU delegation in a country for the safety of the artifacts, this also presents an opportunity to work with police and military officials of the country, as well as museum security and conservation personnel to share the know-how and offer trainings on the preservation, conservations and security of art pieces and museums. This program could be offered jointly with UNESCO; thus, receiving funds from their conservation project.¹⁹ Furthermore, the temporary exhibition which duration can go

¹⁶ Kate Brown, “Europe’s Largest Museums Will Loan Looted Benin Bronzes to Nigeria’s Planned Royal Museum ,” *Artnet News*, 2018, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/benin-dialogue-group-ocotober-2018-1376824>.

¹⁷ The United Nations. 1948. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, article 27.

¹⁸ In reference to 1994 Nigerian most notorious break-in when robbers stole artifacts worth \$200 million. Concerning security, Mr. Omonkhuapoints out: “If Nigerians couldn’t protect the contents of their museums, the argument went, why should European institutions entrust them with more objects?.” See Kristen Chick and Ryan Lenora Brown, “Art of the Steal: European Museums Wrestle with Returning African Art,” *CSMonitor*, 2019, <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2019/0430/Art-of-the-steal-European-museums-wrestle-with-returning-African-art>

¹⁹ See UNESCO Movable Heritage Outreach Programme. See UNESCO, “Movable Heritage Outreach Programme,” 2008, <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/museums/movable-heritage-outreach-programme/>.



from 2-6 months, depending on the country and content, will be surrounded with not only trainings on museum conservation, but workshops, meetings and art sessions where politicians, artists and citizens of both countries can enjoy and understand the other's culture, bringing both societies closer together. In addition, it brings the people of the country closer to Europe, as they will attend a temporary exhibition by the EU in the EU delegation, bringing those citizens closer to the EU work and institutions.

In essence, the implementation of a temporary exhibition through a museum cooperation program constitutes the perfect cultural policy to bring the European values directly to the society of a third country. By bringing the art pieces from the European museums to the original places, its people can enjoy for the first time directly their own heritage. By this unique program and the narrative of the temporary exhibition, those citizens can understand better themselves and their history, as well as appreciate the other helping conserve and research the heritage. The wonder, interest and conservation for their culture from the European museums, combined with the experience of bringing back and seeing for the first time the art piece allows the comprehension of a common heritage. This understanding of a common heritage attaches one culture to the other and brings both societies closer together. Consequently, the strong public sentiment and opinion will drive governments to cooperate and align together in the international sphere, enhancing the multilateralism between the EU and third countries.

IV. CONCLUSION

The Covid-19 pandemic has unveiled the essential role of culture in connecting societies, and connecting people.²⁰ The EU has the opportunity to enhance its multilateralist facet by implementing cultural policies. Specifically, the EU should implement two essential policies: first, a co-production film program and prize, second, temporary exhibitions of art pieces in the country of origin through a museum cooperation program.

The co-production film program and prize are both based on the understanding of each other's culture and the illustration and reflection of European values in practice. The program targets EU with third countries co-productions that portray culture and society or the exchange and enrichment of both, while illustrating the fundamental values and inviting their reflection. This program will be implemented under Creative Europe Media. Likewise, the prize will be given to the film that better encompasses these aims, and will be implemented together with the LUX film prize.

The temporary exhibitions through the museum cooperation program connect both societies by creating a common cultural heritage. The EU should host temporary exhibitions in the country of origin of the *looted art*, exposing both local art pieces and *looted art* today in Europe,

²⁰ UNESCO, "People are turning to Culture for support," op. cit.; and OECD, "Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Cultural and Creative Sectors: Impact, Innovations and Planning for Post-Crisis," 2020, <https://www.oecd.org/cfe/leed/culture-webinars.htm>.



all with the topic of a common cultural heritage and with the aim of creating a common heritage sentiment. This will be possible by the creation of a museum cooperation program focusing on the exposition of *looted art* and not on their property; thus, allowing to exhibit these art pieces in temporary exhibitions, bringing the art close to its original place and people. The temporary exhibition will be hosted in the EU delegations for a period between two and six months.

Together, both policies connect non-European societies with European society. The first policy focuses on spreading and communicating social, moral and cultural messages, reflecting in the very picture of our societies and values. This is achieved through the most efficient and popular way: cinema; and as the president of the European Film Academy stated: it creates a common *soul*.²¹ Furthermore, the second policy puts the cultural common heritage on its center as an essential asset of the EU's public diplomacy, creating stronger ties between countries and sharing values.²²

The two cultural policies will create a bottom-up approach where the different societies with different cultures will feel closer to each other and will better relate to each other. Consequently, politics will follow the common sentiment already rooted in the population, and policies will be driven to strengthen cooperation, reciprocity and agreements with the EU. Furthermore, third-countries will be looking towards alliances with the EU and more countries aiming at a common goal. Alliances that will not be based purely on interests, but also on understanding each other. These cultural policies will catalyze the renaissance of the multilateralism facet of the EU in the international sphere, and it will enhance the promotion of Europe's values through connecting cultures of different societies.

Finally, the connection between societies and cultures fosters the comprehension of the other as a human person. The Covid-19 pandemic has deepened inequalities, conflicts and polarization. Isn't precisely now in 2020 when understanding, connecting and empathizing with the culture of the other takes a crucial role? As culture is key in the mental health and well-being of society,²³ could the European Union go beyond connecting governments and focus on connecting societies? By focusing on society, the EU has the opportunity to promote the diversity of cultures, inclusion, combat discrimination and bring human dignity to the core of its policies. In society, we have long ignored the importance of culture, but the EU can help re-emerge the role of culture, connect society, and catalyze multilateralism while practicing and promoting the European values.

²¹ "Image and identity of Europe. The role of cinema and of film literacy", Speech by Wim Wenders, President of the European Film Academy, Public Hearing, Brussels, 27 October 2010; in Josef Wutz, "dissemination of European cinema in the European Union and the international market" (Jacques Delors Institute, 2014), 115.

²² European Commission, "Towards an Integrated Approach to Cultural Heritage for Europe," 2014, www.culture-dev.eu/pdf/fr/DeclarationofBrugesEN.pdf.

²³ OECD, "Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Cultural and Creative Sectors: Impact, Innovations and Planning for Post-Crisis," 2020, <https://www.oecd.org/cfe/leed/culture-webinars.htm>.



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