The UK and the European Union

Review of Balance of Competencies

Culture

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The European Union's strategy for culture was outlined in the "Agenda for Culture in a Globalizing World" adopted by the European Council in 2007[ii]. It recognises the subsidiarity of culture and sets out three broad areas of European added value: cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue; culture as a catalyst for creativity; and culture as a key component in international relations. These three areas have enabled cultural activity since 2007 to appear in a wide range of EU programmes, from regional aid, development, enlargement, business and innovation, research and development and external relations. The Commission has also introduced the Open Method of Coordination enabling experts from member states to work together on an equally wide range of cultural topics. In the forthcoming Europe 2020 framework culture is recognised as a transversal subject in each of the three high level strategic areas. Culture in the EU programmes remains a very small element of the total MFF budget 2014-2020 (as it is in all member states own budgets).

It is worthy of note that the EU's engagement with culture extends and is extending beyond the area of grants to arts organisations within the Culture Programme (Creative Europe from 2014). The EC led the negotiations on behalf of member states for the UNESCO Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005); it made representations on the role of culture in the review of the Millennium Development Goals, it is active in areas of intellectual property rights. In all of these areas the UK (both governmental and non-governmental) works to put its own view within the discussions between member states. The EU is also working on issues of visas for artists' mobility, on creative industries and on other areas scheduled for discussion in subsequent semesters. Many are directly related to the functioning of the single market, a key UK objective with its relationship with the EU. As with other areas of the UK's membership of the EU the UK can achieve more within the EU framework compared to acting alone. Many contributors to the Balance of Competencies Review on Foreign Policy made the same point.

Culture in the external relations of the European Union.

It is often said that the EU is stronger in "soft power" than all aspects of "hard power". Culture in the EU's external relations plays a key role in its international standing. In recent years the EC has expanded its activities in culture in the external relations. A useful summary is here[iii]. In December 2012, for example, the Commission, through the Enlargement DG, announced a programme to support media, culture and private sector development in the Southern Mediterranean[iv]. This sits alongside the EU co-funded Anna Lindh Foundation[v], one of the main inter-cultural dialogue programmes bringing together the 43 member countries in the Union of the Mediterranean. In 2012 the EC and European External Action Service jointly led a panel of representatives from Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Culture to devise a strategy for EU-China cultural relations[vi].

The UK's gain comes in two ways: strategic though emphasising the consistency of engagement explicit in its own objectives and secondly in specific projects.

William Hague recently wrote in support of the UK's cultural relations[vii] and how this contributes to the UK's standing in the world as well as more quantifiable direct benefits. The key themes of the UK's cultural relations philosophy has been mutuality and partnership. A greater influence and impact is gained exercising these attributes than simply one-way cultural marketing which can verge on propaganda. Trust in the UK, a key objective of cultural relations, comes from participating with and alongside others. The UK and its cultural organisations gain more from participation in multi-lateral EU projects and programmes than the specific extra funds gained. It sends a clear message of being a partner, of a co-equal and being part of a community seeking common objectives. It runs both in parallel to and in mutual support of the specific bilateral objectives of a cultural relations organisation.

The European Parliament in 2011 set out a comprehensive report on culture in the EU's external relations[viii]. Amongst its recommendations it called for the development of a common EU strategy on culture in the EU external relations. This has been the major weakness in the implementation of the Agenda's objective of culture in the external relations. Programmes and projects have been developed by various directorate generals with limited overall strategic direction. The creation of the European External Action Service has added a new factor. An attempt is underway to overcome the main current strategic weakness. There is a "preparatory action" project underway[ix], funded by the European Parliament, to map existing resources, approaches and strategies regarding culture in external relations in EU countries and in a number of strategic partner countries. It will report in 2014[x]. The British Council is one of the partners in the project. The European External Action Service is also closely involved with the project.

In recent years the cultural diplomacy and cultural relations organisations in member states have developed their own network: European Union National Institutes of Culture[xi] (EUNIC). This brings together organisations such as the Goethe Institute, Institute Français, Cervantes Institute etc.; currently there are 32 members from 26 member states. The network encourages its members in cities around the world to work together on joint projects (currently these clusters are active in over 80 cities worldwide) as well as a few regional (e.g. developing creative industries in Jordan, co-financed by the EC[xii]) and centrally driven projects. Full membership is limited to organisations in member states. Participation in projects is voluntary. The UK, through the British Council, plays a major role as one of the largest of the cultural institutes. Through working in partnership with its counterparts in EUNIC it is able to win EU projects; recent examples include in Belarus, Mexico, South Africa and Armenia.

European Capitals of Culture

The UK has twice hosted a European Capital of Culture (ECOC). Both have had significant impact on the programme and influence on subsequent candidate and successful cities. Glasgow in 1990 demonstrated how culture can be used alongside and within regeneration; Liverpool in 2008 has altered the landscape in Europe of evaluations and impact of major cultural (and indeed sporting) events. A UK consultancy has the current contract to evaluate ECOCs for the European Commission. The UK is due to host its next European Capital of Culture in 2023. Cities considering competing will be starting their bid preparation in 2015, at the latest, in time for pre-selection in 2017 and final

selection in 2018. A European Capital of Culture is considerably more extensive that the UK City of Culture programme. Although awarded for a single year a whole ECOC programme involves a four year build up as well as planning legacy implementation. Currently selected (or candidate cities) in comparable member states (Spain, France, Netherlands, Denmark) are committing between EUR60m and EUR130m to their five or six year programmes (over and above their existing culture budgets and excluding any capital investments in new cultural venues or city infrastructure). In each case the city has integrated its European Capital of Culture programme into a long term plan for the city: they are not one-off arts festivals. Indeed this is one of the criteria of the programme. That an ECOC plays a significant role in city development is evidenced not only by the size of the expenditures but by the increasing competition for the title. Over 30 cities bid for the 2016 title in Spain and Poland. Over 14 are expected to bid for Italy 2019. Demand and budgets are not seriously affected by austerity budgets. A city, and the UK, will gain from the 2023 title.

[i] Steve Green is a member of the Selection Panel for the European Capitals of Culture as a nominee of the European Parliament. He retired in 2011 from the British Council where his assignments included Team Leader for the Presidency of the network of the European Union National Institutes of Culture (EUNIC), Head of European Research and Head of the UK network of the Anna Lindh Foundation. The views are personal.

[ii] http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32007G1129(01):EN:NOT

[iii] http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-policy-development/culture-in-eu-external-relations_en.htm

[iv] http://moreeurope.org/sites/default/files/ip-12-1331_en.pdf

[v] http://www.euromedalex.org/

[vi] http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-policy-development/documents/summary-expert-group-external-relations_en.pdf

[vii] http://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/documents/influence-and-attraction-report.pdf

[viii] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=REPORT&reference=A7-2011-0112&language=EN

[ix] http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-policy-development/culture-and-external-relations/preparatory-action_en.htm

[x] http://cultureinexternalrelations.eu/

[xi] http://www.eunic-online.eu/

[xii] http://www.eunic-online.eu/jordan