

ifa Edition Culture and Foreign Policy

# Cultural Freedom in European Foreign Policy

Gijs de Vries



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## Foreword

“Credibility begins at home.” Gijs de Vries in the present study

Illiberal tendencies are putting pressure on the European political project committed to the rule of law, multilateralism and liberal-democratic values – not only from the outside, but also from within. To defend its values, Europe needs to know exactly where its credibility is called into question. From a European point of view, international cultural relations and cultural diplomacy promote cultural freedom and offer the possibility to support cultural agents whose space for expression is shrinking. How should the European strategy for culture in external relations be shaped to contribute to this aim? Which policy fields could be fostered through the inclusion of culture to make use of its transversal role?

The author of this study describes changes in the international world order, upcoming challenges for Europe and possible actions for European policy makers to counter the developments mentioned above and defend liberal democratic values. This study forms part of ifa’s Research Programme “Culture and Foreign Policy”, in which experts address relevant issues relating to culture and foreign policy with the aim of involving academics, practitioners, policymakers and civil society. The underlying research project was conducted within the Federal Foreign Office’s framework for developing a new concept for future German cultural and educational policies.

I would like to thank Gijs de Vries for his excellent work and commitment to this research project. In addition, I would like to thank my ifa colleagues Odila Triebel, Sarah Widmaier and Anja Schön for their work on the coordination and editing of this project.

ifa is committed to peaceful and enriching coexistence between people and cultures worldwide. We promote art and cultural exchange through exhibitions, dialogue and conference programmes. As a competence centre for international cultural relations, ifa connects civil societies, cultural practices, art, media and science. In times of shrinking free spaces in many societies, national cultural institutes, EUNIC and the European External Action Service need to join their forces in international cultural relations within the EU and in cooperation with third countries. We have to understand the mechanisms behind this trend and develop possible strategies to preserve spaces for critical reflection, dialogue and international cooperation.

**Ronald Grätz,**

Secretary General, ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen)

## **Abstract**

In 2017 EU ministers said that culture is “an essential part of the EU’s international relations.” But the EU is a new-comer to the field of cultural diplomacy and its policy is still in its infancy, both conceptually and in terms of implementation. Many questions remain unanswered. How to draw the line between cultural relations and public diplomacy on the one hand and propaganda on the other? How to steer clear of neo-colonialism? How to encourage European governments, who are prone to national cultural show-casing, to work together and derive strength from unity? This paper will explore some of the contours of this emerging European Union policy, its potential as well as its limitations.

## Executive summary

The **liberal international order** is undergoing rapid change. Power is shifting from western states to rising powers, liberal-democratic values are under attack in many parts of the world, and America appears to be losing interest in upholding the liberal international order. Russia and China restrict and distort free speech, and the European Union finds itself increasingly challenged in the realm of ideas.

Faced with threats to its cultural identity, Europe needs to mount a **cultural response**. EU member states have long practiced cultural diplomacy, and EU ministers have stated that culture must also be an integral part of the EU's international relations. This paper explores the contours of the emerging European strategy of cultural diplomacy.

Europe's position is stronger than might appear at first sight. European public opinion did not react to the divisions and uncertainties of recent times by turning against the European Union, nor has the EU been paralysed. Worldwide, the EU's image remains broadly positive. However, Europe will have to take more responsibility for its own security. China's political use of cultural relations needs a political riposte.

**Democracy** is central to Europe's identity. For decades, democracy spread across the world, but in recent years the tide has turned. Democratic values have suffered as media freedom, independent institutions, and the rule of law are being curtailed. Authoritarian governments have learned to 'game the system' and erode democracy by stealth. The authoritarian attacks on democracy must be met with hard as well as soft power, including a vigorous defence of free speech and other human rights.

To push back against oppression EU governments should step up support for the main **international human rights** regimes, including that of the Council of Europe. European diplomats should speak out more often and openly in support of artists, journalists, and other victims of censorship. The EU should also raise its voice in defence of academic freedom, as a dimension of the wider right of everyone to take part in cultural life.

**Disinformation** has an increasingly corrosive effect on trust in democratic societies. Disinformation is practiced systematically by Russia, which uses it to disrupt liberal democracies. Europe bears the brunt of Russian information operations, which some assess as notably successful.



Today's leading digital communication companies exercise extraordinary cultural power. The EU's approach to oblige social media companies to act as gate-keepers of information poses risks to freedom of expression. Legislation may be required to secure transparency and accountability. Independent, quality journalism needs more support, including from the EU.

The cultural and creative industries are among the fastest growing sectors in the world, often providing an income to the poorest and most vulnerable. The **Sustainable Development Goals** imply that culture must be an integral part of policies to alleviate poverty, promote education, gender equality, and sustainable urbanisation, and build peaceful societies that respect universal human rights. This is the most comprehensive agenda for culture the world has ever seen. The EU should publish a white paper proposing to work with international partners in leading this agenda. European priorities should include culture and education, culture and governance, and culture and security.

Along with changes in the world at large there have been important developments closer to home, within the European Union. One prominent development has been the rise of intolerance fuelled by populism. There is no democracy without liberty, and "**illiberal democracy**" poses an existential threat to European values and institutions. Popular discontent is fuelled by a pervasive sense of economic injustice and political disenfranchisement, which EU governments have yet to address. Cultural causes of discontent are among the most complex. As part of its response the EU should strengthen its policies and budgets for citizenship, education, and culture.

Europeans regard culture as the factor that does most to create a feeling of community among them as EU citizens. Cultural heritage, citizenship education, and language education could be among the building blocks of national and European policies to strengthen the saliency of **European citizenship**, along with steps to restore the humanities at the centre of public education. The EU would have to secure sufficient financing in its new multi-annual financial framework.

The attacks on Europe's core values of liberty, democracy, and the rule of law leave no room for complacency. Europe does not lack the means to respond; what it lacks is a sense of direction. Cultural diplomacy must be at the centre of Europe's response to the erosion of liberty around the world. Cultural diplomacy's traditional model, with its dominant emphasis on displaying national cultural "achievements", is no longer fit for purpose. It must be replaced by a model that not only combines national perspectives with a com-

mon, European approach, but which also has **cultural freedom** among its prime objectives. At the same time, national cultural institutes should do more to integrate the European dimension into their operations. Europe can no longer afford business as usual.

**Cultural diplomacy** is not a panacea. In and by itself culture cannot resolve either intra-national conflicts or international ones. But culture can facilitate independent thinking, dialogue, and understanding, provided it is employed freely and independently by artists. The EU's current policies contain some welcome innovations but the EU is still a long way from realising the potential of cultural diplomacy. The EU should upgrade its policies for international cultural relations and integrate them with its other policies to defend and promote the rights and liberties that are at the core of Europe's identity, at home and abroad.

## 1. Introduction

States practice foreign policy to defend and promote their interests in the world. States tend to define their national interests primarily in terms of security and prosperity, but these interests are also frequently taken to include key national values and traditions. In Europe the constitutional order includes democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. These values are central to Europe's identity and to European foreign policy.

These European core values of democracy, the rule of law, and human rights are increasingly being challenged around the world. China and Russia assertively promote a fundamentally different model, and their views find a ready audience among authoritarian rulers everywhere. Across the globe, freedom of expression and other fundamental rights are under attack. Meanwhile, populists and nationalists are working hard to weaken the European constitutional order from the inside. Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of intolerance are on the rise. At home as well as abroad, Europe is embroiled in a contest of values and ideas.

How can liberal democracies respond? What combination of hard and soft power do they need to preserve the rights and liberties that are fundamental to Europe's cultural identity? These are the principal questions this paper seeks to address.

A country's soft power, Professor Joseph Nye has written, rests primarily on three resources: its culture (where others find this attractive), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate).<sup>1</sup> Soft power, the power of attraction, has long been part of European diplomacy. In Germany, cultural relations and education policy form the third pillar of foreign policy, along with political and economic relations. France counts "a vibrant culture" among the factors that contribute to its security, prosperity, and influence.<sup>2</sup> The United Kingdom, in the opinion of (then) Foreign Secretary William Hague, is "a modern day cultural super-power."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Nye, *Soft Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> République Française, *Defence and National Security Strategic Review* (Paris, 2017), p. 52.

<sup>3</sup> William Hague, Foreword, in John Holden, *Influence and Attraction* (London: British Council, 2013).

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The European Union, too, is engaged in cultural diplomacy. In 2017 EU ministers said that culture is “an essential part of the EU’s international relations.”<sup>4</sup> But the EU is a newcomer to the field and its policy is still in its infancy, both conceptually and in terms of implementation. Many questions remain unanswered. How to draw the line between cultural relations and public diplomacy on the one hand and propaganda on the other? How to steer clear of neo-colonialism? How to encourage European governments, who are prone to national cultural show-casing, to work together and derive strength from unity? This paper will explore some of the contours of this emerging European Union policy and assess its potential as well as its limitations in safeguarding Europe’s values and interests.

The EU enjoys a broadly positive reputation around the world. If Europeans act with tact, openness to partners, and a sense of common purpose, they are well-placed to win friends and work with them to mutual advantage. The Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals represent opportunities for European diplomacy, including in the cultural domain. But the going will not be easy.

If Europe is to defend its values effectively abroad, then Europeans will have to stand up for them at home, with courage and conviction. Soft power, as Nye points out, involves more than cultural relations alone: it demands consistency between foreign and domestic policy. Cultural diplomats and practitioners must face inwards as well as outwards. This means that they not only have physical borders to cross, but mental and bureaucratic boundaries as well – and these may well be the greater obstacles.

The attacks on Europe’s core values of liberty, democracy, and the rule of law are dangerous; they leave no room for complacency. But the rise of illiberalism should not be cause for despondency either. Europe does not lack the means to respond; what it lacks is a sense of direction. Too often, as the composer Chilly Gonzales put it, it looks like “a movie with no plot”. Faced with threats to its cultural identity, Europe needs to mount a cultural response.

The main argument of this paper is that cultural diplomacy can be a key component of this response, provided it is rethought and redesigned. Cultural diplomacy needs a paradigm shift, both at national and at European level. The traditional model, with its dominant emphasis on displaying national cultural “achievements”, is no longer fit for pur-

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<sup>4</sup> Council conclusions on culture in the European Union’s external relations, Brussels, 23 May 2017.

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pose. It must be replaced by a model that not only combines national perspectives with a common, European approach, but which also has cultural freedom among its prime objectives. If Europeans are to respond effectively to the erosion of liberty around the world, they will have to employ all the means at their disposal. For the EU this means that cultural diplomacy must be reconfigured as an integral dimension of European foreign policy instead of being treated as an incidental adjunct, as is the case today. The EU needs to move beyond the confines of its current policy framework, recognising both the limits and the potential of a more ambitious approach.

Some of the concepts used in this paper, such as soft power, public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy and international cultural relations, have been extensively discussed in the academic literature. They are considered parts of a semantic field but there is no consensus as to their exact definition.<sup>5</sup> Many practitioners use terms such as cultural diplomacy and international cultural relations interchangeably.

For the purposes of this paper, power in international relations will be regarded as the capacity of a nation to use its tangible and intangible resources in such a way as to affect the behaviour of other states.<sup>6</sup> Soft power, as defined by Nye, is the ability to affect others to obtain preferred outcomes by the co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuasion, and positive attraction.<sup>7</sup> Cultural diplomacy is regarded as a subset of public diplomacy, which is understood by practitioners as activities undertaken to understand, inform and engage individuals and organisations in other countries in order to shape their perceptions in ways that will promote a country and its policy goals internationally.<sup>8</sup> Culture in these pages is used in a triple sense: a people's way of life (customs, values, ideals), arts and heritage, and popular culture (the products of a commercial entertainment industry).<sup>9</sup>

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 discusses the main changes in the international order that present risks and opportunities to European liberal democracies. The argument then explores some of these changes in greater detail. Starting with the risks,

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<sup>5</sup> Marie Gillespie et al., *The Cultural Value Project: Cultural Relations in 'Societies in Transition'* (Hertie School of Governance and The Open University, 2018), p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> John Stoessinger, 'The Anatomy of the Nation-State and the Nature of Power', in Michael Smith, Richard Little, and Michael Shackleton (eds.) *Perspectives on World Politics*, (London: Croom Helm, 1981), p. 36.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph S. Nye, 'Hard, Soft, and Smart Power', in Andrew F. Cooper, Jorge Heine, Ramesh Thakur, *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 565.

<sup>8</sup> *Australia's public diplomacy: building our image*. Report by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (Canberra: Senate of Australia, 2007), p. 12.

<sup>9</sup> For a similar definition, see Martha Bayles, *Through a Screen Darkly. Popular Culture, Public Diplomacy, and America's Image Abroad* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), p. 5.

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section 3 sets out the dangers posed by the hollowing out of democracy, while sections 4 and 5 discuss the growing contestation of human rights, and the disruptive use of disinformation (digital disorder). The paper next explores some of the opportunities which the new global development agenda provides.

In section 7 the paper turns from global trends to the rise of populism within Europe itself; section 8 discusses what it will take to turn the tide, including a re-evaluation of European citizenship.

The consequences and lessons for cultural policies and practices will be discussed throughout the text; the final section presents proposals and conclusions. Throughout the analysis the focus will be on the role of the European Union and its efforts to develop an EU strategy for international cultural relations. Given its brevity, this paper does not pretend to be exhaustive. Its primary goal is to contribute to further discussion and analysis. The views expressed are those of the author.

## 2. A changing world order

What is the liberal international order? One leading analyst, John Ikenberry, defines it as an “open and rule-based international order” that is “enshrined in institutions such as the United Nations and norms such as multilateralism.”<sup>10</sup> At its heart were collective security, open markets, and democracy.<sup>11</sup> This order is changing rapidly, and may even be fracturing. Change is affecting it at three levels: i) power is shifting from western states to rising powers, ii) liberal-democratic values are being challenged in many parts of the world, and iii) the US appears to be losing interest in upholding the liberal international order.

The post-1945 dominance of western powers is under pressure from various quarters. Daalder and Lindsay distinguish between three categories of challengers: i) revisionist powers, such as China and Russia, who want to reshape global rules to their own advantage; ii) emerging powers, such as Brazil and India, who embrace the perks of great-power status but shun the responsibilities that come with it; and iii) rejectionist powers, such as Iran and North Korea, that defy rules set by others.<sup>12</sup>

In 2014 Russia illegally annexed Crimea and the city of Sevastopol – the first time since the Second World War that military force was used to change European borders. In 2016 Russia attempted to trigger a coup in Montenegro. Moscow has also supported destabilising activities of political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina, encouraged anti-EU sentiment in Europe, interfered in American and French elections, and engaged in cyber-attacks and attempted attacks, including on the headquarters of the OPCW in The Hague. The UK now regards Russia as a bigger threat to its national security than Islamic State and Al Qaeda.<sup>13</sup>

China, too, has used military force in defiance of international law. It has rapidly built up its military presence on islands in the South China Sea. When its territorial claims were rejected by the Permanent Court of Arbitration, China dismissed the ruling as “a piece of paper” that is destined to come to naught.<sup>14</sup> It has embarked on an ambitious programme to project its power in the world through loans (Belt and Road), investment in strategic

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<sup>10</sup> G. John Ikenberry, ‘The Future of the Liberal World Order’, *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2011, p. 56.

<sup>11</sup> Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, ‘America’s Allies Must Step Up as America Steps Down’, *Foreign Affairs*, September 30, 2018.

<sup>12</sup> Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, ‘America’s Allies Must Step Up as America Steps Down’, *Foreign Affairs*, September 30, 2018.

<sup>13</sup> British Army Chief: Russia ‘far bigger’ threat than IS, *The Guardian*, 24.11 2018.

<sup>14</sup> Tom Phillips, ‘China attacks international court after South China Sea ruling’, *The Guardian*, 13 July 2016.

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industries, diplomacy, and military means. In Asia, China spends more on defence than India, Japan, South Korea, Australia, Pakistan, Vietnam, and the Philippines together.<sup>15</sup>

Both China and Russia actively seek to change the international discourse about human rights, including in the UN Human Rights Committee. To promote their state-centric agenda both Moscow and Beijing have significantly upgraded their cultural diplomacy and informational activities in other countries.

The third major development is America's change of direction. Its largely unsuccessful interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq have dented America's readiness to deploy force as an instrument of statecraft. America's willingness to act as guardian of the international trading regime has also waned, even among Democrats: as Presidential candidate, Hillary Clinton withdrew her support for the Trans-Pacific Partnership. But prior to Donald Trump's election, leading Democrats and Republicans remained by and large committed to America's post-1945 role as leader of the "free world."

Trump broke with this tradition. As President, Trump has described NATO as "obsolete" (a remark he retracted), and the EU as a "foe" (a remark that still stands). He has praised dictators and scorned allies, including Canada, Germany and the UK. Trump imposed tariffs on steel and aluminium from Canada and Europe, ostensibly for reasons of security. He ended America's participation in the 2015 Paris Agreement to mitigate climate change. He took the US out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and compelled Mexico and Canada to change the North-American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). President Trump abrogated the 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran and has recently announced to withdraw from the INF nuclear arms control agreement with Russia. Washington has cut off funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) which provides humanitarian aid to Palestinians. The US has left UNESCO. It has stopped cooperating with UN Special Rapporteurs whose global mandate includes possible human rights infringements in the USA.

At the 2018 G-7 summit world leaders argued over whether an order based on principles and common values was still applicable for the seven most powerful countries in the Western world. This is how the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, described the outcome:

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<sup>15</sup> Jamie Smyth, 'Battle stations: Asia's arms race heats up', *Financial Times*, 26 August 2018.



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“And probably for the first time in our modern history, the President of the United States said he was not interested in continuing such thinking or such action. And he deleted, virtually with his own hand, the sentence, which has always appeared in the declarations of the seven most powerful countries in the Western world to the effect that we seek to safeguard a world order based on principles and values.”<sup>16</sup>

For 70 years, principles and values helped hold the Atlantic Alliance, the World Trade Organisation, and other pillars of the international order together. This era, it seems, is now closing. With Russia stirring up trouble, China rising, and America unpredictable and possibly unreliable as a guarantor of the liberal world order, how should Europeans respond?

### **Where does Europe stand?**

Two world wars and decolonisation put an end to Europe’s position as the geopolitical centre of the world. With the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union Europe also lost its place at the centre of US foreign policy. “A century ago, Europe was the centre of the world – even if it was the dark centre of the world,” Dominique Moïsi observed. “Today we might be back to tragedy but not centrality.”<sup>17</sup>

This process is set to continue. As other global and regional power centres emerge, Europe’s relative position will inevitably erode. For a start, Europe’s share of the world population will decline. In 2015 the EU counted 509 million inhabitants, some 6.9% of the world’s total. China (1.4 billion) and India (1.3 billion) together accounted for 35% of the global population. As other parts of the world grow, China’s share is projected to fall from 18.9% to 12.0% in 2050, while India’s share is expected to fall from 17.7% to 16.1%. The EU’s share of the world’s population is projected to shrink to a mere 5% by 2065.<sup>18</sup>

In economic terms, too, Europe’s relative power will continue to decline, although less sharply. The EU is currently the world’s third major economic power, behind China and the USA. China and India are catching up, and are projected to overtake both the EU and the USA. Between 2016 and 2050 China’s share of world GDP (in PPP) is expected to rise from 18% to 20%; India’s share will grow from 7% to 15%; the US share will fall from 16%

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<sup>16</sup> Donald Tusk, ‘November 11, 2018: Poland and Europe. Two Anniversaries, Two Lessons’, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Katrin Bennhold, ‘Can Europe’s Liberal Order Survive as the Memory of War Fades?’, *New York Times*, November 10, 2018.

<sup>18</sup> Eurostat, *The EU in the world – 2018 edition* (Luxembourg: European Commission, 2018), pp. 16-17.

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to 12%; and the EU's share will fall from 15% to 9%.<sup>19</sup> Even as it slides from third place to fourth the EU will remain a prominent economic force in the world.

In terms of military power the USA is likely to retain its dominant position for many years to come. True, China and India are engaged in a massive military build-up. In 2017 China increased its military spending by 5.6% and India by 5.5%, while Russia's spending fell by 20%. China is building the equivalent of almost the entire British Royal Navy every year.<sup>20</sup> But the United States continues to lead the world. At 610 billion USD, US military spending accounted for more than a third of the world's total in 2017. The USA's spending was 2.7% greater than the next spender, China; indeed, the USA spent more than the next seven highest spenders combined. The European countries are minor players. France spent 57.8 billion USD (3.3% world share; 2.3% GDP); the UK spent 47.2 billion USD (2.7% world total; 1.8% GDP), and Germany spent 44.3 billion USD (2.5% world share; 1.2% GDP).<sup>21</sup> America's military supremacy is likely to continue for the foreseeable future: in 2018 US military spending rose sharply to 700 billion USD.

The combination of economic strength, military weakness, and demographic decline leaves the countries of Europe with a brittle power base. Political developments over the past decade and a half have been hardly less challenging. The global financial crisis showed that Europeans lack the tools and the cohesion to manage their global financial interests. The subsequent Euro-crisis fuelled deep misgivings and distrust between Northern and Southern Europeans. In 2015 tensions between Western and Central Europeans, and within many Western countries, were aggravated by Angela Merkel's unilateral decision to open Germany's borders to asylum seekers and other migrants. The British decision, in 2016, to leave the European Union dealt another blow. Unsurprisingly, many opinion-leaders are pessimistic about the future. Some believe that the European Union is doomed.<sup>22</sup> A *Bundeswehr* planning scenario leaked in 2017 imagined the EU's eastern states splitting off and joining an autocratic, Eurasian bloc by 2040.<sup>23</sup>

British analysts in particular have long argued that the EU is, or has become, too diverse, or too meddling, to hold together. It is bound to disintegrate sooner or later and suffer the fate of previous common European ventures. According to the influential col-

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<sup>19</sup> PwC, *The Long View - How will the global economic order change by 2050?* (PwC, 2017).

<sup>20</sup> Financial Times, 'The military aims of 'Global Britain' must be realistic', 4 January 2019.

<sup>21</sup> SIPRI, *Trends in world military expenditure, 2017* (SIPRI Fact Sheet, May 2018).

<sup>22</sup> Jan Zielonka, *Is the EU Doomed?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014).

<sup>23</sup> The Economist, 'In bad Ode. Germany's troubled relations with the Visegrad states show the limits to its power', 16 June 2018, p. 24.

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umnist Simon Jenkins, the EU “has clearly become too insensitive, too brittle, to survive for ever. All Europe’s great settlements – Westphalia, Utrecht, Vienna, Versailles, Yalta – have lasted no more than two generations.”<sup>24</sup> Echoing Zielonka’s vision of the European Union as a neo-medieval empire, Jenkins sees the EU degenerating into a new Holy Roman Empire: a graduated, multi-layered, essentially German confederation of states. Meanwhile populists from left and right decry the European Union as a German-dominated super-state which tramples the sovereignty and identity of its component peoples.

But there is another side to this coin. Europe is stronger than it might at first sight appear. Contrary to expectations, European public opinion did not react to the difficulties, divisions, and uncertainties of recent times by turning against the European Union. On the contrary, it appears that Brexit and the election of Donald Trump have galvanised public support for the European Union. In 2018 favourability ratings of the EU reached their highest level in 35 years.<sup>25</sup> Close to three-quarters of respondents in the Euro area are in favour of the Euro (74%), while 20% are against. Perhaps equally remarkably, overall trust in the European Union remains higher than trust in national governments and national parliaments.<sup>26</sup>

Nor has the EU been paralysed. No country has left the Euro; in fact, six new countries joined since the outbreak of the financial crisis.<sup>27</sup> The EU has redoubled its efforts to strengthen the global trading system, striking deals with Canada and Japan. The trade agreement with Japan is the largest in the EU’s history and covers nearly a third of the world’s GDP. For the first time the EU’s draft multiannual financial framework includes a significant budget for European defence cooperation. In response to China’s targeting of foreign technology an EU framework for screening foreign direct investment was agreed in record time. As an inadvertent by-product of its large internal market the EU continues to wield significant global regulatory power.<sup>28</sup> Its privacy standards, for example, lead the world.

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<sup>24</sup> Simon Jenkins, ‘Britain will go back into the European club’, *The Guardian*, 21 November 2018.

<sup>25</sup> Philipp Schulmeister et al., *Democracy on the Move: One Year to go to the European Elections*, European Union, May 2018.

<sup>26</sup> European Union, Standard Eurobarometer 89, Spring 2018.

<sup>27</sup> Cyprus and Malta (2008), Slovakia (2009), Estonia (2011), Latvia (2014), and Lithuania (2015).

<sup>28</sup> Anu Bradford, ‘Exporting standards: the externalization of the EU’s regulatory power via markets’, *International Review of Law and Economics* 42 (2015), pp. 158-173.

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The EU may not be a “soft superpower”, but it is held in favourable opinion in many parts of the world. A 2017 BBC-commissioned survey of opinions in 18 countries around the world showed that, on average, the EU was viewed more positively than China, the United States, and Russia.<sup>29</sup> In 2018, another poll confirmed this result for the countries of North Africa and the Middle East, where the EU is viewed favourably by majorities in eight of the ten countries surveyed (all except Egypt and Iraq). China was held in favourable opinion in six countries. Majorities in four countries hold positive views of Russia; the USA receives favourable ratings by majorities only in Saudi Arabia and the UAE.<sup>30</sup>

Such statistics should be read with a degree of caution: favourability ratings do not readily translate into political influence. Still, the EU’s broadly positive image does constitute an asset in an era of increasing global political competition. It remains for the EU – EU governments as well as EU institutions – to recognise the value of this asset, and to build on it.

For all its evident flaws the European Union remains a beacon of hope to countless people, within Europe itself and elsewhere in the world. Hopes and expectations can be particularly strong in regions where people’s liberties are ignored and their rights denied. It often takes writers and artists, working outside official channels, to register such hopes – the hope that Europe will live up to its values of freedom and justice, and that Europeans will not abandon them to their fate.

Navid Kermani is the author of several books and essays on Islam, the Middle East, and Christian-Muslim relations. His most recent book is the reflection of his travels from Europe’s borders to Isfahan.<sup>31</sup> Again and again, Kermani meets people who hope that Europe will support their yearning to be free. Will Europe pay attention to their voices, and those of other neighbours, far and wide? Will politicians and intellectuals listen to the messages from outside their borders?

The international order is in flux. Europe may no longer be its geopolitical zenith, but neither is it the nadir. The European Union is not an international power in the traditional, Westphalian sense, nor is it likely to become one, occasional rhetoric about a “European

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<sup>29</sup> GlobeScan, ‘Sharp Drop in World Views of US, UK: Global Poll’, press release, 4 July 2017.

<sup>30</sup> Zogby Research Services, *Middle East Public Opinion 2018*, p. 15.

<sup>31</sup> Navid Kermani, *Entlang den Gräben. Eine Reise durch das östliche Europa bis nach Isfahan* (München: C.H. Beck Verlag, 2018).

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army” notwithstanding. But the EU is more resilient, and more relevant, than its doom-sayers allow for.

The international order is changing fast. Some of the changes are political and economic; others are cultural. The political and economic challenges are well-known. Now that America is increasingly focused on Asia, Europe will need to take more responsibility for its own security. European governments will also have to work more closely together to weather the growing global competition in trade and investments. The third area where European interests and values are being challenged is the realm of ideas. Russia and China are harnessing information and disinformation as instruments of foreign policy. Both Moscow and Beijing work hard to divide the European Union, and their strategy is not without success. But where Russia appears to concentrate on disruption, China poses a perhaps more fundamental, long-term challenge in terms of values and ideas. China makes more systematic use of “soft power”, and Europe is still far from formulating an effective response.

### **China’s “soft power”**

China’s ambition to become a global power is reflected principally in its military build-up, the Belt and Road Initiative, and its soft power strategy. The military build-up has already been discussed; we now briefly look at the other two initiatives.

The Belt and Road Initiative is huge, although its exact costs are unknown; most experts think it dwarfs the American Marshall Programme from the 1950s in real terms. “Belt and Road” serves to link other countries to China through maritime, terrestrial, and digital infrastructure. Cybersecurity and -surveillance is one of the priorities. Chinese cyber-surveillance systems have found customers in Ethiopia, Ecuador, South Africa, Bolivia, Egypt, Rwanda, and Saudi Arabia.<sup>32</sup> Along with its technology China exports its restrictive cybersecurity legislation to countries such as Nigeria, Tanzania, and Vietnam. China is also investing heavily in foreign telecommunications infrastructure and has donated computers to governments in nearly three dozen countries, from Pakistan to Malawi.

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<sup>32</sup> Justin Sherman and Robert Morgus, *Authoritarians Are Exporting Surveillance Tech, And With it Their Vision for the Internet*, blog post, *Council on Foreign Relations*, Washington, 5 December 2018.

## 2. A changing world order

Sometimes its gifts come with hidden strings attached. In 2012 the African Union was the grateful recipient of a new headquarters, which China had built and donated. It took the African Union five years to discover that the Chinese-installed computer system had been equipped with a back door through which its servers were emptied every night, the contents transferred to Shanghai.<sup>33</sup>

China also strives to extend its soft power. At the Communist Party's 2007 Congress, Chinese President Hu Jintao called for China to "increase the country's cultural soft power". His successor, current President Xi Jinping, echoed Hu's message in 2014: "We should increase China's soft power, give a good Chinese narrative, and better communicate China's message to the world."

China's soft power strategy ranges from "panda diplomacy" and the promotion of the Chinese New Year (2,000 activities in 140 countries) to the blocking of Facebook, Google, Instagram, and Twitter. Its instruments include the Xinhua news agency; the China Global Television Network (which broadcasts in Arabic, English, French, Russian, and Spanish); China Radio International (which broadcasts in 60 languages); China Daily; some 500 Confucius Institutes in around 140 countries; educational exchanges; foreign policy think tanks; "host diplomacy" (conferences in China); and programmes on sports and culture. China is currently streamlining its soft power infrastructure. It is merging its state broadcasters into a single entity, Voice of China, to rival the US-funded Voice of America. It is also merging its media regulator (State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television) with the Ministry of Culture. China's annual budget for "external propaganda" has been estimated at 10 billion USD.<sup>34</sup> It is a massive programme by any standards.

Is it successful? How much value for money China's soft power strategy generates is difficult to say. The Portland 30 Index combines six sub-indices into a composite soft power score (culture, digital, education, engagement, enterprise, government). Its 2018 edition puts China near the bottom of its list, in 27<sup>th</sup> place, just before Russia, Brazil, and Argentina. Monocle's Soft Power Survey 2018/19, another commercial initiative, ranks China 19<sup>th</sup> out of the 25 countries it compared.

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<sup>33</sup> Joan Tolouine, Ghalia Kadiri, 'À Addis-Abeba, le siège de l'Union africaine espionné par Pékin', *Le Monde*, 26.1.2018.

<sup>34</sup> David Shambaugh, 'China's Soft-Power Push: The Search for Respect', *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2015, p. 100.

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Opinion polls deliver more interesting, fine-grained results. Negative and positive views of China appear to be fairly evenly balanced. A GlobeScan poll conducted in 2017 showed that on average, across 17 countries, positive ratings of China were at 41% (down from 43% in 2014) and negative ratings were at 42% (up from 40% in 2014). However, views in Africa, where China is making major investments, were strongly positive (83% in Nigeria, 63% in Kenya).<sup>35</sup>

A survey published in 2018 by the Pew Research Center showed that across the 25 countries surveyed, a median of 45% have a favourable view of China while 43% hold an unfavourable view. Majorities or pluralities in 12 countries give China positive marks. Positive views of China are most prevalent in Africa, the Middle East and parts of Asia. Negative views of China are tied to perceptions of its human rights record. There is, however, widespread agreement that China is on the rise.<sup>36</sup>

China, then, may not be winning much sympathy but it seems to be gaining respect. How much of this is due to its hard power projection (military muscle flexing, Belt and Road, espionage), and how much to soft power or cultural diplomacy, is impossible to say.

In any event, such statistics do not capture the full story. Gaining friends and admirers abroad is not the only aim of China's cultural diplomacy. Two other objectives are at least as important: blocking foreign (and particularly "Western") ideas from influencing Chinese citizens, and eliminating foreign sources of criticism. There is a hard edge to China's soft power.

China runs what is arguably the world's most pervasive censorship regime. It blocks foreign broadcasters, such as the Australian Broadcasting Corp, foreign social media, and European internet sites such as that of Deutsche Welle and the BBC. Chinese censors routinely block access to foreign culture deemed to contain "low-taste content", including foreign cultural products such as hip hop music and karaoke. Beijing disallows the publication of any works by authors it dislikes, including Nobel Prize winner and human rights activist Liu Xiaobo, who died in prison in 2017.

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<sup>35</sup> GlobeScan, 'Sharp Drop in World Views of US, UK: Global Poll', press release, 4 July 2017.

<sup>36</sup> Richard Wike, Bruce Stokes, Jacob Poushter, Laura Silver, Janell Fetterolf and Kat Devlin. 'Trump's International Ratings Remain Low, Especially Among Key Allies', Pew Research Center, 1 October 2018.

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At the same time, China systematically works to influence how international media comment on China. In a practice known as “borrow a boat to go on to the ocean” China has set up agreements that allow foreign newspapers, radio and TV stations to use party-approved content for free.<sup>37</sup> An investigation by the Financial Times found that at least 200 nominally independent Chinese-language publications had concluded such agreements.<sup>38</sup> In 2015 Reuters reported that China Radio International was covertly backing at least 33 radio stations in 14 countries.<sup>39</sup> In 2018 the network had extended to 58 stations in 35 countries.<sup>40</sup>

China’s interpretation of cultural diplomacy includes pressure to exercise self-censorship. This succeeds distressingly often. In 2017 the Annecy Film festival was about to screen Liu Jian’s “Have a nice day”, a film which portrayed a bleak image of China, when the organisers withdrew the film, citing “official pressures”. Apple agreed to remove hundreds of apps from its App Store, including Virtual Private Networks used to circumvent China’s internet censors.<sup>41</sup> Google designed a search engine, codenamed Dragonfly, which would have been compatible with Chinese internet censorship; it only agreed to drop the project after protests from staff and human rights groups.

Pressure to restrict free speech and other liberties is also applied systematically to academic exchanges. Chinese universities have been instructed to “stand firm and hold the political, legal and moral bottom line” and exert tighter control over the use of imported textbooks “that spread Western values”.<sup>42</sup> European universities that accept to host Confucius Institutes, co-financed by China, are being asked to agree that they will respect “cultural custom” and “not contravene [...] the laws and regulations” of China.<sup>43</sup> In the United States, a report by the National Association of Scholars concludes that “to a large extent, universities have made improper concessions that jeopardise academic freedom and institutional autonomy. Sometimes these concessions are official and in writing; more

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<sup>37</sup> Anne-Marie Brady, *Magic Weapons: China’s political influence activities under Xi Jinping* (Washington: The Wilson Center, 2017).

<sup>38</sup> Emily Feng, ‘China and the World: how Beijing spreads the message’, *Financial Times*, 12 July 2018.

<sup>39</sup> Koh Gui Quing and John Shiftman, ‘Beijing’s covert radio network airs China-friendly news across Washington, and the world’, *Reuters*, 2 November 2015.

<sup>40</sup> Luisa Lim and Julia Bergin, ‘Inside China’s audacious global propaganda campaign’, *The Guardian*, 7 December 2018.

<sup>41</sup> Freedom House, *Freedom on the Net 2018 – China* (New York: freedom House, 2018).

<sup>42</sup> ‘Chinese universities ordered to ban textbooks that promote Western values’, *South China Morning Post*, 31 January 2015.

<sup>43</sup> Daniel Sanderson, ‘Universities “sign Chinese gagging clause”’, *The Times*, 5 September 2018.



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often they operate as implicit policies.”<sup>44</sup> Stockholm University is one of several universities in Europe, Canada, and the USA that have decided to close their Confucius Institute.

China’s not-so-soft approach to power begs the question how European governments should respond. On the one hand, options are limited. Political and economic interests dictate that Europe will have to work with China. But how it does so is up to Europe itself. The greater its unity, the greater its strength. To stop China exploiting European divisions, the EU should insist on reciprocity in cultural relations. China is building networks with think tanks in Europe, notably as part of its 16+1 network with Central and Eastern Europe, but Beijing does not give European research institutes reciprocal access to China. European universities need to re-assess their policy of welcoming Confucius Institutes where these come with political strings attached. China’s censorship of the arts, sciences, and journalism must be countered publicly rather than through quiet diplomacy.

China’s political use of cultural relations needs a political response. That is not what has been happening. When EU officials exchange views with China, they talk mostly about trade.

Having explored some of the main developments in the international order, it is time to take a closer look at three changes and how they affect Europe: the hollowing out of democracy, the growing contestation of human rights, and digital disorder.

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<sup>44</sup> National Association of Scholars, *Outsourced to China: Confucius Institutes and Soft Power in American Higher Education* (New York: NAS, 2017), p. 17.

### 3. A waning of democracy?

Democracy is central to Europe's identity, and EU governments have long been promoting democratic reforms around the world. For decades, democracy spread across the world, but in recent years the tide has turned.

According to the American think-tank Freedom House, in 2017 democracy faced its most serious crisis in decades as 71 countries suffered net declines in political rights and civil liberties, and only 35 registered gains. For the 12<sup>th</sup> consecutive year the Freedom House Index of global freedom declined. Since 2016, it reckons that 113 countries have shown a net decline, and only 62 showed a net improvement.<sup>45</sup> Freedom House ranks 88 countries (representing 39 percent of the global population) as free, 58 as partly free (24 percent of the global population), and 49 as not free (37 percent of the global population).

Other analyses confirm the downward trend. The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), a British firm, compiles an index that measures the state of democracy along five dimensions: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, functioning of government, political participation, and political culture. It saw 89 countries regressing in 2017, compared with only 27 improving. The EIU ranks 19 countries as full democracies (4.4 % of the world population), 57 as flawed democracies (44.3% of the global population), 39 as hybrid regimes (17.7% of the global population) and 52 as authoritarian regimes (32.3% of the world population).<sup>46</sup>

The Bertelsmann Transformation Index, which measures the transition of authoritarian states to democracy and market economies, similarly reports a decline in the acceptance of democratic institutions across the world.<sup>47</sup>

For several years analysts have warned of global democratic backsliding, even in North America and Western Europe. Foa and Mounk (2016) found that citizens in these regions have become more cynical about the value of democracy as a political system and more willing to express support for authoritarian alternatives. In Europe, for example, only 36% of millennials were found to strongly reject the notion that a government's incompetence can justify a military take-over.<sup>48</sup> In one survey of 38 nations in different parts

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<sup>45</sup> Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2018. Democracy in Crisis*, 2018.

<sup>46</sup> The Economist Intelligence Unit, *Democracy Index 2017*, 2017.

<sup>47</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.), *Transformation Index BTI 2018*, 2018.

<sup>48</sup> Roberto Stefan Foa and Yascha Mounk, 'The democratic disconnect,' *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (2016), p. 13.

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of the world, a median of 49% of respondents said that rule by experts, rather than elected representatives, would be a good way to govern their country.<sup>49</sup> In South Africa, 62% of the population say they are willing or very willing to give up elections in exchange for security, housing, and jobs.<sup>50</sup> A spate of recent publications discusses the trend.<sup>51</sup>

Such pessimistic assessments have not gone uncontested. First of all, international opinion surveys provide a mixed picture. Across Africa, popular demand for democracy exceeds citizens' perception of available supply, and large majorities reject authoritarian alternatives such as presidential dictatorship, military rule, and one-party government.<sup>52</sup> Arab citizens, too, voice strong support for democracy.<sup>53</sup> In a 38-nation poll the Pew Research Institute found that more than half in each of the nations polled consider representative democracy a very or somewhat good way to govern their country. Waning support for democratic values is also not a consistent trend across Western countries.<sup>54</sup>

Secondly, a focus on recent developments risks obscuring more positive, long term trends. In fact, the number of democracies in the world has grown significantly over time. According to one influential analysis, democratisation has progressed in waves. A first wave followed the widening of suffrage in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and brought the number of democracies in the world to some 29 by 1926. Reversals in the 1930s and 1940s reduced the number to 12, but following the allied victories in World War II the number of democracies grew to 36 by 1962. A third global wave of democracy began with Portugal's Carnation Revolution in 1974 and swept through Latin America, parts of Asia, Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and sub-Saharan Africa from 1989.<sup>55</sup> The number of electoral democracies grew to well over 100. In a parallel development, ratification and

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<sup>49</sup> Pew Research Center, *Globally, Broad Support for Representative and Direct Democracy*, October 16, 2017.

<sup>50</sup> Jamy Felton, 'AD248: Increasingly non-partisan, South Africans willing to trade elections for security, housing, jobs', *Afrobarometer*, 2018.

<sup>51</sup> Including Larry Diamond, 'Facing up to the democratic recession', *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 26, No. 1 (2015); Yascha Mounk, *The People Vs. Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2018); David Runciman, *How Democracy Ends* (London: Profile Books, 2018); Timothy Snyder, *The Road to Unfreedom* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2018). For a critical review, see David Waldner and Ellen Lust, 'Unwelcome Change: Coming to Terms with Democratic Backsliding,' *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 21 (2018), pp. 93-113.

<sup>52</sup> Robert Mattes and Michael Bratton, *Do Africans Still Want Democracy?*, Afrobarometer Policy Paper 36 (2016).

<sup>53</sup> Arab Center, *The 2015 Arab Opinion Index*.

<sup>54</sup> Pippa Norris, *Is Western Democracy Backsliding? Diagnosing the Risks*, Harvard Kennedy School Working Paper, 2017.

<sup>55</sup> Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.

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(partial) implementation of international human rights treaties grew significantly, culminating in the foundation of the International Criminal Court in 1998. So it would be an exaggeration to claim that democracy is dying.<sup>56</sup> In the past half century the world has become notably more democratic, and considerably more free.

In recent years, however, the long "third wave" of democratisation appears to have crested. The change is well-documented by research at the University of Gothenburg. The Varieties of Democracy ("V-Dem") project produces the largest global dataset on democracy. Researchers use the data to distinguish between four regime types.<sup>57</sup> They found several interesting things.

First, most of the world's countries are in the democratic spectrum (56%): 35 states qualify as liberal democracies and 62 as electoral democracies. Of the remaining countries 56 (32%) are electoral autocracies and 21 (12%) are closed autocracies.<sup>58</sup>

Second, the world has seen a gradual but steady increase in liberal democracy until around the year 2005. Since then, levels of democracy have been relatively stable across the world and remain close to an all-time high. However, there is a clear downward trend in the number of countries making democratic advancements since at least 2008, and the number of countries regressing towards autocracy has increased since roughly around the turn of the century.<sup>59</sup>

Third, the picture looks different if levels of democracy are weighted by the size of each country's population. Whereas a number of smaller countries have made progress on democracy, such as Bhutan, Burkina Faso, and Fiji, only one major country has (Nigeria). Big, populous countries have shown the greatest declines in democracy, including Brazil, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, Poland, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, and the United States. The number of people living in non-democratic countries is growing.

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<sup>56</sup> Thomas Carothers and Richard Youngs, 'Democracy Is Not Dying', *Foreign Affairs*, April 11, 2017.

<sup>57</sup> In liberal democracies and electoral *democracies* there are de facto free and fair multi-party elections; in *electoral autocracies* and *closed autocracies* there are not, although in electoral autocracies there are de jure multiparty elections. Liberal democracies additionally respect the rule of law and individual liberties; electoral democracies do not.

<sup>58</sup> Anna Lührmann, Marcus Tannenberg and Staffan I. Lindberg, 'Regimes of the World (ROW): Opening New Avenues for the Comparative Study of Political Regimes,' *Politics and Governance*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2018), p. 68.

<sup>59</sup> *Democracy for All? The V-Dem Annual Democracy report 2018* (University of Gothenburg, 2018), passim.

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Fourth, while multi-party elections continue to improve, they are at risk of losing their meaning. Media autonomy, freedom of expression and alternative sources of information, and the rule of law have undergone the greatest declines among democracy metrics in recent years. This trend affects both autocracies and democracies.

A final key finding concerns inclusion. Although liberal democracies are systematically better than other regimes in securing people's democratic rights, even in democracies women, minorities, and the poor are systematically disadvantaged in their access to political power.

These global trends do not tell the whole story, as they may obscure much country-specific variety in regime transitions. In any given year several dozen countries change status. In 2017 alone, 24 countries advanced and another 24 regressed. In Europe over the past ten years negative change has outweighed improvements. Albania joined the group of liberal democracies, but four EU member states – Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, and Slovakia – lost their status of liberal democracies to become electoral democracies, while Serbia fared even worse and became an electoral authoritarian state.

#### **“Gaming” the system**

As this paper focuses on cultural values and principles in European foreign policy, we need to look more closely at one set of findings. Between 2007 and 2017 important changes have taken place in liberal and electoral democracies. On the positive side, formal aspects of democracy have improved. The number of multiparty elections, for example, has grown. Yet at the same time a countervailing trend has emerged: democratic values have suffered as media freedom, independent institutions, and the rule of law are being curtailed. A paradox, no doubt, but one that is fairly easy to explain. National elections are high-profile events that attract international attention. By comparison, incremental restrictions on local journalists, NGOs, academics, or the judiciary often pass under the radar of foreign media. Each step may appear relatively insignificant, but the cumulative effect is to impair democratic rights and liberties.<sup>60</sup> Authoritarian leaders are, in effect, learning how to game the system and erode democracy by stealth – including in Europe.

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<sup>60</sup> *Democracy for All? The V-Dem Annual Democracy Report 2018* (University of Gothenburg, 2018), p. 27.

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Hungary's 2018 parliamentary elections exemplify the trend. The OSCE's election observation mission reported that, although the technical administration of the elections was professional and transparent, the elections were characterised by

“a pervasive overlap between state and ruling party resources, undermining contestants' ability to compete on an equal basis. Voters had a wide range of political options but intimidating and xenophobic rhetoric, media bias and opaque campaign financing constricted the space for genuine political debate, hindering voters' ability to make a fully-informed choice.”<sup>61</sup>

Serbia's 2017 presidential election is another case in point. The OSCE/ODIHR election assessment mission found that although the election provided voters with a genuine choice of contestants, who were able to campaign freely,

“the campaign was dominated by the candidate from the governing coalition, and concurrent prime minister, who benefited from the effectively blurred distinction between campaign and official activities. Unbalanced media coverage and credible allegations of pressure on voters and employees of state-affiliated structures and a misuse of administrative resources tilted the playing field. Regulatory and oversight mechanisms were not effectively utilized to safeguard the fairness of competition.”<sup>62</sup>

Such efforts to evade and weaken the core values of liberal democracy should be a cause of concern for all democrats, and particularly for Europeans. Democracy implies more than the technically competent holding of elections. It also entails checks and balances by independent and effective institutions, including a free judiciary, a free press, and free civil society organisations. Democracy, human rights, and the rule of law form a triad: to weaken one of the three dimensions is to diminish the whole. In the words of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe:

“Democracy, rule of law and human rights can be seen as three partly overlapping circles. (...) There can be no democracy without the rule of law and respect for human rights; there can be no rule of law without democracy and respect for human rights, and no respect for human rights without democracy and the rule of law.”<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> OSCE, Hungary Parliamentary Elections 8 April 2018, ODIHR Limited Election Observation Mission Final Report (Vienna: OSCE, 2018), p. 1.

<sup>62</sup> OSCE/ODIHR, Republic of Serbia Presidential election 2 April 2017, Election Assessment Mission Report (Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR, 8 June 2017), p. 1.

<sup>63</sup> Committee of Ministers, *The Council of Europe and the Rule of Law. An Overview*, document CM(2008)170, 21 November 2008, paras. 26-27.

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The EU Treaty concurs. Article 2 reads:

“The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.”

Any country wishing to join the European Union must comply with the Copenhagen accession criteria, which require, inter alia: “stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities.”<sup>64</sup>

The EU is more than the single market and the single currency. As the Treaty makes clear, the European Union is first and foremost a community of values. Its principal purpose is to protect human dignity by means of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. The rise of illiberal democracy therefore strikes at the heart of the European project. Policies to turn this tide should be at the top of the political agenda. They require concerted action both by EU institutions and by the national guardians of democracy: governments, parliaments, judges, and citizens.

Such action does not come easy to the EU. In theory, all member states have signed up to the values enshrined in the Treaty; in practice it is difficult for the EU to make them respect their engagements. The EU has been more successful in getting candidate countries to respect the rule of law (to a degree) than in getting its own member states to comply. Still, the EU is not powerless. The European Commission has taken both Poland and Hungary to the European Court of Justice. The Commission has also proposed a mechanism that would allow the majority of member states to cut EU funding to governments that trample the rule of law.<sup>65</sup> There is a proposal on the table for a Justice, Rights and Values Fund that would allow the EU to support democracy promotion by NGOs in certain circumstances. Human rights organisations point out, however, that the rules are so restrictive that the fund, as currently proposed, may well be largely useless.

Democracy is too precious and too vulnerable to be left in the care of politicians alone. To counter the gradual erosion of democratic liberties the role of citizens will be absolutely crucial. As democracy’s ultimate stakeholders it is for citizens to raise their voice in protest at democracy’s detractors, and in solidarity with the victims of autocracy. The

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<sup>64</sup> European Commission, *Glossary – Accession criteria*.

<sup>65</sup> European Commission, Proposal for a regulation on the protection of the Union’s budget in case of generalised deficiencies as regards the rule of law in the Member States, COM(2018) 324 final, 2 May 2018.

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price for doing so can be high, as prisoners from Turkey to Russia will testify, and the courage shown by those who stand up to defend democracy merits active support from fellow-citizens both at home and abroad.

A type of democratic rot is setting in, not only in far-flung places, but even within EU member states. The rot is spreading as autocrats learn from foreign examples and copy techniques that work. President Trump's efforts to deter scrutiny by US media ("fake news") are being emulated across the world, from Malaysia to Turkmenistan. Restrictions on foreign NGOs are proliferating, from Belarus to Cambodia. Hungary's limits on judicial independence have inspired similar restrictions in Poland.

These are not isolated cases; they are part of a growing, international trend, and international action is indispensable to stop the contagion. As democracy is being undermined across borders, initiatives to defend and strengthen democratic liberties must similarly be organised across borders. Where problems go, solutions must follow. To preserve our own liberties we need to help protect those of our neighbours.

Among other things this will imply a re-thinking of what it means to be a citizen in a democracy. Citizenship, in today's interdependent world, can no longer be conceived in exclusively national terms. Citizenship of the nation-state will increasingly need to acquire a cross-border dimension. The challenge will be to develop this dimension so that people embrace it as an extension of national citizenship, and not in opposition to it. Shaping this change will be a work of many hands, including teachers and other educators. Artists and cultural organisations can do much to bring innovative practices to the fore, create free spaces for dialogue, and set the tone of the debate. Later sections of this paper will explore two aspects of such 21<sup>st</sup> century citizenship: the European dimension and the global one. They will also discuss the evolving role and responsibility of educators and artists as enablers of democracy. First and foremost, however, the authoritarian attacks on democracy must be met with a much more vigorous defence of free speech and other human rights.



#### 4. Human rights under attack

Is the post-1945 era of international institutions and international law drawing to a close? Have we perhaps even entered the “endtimes” of human rights?<sup>66</sup> At first sight, the signs are ominous. Open societies, where citizens are free to speak, write, meet, and criticise their leaders, are under attack.

Dictatorships have long been notorious for the killing of journalists. In 2018, journalists investigating corruption were murdered even in Malta and Slovakia. Dozens of countries around the world have passed laws and taken measures to curtail the work of civil society organisations.<sup>67</sup> Government pressure forced the Konrad Adenauer Foundation to close its offices in Ecuador; the British Council has had to downgrade its presence in Moscow. Human rights groups face an unprecedented global crackdown.

At the same time, international institutions charged with defending rights and freedoms are being undermined from within. Russia has stopped paying its contribution to the Council of Europe in retaliation to the suspension of its voting rights in the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) after its illegal annexation of Crimea. Burundi withdrew from the International Criminal Court (ICC); other countries ignore 15 outstanding ICC arrest warrants and surrender requests, including that of the Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir, who stands accused of war crimes. The British Foreign Office warns that China and Russia “are attacking the human rights functions within the UN system”, and that China is using the Human Rights Council to promote its “alternative vision of human rights”.<sup>68</sup>

In Egypt, president al-Sisi gets away with torture and oppression, having no doubt noted EU Council President Tusk’s appreciation for the fact that illegal migration from Egypt to Europe fell from almost 13,000 in 2016 to almost none in 2018.<sup>69</sup>

The picture is not all black, however. Human rights law does bite. In 2016 an ad hoc tribunal in Dakar found the former Chadian president Hissène Habré guilty of crimes against humanity and war crimes. The International Tribunals for Rwanda and the For-

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<sup>66</sup> Stephen Hopgood, *The Endtimes of Human Rights* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013).

<sup>67</sup> Thomas Carothers and Saskia Brechenmacher, *Closing Space* (Washington: Carnegie Foundation, 2014).

<sup>68</sup> Foreign Affairs Committee, *Global Britain: Human rights and the rule of law* (London: House of Commons, 2018), p. 9.

<sup>69</sup> Michael Peel, ‘Into Africa’, *Financial Times*, 19 September 2018.

mer Yugoslavia gave a voice to victims of war crimes and genocide. The International Criminal Court reminds future perpetrators of mass atrocities and aggression that they will be held individually accountable. In 1977 only 17 countries had abolished the death penalty; today, 140 have – nearly two-thirds of countries in the world.<sup>70</sup>

Nor should long-term developments be overlooked. Weak and disappointing as international human rights law may be, we are no longer living in a world without rules, the world Thomas Hobbes saw as condemned to live in a perpetual state of war. In only a few decades, most of the world's sovereign states have agreed to abide by treaties that set out the right to a life lived in dignity. The numbers tell the story.

- There are 172 parties to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. China has signed, but not ratified.
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights has 169 state parties. The United States signed but did not ratify.
- The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment has 164 state parties; India signed but did not ratify.
- The Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women has been joined by 189 states; only eight failed to ratify, including the USA.
- A total of 123 states have so far joined the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). China, India, Pakistan, Russia, Turkey, and the USA are among the countries that have declined.
- Most UN member states (116) have also ratified the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which allows individuals to lodge complaints. Countries that have taken no action include India, Japan, the United States, and a single EU member state: the United Kingdom.
- The Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights entered into force in 2013. It has been ratified by 23 states; another 26 have signed but not yet ratified. The EU has a spotty record: thus far only eight member states have joined.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Kathryn Sikkink, *The Long Arc of Human Rights: A Case for Optimism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

<sup>71</sup> Belgium, Finland, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovakia, and Spain.

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- EU member states have shown a similar reluctance to allow citizens to invoke their rights under the European Social Charter. All EU states have ratified the Charter, but only 15 of them have granted their citizens access to the collective complaints procedure.<sup>72</sup> Germany, so often in the forefront of European efforts to enforce human rights, is not yet a party to either instrument.

As this brief overview illustrates, a minority of states remain outside some or most of the global human rights regime. This group includes autocracies such as Saudi Arabia and China. But the major international human rights treaties have been ratified by the majority of states, representing all regions of the world. Governments may fail to comply, but when they do, victims invariably invoke the global standards. Human rights are clearly not just a European construct that lacks legitimacy outside the West.

Still, some notable anomalies persist. Among democratic countries, India's absence from the Torture Convention and the ICC is particularly striking, as is the United States' reluctance to ratify the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to join the ICC. There is also considerable irony in the reluctance of European governments to grant their citizens access to international human rights complaints mechanisms. If democratic countries are to be successful in their international efforts to safeguard human rights, they must lead by example. Credibility begins at home.

Human rights are central to Europe's identity. The European Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities (Article 2, Treaty on European Union). These values, the Treaty says, are common to the Member States. Human rights are central to how Europeans see their role in the world. The Member States want the Union's action on the international scene to be

*"guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement (...): democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law." (Art. 21, TEU)*

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<sup>72</sup> Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden.

Under international law states have the duty to respect, fulfil and protect human rights. They must take care not to violate the rights; take all measures necessary for their citizens to enjoy the rights; and take steps to prevent other states from violating them. How does the EU measure up?

### **Respect**

The European human rights regime is one of the most stringent in the world. The European Court of Justice (ECJ) sees to it that the 28 EU member states respect human rights as general principles of European law, and that they abide by the EU Charter of Human Rights. Some of the most notable cases have involved terrorism. In a series of landmark cases the Court has ruled that governments and the EU must respect the right to privacy in the fight against terrorism, and that suspects of terrorism are entitled to due process. The ECJ also verifies if governments respect the rule of law. In October 2018 it ordered Poland to suspend changes to its Supreme Court which violated the rule of law. The ECJ lets itself be guided by the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights, which has jurisdiction in the 47 countries of the Council of Europe.

### **Fulfil**

The European Court of Human Rights cannot effectively protect human rights on its own. Its rulings must be carried out by national authorities who often drag their feet. Thousands of human rights judgments are still waiting to be implemented.<sup>73</sup> Often, it takes pressure from civil society and the media to make the authorities budge. The EU could help by supporting local NGOs and journalists to monitor European human rights law. European foundations, NGOs and cultural institutes could help to raise awareness – but some of them would need to take an interest first. Take, for example, the case of the Turkish publisher Fatih Tas. Tas has long published books and periodicals that irk the Turkish authorities, who try to silence him. Five times he has taken Turkey to the European Court of Human Rights, and five times the Court ruled in his favour. A gesture of support from the European Publishers Council, or a similar NGO, would not be remiss.<sup>74</sup>

All EU member states have accepted the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. They must therefore prevent and eradicate all

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<sup>73</sup> In 2017 there were 7,584 judgments that had not yet been implemented (Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, *Supervision of the Execution of Judgments and Decisions of the European Court of Human Rights*, 2017 Report).

<sup>74</sup> Approached repeatedly by the author to learn what role the EPC sees for itself in relation to freedom of expression, the EPC failed to reply.

forms of racial discrimination and incitement to racial hatred. There is a growing pile of EU documents that attest to their determination to do so, and stand up for European values. But the evidence shows that Europeans are falling short. Europe's collective failure to control discrimination is affecting its credibility in the eyes of the world.

Racial discrimination and harassment in Europe are commonplace. People of African descent face systematic racism and discrimination in labour markets, housing, and healthcare.<sup>75</sup> Muslims too face discrimination, harassment, and hate crimes.<sup>76</sup> Anti-Semitic abuse in Europe has become so common that many victims no longer bother to report the incidents. A recent survey by the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency found that 28% of Jewish respondents in 12 member states had experienced harassment, 40% worry about physical attack, and 89% considered anti-Semitism online a problem in their country.<sup>77</sup> On the day the report was published police in Rome said it was investigating the theft of 20 memorial plaques commemorating the Holocaust. The small brass plaques, dedicated to members of a Jewish family, De Consiglio, had been dug out from the pavement.<sup>78</sup>

Europe has other unfinished business. Authoritarian rulers who are looking to suppress criticism often turn to European surveillance technology, and European companies are happy to oblige. The British arms manufacturer BAE Systems used its Danish subsidiary to export cyber-surveillance systems to Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Oman, Morocco and Algeria. BAE's 'Evident' system had previously been used by Tunisia's strongman Ben Ali to stifle opposition.<sup>79</sup> Turkey and Bahrain are reported to have used software from the German firm FinFisher to monitor critics.<sup>80</sup> When governments order cyber surveillance systems, they claim it is needed to fight terrorism. But such technology is dual-use and can just as easily be used to stamp out peaceful opposition. In 2016 the European Commission proposed to change European export control rules to prevent technology from being used in human rights violations.<sup>81</sup> In 2018 EU governments were still discussing the idea.

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<sup>75</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Being Black in the EU* (Vienna: EUIAFR, 2018).

<sup>76</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey. Muslims: Selected Findings* (Vienna: EUIAFR, 2017).

<sup>77</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Experiences and perceptions of antisemitism* (Vienna: EUIAFR, 2018).

<sup>78</sup> Paul Kirby, 'Anti-Semitism pervades European life, says EU report', *BBC News*, 10 December 2018.

<sup>79</sup> 'How BAE sold cyber-surveillance tools to Arab states', *BBC News*, 15 June 2017.

<sup>80</sup> Access Now, *Alert: FinFisher changes tactics to hook critics* (New York: Access Now, 2018).

<sup>81</sup> European Commission, Proposal for a regulation on dual-use items, COM(2016)616 final, 28 September 2016.

##### **Protect**

What else can Europe do to push back against oppression across the world? A first priority for EU diplomats could be to urge more countries to join the main international human rights regimes. The USA under President Trump is probably a lost case, but it is hard to think of a reason why countries like India or Singapore could not be persuaded to join the UN Convention Against Torture, or why Malaysia must remain outside the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. And, occasional outbursts from Washington grandees notwithstanding, there is no reason why the EU should not continue urging its partners to end impunity for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide by joining the ICC.

Around the world victims of oppression look to Europe for support, but too often Europeans fail them. There is no lack of glowing EU policy statements about human rights; delivery is where Europe tends to come up short. In countries that violate human rights EU governments and the European institutions sometimes follow a good cop, bad cop routine, whereby national diplomats discuss trade and security but leave more controversial subjects such as human rights to the European Commission. Foreign governments tend to be familiar with the ritual and graciously allow the Europeans to punch below their collective weight.

There is a time for quiet diplomacy but there is also a time to speak out in support of victims of oppression, and European diplomats should do so more often. They could, for example, use the annual United Nations Human Rights Days to issue a statement or host a public meeting with writers, journalists, artists, or human rights campaigners. Ambassadors from European countries could pack a punch by speaking out on World Press Freedom Day (3 May) in capitals around the world. They could mark the occasion of the International Day for Universal Access to Information (28 September) to recall the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 and its promise to give citizens access to information. European diplomats could raise their voice on the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists (2 November), or on 10 December – International Human Rights Day. A little courage can go a long way.

##### **Academic freedom**

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought. Freedom to explore ideas is fundamental to a free society, and nowhere more so than in research and education. This freedom is under pressure around the world. The Scholars at Risk Network has documented hundreds of attacks on academic freedom. These include killings, violence and disappearances of

scholars, staff and students; wrongful prosecution and imprisonment, loss of position and expulsion from study, travel restrictions, and university closures in 47 countries.<sup>82</sup>

Anthropologist Homa Hoodfar was incarcerated for months in an Iranian prison cell. Undaunted, she still found a way to write. “As I had no pen and paper, I used the tail end of my toothbrush as a pen and the walls of my cell as a writing pad and desk.” The subject Hoodfar wrote about was academic freedom, which she describes as a table with four legs. The first one is the freedom to do research and to teach. The second leg is the freedom for students to do the same. The third one is the right to participate in the managing of academic institutions so that they are not swayed by commercial interests, and the fourth leg is the right of academics and members of learning institutions to act as public intellectuals.<sup>83</sup>

Such freedom is a cornerstone of liberal democracy. Those who repress scholarly research, teaching and writing do so to prevent citizens from thinking freely, sharing ideas, and challenging the status quo. Academic freedom needs defending, but Europe has often been missing in action. Some European universities and academic publishers prefer to look away, rather than to endanger lucrative arrangements in countries such as China. Cambridge University Press publishes *China Quarterly*, an academic journal. In 2017 it decided to take down over 300 articles from its Chinese website, at the request of its importer in China. It only agreed to reverse its decision after a storm of academic protest. The German publishing group Springer Nature agreed to remove more than 1,000 articles from the websites of the *Journal of Chinese Political Science* and *International Politics*, two Springer journals, on the Chinese market. The articles contained keywords deemed politically sensitive by the Chinese authorities, including “Taiwan”, “Tibet” and “Cultural Revolution”.<sup>84</sup> Springer Nature did not reverse its decision. The University of Nottingham Ningbo China, the first joint venture university in China, has removed a foreign academic from its management board after the Chinese Communist Party objected to renewal of his contract.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Scholars at Risk, *Free to Think 2018* (New York: Scholars at Risk, 2018).

<sup>83</sup> Professor Homa Hoodfar, ‘Academic freedom as a transnational right’, remarks given at the 2017 Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, Toronto, 8 July 2017.

<sup>84</sup> Ben Bland, ‘Outcry as latest publisher bows to China censors’, *Financial Times*, 1 November 2017.

<sup>85</sup> Emely Feng, ‘China tightens party control of foreign university ventures’, *BBC News*, 2 July 2018.

European governments, too, could show a little more spine. In January 2016 Turkish academics known as Academics for Peace published a petition entitled “We will not be a party to this crime,” which condemned anti-terror policies in the south-eastern part of Turkey and urged the authorities to resume peace negotiations. Hundreds of signatories were subsequently charged under anti-terrorism laws. In the wake of the coup attempt, later that year, more than 6,000 academics have been dismissed from their posts; hundreds have been detained or arrested. In both cases the EU’s feeble response failed to impress Ankara.

The increasing virulent attacks on academic freedom deserve a more vigorous European response. EU ministers of education should recognise the importance of academic freedom as a cornerstone of education. The Foreign Affairs Council should include academic freedom in the EU’s international dialogues on human rights, as the European Parliament proposed.<sup>86</sup> The European Commission should also play its part. A few EU countries operate small schemes to provide sanctuary and assistance to scholars at risk. There is little coordination and the schemes lack visibility. An EU-wide scheme would not be difficult to conceive.

### **The right to culture**

Academic freedom is a dimension of the wider right of everyone to take part in cultural life. This fundamental right is under threat both from authoritarian governments and from violent fundamentalists. When Egypt incarcerated the poet Galal El Behairy for writing a song critical of government policies, when jihadist groups banned music in Northern Mali, when China arrested five Hong Kong booksellers, or when Russia silenced the Ukrainian filmmaker Olav Sentsov by arresting him on terrorism charges, to cite just some cases out of many, they were striking at cultural freedom. Freedom of expression is perhaps the most basic human right. It is the right on which all other rights depend.<sup>87</sup> Freedom of expression is what dictators trample when they silence the voices of journalists, writers, singers, filmmakers and other artists. It is telling that artists who reach large numbers of people, such as musicians and filmmakers, are among the most vulnerable.<sup>88</sup> As spaces for cultural freedom are shrinking in many parts of the world, cultural freedom

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<sup>86</sup> European Parliament recommendation of 29 November 2018 on defence of academic freedom in the EU’s external action.

<sup>87</sup> As noted by Timothy Garton Ash in his erudite and wise book *Free Speech. Ten Principles for a Connected World* (London: Atlantic Books, 2016), p. 119.

<sup>88</sup> For statistics, see Freemuse, *The State of Artistic Freedom 2018* (Copenhagen: Freemuse, 2018).



needs champions. Could there be a more suitable priority for European cultural diplomacy?

Cultural freedom is firmly anchored in international law. It is protected under Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 15(3) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and Article 19(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It is closely related to other rights, such as the right to education (Articles 13 and 14, ICESCR), through which individuals and communities pass on their values, religion, customs, language and other cultural references.<sup>89</sup>

Like all human rights, the right to take part in cultural life and creative activity requires from states both abstention (non-violation) and positive action (facilitation and promotion of cultural life; access to and preservation of material and immaterial culture). Under international law these two requirements are core obligations, applicable with direct effect. States must

“respect and protect the right of everyone to engage in their own cultural practices, while respecting human rights which entails, in particular, respecting freedom of thought, belief and religion; freedom of opinion and expression; a person’s right to use the language of his or her choice; freedom of association and peaceful assembly; and freedom to choose and set up educational establishments.”

States must also “eliminate any barriers or obstacles that inhibit or restrict a person’s access to the person’s own culture or to other cultures, without discrimination and without consideration for frontiers of any kind.”<sup>90</sup>

European initiatives could be instrumental in two respects: the EU could use political pressure to promote the respect of cultural freedom, and it could engage in partnerships to support public and private cultural action. At the moment, the EU does a little bit of both, its policies mostly driven by low-level bureaucratic entrepreneurship. In 2014 EU ministers adopted guidelines on freedom of expression online and offline, but application by national diplomats has been haphazard.

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<sup>89</sup> United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *General Comment No 21, The right of everyone to take part in cultural life* (New York: United Nations, 21 December 2009). See also the Report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Farida Shaheed, *The right to freedom of expression and artistic creativity* (New York/Geneva: United Nations Human Rights Council, 14 March 2013).

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

Across the world, journalists often bear the brunt of official policies to silence criticism and gag independent voices. In 2018, the Committee to Protect Journalists reports, 251 journalists were imprisoned, and 54 were killed. Turkey, China, and Egypt were responsible for more than half of those jailed around the world for the third year in a row.<sup>91</sup> Impunity for crimes against journalists remains the norm, with justice in only one in ten cases.<sup>92</sup> China runs the largest and most sophisticated internet censorship operation in the world, and its big firewall is being emulated from Vietnam to Ethiopia. In many countries (including European ones), public service broadcasting is under threat and licencing of private broadcasters lacks transparency. Worldwide, respect for freedom of expression and information is at its lowest point in ten years.

The EU, to its credit, pushes back. Among other things it has stepped up support to independent media in the Western Balkans and funds initiatives such as the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (Leipzig), the European Journalism Centre (Maas-tricht) and UNESCO's International Program for the Development of Communication. European broadcasters such as the BBC and Deutsche Welle do important work to train journalists around the world. Some EU governments chip in: the Dutch government supports NGOs such as Free Press Unlimited and Hivos (Digital Defenders Partnership). But neither EU governments nor the different Directorates General of the European Commission have a policy framework to defend and promote artistic freedom around the world.<sup>93</sup> The EU also still lacks an integrated, joined up approach to freedom of expression. On the ground in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, coordination between member states (and with the European Commission) tends to happen by default rather than design. Cross-border learning and inter-sectoral learning happen incidentally, not systematically. Here, as elsewhere, there is still much potential for European cultural diplomacy.

Perhaps Europe's biggest challenge is to break down the silos that separate cultural policy from human rights policy, and development aid from diplomacy. Too often, the pace of events is not matched by the pace of national and EU decision-making. This is most notable when political circumstances improve, and when the EU could make a difference by responding generously and creatively.

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<sup>91</sup> Committee to Protect Journalists, data on <https://cpj.org/>.

<sup>92</sup> UNESCO, *World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development. Global Report 2017/2018* (Paris: UNESCO, 2018), p. 17.

<sup>93</sup> Options are discussed by Sara Whyatt, 'Promoting the freedom to imagine and create', in UNESCO, *Re/Shaping Cultural Policies: 2005 Convention Global Report* (Paris: UNESCO, 2018), pp. 209-225.

#### 4. Human rights under attack

For positive things do happen. There are countries that manage to buck the downward trend. In 2018 space for civil society improved in Ecuador, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Liberia, Lithuania, Malaysia and Somalia.<sup>94</sup> Between 2014-2017, media freedom improved in Fiji, the Gambia, Macedonia, Namibia, and South Korea; digital freedom also improved in Botswana, the Central African Republic, Mauritius, and Sri Lanka.<sup>95</sup>

Such positive changes do not herald a sea change, but they do present opportunities for the EU to act. When political circumstances improve is when foreign assistance is most likely to make a difference. As a rule, EU diplomacy is not yet sufficiently nimble to respond to rapid changes in human rights regimes. Too often the Commission, the European External Action Service and the member states are tied down by rigid bureaucratic rules on the one hand, and the slow machinery of Council working groups on the other. When Tunisians toppled Ben Ali in 2011, it took painfully long for the EU to respond. What is needed is a rapid response mechanism that will allow the EU and EU governments to scale up financial support, technical assistance, and cultural cooperation to countries that improve their human rights record.

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<sup>94</sup> Civicus, *People Power Under Attack* (Johannesburg, 2018).

<sup>95</sup> Article 19, *The Expression Agenda Report 2017/2018* (London: Article 19, 2018).

## 5. Digital disorder

“Fake news” is one of the defining issues of our time. On the internet, sensationalist and misleading stories fuel conspiracy theories and mistrust as never before. Spreading fake news is one of the cyber-based techniques that states use to disrupt competitors and opponents, along with espionage, sabotage, and propaganda.

As a practice, information manipulation is nothing new. Politicians have long been known to use the truth selectively, and advertisers do this for a living. What is new, however, is the scale of today’s disinformation, the extent to which it is being used by governments and political leaders, and the corrosive effect this has on trust in democratic societies.

News used to travel at the speed of transmission by newspapers, radio, and television. Today, the internet and social media spread information instantly to millions across the globe; their scope and speed are unprecedented. Lies, unfortunately, travel fastest of all: six times faster than truth, according to research done at MIT.<sup>96</sup>

The electronic media have amplified the ability of governments to influence the thoughts and emotions of their target audiences at home and abroad. More and more governments use this capacity to manipulate and control. From China to Turkey, digital authoritarianism is on the rise. Governments censor electronic media or block them altogether to prevent their citizens from spreading or accessing criticism or “cultural pollution” from abroad; systems of artificial intelligence and security cameras are used to control behaviour. Russian trolls and bots spread disinformation far and wide.

Disinformation makes it more difficult to distinguish truth from falsehoods. It reinforces distrust at a time when trust in most democratic countries is already at a low point. More Americans get their news from social media than from newspapers, but a majority find it difficult to distinguish between truth and online disinformation.<sup>97</sup> More than a third of young people in the UK report that they find it difficult to tell the difference between truth and lies on social media; a similar proportion say that social media had made them feel more negatively about politics.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Soroush Vosoughi, Deb Roy, Sinan Aral, ‘The spread of true and false news online’, *Science*, 9 March 2018.

<sup>97</sup> Jon Roozenbeek and Sander van der Linden, ‘The fake news game: actively inoculating against the risk of misinformation’, *Journal of Risk Research*, 2018, p. 2.

<sup>98</sup> Ian Wybron, Simone Vibert, Josh Smith, *Next Generation UK* (London: British Council, 2017), p. 8.

Informed political choice depends on reasoned debate. When facts become opinions, and opinions facts, democracy suffers. This is a particular problem on social media, where algorithms drive revenues by getting users to access material that bolsters their existing views and prejudices.

That said, it is important to distinguish between the responsibility of governments and that of online communication platforms. Some governments intentionally spread disinformation; social media sometimes allow this to happen. The distinction tends to slip from sight when both phenomena are referred to as fake news. This is one reason why the term “fake news” is best avoided. Another reason is its use by President Trump.

Since Donald Trump launched the term “fake news” to delegitimise journalists and media, the practice has been embraced enthusiastically by politicians around the world to silence critical voices. Research at Oxford University found that in 2017 the term was used by political leaders in Burma, Cambodia, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Hungary, Kuwait, Libya, Malaysia, the Philippines, Poland, Russia, Singapore, Somalia, Syria, Tanzania, Thailand, Turkey, the USA and Venezuela. In Tanzania, for example, several independent newspapers and radio stations were shut down or suspended because of what President Magufuli considered “inaccurate” reporting.<sup>99</sup> The old Nazi slur of “*Lügenpresse*” has found a world-wide following.

Now that the term “fake news” has become an instrument of censorship it is best to avoid the concept. The European Union uses the term “disinformation” instead. Disinformation is understood as verifiably false or misleading information that is created, presented and disseminated for economic gain or to intentionally deceive the public, and may cause public harm. Public harm includes threats to democratic processes as well as to public goods such as health, environment or security. Disinformation does not include inadvertent errors, satire and parody, or clearly identified partisan news and commentary.<sup>100</sup>

Disinformation is practiced systematically by Russia, which uses it to disrupt liberal democracies.

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<sup>99</sup> Caroline Lees, ‘Fake news: the global silencer’, *Index on Censorship*, Vol. 47, No 1 (2018), pp. 88 and 90.

<sup>100</sup> European Commission, *Tackling online disinformation: a European approach*, COM(2018) 236 final, 26.04.2018, pp. 3-4.

### Russia

Russian military doctrine explicitly endorses information warfare as a military tactic.<sup>101</sup> Russian nationalists regret the loss of territory and status following the demise of the Soviet Union, which they attribute to hostile Western intentions. They see Russia as under permanent attack from Western ideology and information operations. In defence, Russia must deploy its own information tactics, including “*dezinformatsiya*”, against the USA and Europe. Russia uses traditional instruments such as the state-owned satellite TV channel RT and the news agency Sputnik, but also cyber-operations. Fancy Bear, a Russian cyber group, hacked the servers of the Democratic Party in the USA and released emails to WikiLeaks to damage Hillary Clinton’s 2016 presidential campaign.

Analysis commissioned by the US Senate shows that Russia used accounts under fake names on every major social media platform to influence the 2016 US Presidential election (Facebook, Google+, Instagram, PayPal, Pinterest, Reddit, Tumblr, Twitter, Vine, YouTube). Conservative voters were targeted with posts on immigration, gun rights, and race. The most prolific efforts targeted African Americans to suppress votes for Hillary Clinton. The researchers found that the messaging sought to benefit the Republican Party and specifically Donald Trump.<sup>102</sup>

It is Europe, however, that bears the brunt of Russian information operations. Russian social media sowed confusion about the role of Russian forces in seizing Crimea and ran a campaign to blame the Ukrainian government for the destruction of Malaysia Airline Flight 17. Russian state television promoted a story according to which a 13-year old Russian-German girl had been raped by migrants. After German police found the story to be untrue Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov used it to criticise Germany. The Lisa case fuelled the rise of anti-immigrant sentiment in Germany. On 22 March 2016, the day terrorists killed 32 people in Brussels, Russian-linked Twitter accounts spread hashtags as #Islamistheproblem, #Islamkills, and #StopIslam, which became one of the top five trending topics in Belgium and the Netherlands. In France, Russian hackers released gigabytes of data – including forged emails – to harm Emmanuel Macron’s 2017 election campaign. In Sweden researchers identified dozens of forgeries and fake articles, including a forged letter allegedly written by the Minister of Defence announcing the sale of sophisticated weapons

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<sup>101</sup> The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, approved by the President of the Russian Federation on December 25, 2014, paragraph 46.

<sup>102</sup> Scott Shane and Sheera Frenkel, ‘Russia 2016 Influence Operation Targeted African-Americans on Social media’, *New York Times*, 17 December 2018.

to Ukraine.<sup>103</sup> In Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine, Russia uses social media to drive wedges between ethnic Russian or Russian-speaking populations and their host governments, NATO, and the European Union.<sup>104</sup>

Russian bots and trolls consistently strive to delegitimise the European Union, which is depicted as corrupt, decadent, duplicitous, impotent, and overrun by Muslims. In the UK, Russian media actively supported Brexit. In the Netherlands, they encouraged rejection of the European Union's Association Agreement with Ukraine. Pro-Russian local media in the EU and the Balkans echo the anti-EU narratives.

It is impossible to say with certainty how effective these disinformation campaigns are. Some are ham-fisted, such as the efforts to disrupt Macron's election campaign, but on the whole they are well-organised and systematic. Between 2015 and 2017, for example, information spread by Russian Twitter trolls was cited at least 30 times by leading news and opinion sites in the Netherlands.<sup>105</sup> The EU has identified 3,500 examples of pro-Kremlin disinformation contradicting publicly available facts repeated in many languages on many occasions. It concludes that "Russian disinformation can be extremely successful."<sup>106</sup>

Russia's efforts to wield soft power have been much less successful. Russia's international image is largely negative. A recent poll by the PEW Research Institute showed that it is viewed more unfavourably than favourably in 16 of the 25 countries surveyed, including most of Europe. In only four countries do at least half of respondents express a positive view of Russia: the Philippines, Tunisia, South Korea, and Greece. At the same time, however, many say that Russia's international stature is growing: four in ten respondents believe Russia is playing a more important role in the world today compared with ten years ago.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Martin Kragh and Sebastian Asberg, 'Russia's strategy for influence through public diplomacy and active measures: the Swedish case', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 40, No.6 (2017), pp. 773-818.

<sup>104</sup> Todd C. Helmus, Elisabeth Bodine-Baron, Andrew Radin, Madeline Magnuson, Joshua Mendelsohn, William Marcelino, Andriy Bega, Zev Winkelman, *Russian Social Media Influence: Understanding Russian Propaganda in Eastern Europe* (Santa Monica, Cal.: Rand, 2018). See also Stefan Meister (ed.), *Understanding Russian Communication Strategy: Case Studies of Serbia and Estonia* (Stuttgart: ifa, 2018).

<sup>105</sup> Reinier Kist, Rik Wassens, 'Media Nederland citeerden trollen als bron', *NRC-Handelsblad*, 9-10 December 2017.

<sup>106</sup> Jon Stone, 'Russian disinformation campaign has been 'extremely successful' in Europe, EU says', *The Independent*, 17 January 2018.

<sup>107</sup> PEW Research Institute, *Image of Putin, Russia Suffers Internationally* (Washington: PEW, 6 December 2018).

One reason why Russian disinformation campaigns must be taken seriously is that they tap into – and amplify – the growing lack of trust in liberal democracies. This distrust has many causes; some are political, others economic and social. One of the main causes is the role played by social media. While Russia spreads distrust intentionally, social media do so unintentionally.

### **Social media**

On social media people pay with personal information for entertainment and news that they think is free. The resulting loss of privacy is a driver of distrust; doubt about the reliability of information on social media is another.

Communication, as James Carey wrote, is culture.<sup>108</sup> Today's leading digital communication companies exercise extraordinary cultural power. Amazon has a 70% share of the ebook market. Google has an 88% market share in search advertising. Facebook (including Instagram, Messenger and WhatsApp) controls more than 70% of social media on mobile devices.<sup>109</sup> Google dominates more than 90% of the world market for search engines. Facebook has more users than China has people.

With so much power concentrated in so few hands, how can these digital giants be held to account? Some believe that technology can help to redress the balance between citizens and corporations. Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the World-Wide Web, has launched a project to fix the internet. Dismayed by the abuse of privacy on the web, Berners-Lee wants to replace the current model where users have to hand over personal data to digital giants in exchange for perceived value. His initiative, called Solid (Social Linked Data) allows users to discover and share information without sacrificing privacy.<sup>110</sup>

Others think that public authorities must intervene. This has been the dominant approach in Europe. The EU has agreed strict rules (General Data Protection Regulation) to make companies protect the personal information of their clients. The European Commission has also fined Google a record-breaking 4.3 billion EUR for using Android to cement its market dominance. More could be done to tame the power of the oligopolies. The EU could, for example, require companies with more than a 10% share of any data-

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<sup>108</sup> James W. Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (London: Taylor and Francis, rev. ed., 2009).

<sup>109</sup> Rana Farooq, 'Silicon Valley has too much power', *Financial Times*, 17 May 2017.

<sup>110</sup> Tim Berners-Lee, 'One Small Step for the Web...', 29 September 2018.



driven market to share anonymised slices of the data with other companies, as Mayer-Schönberger and Range (2018) propose.<sup>111</sup>

The EU has so far not adopted legislation to force digital traders to counter online disinformation. Its preferred approach for the time being has been through self-regulation. The Commission has issued an EU Code of Practice to mobilise the private sector against disinformation.<sup>112</sup> This approach may have its benefits. As an unintended side-effect it might even induce platforms such as Facebook, Google, YouTube and Twitter to take steps to respect and promote human rights. The global standard for companies who take rights seriously is set by the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. These Principles, which have been endorsed by the UN Human Rights Council, invite companies to prevent and address human rights abuses linked to their business activity. Companies should, inter alia, conduct human rights due diligence and provide remediation, including through accessible, operational grievance mechanisms.<sup>113</sup>

But the EU's approach is not without risks. By obliging social media companies to act as gate-keepers who must filter out undesirable content, governments are delegating regulatory functions to private companies. This way of privatising public responsibilities raises two problems. Companies may be tempted to filter out lawful content in order to avoid liability. This is already happening. Facebook bans advertisements with sexually oriented content, including artistic or educational nudes. This led it to remove ads from the Flemish Tourist Board which contained "nude" material – a painting by Peter Paul Rubens of Jesus taken down from the cross, wearing a loincloth. In a playful response, the Flemish Tourist Board released a video in which the "nude police" chase away visitors at the Rubens House in Antwerp. But it also expressed regret that it could not show its unique cultural heritage on the world's most popular social network. The wider risks to freedom of expression of delegating gate-keeping to social media are clear. It would be a sad irony if Europe, trying to defend its citizens against disinformation, would end up indirectly limiting their freedom of speech.

The second problem of delegating public responsibility to private companies is that of accountability. Governments are democratically accountable to citizens; companies are at

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<sup>111</sup> Viktor Mayer-Schönberger and Thomas Range, *Reinventing Capitalism in the Age of Big Data* (New York: Basic Books, 2018).

<sup>112</sup> European Commission, 'Code of Practice on Disinformation', 26 September 2018.

<sup>113</sup> United Nations, 'Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights', 2011.

best accountable to their share-holders.<sup>114</sup> The secrecy with which Facebook and other social media surround their data makes external scrutiny extremely difficult. An official investigation in the UK concluded that Facebook had not been sufficiently transparent to enable users to understand how and why they might be targeted by a political party or campaign.<sup>115</sup> The European Commission agrees that social media have failed to act proportionally to the challenge posed by disinformation and the manipulative use of their platforms.<sup>116</sup>

In any case, self-regulation and voluntary instruments will probably not bring the digital traders to change their business model, which depends on selling the data that users voluntarily or unwittingly provide. Genuine transparency and accountability, including accessible means of redress, are still being resisted and will probably require government regulation. Some governments, including Germany, have already started down this path. The British parliament wants audits carried out on the non-financial aspects of technology companies, including their security mechanisms and algorithms, to make sure that they are operating responsibly.<sup>117</sup> At some point European legislation may be needed to provide a level playing field.

Each of these approaches – technology, regulation, and self-regulation – may help to combat disinformation. But ultimately things are down to individual users: citizens must feel empowered to detect and prevent disinformation. People need to understand the risks and feel confident to avoid them. Media training can help build cognitive resilience, the necessary skills and attitudes to resist manipulation in social or traditional media. Media literacy can play a critical role in young people’s civic engagement.<sup>118</sup> Schools and universities should take the lead, but many are cash-strapped and few will have budgeted for this. The EU has proposed a Digital Competence Framework for Citizens. It also launched a small pilot project, Media Literacy for All, but any substantial financial support will have to come from national institutions. Cultural organisations and NGOs, which have mostly remained on the sidelines of this debate, could do much to raise awareness.

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<sup>114</sup> For an insightful discussion see the Report by David Kaye, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and expression of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, A/HRC/38/35, 6 April 2018.

<sup>115</sup> Information Commissioner’s Office, *Democracy disrupted? Personal information and political influence* (London, 2018), p. 4.

<sup>116</sup> European Commission, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>117</sup> Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, *Disinformation and ‘fake news’: Interim Report* (London: House of Commons, 2018), paragraph 72.

<sup>118</sup> Paul Mihailidis and Samantha Viotty, ‘Spreadable Spectacle in Digital Culture: Civic Expression, Fake News, and the Role of Media Literacies in “Post-Fact” Society’, *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 61., No.4 (2017), pp. 441-454, and sources cited.

## 5. Digital disorder

Citizens also need access to easily accessible, trustworthy sources of information, both online and off-line. Independent, non-partisan journalism is a public good. Democracy cannot function without it, as autocrats know only too well. Such journalism is expensive, particularly if it serves mass markets. Crowd-funding can sometimes be successful, as *The Guardian* shows, but this works best in large and liquid language markets such as English. Citizens need information in their mother tongue, and this puts people in minority languages at a disadvantage.

Quality journalism needs public support, including in Europe. The EU's Creative Europe programme can support media diversity but it is small and underfunded. EU governments will have to step in and contribute.

## 6. Culture and development

The cultural and creative industries are among the fastest growing sectors in the world. With an estimated global worth of 4.3 trillion USD per year, the culture sector now accounts for 6.1% of the global economy. Cultural and creative industries generate nearly 30 million jobs worldwide, employing more people aged 15 to 29 than any other sector.<sup>119</sup>

In many countries the cultural and creative sectors provide an income to the poorest and most vulnerable. In Morocco, employment in the publishing sector alone represents 1.8% of the labour force. In Honduras 5% of the cultural sector represents 5% of the economy. In Mali 5.8% of the population is employed in the cultural and creative sector, with crafts alone providing more than 100,000 jobs. In Indonesia the creative industries account for 7% of GDP (2010-2013).<sup>120</sup> Music festivals, film festivals, and visits to cultural heritage sites generate heritage tourism, income, and jobs.<sup>121</sup>

Poverty is a blight on freedom. For women and for men, the income and self-esteem generated by the cultural sector, is vital to fighting poverty and enhancing freedom.

Culture's role as a dimension of development was at the heart of the UN Decade for Cultural Development (1988-1997) which culminated in the seminal report "Our Creative Diversity", produced by the World Commission on Culture and Development (1996). The link between culture and development was underlined again in the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. Article 14 mentions four ways in which governments can foster a dynamic cultural sector to support sustainable development and poverty reduction: (i) strengthening cultural industries, (ii) capacity building, (iii) technology transfer, and (iv) financial support. The Convention, which specifies concrete undertakings in each of these four areas, has been ratified by 145 countries. The UN General Assembly has emphasised culture's potential to contribute to sustainable development on no fewer than 13 occasions.<sup>122</sup> UNESCO, too, has long advocated greater recognition of the role of culture in development.

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<sup>119</sup> As reported by UNESCO: UNESCO (2005): The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

<sup>120</sup> UNESCO, UNPA and UNDP, *Post-2015 Dialogues on culture and development* (Paris: UNESCO, 2015), p. 18.

<sup>121</sup> UNCTAD, *Economic Development in Africa Report 2017. Tourism for Transformative and Inclusive Growth* (Geneva: UNCTAD, 2017).

<sup>122</sup> UNGA Resolution 72/229 on culture and sustainable development (20.12.2017), and the resolutions cited therein.

Such recognition has been a long time in the making, and many would argue it is yet to be fully achieved. Countries found it difficult to translate their abstract commitment into policies and spending. In practice, governments in the global South did (and do) not always recognise the potential of the cultural sector as a vector of development. Many aid donors, too, have tended to treat cultural development as an optional extra. Multilateral agencies such as UNDP proved reluctant to invest. Nor has the World Bank been much involved, although it recently agreed to work with UNESCO in areas such as cultural heritage and creative industries.<sup>123</sup> As UNESCO's Evaluation Office reluctantly concluded, the recognition of the cultural aspects of development remains lower than that of the environmental dimension.<sup>124</sup>

What could account for this complex relationship between the world of development and the world of culture? There may be several explanations. To begin with, there is little overlap in membership between the development community and the world of culture. Most cultural practitioners are unfamiliar with the world of development, and vice versa. The two communities rarely interact and synergies have not been easy to achieve. Efforts to explore common ground, such as the "dialogue of civilisations" or the "dialogue of cultures"<sup>125</sup> have generated more talk than action. The same could be said for relations between cultural experts and ministries of finance or planning in the global South: they largely live in separate worlds.

Perspectives also differ on the role of culture in development. While development specialists or policy planners may welcome cultural projects in terms of their potential to contribute to economic growth or other targets, cultural operators tend to be weary of such "instrumentalisation" and argue that culture must be treated as an end in itself. Another recurrent issue has been the perceived difficulty to agree on ways to measure culture's contribution to development: aid workers and finance ministries tend to favour quantitative evidence whereas cultural operators often prefer more qualitative assessments. A fourth complicating factor is the changing political climate in Western countries, where spending on development and on culture is increasingly being criticised and politicised by right-wing opponents. In the UK, for example, newspapers such as *The Sun* ran a campaign ridiculing British financial support for an Ethiopian NGO that uses music and radio to spread awareness about girls' rights. Headlines such as "Britain pays £5 million

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<sup>123</sup> See the Memorandum of Understanding between UNESCO and the World Bank, 13 July 2017.

<sup>124</sup> Evaluation Office, *UNESCO's Work on Culture and Sustainable Development* (Paris: UNESCO, 2015), p. 6.

<sup>125</sup> Misnomers, both.

to ‘Ethiopian Spice Girls’” prompted an MP to ask why the cash for the pop group was not spent on the UK’s elderly population. The British government scrapped the subsidy.<sup>126</sup>

Perhaps the most poignant illustration of the tepid support for culture’s role in development, some might argue, is the adoption of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

UNESCO has spearheaded initiatives to integrate culture into sustainable development. The 2013 Hangzhou Declaration, a key step in UNESCO’s advocacy to integrate culture into sustainable development,<sup>127</sup> built on several UN General Assembly resolutions on culture and development as well as efforts by others to recognise culture along with – and equal to – the economic, social, and environmental components.<sup>128</sup> Parallel to UNESCO a global campaign advocated for the inclusion of culture as an explicit goal among other Sustainable Development Goals. Although the campaign’s Declaration was endorsed by over 900 organisations,<sup>129</sup> and in spite of UNESCO’s tireless efforts, Agenda 2030 fell short of the target. Culture failed to achieve recognition as a separate global goal, let alone as the fourth pillar of sustainable development.

Such a pessimistic assessment would be wrong, however. It is true that Agenda 2030 does not recognise culture as one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. However, the Agenda does mention culture explicitly in the preamble and in relation to four areas: education, economic growth, sustainable cities, and patterns of production and consumption. This marks the first time that culture is included in the global development agenda, albeit in a somewhat underhanded way.

- In the preamble of Agenda 2030 world leaders pledge to foster intercultural understanding. They acknowledge the natural and cultural diversity of the world and recognise that “all cultures and civilisations can contribute to, and are crucial enablers of, sustainable development”.
- Target 4.7 (quality education) states that by 2030, all learners should acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including,

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<sup>126</sup> Nicola Slawson, ‘Ethiopian music scheme loses UK aid after press criticism’, *The Guardian*, 07.01.2017.

<sup>127</sup> The Hangzhou Declaration: Placing Culture at the Heart of Sustainable Development Policies, adopted in Hangzhou, People’s Republic of China, 17 May 2013.

<sup>128</sup> Including UCLG, the Global Network of Cities, Local and Regional Governments, in its 2010 document on Culture as the Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development.

<sup>129</sup> IFACCA (ed.) et al. (2016), Culture as a Goal in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

- In Target 8.9 (decent work and economic growth) governments agreed to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.
- Target 11.4 (sustainable cities and communities) states that governments will strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.
- Target 12 B (responsible production and consumption) echoes Target 8.9, and states that countries will develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.

In addition to the targets where culture is mentioned explicitly, some goals contain targets that, although they do not directly refer to culture, are critical to promoting cultural rights and freedoms. Examples include targets 4.4 (skills), 5.5 (gender equality in leadership), 8.3 (creativity and innovation), and 10.2 (inclusiveness to minorities). Goal 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions) contains several such targets.

- Target 16.6 commits governments to develop "effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels". Accountability is unattainable without freedom of opinion, freedom of expression, and freedom of assembly – rights that are recognised and affirmed in the UN Convention on Civil and Political Rights.
- In target 16.7 governments undertook to ensure "responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels". Cultural policy making is covered by definition. There is compelling evidence that participation in culture also promotes democratic participation as well as empowerment and well-being of citizens.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> UNESCO, *Re/Shaping Cultural Policies – 2005 Convention Global Report* (Paris: UNESCO, 2018), p. 211.

- Target 16.10 aims to ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements. One relevant indicator (16.10.2) is the number of countries that adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information. Access to information is necessary to ensure the free flow of ideas in word and image, and EU aid should be targeted accordingly.
- Another indicator under Target 16.10 is the number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months. UNESCO has started a campaign to combat violence against journalists and other media personnel. Supporting and co-financing this campaign should be a priority for all governments.<sup>131</sup>

All in all, Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals provide plenty of opportunities for ambitious and comprehensive cultural policies. The SDGs imply that culture must be an integral part of policies to alleviate poverty, promote education, gender equality, and sustainable urbanisation, and build peaceful societies that respect universal human rights.<sup>132</sup> This is the most comprehensive agenda for culture the world has ever seen.

Such huge opportunities, of course, come with equally significant risks. One of the principal risks is failure to realise the necessary integrated policies.

The SDGs call for an integrated approach to culture, at international level as well as nationally. In this respect the cultural targets do not differ fundamentally from other objectives: the entire Agenda requires a holistic, joined-up approach to policy making and policy implementation. This is easier said than done. Holistic policy making and policy delivery is impossible without interdepartmental cooperation and coordination – the bane of any government. Agenda 2030 also demands unprecedented public-private cooperation. Will Ministries of Culture sit down with Ministries of Foreign Affairs and development agencies? Will governments reach out to civil society organisations, and vice versa? Will national cultural institutes be prepared to think outside the box?

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<sup>131</sup> For insightful discussions of the relationship between culture and sustainability, see Danielle Cliché and Yudhishtir Raj Isar, 'Advancing creativity for development', in UNESCO, *Re/Shaping Cultural Policies – 2005 Convention Global Report* (Paris: UNESCO, 2018), pp. 17-29, and Christine M. Merkel and Lutz Müller, 'Nachhaltigkeit und Kultur', in Gerd Michelsen (Hrsg.), *Die deutsche Nachhaltigkeitsstrategie* (Wiesbaden: Hessische Landeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 2017), pp. 107-122.

<sup>132</sup> UNESCO, UNDP, UNFPA, *Post-2015 Dialogues on Culture and Development* (Paris: UNESCO, 2015).



If Agenda 2030 has an Achilles' heel, it is ensuring cooperation and joined-up decision making. But coordination is not the only challenge. Delivering the SDGs will require resources, time, and sustained efforts. Also needed are transparency, accountability, and a willingness to learn. Perhaps most importantly, this agenda requires leadership. Ministers will have to assume personal responsibility, focus, and sustain their interest. So will leaders of non-governmental organisations and businesses. This is not a job for the back office only.

### **The role of the European Union**

In principle, the EU is well-placed to lead in realising Agenda 2030. The EU is one of the most prosperous regions of the world and EU governments would be able to lead by example. Together, EU member states and the Commission are also the world's most prominent donors of Official Development Assistance (ODA). In its 2018 peer review of EU development policy the OECD concludes that the EU has "shown leadership" in its efforts to reach global agreements on sustainable development and climate change, as well as in shaping the international humanitarian landscape by taking an integrated approach towards crisis and fragility. Its joint programming, extensive use of budget support, and results based management based on country priorities are enhancing ownership and inclusiveness.<sup>133</sup>

Unfortunately, this is not the whole story. In the field of culture the EU and most of its member states have lagged rather than led, including in terms of spending. The volume of international aid to culture has not increased; it has fallen. The latest available data from 2015 for the OECD as a whole show that both the share of ODA to support creativity in developing countries and the share of ODA spent on culture have declined since 2010. The total amount of cultural ODA being donated has fallen from 465.9 million USD in 2005 to 354.3 million USD in 2010, and to 257 million USD in 2015, a decrease of 45% in ten years. The top ten recipients of cultural ODA in 2015 were Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Mexico, Morocco, South Africa, Turkey, Vietnam, West Bank and Gaza Strip – hardly the poorest countries in the global South.<sup>134</sup>

These declining levels of aid from richer countries sit uneasily with the EU's promise to mainstream culture in development.<sup>135</sup> EU ministers have also committed the EU and

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<sup>133</sup> *OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: European Union 2018* (Paris: OECD, 2018).

<sup>134</sup> UNESCO, *Re/Shaping Cultural Policies – 2005 Convention Global Report* (Paris: UNESCO, 2018), p. 171.

<sup>135</sup> Council of the European Union, Conclusions on culture in the EU's external relations with a focus on culture in development cooperation, Doc. 14443/15, 24 November 2015, p. 6.

its member states to the 2030 Agenda.<sup>136</sup> It is time for EU governments and the European Commission to act on these promises. Action to help implement and finance Agenda 2030 in the area of culture is long overdue.

At long last, the Commission's development Directorate General, DEVCO, is showing signs of taking culture more seriously. In 2018 it reinforced its unit in charge of culture, education, and health, although any major policy innovations will probably be postponed until the arrival of a new Commission in late 2019.

One evident priority for the new Commission (2019-2024) would be to publish a white paper (or "communication", in the jargon) on Culture in Sustainable Development. The EU currently manages a wide portfolio of mostly short-term cultural development projects, many of which predate the SDGs. There is no integral approach. Yet the whole point of the SDGs is to arrive at a unified approach to development. This is particularly important in the field of culture, which is covered in a multitude of goals and targets. Without a comprehensive approach the main benefit of the SDGs will be lost. The Commission should say, therefore, how it intends to use the EU budget to ensure the necessary comprehensive approach to the cultural aspects of Agenda 2030. It should also say how it will work with EU governments. Will there be synergy between the EU budget and the European Development Fund, financed by EU member states outside the EU budget?

This is an area – culture as a dimension of sustainable development – where Europe, if it wants to, could lead the world. The newly elected European Parliament (2019-2024) should see to it that a policy paper is produced, and that its main conclusions will be agreed between the Council, the Commission, and the Parliament.

Elements of a European approach to culture in development could include the role of culture in education (SDG 4), cultural governance (SDG 16.6 and 16.7), and culture as an aspect of peace and security (SDG 16.1 and 16.10). The following three sections offer a brief discussion.

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<sup>136</sup> Council Conclusions on the EU response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (20 June 2017).

### **Culture and education (SDG 4)**

It is difficult to over-estimate the importance of education for a life well-lived. Education is both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realising other human rights.

“As an empowerment right, education is the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities. Education has a vital role in empowering women, safeguarding children from exploitative and hazardous labour and sexual exploitation, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment, and controlling population growth. Increasingly, education is recognized as one of the best financial investments States can make. But the importance of education is not just practical: a well-educated, enlightened and active mind, able to wander freely and widely, is one of the joys and rewards of human existence.”<sup>137</sup>

Education figures prominently among the Sustainable Development Goals. SDG 4 is nothing short of ambitious: governments committed to ensure that, by 2030, all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

As with all SDGs, financing these ambitious policies is first and foremost a responsibility of national governments. International assistance can play a supporting role, in keeping with SDG 17. Education is one area where international assistance is needed. The total annual financing gap between the available domestic resources and the amount necessary to realise the global education targets is estimated at 39 billion USD between 2015 and 2030 in low and lower middle income countries.<sup>138</sup> Many EU member states provide educational aid as part of their development policies. The EU also supports cooperation in education, including through the Development Cooperation Instrument (developing countries) and the Instrument for Pre-Accession (candidate countries). Another of its instruments, and one of the best known, is Erasmus.

Erasmus+ is the EU’s programme which helps young people to study, train or learn abroad. Erasmus is open to students from Iceland, Liechtenstein, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, and Turkey. Conditional access is

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<sup>137</sup> United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *The Right to Education*, General Comment No. 13 (1999), paragraph 1.

<sup>138</sup> Education 2030. Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals 4 (World Education Forum, Incheon, Korea, 2015), p. 68.

given to students from the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro), Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine), the Southern Mediterranean (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia) and Russia. The European Commission has proposed to double the Erasmus budget to 30 billion EUR (2021-2027) with 25.9 billion EUR for education and training, 3.1 billion EUR for youth and 550 million EUR for sport.

Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees were launched in 2004 and, since 2014, form part of Erasmus+. Since that first year, when just 140 students took part, more than 21,000 students have now benefitted from an Erasmus Mundus Master scholarship. In 2017 the top five sending countries were Brazil (79), India (63), Iran (59), Bangladesh (58) and Mexico (49). Erasmus Mundus thus helps to build cooperation and trust between the EU and the rest of the world, though with only 1,300 places for master students in 2017 this is a relatively small programme.

EU funding will clearly be needed to meet the global development goals, and it will have to be earmarked and targeted accordingly. But in addition to providing money the EU should seize this opportunity to engage its foreign partners in dialogue and processes of mutual learning. The SDGs invite countries to enter into partnerships. This is one of the important differences with the Millennium Development Goals, which only addressed so-called developing countries. The SDGs, by contrast, are about creating mutual commitments, something fully in line with the EU's preference for multilateralism.

These mutual commitments should include European initiatives to improve knowledge of the non-Western world in Europe itself. History curricula in Europe mostly teach national history, with a smattering of European history; the history and social reality of other parts of the world still gets surprisingly little attention. The age of colonialism is long past but Eurocentrism still permeates European education.<sup>139</sup> If educational institutions, cultural organisations and governments in Europe are serious about the SDGs, a good way to start would be to bring a more global perspective to national education.

Another promising area for dialogue and mutual learning is the role of culture in education.

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<sup>139</sup> Dominic Sachsenmaier, "European Historical Identities and the World", in Brian Carvell (ed.), *Shared Histories for a Europe without Dividing Lines*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe (2014), pp. 597-602.

Culture and education are closely connected. When mainstreamed in education, culture builds confidence and encourages dialogue. Cultural expressions are essential for the development of young people: they build self-confidence and critical skills, helping them to achieve better educational results.<sup>140</sup> Artists help society to reflect on the human condition and improve it.

Based on her research for UNESCO Anne Bamford has identified four ways for teachers to boost arts and creativity in the classroom. “Education in the arts” means dedicated curriculum time to music, visual arts, drama, dance and the media. “Education through the arts” means integrating art into other subjects, such as languages, history, or science. “Art as education” uses art forms such as film, dance or theatre as a medium for learning, and “education as art” brings creative, cultural and aesthetic understanding of learning into teaching.<sup>141</sup>

There is no single approach or best way to create synergies between culture and education. National circumstances differ and policies must differ accordingly. There is much scope for mutual learning, including between Europeans and non-Europeans – learning is best practiced as a two-way process, and as a process between equals.

One interesting experience Europeans could contribute to global exchanges is that of Ireland. Irish research has shown that children who take part in artistic and cultural activities cope better with schoolwork, have more positive attitudes towards school later on, are happier, have reduced anxiety, better academic skills and fewer socio-emotional difficulties than children who are less engaged. Acting on the research the Irish government launched a programme, Creative Youth, to ensure that every child in Ireland has practical access to tuition, experience and participation in music, drama, art and coding (sic) by 2020.<sup>142</sup> Ireland’s visionary experiment deserves to be included in the international dialogues that should be at the heart of European cultural diplomacy.

Just as Agenda 2030 can play an important role in promoting access to education, education can play a role in promoting understanding of and critical support for the SDGs. Reflection on ways of teaching the SDGs in schools and universities is at an early

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<sup>140</sup> UNESCO, UNPA and UNDP, *Post-2015 Dialogues on culture and development* (Paris: UNESCO, 2015), p. 27.

<sup>141</sup> Anne Bamford, ‘The role of arts in a changing educational landscape’, *Arts in Education Portal*, 2017.

<sup>142</sup> Press release, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 7 December 2017.

stage.<sup>143</sup> This type of global citizenship education is another area where educators have much to learn from each other, both within the European Union and beyond.

By working together to develop global citizenship education the EU and its partners would be acting in the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which says:

“Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups (...).”<sup>144</sup>

Global citizenship education and promoting the arts in education can be mutually reinforcing. Both are about developing creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and self-confidence: attitudes, skills and values that are essential to a life lived in freedom and responsibility. Promoting global citizenship is one of the objectives of the Agenda 2030 (SDG 4.7). The EU should stimulate exchanges of good practice and create a network of national experts to encourage cross-border learning.

### **Culture and governance: effective, transparent and accountable institutions (SDG 16)**

In many parts of the world there is deep popular discontent with the lack of effective, transparent and accountable government. North Africa and the Middle East are among several areas where resentment is on the rise. While Emirati respondents hold positive views about the direction of their country, Tunisians, Egyptians and Iraqis are very negative and do not have confidence in any of their country's institutions. Jobs, education, and political reform are the three top priorities of people across the region. A recent poll found that political reform has advanced as an issue of concern in Tunisia, Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. Ending corruption has climbed the ranks in Tunisia as well as in Egypt (to first place). And the protection of civil rights has risen as an issue of importance in Jordan and Iraq.<sup>145</sup> Worldwide, majorities favour representative democracy over other forms of governance.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> See, for example, Helen Kopnina, 'Teaching Sustainable Development Goals in The Netherlands: a critical approach', *Environmental Education Research*, Vol. 24, No. 9 (2018), pp. 1268-1283.

<sup>144</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Article 26(2).

<sup>145</sup> Zogby Research Services, *Middle East Public Opinion 2018*, p. 6.

<sup>146</sup> Richard Wike, Katie Simmons, Bruce Stokes and Janell Fetterolf, *Globally, Broad Support for Representative and Direct Democracy* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2017).

There is no sustainable development without governance that is perceived as effective and fair. Good governance cannot be imposed from the outside. Isomorphic change, encouraged by external donors eager for quick wins, usually results in Potemkin-type institutions. Democracy promotion is not for the faint-hearted. That said, it is equally important to avoid the other extreme of lending uncritical support to oppressive regimes. Europeans would do well to remember their embarrassment during the Arab Spring, having long supported Tunisia's Ben Ali and Egypt's Mubarak. Institutional reform is part of the SDG agenda and Europe should not shrink from the task.

One of the areas which needs effective, transparent, and accountable institutions is culture. There are various ways in which EU governments and the Commission could make a difference. They could, first of all, support systems of cultural governance that are transparent and open to influence from civil society, regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, class, or ability. The EU can also assist partners to integrate culture in national development plans that are subject to integral evaluation, reporting, and public scrutiny. National statistical offices could be supported in collecting, analysing, and reporting the necessary cultural statistics. The EU could support links between local governments in EU member states and their counterparts in other parts of the world, including through UNESCO's Creative Cities Network. EU embassies could help raise popular awareness of the SDGs at the many EU festivals of films, food, and literature. And, crucially, the EU can help ensure that cultural policies and practices across the world are embedded in respect for artistic freedom, including freedom of expression and freedom of assembly.

By themselves, these steps will not be enough to satisfy public demand for political change. Yet even such incremental reforms can help change the tone and the substance of public debate. Artists, writers, journalists often rank among national opinion leaders. Many face censorship, harassment, or worse. EU support for good cultural governance can give them the support they need and deserve.

### **Culture, peace and security (SDG 16)**

SDG 16 is somewhat of a mixed bag in that its objectives range from promoting peace and the rule of law to building better institutions. Among these targets peace is obviously essential and must be at the heart of any SDG strategy. Can cultural initiatives help to promote peace and security?

Culture is not an innocent possession. Images can be instruments of propaganda. Songs can be weapons of war, and music a tool of torture. Radio was used in Rwanda to incite genocide. Serb artillery deliberately destroyed the Sarajevo library. Islamist extrem-

ists turned the World Heritage site of Palmyra to rubble. Members of the Iraqi National Symphony Orchestra received death threats for playing classical music.<sup>147</sup> Depressing examples abound.

But what about culture's positive potential? Can art and culture assist in post-conflict rehabilitation? Can cultural interventions facilitate reconciliation? Does culture have the power to transform conflicts, and possibly even prevent them? Unfortunately, these questions do not permit ready answers. Post-conflict rehabilitation can take years, and the contribution of any one factor, cultural or otherwise, can be difficult to identify. Causality across a longer time span is often difficult to prove. Prevention is even harder to establish. Not surprisingly, much of the evidence is tentative.

There is one exception: culture's contribution to trauma recovery is well-established. Creative arts and play therapy have helped children to recover from mass violence, including in the former Yugoslavia and in the USA after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.<sup>148</sup> Art can be a pathway to empower people to cope with post-traumatic stress, and become survivors instead of victims.<sup>149</sup>

Cultural work with refugees and migrants has been supported by the EU for quite some years, including in non-EU countries such as Lebanon and Syria. EU member states have also been involved. In 2017 they published a review of what they saw as good national practices, mostly within Europe.<sup>150</sup> Some of this work could be of use to governments and agencies elsewhere in the world. Most of the world's 65.6 million forcibly displaced people live outside Europe. If Europe were to invest in international dialogue about cultural empowerment it might find it has as much to learn as to share.

Can the arts and culture facilitate reconciliation? Theatre has often been used in post-conflict situations as a way to bring people together. Longer-term effects (impacts) in terms of reconciliation have mostly proved elusive, like in Sri Lanka. James

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<sup>147</sup> Katrin Sandmann, 'In war, art is not a luxury', in Raphaela Henze and Gert Wolfram (eds.), *Exporting Culture* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2014), p. 127.

<sup>148</sup> Cathy A. Malchiodi (ed.), *Creative Interventions with Traumatized Children* (New York: Guilford Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2014); Raymond Monsour Scurfield and Katherine Theresa Platoni (eds.), *Healing War Trauma: A Handbook of Creative Approaches* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>149</sup> Barbara Ann Baker, 'Art Speaks in Healing Survivors of War: The Use of Art Therapy in Treating Trauma Survivors', *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, Vol.12(1-2), 2006, pp.183-198.

<sup>150</sup> Working Group of EU Member States' Experts, *How culture and the arts can promote intercultural dialogue in the context of the migratory and refugee crisis* (Brussels, 2017).



Thompson offers a sobering perspective.<sup>151</sup> Museums, too, can contribute to reconciliation by enabling visitors to explore their community's experience as part of a wider context. Northern Ireland's Mid-Antrim Museum engaged local people in exploring traditions. The aim was to allow plural voices and histories to take shape.<sup>152</sup>

Can cultural initiatives help to prevent violent conflicts? Documentaries by photographers and film makers can raise awareness of atrocities. Radio can nurture dialogue over confrontation. In Mali, Studio Tamani's programmes are followed by 1.6 million listeners every day. An impact study found that the station allows listeners to be well informed, and that it gives them a preference for dialogue as a solution to resolve conflicts.<sup>153</sup> But what evidence exists is mostly anecdotal.

The European Union believes that culture can be an instrument to prevent terrorism. According to HRVP Federica Mogherini, "When Europe engages with the world, culture has to be at the core of our foreign policy. Culture can help us fight and prevent radicalisation."<sup>154</sup> The Joint Communication also states that culture can help to counter violent extremism,<sup>155</sup> and deepening work on culture to counter violent extremism is part of the EU's official foreign policy strategy.<sup>156</sup> Does culture really work to prevent terrorism? The evidence base is weak. Labelling the odd youth project or theatre performance as a contribution to counter-radicalisation is not the same as demonstrating impact.

EU governments are on firmer ground in their efforts to prevent the trafficking of cultural goods that finance organised crime, money laundering and terrorism. In SDG 16.6 governments promised to reduce illicit financial flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat organised crime. Illegal trade in archaeological artefacts is big business, and Europeans play an active part. Via Facebook antiquities can be stolen on request ("loot-to-order"). Sophisticated networks of traders and robbers share information

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<sup>151</sup> James Thompson, 'Ugly, Unglamorous and Dirty: theatre of relief/reconciliation/liberation in places of war', *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 01 March 2002, Vol.7(1), p. 108-114.

<sup>152</sup> Geoffrey Crossick and Patrycja Kaszynska, *Understanding the value of arts and culture* (Swindon: Arts & Humanities Research Council, 2016), p. 67. For a wider discussion see the report of the Northern Ireland Arts Council, *Evaluation of the Building Peace through the Arts: Re-Imagining Communities Programme*, 2016.

<sup>153</sup> Foundation Hironnelle, *Toutes Les Voix du Mali*, 2018.

<sup>154</sup> EEAS, 'Speech of the HR/VP Federica Mogherini at the Culture Forum in Brussels', 20 April 2016.

<sup>155</sup> European Commission, 'Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations', 8 June 2016.

<sup>156</sup> *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy* (Brussels, 2016), p. 21.

about how and where to dig. The traffickers come mostly from the Middle East, users are based in the United States, Germany, France, the UK, Belgium and elsewhere.<sup>157</sup> European governments must do more to stop this shameful trade. Europol too has work to do.

ISIS' destruction and looting of World Heritage in Syria and Iraq has thrown the need to protect cultural heritage into sharp relief. One major international legal instrument is the 1954 UNESCO Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. All EU member states have joined it, except Malta. Worldwide, only 133 states have joined and membership is particularly low in Sub-Saharan Africa, South and South East Asia, and the Pacific. The other principal treaty is the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. This has been ratified by 138 states including most EU member states. Ireland, Latvia, and Malta are still missing in action. Getting more countries to ratify and apply these important treaties would be a fitting target of European cultural diplomacy.

Europeans can also contribute money and expertise. Several EU governments have launched schemes to protect cultural heritage. France set up the International Alliance for the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Conflict Areas (with help from the United Arab Emirates). Italy partnered with UNESCO to establish the Unite4Heritage Task Force, which is to be deployed for the protection of heritage at risk. The UK launched its own Cultural Protection Fund. The Dutch Prince Claus Fund (a private foundation) set up a Cultural Emergency Response Programme. The European Commission, too, provides project finance, and heritage protection was included in the mandate of the EU's advisory mission on security sector reform in Iraq (EUAM Iraq). What remains to be achieved is synergy. There is obvious scope for a more coordinated approach.

In conclusion, it is clear that there are plenty of opportunities for the EU to drive the global agenda on culture in development.

The international order is changing, and many of the changes are reducing the scope for rights and liberties. But there are also changes that create opportunities to enlarge that scope, and Agenda 2030 is among them.

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<sup>157</sup> Amr Al-Azm and Katie A. Paul, 'How Facebook Made It Easier Than Ever to Traffic Middle Eastern Antiquities', *World Politics Review*, August 14, 2018.

## 6. Culture and development

Development is freedom, as Amartya Sen famously wrote, and culture can be a powerful driver and an enabler of development.

The cause of culture in development needs champions. Will the EU be among them?

## 7. Liberty and populism in Europe

In the previous sections we have looked at some key changes in the international order. Some, such as the downward trends in democracy and human rights and the spreading of disinformation, pose threats to Europe's core values and interests; other changes, such as the world's new development agenda, offer opportunities to enlarge the scope of freedom.

Along with changes in the world at large there have been important developments closer to home, within the European Union. One prominent (and perhaps dominant) development has been the rise of intolerance fuelled by populism, and it is to this that we now turn.

European voters are adrift. In more and more countries the traditional duopoly of centre-right parties and centre-left parties has been broken and the political centre has fragmented. The main beneficiaries have been populist parties. Sometimes on the left (Spain, Greece), but mostly on the right of the political spectrum. In 20 years populist parties more than tripled their vote. The rise of populism has been described as the most important European political development of the 21st century.<sup>158</sup>

Is this correct? As a political force, how strong is populism in Europe today? In October 2017 the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) won 26% of the popular vote. An analysis of right-wing populist parties in 22 European countries showed that, on average, these parties won 16 percent of the vote in the most recent parliamentary election in each country, up from 11 percent a decade earlier and 5 percent in 1997.<sup>159</sup> A strong and impressive showing, certainly, but not an electoral tsunami. If one out of four voters vote for a populist party, that still leaves three out of four who don't. Populism's bark, it seems, may be worse than its bite.

Unfortunately, the problem is real. Two factors make the rise of populism more significant than the statistics suggest. Radical right-wing parties entered governments in eleven European countries, including Austria and Italy, and several of their core ideas have entered the mainstream. Centrist parties responded to the rise of right-wing competitors by moving to the right themselves, from Germany's CSU to Holland's VVD (liberals)

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<sup>158</sup> William A. Galston, 'the rise of populism and the collapse of the center-left', Brookings, blog post, 8 March 2018.

<sup>159</sup> Andre Tartar, 'How the Populist Right is Redrawing the Map of Europe', *Bloomberg*, 11 December 2017. See also Matthijs Rooduijn, 'Why is populism suddenly all the rage?', *The Guardian*, 20 November 2018.

and CDA (Christian democrats). Discourse reinforcing notions of outsiders and insiders, long the hallmark of right-wing populists, is now practiced across the political spectrum.

Populists tend to suggest that society is dominated by immoral, abusive and secretive elites. The people must be protected against these elites and they, the populists, are the ones to do it. Populists present themselves as the sole true champions of the people. To stand in their way is to thwart the will of the people. Political competitors are depicted as stooges (or even part) of the elite who fail to serve the interests of the people. In a similar vein, populists treat courts that restrain their power as “enemies of the people.” Journalists, academics, or others who speak out against them are tarred with the same brush. Populists, as Jan Werner Müller writes, are anti-pluralist as well as anti-elite.<sup>160</sup>

In this respect, today’s European populists differ from their predecessors. As Cas Mudde notes, it is noteworthy that in the early 20th century, nationalism and socialism mobilised mainly as anti-democratic extremism, whereas at the beginning of the 21st century populists are mainly democratic but anti-liberal.<sup>161</sup> Today’s populists accept popular sovereignty and majority rule, but reject key features of liberal democracy such as minority rights, rule of law and separation of powers. The Swiss People’s Party is a case in point. In 2018 the right-wing *Schweizerische Volkspartei* triggered a national referendum to give Swiss law precedence over international law and treaties. The proposal, which aimed to “free” Switzerland of human rights obligations, including to refugees, was rejected by around two-thirds (67%) of those voting. Still, a sizeable minority of around one in every three voters (33%) supported the effort to “reclaim national sovereignty”.<sup>162</sup> In Central Europe this turn away from liberal values is represented by several governing parties, including Hungary’s Fidesz and Poland’s Law and Justice (PiS).

There is every reason to be alarmed at this development. Populists act as if the people are of one mind and indivisible, and as if they – and they alone – represent the popular will. But, as Habermas said, the people only appears in the plural. Pluralism is at the heart of democracy. Populists reject pluralism, and this is what makes them dangerous. On any given issue “the people” divide into majorities and minorities, and checks and balances in politics are essential to prevent majorities violating the rights and freedoms of minorities. Few saw this as clearly as John Stuart Mill:

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<sup>160</sup> Jan Werner Müller, *What Is Populism?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

<sup>161</sup> Cas Mudde, ‘How populism became the concept that defines our age’, *The Guardian*, 22 November 2018.

<sup>162</sup> ‘Swiss vote No in sovereignty referendum – early results’, *BBC News*, 25 November 2018.

## 7. Liberty and populism in Europe

“The will of the people ... practically means the will of the most numerous or the most active part of the people; the majority, or those who succeed in making themselves accepted as the majority; the people, consequently may desire to oppress a part of their number; and precautions are as much needed against this as against any other abuse of power.”<sup>163</sup>

In a democracy liberty must be protected against the tyranny of the majority. It is wrong, therefore, to speak of “illiberal democracy” – Viktor Orbán’s proud achievement. There is no democracy without liberty, and to suggest otherwise is deeply and cynically misleading.

It is unfortunate, therefore, that the European Commission, while insisting that the rule of law and democracy are interconnected, has focused its criticism of the Hungarian and Polish governments largely on violations of the rule of law. As Müller observes, the virtually exclusive emphasis on rule of law in public discourse has, arguably, reinforced the sense that Europe only cares about liberty, while the nation-state does democracy.<sup>164</sup> It is time for the EU to call a spade a spade. The Hungarian and Polish developments are not just “illiberal”; they are also undemocratic.

When politicians call journalists “jackals” and “whores”, as leaders of Italy’s Five Star Movement did; when they call Muslim refugees “lice”, and Roma “animals” as Zolt Bayer, founder of Hungary’s Fidezs party did; when the deputy Speaker of the Italian Senate says that a black cabinet minister, Cécile Kyenge, reminds him of an “orang-utan”, it is not only liberal principles that are cast aside; democracy itself is at stake. Such verbal violence serves to dehumanise. Nobody with the faintest awareness of European history can fail to hear the ominous echo of Nazi terminology, honed to humiliate and extirpate Jews.<sup>165</sup> Ominous, too, is the failure of all too many peers and compatriots to sanction such abuse. Populism is not the same as racism, but the dividing line is erased all too easily.

Why do European voters support populists? Academic research distinguishes between economic, cultural, and political explanations. Support is partially rooted in economic insecurity and social deprivation. The populist message of “us” (the people) versus “them” (the elites) strongly resonates with people who feel left behind and who see them-

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<sup>163</sup> John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and other Essays*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 8.

<sup>164</sup> Müller, *op. cit.*, pp 58-59.

<sup>165</sup> See in particular Victor Klemperer, *Lingua Tertii Imperii: Die Sprache des Dritten Reiches* (Berlin, 1947); English translation *The Language of the Third Reich: Lingua Tertii Imperii: A Philologist’s Notebook* (London: Continuum, 2001).

selves as the victims of globalisation. But many populist voters are neither poor nor unemployed. They appear to be motivated more by social and cultural concerns. There is strong evidence that migration and other social changes have produced a cultural backlash.<sup>166</sup> Opposition to migration was a key factor in the Brexit vote. One influential analysis explains Donald Trump's election as stemming from a rising sense of status threat among white Americans.<sup>167</sup> A third contributing factor is political alienation: the sense that politicians are out of touch with "people such as me" and that voting in elections is useless. Populism appeals to people who feel left behind – victims of uncontrollable economic forces, unwanted demographic change, and unaccountable political elites. This is a potent mix, and the starting point for any countervailing strategy must be to take each of these concerns seriously.

Answers will have to be found predominantly at national level. National circumstances differ widely. National governments control most of the policy instruments, including education, taxation, and housing – the tools necessary to tackle declining social mobility, one of the causes of discontent. National answers alone will not suffice, however. Populism is a European phenomenon. Not only does it manifest itself in almost all EU countries, but populist leaders work together across borders, and opposition to the EU is one of the causes that unites them. Populism in Europe is a multi-headed hydra. For all of these reasons the responses must be European as well as national. But the EU's powers are limited. So what can it do?

A comprehensive answer would be beyond the confines of this paper, but an obvious starting point for the EU would be to mobilise its economic powers. Many people no longer believe that the economy serves their interests. This is not "just" a view held by populists. On the contrary: large majorities across Europe feel that the economy is rigged in favour of the rich and powerful. This is the majority view from Spain (88%) to Sweden (56%) and from Poland (67%) to France (75%), Germany (77%), and the UK (76%).<sup>168</sup> It is not difficult to see why. Millions have lost their jobs since 2007 because of the financial crisis, yet not a single leading Wall Street executive has been prosecuted.<sup>169</sup> Banks practice

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<sup>166</sup> Ronald F. Inglehart and Pippa Norris, *Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Nave-Nots and Cultural Backlash* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Faculty Research Working Paper, August 2016).

<sup>167</sup> Diana C. Mutz, 'Status threat, not economic hardship, explains the 2016 presidential vote', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, Vol.115(19), 2018, pp. E4330-E4339.

<sup>168</sup> IPSOS Research, Global Trends 2018.

<sup>169</sup> Kara Scannell and Richard Milne, 'Who was convicted because of the global financial crisis?', *Financial Times*, August 9, 2017.

business as usual; they work around the EU cap on bonuses by increasing the fixed pay (salaries and benefits) and share packages of their top brass. In the United Kingdom top CEOs have seen their annual mean pay rise to £5.7 million. They earn as much in 2 ½ days as the average worker makes in a year.<sup>170</sup> Business as usual for banks still includes money laundering: cases in 2018 alone involved the Cyprus Development bank, Dankse Bank, MagNet Bank, Pilatus Bank, ING, Raiffeisen Bank, and Hypo Voralberg Bank. Yet national authorities in Europe only investigate on average 10% of suspicious transaction reports, and barely 1% (sic) of criminal proceeds are being confiscated.<sup>171</sup> The four big European accountancy firms still promote tax avoidance by multinationals, as shown in the “Lux-Leaks” revelations. Worldwide tax losses as a result of profit shifting amount to a staggering 500 billion USD a year.<sup>172</sup>

The financial crisis and its aftermath have dealt a hammer-blow to the credibility of the free market as a force for good. Little wonder, then, that populists find it easy to tap into a well of popular resentment. Unless these concerns are addressed convincingly, not only will mainstream parties in member states continue to lose support, but the EU itself will see its legitimacy erode.

There is much that the EU could do if national governments would allow it. Europol could do more to crack down on money laundering if national agencies would share more information. Today, most of its suspicious transaction reports come from two countries only: the UK and the Netherlands. The European Banking Authority could be given greater powers to coordinate national banking watchdogs, as the Commission has suggested.<sup>173</sup> EU governments could do more to close the gaps in the national and European rules on tax fraud and tax evasion, as the Commission has been urging for years. The EU could counter tax evasion by tech companies such as Amazon and Apple, as France has proposed, but other governments blocked the initiative for a digital tax. With a fully-fledged banking union, citizen’s savings would be secured and taxpayers would not have to pay to save banks, but the Eurogroup postponed the necessary decisions.

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<sup>170</sup> Cat Rutter Pooley, ‘Top UK CEOs earn annual wage of average worker in 2 ½ days’, *Financial Times*, 05.01.2019.

<sup>171</sup> Europol, *From Suspicion to Action: Converting financial intelligence into greater impact* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2017).

<sup>172</sup> Alex Cobham and Petr Jansky, *Global distribution of revenue loss from tax avoidance* (Helsinki: United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research, 2017).

<sup>173</sup> Jim Brunsten, ‘Brussels seeks tougher anti-money laundering tools’, *Financial Times*, December 28, 2018.



The EU could also do more to fight unemployment. As matters stand, there are still around 17 million people unemployed in Europe, including one in three of young persons in Italy, Greece, and Spain. There is arguably no more convincing way to address citizens' widespread concerns about economic fairness. Today the EU spends most of its budget on agriculture and regional policy. That does not reflect public opinion. When asked what the EU should be spending its money on, people's first priority is for the EU to spend more on social affairs and employment.<sup>174</sup> Plans for the EU to set up a European Unemployment Insurance Scheme are far advanced.<sup>175</sup> Such a fund, which would help recession-hit countries with high unemployment, would be a concrete, visible way the EU to strengthen its bond with citizens. It would put flesh on the bones of Emmanuel Macron's vision of a Europe that protects ("*L'Europe qui protège*"), and it would answer the populist accusation that the EU is a stitch-up between business and political elites. The idea has been embraced by the European Commission and by German Finance Minister Olaf Scholz. It was discussed by the Eurogroup, but Germany's CDU/CSU does not support it.<sup>176</sup>

The EU could also play a more effective role in addressing people's concerns about democracy. National leaders could give citizens a meaningful vote in the selection of the Commission President ("*Spitzenkandidaten*"). They could create a genuine common electoral system for the European elections. And they could, if only occasionally, stop blaming 'Brussels' for unpopular measures agreed by national governments, while claiming personal credit for European decisions. The EU's democratic deficit is real. To counter it, national leaders will have to show honesty and courage.

The third, cultural dimension of popular discontent is the most difficult for the EU to deal with. Some steps have been agreed in response to the widespread unease about migration. Although governments failed to endorse the Commission's sensible proposals for a European distribution programme, they did accept to strengthen border protection. A more ambitious proposal for a standing corps of 10,000 operational staff with executive powers and their own equipment is included in the Commission's draft budgetary framework. But managing migration is not the only issue here. Much more must be done to stem the rising, toxic tide of exclusionary nationalism.

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<sup>174</sup> Standard Eurobarometer 90, Autumn 2018, annex.

<sup>175</sup> Miroslav Beblavy, Gabriele Marconi and Ilaria Maselli, *A European Unemployment benefit scheme* (Brussels: European Commission, 2017).

<sup>176</sup> Guy Chazan and Mehreen Knan, 'German finance minister advocates unemployment fund for eurozone', *Financial Times*, October 17, 2018.

Across Europe, political entrepreneurs are weaponising identity by stoking prejudice against foreigners. A Europe where people are told to fear non-Europeans is a Europe that cannot be a constructive and effective force in the world. A Europe where people are told to fear their fellow-Europeans – as competitors for housing, schools, jobs, and benefits – is a Europe that cannot hold together. The European Union is the world's only successful attempt to solve national differences peacefully through law and common institutions. The secret of the EU's success is the willingness to strike a balance between unity and diversity. To live together, Europeans have found they must be willing to take each other's interests and views into account, and abide by the common rules that allow them to do so. Over decades, the EU has built an unprecedented but fragile sense of trust among Europeans. The politics of division are designed to destroy this trust. Populists aim at the heart of the European dream.

Trust is easy to diminish but difficult to build. Counter-strategies to strengthen social cohesion and a sense of common endeavour will have to be developed and maintained over time. This is not work at which political institutions excel; civil society organisations and other citizens' initiatives tend to be more successful. Some cultural institutes, such as the British Council and the Goethe-Institut, have gained extensive experience with projects to support civil society and freedom of speech in challenging environments, and in some countries (such as Turkey) they work well together to promote these causes. However, such cooperation is not yet standard practice, and there remains considerable scope for joint or coordinated projects to support civil society in countries such as Hungary and Romania.

There is much the EU could do to support such initiatives, notably by strengthening its policies and budgets for citizenship, education, and culture. These include well-known programmes such as Erasmus, but also lesser known but important programmes such as Europe for Citizens, as will be discussed in the next section. In addition, EU missions in third countries do not always work well with the national cultural institutes. Some missions take a passive approach, arguing that culture is not a priority.

## 8. Citizenship and education

“We have made Italy. Now we must make Italians.” It is tempting to apply this famous statement by the 19th century Italian statesman Massimo d’Azeglio to the European Union. Could a stronger sense of belonging together, as citizens of the European Union, be an antidote to populism?

Populists, of course, deny that European citizenship is possible, let alone desirable. The only true citizen is a national citizen. Our identity as citizens is singular; composite identity is a contradiction in terms, and a dangerous one to boot. Nor are populists the only politicians to believe this. In their wake, even mainstream politicians echo this theme. As Theresa May said, to much applause at her Conservative Party Conference, “(i)f you believe you are a citizen of the world, you are a citizen of nowhere. You don’t understand what citizenship means.”

Three questions, then: can European civic identity exist? Should it exist? And will it counter populism? In the past 60 years European integration has steadily progressed, but people’s identification with the EU as citizens has not kept pace. Just as France or Germany managed to mould different regional identities into a strong sense of national identity, perhaps it is time for the EU to shape its various national identities into an overarching sense of European identity.<sup>177</sup> But the analogy with national identity should not be pushed too far: European identity is not the same as national identity writ large. Whereas national identities, as a rule, are seen as mutually exclusive (I am French, therefore I am not German), European identity is inclusive, to a degree (I am French; I am also a European).

This sense of layered European identity has, in fact, been growing. Asked (in 2015) whether they see themselves as national citizens only, as national and European, as European and national, or as European citizens only, 39% said they saw themselves as national citizens only, but 51% said they identified as national and European citizens. A further 6% said European and national, and 2% said European only.<sup>178</sup> The latest statistics (2018) show that in each EU Member State, more than half of respondents feel that they are citizens of the EU. Across the EU as a whole, 71% feel this way, and at a national level proportions range from 89% in Luxembourg to 51% in Bulgaria.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> On the historic development of French identity, see Eugen Weber’s classic study *Peasants into Frenchmen* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1976).

<sup>178</sup> European Commission, *Standard Eurobarometer 83*, Spring 2016 (European citizenship).

<sup>179</sup> European Commission, *Standard Eurobarometer 90*, Autumn 2018.

Europeans say that culture is the factor that does most to create a feeling of community among them as EU citizens.<sup>180</sup> Eight in ten (80%) think cultural heritage is important for the European Union. A large majority of respondents (88%) agree Europe's cultural heritage should be taught in schools, as it tells us about our history and culture. More than three quarters in each EU Member State agree.<sup>181</sup> Cultural heritage could be one of the building blocks of policies to strengthen the saliency of European citizenship.

Education, and particularly citizenship education, could be another such building block. Education helps to develop the skills, attitudes and values people need to live as citizens in a democracy. To grasp the importance of education as the foundation of citizenship, we need to look no further than the words of Mr Steve King. King, a nine-time US Republican Congressman allied to President Trump, does not understand why terms like “white nationalist” or “white supremacist” are offensive.

“White nationalist, white supremacist, Western civilization — how did that language become offensive?” King said. “Why did I sit in classes teaching me about the merits of our history and our civilization?”<sup>182</sup>

Whether King was being disingenuous or failed to pay attention in class, he should have known the answer. The USA is a melting pot of nations, held together by allegiance to common civic values. One of these is respect for other people – a principle central to “Western” as well as other civilisations. To engage respectfully in dialogue with others (that is, reasoned exchange), is one of the principal lessons we learn through education, including civic education. This is why education “is the single greatest key to human dignity”, as Jonathan Sacks wrote in his beautiful book on *The Dignity of Difference*.<sup>183</sup>

Education and culture are areas where the EU has only limited competence. It may support, coordinate, or complement actions of the member states, but EU legislation in these areas is not allowed to harmonize national laws or regulations. The EU budget spends little on education and culture. For many years education and culture rarely figured on the agenda of the European Council, but this is changing. In December 2017 the European Council declared that education and culture are key to building to inclusive and cohesive societies, and to sustaining European competitiveness. They also expressed a

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<sup>180</sup> European Commission, *Standard Eurobarometer 88*, Autumn 2017, p. 42.

<sup>181</sup> European Commission, *Special Eurobarometer 466*, September-October 2017 (Cultural Heritage).

<sup>182</sup> Trip Gabriel, ‘Before Trump, Steve King Set the Agenda for the Wall and Anti-Immigrant Policies’, *New York Times*, 10 January 2019.

<sup>183</sup> Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference* (London: Continuum, rev. ed. 2003), p. 15.

willingness “to do more in these areas, in which the EU plays an important supplementing and supporting role.”<sup>184</sup> A few weeks earlier, at the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth in Gothenburg, the European Pillar of Social Rights had been jointly signed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission. In its first principle, the European Social Pillar states that everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market.

These declarations came in the wake of a spate of terrorist attacks which pitted communities against each other. They reflect the hope that education and culture can help restore the social fabric. That these statements were adopted at the highest political level signals there is, for the first time, growing awareness of and support for the role of the EU in the field of education and culture.

But declarations alone do not change reality. Will these statements of principle be acted upon? Much, of course, will depend on the available budget. In its proposal for the EU’s multiannual financial framework for 2021-2027 the European Commission has proposed to more than double the funding for Erasmus+, the Union’s flagship programme for education, youth, and sport, to 30 billion EUR. Erasmus could then provide learning and mobility opportunities to 12 million people, compared to 4 million under the current programme. The Commission also proposes to increase the budget for Creative Europe, the EU programme for culture and media, to 1.85 billion EUR, including 609 million EUR for culture. To put this into perspective: the amount proposed for culture amounts to 0.05% of the EU budget (MFF, 2021-2027). Out in the real world, among citizens and cultural organisations, there is huge demand for the EU to do more. The available funds only permit one in 6 (16.2%) of applications to be funded. This is a budget that sells Europeans short.

Erasmus is seen by citizens as one of the three most positive results of European integration.<sup>185</sup> Erasmus builds experience, broadens horizons, and boosts employability. Eastern European students benefit particularly, with their long-term unemployment being reduced by 83% when compared no their non-mobile peers. It is also notable that more Erasmus-alumni hold management positions five to ten years after graduation than do

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<sup>184</sup> European Council, ‘European Council Conclusions’, 14 December 2017, 2018.

<sup>185</sup> European Commission Staff Working Document, *Mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme (2014-2018)*, SWD (2018) 40 final, p. 82.

their non-mobile peers.<sup>186</sup> Erasmus contributes to a more cohesive Union: it fosters positive social/civil behaviour and a sense of feeling “European” (+19% compared to non-participants).<sup>187</sup> The programme literally brings young people together, including in delightfully serendipitous ways.<sup>188</sup>

Worldwide, student mobility is at an all-time high. In 2015, 4.6 million students studied abroad, up from 0.8 million in the late 1970s.<sup>189</sup> Countries increasingly compete to attract these internationally mobile students, and Europe’s competitive position is being eroded. Whereas in 2001 Germany and France were the third and fourth most popular destination countries (behind the USA and the UK), by 2017 France had dropped to 5<sup>th</sup> place (behind the USA, the UK, China, and Australia), while Germany slipped to 9<sup>th</sup> place (behind the USA, UK, China, Australia, France, Canada, and Russia). Spain no longer makes the top 10.<sup>190</sup> EU member states will wish to take their own measures, but to bolster Europe’s competitiveness it would also make sense to strengthen the Erasmus programme. For this to happen the programme would need to be treated as a strategic asset: “need to have”, not just “nice to have”.

Erasmus is one of the EU’s most successful and popular programmes and the Commission has been right to flag it up as a main priority for the coming years. But there is a snag. Agreement on the MFF requires unanimity in the Council. This will not be easy to achieve, if only because one of the net-contributors, the UK, is set to leave the Union. EU finance ministers may be inclined to axe the proposed increase because benefits for each EU country are not easy to predict, and other spending is easier to calculate as part of their zero-sum “juste retour” negotiations about the budget. Erasmus promotes the EU as a force for good both inside and outside the EU. It would be myopic to cut its proposed budget and ministers of education, culture, and foreign affairs would be wise to say so loudly, early, and often.

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<sup>186</sup> Institute of International Education, *A World on the Move: Trends in Global Student Mobility*, Issue 2 (New York: IIE, March 2018), p. 8.

<sup>187</sup> European Commission, *Mid-term-evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme (2014-2018)*, COM(2018) 50 final, 31.1.2018, p. 2.

<sup>188</sup> It is estimated that a quarter of participants met their long-term partner while studying abroad, and that the programme had been responsible for the births of one million children since its launch in 1987 (European Commission, *Erasmus Impact Study*, 2014).

<sup>189</sup> OECD, *Education at a glance* (Paris: OECD, 2017), p. 287.

<sup>190</sup> Institute of International Education, *A World on the Move: Trends in Global Student Mobility*, Issue 2 (New York: IIE, March 2018), p. 3.

In fact, it could be argued that the entire policy area of education and culture is due for a re-appraisal. At a time when presumed national identities are increasingly being touted – in EU member states as well as in the world at large – it is time for the EU to sharpen its profile as a force for individual liberty and social tolerance. The European Union is not only about diversity; it is about unity in diversity. Left unattended, or addressed through appeasement, centrifugal forces will tear societies apart as they have done on so many occasions up to this very day. If European history has any principal lesson to teach, it is that by accommodating the erosion of fundamental liberties we condone their demise.

Erasmus and Creative Europe will not stem the tide by themselves. More is needed. Europe's politicians should be reminded of their promise to create a European Education Area – a boring formula that stands for a sensible, even urgent collection of policies. Here is how the Commission sees it. The European Education Area stands for

“[...] a Europe in which learning would not be hampered by borders. A continent where spending time in another Member State – to study, to learn and to work – has become the standard and where, in addition to one's mother tongue, speaking two other languages has become the norm. A continent in which people have a strong sense of their identity as Europeans, of Europe's cultural heritage and its diversity”.<sup>191</sup>

An eloquent, moving statement (*une fois n'est pas coutume*) and three feasible objectives, provided national political leaders liberate this policy area from the miserly ambitions of rather too many ministers of education.

What would re-energising education and culture mean in practice? In its contribution to the 2017 Leaders' Meeting in Gothenburg the Commission has presented various proposals to strengthen a sense of common European citizenship, complementary to our national, regional, and local identities.<sup>192</sup> These proposals now await implementation or endorsement. Meanwhile the Commission would do well to reach out beyond the sphere of officialdom to cultural institutes, NGOs, and foundations. Citizenship cannot – and should not – be constructed from the top; it must be shaped and co-developed by citizens and civil society organisations, and the Commission should use its convening power to get the ball rolling.

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<sup>191</sup> European Commission, *Strengthening European identity through education and culture*, COM(2017) 673 final, p. 11.

<sup>192</sup> European Commission, *Strengthening European identity through education and culture*, COM(2017) 673 final.

Three dimensions deserve particular attention: foreign language education, education for citizenship, and restoring the humanities at the centre of education.

### Languages

To live and work together Europeans need to understand each other, and that means having access to each other's languages. In 2002 the Barcelona European Council agreed that every European citizen should get the opportunity to learn two foreign languages from an early age. Europe is still far from reaching this goal. On the positive side, 83.8% of primary school children learn at least one foreign language (2014), but that does not say much. Teaching time is limited: on average only one to two hours per week. Only about half of pupils in general education are offered two languages (51%); the participation rate in vocational education is even lower (34.5%), and there are big differences between member states.<sup>193</sup> In 13 member states, including Germany and Italy, the trend is flat or even downward.<sup>194</sup> More than 15 years after Barcelona national ministers have still far from given foreign language instruction sufficient priority.

It is not that ministers of education ignore the importance of multilingualism. Council resolutions of 22 May 2008, 21 November 2008, and 20 May 2014 explicitly state that language competences contribute to people's mobility, employability and personal development. They even mention the importance of classical languages such as ancient Greek and Latin.<sup>195</sup> But words come easy, and action lags behind. Too many ministers ignore at home what they signed up to in Brussels. A push from national parliaments, or civil society, may be needed.

The EU and national governments also need to step up their efforts to promote European languages in the wider world. This is another area where action on the ground has failed to match rhetorical commitment. A decade ago the Council agreed to make best use of European languages for developing cultural and economic dialogue with the rest of the world and enhancing the role of the EU on the international stage.<sup>196</sup> Little has happened.

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<sup>193</sup> European Commission, *Eurydice Brief: Key data on teaching Languages at school in Europe – 2017 edition*, pp. 5-8.

<sup>194</sup> Peter Teffer, 'Fewer EU pupils being taught two languages', *EUObserver*, 23 February 2017.

<sup>195</sup> Council conclusions of 20 May 2014 on multilingualism and the development of language competences, *Official Journal C 183/26*, 14.6.2014.

<sup>196</sup> Council resolution on a European strategy for multilingualism, 21 November 2008.



Nor have ministers, or the EU, shown much interest on the logical and indispensable concomitant of this export policy: common and co-ordinated efforts to promote the study and learning of non-European languages in Europe. The Commission did in fact propose<sup>197</sup> to promote the teaching and learning of non-EU languages in the EU but ministers declined, and only endorsed the recommendation to promote their own languages. Communication is a two-way street. Winning and keeping friends in an increasingly contentious world is difficult enough as it is. Like it or not, Europeans will need to learn the art of listening before speaking.

### Citizenship

Democracy ultimately depends on popular support, which rests on a sense of shared identity and common responsibility. Democracy needs people who are willing to think, speak, and act as democrats – cives, or citizens - of their political community. In Europe today many people are disenchanted with politics, and growing numbers of young people do not take part in elections. This is a worrisome trend. Disagreement and disaffection are integral to political life, and most people will act as spectators or bystanders at least some of the time, but there is a degree of disengagement beyond which democracy withers away and dies. Democracy needs citizens.

Nobody is born a citizen, except in the narrow, legal sense. Citizenship is a skill acquired through socialisation, education, and practice. Education, in particular, is essential to arm students with the habits they need to live as citizens in democracies. These habits, as Sarah Stitzlein notes, include collaboration, compromise, deliberation, critique, dissent, hope, and living citizenship as shared fate.<sup>198</sup> The rising tide of intolerance across Europe is testimony that citizenship has been neglected as a priority in education.

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<sup>197</sup> European Commission, *Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment*, COM(2008) 566, 18.9.2008, p. 14.

<sup>198</sup> Sarah M. Stitzlein, *American Public Education and the Responsibility of its Citizens: Supporting Democracy in the Age of Accountability* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 166.

The Council of Europe, which has done excellent work on the subject, warns that

“[...] (i)n many countries, education for democratic citizenship and human rights education are not sufficiently mainstreamed. In some areas of learning, such as vocational training, they are often absent. Where they are present, in many cases not enough is being done to monitor their impact, meaning that they do not receive sufficient priority, with resources geared instead towards areas of education that are evaluated and ranked.”<sup>199</sup>

Europeans know little about each other’s history, social reality, and cultural diversity. Much of Europe’s history is shared history, but most national history school curricula remain focused on national narratives, notwithstanding excellent efforts to change this such as the Council of Europe’s Shared Histories project.<sup>200</sup> Europeans also know little about the European Union, as opinion surveys have shown for many years. The 2017 Eurobarometer poll shows that 89% of young Europeans want governments to strengthen school education about their rights and responsibilities as citizens of the Union.

It is not that EU ministers are unaware of the importance of the subject. Ministers even called for a stronger European dimension in national citizenship education.<sup>201</sup> The problem is, just as with language instruction, that national practices do not reflect European declarations. When the Dutch government published draft legislation on citizenship education in 2018, for example, it did not include any substantive proposals on the European dimension of citizenship.<sup>202</sup>

Today’s generation of Europeans cannot exercise citizenship responsibly without knowledge and understanding of the evil perpetrated by previous generations. Understanding of the role Europeans have played in the Holocaust is vital to understand the European responsibility to counter anti-Semitism and other forms of prejudice. This should be self-evident, but sadly it is not. Teachers can be reluctant to teach about the Holocaust to avoid being challenged by students, including from immigrant backgrounds, who equate today’s Israel with yesterday’s Nazi Germany. On social media the subject is mired in bile. But if Europeans cannot muster the courage to face up to their past, they

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<sup>199</sup> Council of Europe, *Learning to Live Together. Report on the State of Citizenship and Human Rights Education in Europe* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2017).

<sup>200</sup> Council of Europe, *Shared Histories. For a Europe without dividing lines* (Strasbourg, 2014).

<sup>201</sup> Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching.

<sup>202</sup> Wetsvoorstel verduidelijkend burgerschapsopdracht in het funderend onderwijs, 05-06-2018.

cannot face their future with confidence. Citizen education in Europe must include education about the Holocaust.

One way national authorities could reinforce both the national and the European dimension of citizenship would be to strengthen the Europe for Citizens Programme. The programme has a dual purpose: to raise awareness of the common history and values of the EU, and to encourage the democratic and civic participation of citizens.<sup>203</sup> With a budget of only 188 million EUR for seven years (2014-2020) it is a small programme. A bigger budget would allow the EU to do more to preserve and strengthen democracy in Europe.

It should also be made easier for schools, cultural organisations, and other citizen groups to access the EU funds for citizenship, culture and education. As so often, the EU has scattered its subsidies across numerous instruments, each with different rules and time-tables. Citizens should not be expected to trawl through Erasmus+, the European Structural and Investment Funds, Creative Europe, Europe for Citizens, the Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme, the European Solidarity Corps and Horizon 2020, not to mention the guidance of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. How many people have heard of them? A one-stop-shop, a single web portal to access these funds, is long overdue.

### Humanities

Literacy and numeracy, the ability to understand and work with numbers, must hold pride of place in any system of education, alongside understanding of the fundamentals of natural science. But success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century depends on more than simply learning facts. A recent report on science education in Europe points out that students also need to acquire key competences, such as the ability to collaborate, listen to the ideas of others, think critically, be creative, take initiative, and constructively manage emotions. The authors conclude that science education should focus on competences, and that the emphasis must shift from STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) to STEAM by linking science with the arts and other fields.<sup>204</sup> Science and other disciplines must be infused with what philosopher Martha Nussbaum calls the spirit of the humanities: “searching critical thought, daring imagination, empathetic understanding of human

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<sup>203</sup> EACEA, ‘Europe for Citizens’, 2019.

<sup>204</sup> Expert Group on Science Education, *Science education for responsible citizenship* (Brussels: European Commission, 2015), p. 20.

experiences of many different kinds, and understanding of the complexities of the world we live in.”<sup>205</sup>

To live in freedom and avoid subservience to authorities or peers, human beings must have the confidence to think for themselves. Socratic thinking is essential to a free society. It is an even more important skill in today’s world, with societies riven by ethnic, religious, or other social divisions. Socratic thinking involves questioning our own reasoning and taking responsibility for it; it also involves exchanging ideas with others in an atmosphere of mutual respect for reason.<sup>206</sup> This is what the humanities teach us, Nussbaum argues, and this is why democracy needs the humanities.

Much important academic research in the humanities and the arts is carried out by so-called rare or small disciplines, such as archaeology, anthropology, oriental languages, or linguistics, where student numbers are low and post-degree career opportunities limited. At many universities and research institutes such bodies of precarious knowledge are now threatened with extinction, a victim of budgetary cuts.<sup>207</sup> Europe is impoverishing itself: once lost, such knowledge is difficult and expensive to regain.

For all of these reasons one would expect that the European Union would have put the humanities front and centre in its research funding.<sup>208</sup> That is not the case. Horizon 2000, the EU’s flagship research programme, allocates a mere 7% of its budget to the social sciences and humanities – together.<sup>209</sup> At national level the situation is not much better. Even in a prosperous country like Norway only three per cent of the funding allocated by the Research Council goes to humanities research.<sup>210</sup> If Europe is serious about the quality of its democracy – and its competitiveness – it will have to step up to the plate.

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<sup>205</sup> Martha C. Nussbaum, *Not For Profit. Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 7.

<sup>206</sup> Nussbaum, op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>207</sup> Markus Hilgert, ‘Scholars at Risk – Cultures in Crisis’, keynote speech at the Scholars at Risk Network 2018 Global Congress, Freie Universität Berlin, 25 April 2018.

<sup>208</sup> The humanities include history, archaeology, anthropology, philosophy, religious studies, literature, linguistics, musicology, art history, classical studies, media studies and cultural studies. For an extensive discussion see Poul Holm, Arne Jarrick, and Dominic Scott, *Humanities World Report 2015* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

<sup>209</sup> European Commission, *Integration of social sciences and humanities in Horizon 2020* (Brussels: European Commission, 2018), p. 8.

<sup>210</sup> Research Council of Norway, ‘The Research Council to strengthen humanities research’, press release, 17 January 2018.

## 8. Citizenship and education

Time to return to our three questions. European civic identity does exist. Most Europeans see themselves as citizens of the EU as well as citizens of their national state. That, to most liberal democrats, is a welcome development. Like all democracies, the EU needs its citizens to think and act as citizens. Will a stronger sense of common endeavour be an antidote to populism? Populists seem to think so, and oppose any moves to strengthen European cultural cooperation. That might not be the worst reason to promote it.

## 9. Revisiting European cultural diplomacy

In previous chapters we have seen how the European core values of democracy, the rule of law, and human rights are being challenged around the world. At the same time, new opportunities to promote freedom and good governance are opening up as a result of Agenda 2030, the UN strategy to realise the Sustainable Development Goals. In this final section we will look at how these changes affect European diplomacy. Are EU policies to defend and promote cultural freedom and related human rights fit for purpose? If not, what changes are needed?

In Europe, cultural policy is primarily a national competence. The EU is not in the driving seat, but it plays an important supporting role. The EU Treaty aims at an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe. Against that background it confers on the Union the task, *inter alia*, of contributing “to the flowering of cultures of Member States, while at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore.” Cool language that speaks to the hotly contested issue of European identity. Nineteenth century nationalism saw culture as the emanation of national identity. The Treaty takes a more subtle view. It sees both unity and diversity as essential to Europe’s cultural identity. Striking the right balance has not been easy.

On the one hand the Union supports and supplements national actions to respect cultural and linguistic diversity and to strengthen the competitiveness of the cultural and creative sectors, in accordance with Article 167 of The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. The cultural and creative sectors include *inter alia* architecture, archives, libraries and museums, artistic crafts, audio-visual (including film, television, video games and multimedia), tangible and intangible cultural heritage, design, festivals, music, literature, performing arts, publishing, radio and visual arts.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand the EU supports efforts to create common perspectives, such as the European year of cultural heritage.

Most EU cultural projects take place within Europe, but there is also an international dimension. For many years the Commission has paid for cultural projects outside the EU, but only in 2007 was culture in external relations identified as one of the main aspects of

the Union's cultural agenda (European Agenda for Culture).<sup>211</sup> In 2008 the Council called for "a European strategy for incorporating culture consistently and systematically in the external relations of the Union and contributing to the complementarity of the Union's activities with those of its Member States"<sup>212</sup>, and in May 2011 the European Parliament asked for a common strategy on culture in the EU's external relations.<sup>213</sup> Parliament also voted a budget of 500,000 EUR for a Preparatory Action in this field. In 2015 the Council adopted Conclusions on culture in the EU's external relations that called for "a more integrated approach [...] that includes the mainstreaming of the cultural dimension in development programmes."<sup>214</sup> Finally, In 2016, the Commission and the EEAS issued a Joint Communication entitled "Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations."<sup>215</sup> When the Council endorsed the Joint Communication it emphasised that culture is "an essential part of the EU's international relations."<sup>216</sup>

There is an ongoing international debate between proponents of "cultural diplomacy", understood as the domain of public authorities, and "cultural relations", regarded as the preserve of politically independent cultural organisations and practitioners. The distinction is easier to draw in theory than in practice. In reality, governments often work through "arms-length" relationships with nominally independent cultural institutes and organisations, while these organisations receive much of their funding from the public purse. The EU deals with the issue in time-honoured fashion: a fudge. As its convoluted title indicates, the "Communication" is not a full-blown "strategy" (cultural diplomacy), but something that points the way towards a strategy [...] for cultural relations. *Honi soit qui mal y pense.*

The three main objectives of the Joint Communication are (i) to support culture as an engine for social and economic development, (ii) promoting intercultural dialogue and the role of culture for inter-community relations, and (iii) reinforcing cooperation on cultural

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<sup>211</sup> Commission of the European Communities, 'Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a European Agenda for Culture in a Globalizing World', 2007.

<sup>212</sup> Council of the European Union, 'Council Conclusions on the Promotion of Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue in the External Relations of the Union and its Member States', 2008.

<sup>213</sup> European Parliament, 'European Parliament Resolution of 12 May 2011 on the Cultural Dimensions of the EU's External Actions', (2010/216(INI), 2011.

<sup>214</sup> Council of the European Union, 'Outcome of Proceedings', 24 November 2015.

<sup>215</sup> European Commission, 'Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations', 8 June 2016.

<sup>216</sup> Council of the European Union, 'Draft Council Conclusions on an EU Strategic Approach to International Cultural Relations', 5 April 2017.

heritage. Intercultural dialogue will be promoted through cooperation between cultural operators; peace building cultural activities; exchanges between young people, students, researchers, scientists and alumni; as well as through cooperation on the protection of cultural heritage. The EU sees cultural heritage as an important manifestation of cultural diversity that needs to be protected. Rehabilitating and promoting cultural heritage attracts tourism and boosts economic growth. It proposes joint action with partner countries to develop sustainable strategies for heritage protection through training, skills development and knowledge transfer.

The EU calls for a cross-cutting approach to culture.

“Culture is not just about the arts or literature. It spans a wide range of policies and activities, from inter-cultural dialogue to tourism, from education and research to the creative industries, from protecting heritage to promoting creative industries and new technologies, and from artisanship to development cooperation.”

An EU Cultural Diplomacy Platform has been created to help with the implementation of the strategy. The EU also concluded an Administrative Arrangement with the European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) to improve cooperation in the field of culture across the world. EUNIC clusters in 14 partner countries are piloting the implementation of the arrangement.

Interestingly, the Communication argues that it is “necessary to go beyond projecting the diversity of European cultures, and aim at generating a new spirit of dialogue, mutual listening and learning, joint capacity-building and global solidarity.” Three years on, this spirit has not quite caught on yet, as most European countries that practice cultural diplomacy continue to work firmly within the traditional paradigm of exporting and show-casing “national culture”. But there have been signs of change. Even in France, where cultural diplomacy remains largely about promoting “*le rayonnement français*”, there is growing interest in listening and learning.

Perhaps the most notable sign of change is the promise by President Emmanuel Macron to return African heritage in French museums to Africa, permanently or temporarily. Two French academics, Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy, followed up with a detailed



study supporting Macron's pledge.<sup>217</sup> The proposal and the report stirred up much controversy, and not a little embarrassment. Many European museum directors were roundly critical. As one of them commented: "The issues the French have raised — giving everything back to the countries of origin — have nothing to do with reality nor, as a rule, the interests of these countries."<sup>218</sup> Other interested parties reacted more constructively.<sup>219</sup> The issue, it must be said, deserves more than an ill-tempered dismissal. The moral case for restitution is strong, even though the practical consequences should be carefully debated. One obvious question is whether objects, once returned, will be properly cared for. Antiquities that have been returned have been known to go missing. In 1993 the Metropolitan Museum of Art returned the "Lydian Hoard", a 6<sup>th</sup> century BC collection of gold and silver objects, to Turkey. Once back on Turkish soil, key examples of the treasure were promptly stolen. Similar cases are reported from Iraq.<sup>220</sup>

National museum directors will reach their own conclusions. At the same time the debate holds a number of lessons for Europe as a whole. To start with, the issue would benefit from some European coordination, if only to avoid decisions being taken largely along national lines – in an unintended but no less awkward echo of previous colonial competition. EU ministers could take the lead and decide to build on the European Year of Cultural Heritage (2018). Using the EU budget, ministers could agree to coordinate their support for collections and museums in Africa and other parts of the world. A practical (and highly symbolic) way to cement their cooperation would be to launch a European programme for investment in cultural infrastructure in the Global South, as a concrete expression of national and European cultural diplomacy. Such a European initiative would help turn the debate, with its current perspective of winners and losers, into a positive sum game. Above all, it would energise European-African cultural relations. Why not use this opportunity to create genuine partnerships – partnerships between equals – and conceive the programme from the start as a joint initiative between Europe and Africa?

For too long Europe's cultural relations with Africa, Asia, and Latin America have been stuck in the post-colonial mode of donors and recipients. What is clear is that Eu-

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<sup>217</sup> Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy, *Rapport sur la restitution du patrimoine culturel africain. Vers une nouvelle éthique relationnelle* (Paris, 2018).

<sup>218</sup> Deutsche Welle, 'German Museums 'willing to return' Looted Colonial Objects', 2018.

<sup>219</sup> See, for example, the exchange between Tristram Hunt, Hartmut Dorgerloh and Nicholas Thomas in *The Art Newspaper*, 28 November 2018.

<sup>220</sup> Maxwell L. Anderson, *Antiquities. What everyone needs to know* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 161.

rope's counterparts in other parts of the world are not looking to play role of grateful recipients of European development aid or cultural show-casing. What they have been asking for is to be included in joint projects, collaborative projects, co-creation and co-development. They want and expect Europe to change the traditional model of donor-recipient relations, and replace it with models of exchange and cooperation between equal partners. Too often Europe is felt to be extending aid, whereas what it should be offering is recognition and respect.

Europeans have been slow to respond and adapt, although the tide is beginning to change. The EU should build on this change. It should stop thinking of cultural policy as "development". Asian and other partners do not ask to be "developed", they ask to be accepted and valued as equals.

The EU should therefore move away from well-intentioned but traditional practices such as European Food Days. Not only are such Days more about display than about dialogue, but their "European" nature is largely fictitious, a mere by-product of parallel national show-casing. Instead, EU cultural events should be designed as equal partnerships with cultural institutes and artists from the host country. Listening, learning and sharing should be prime objectives.

The EU also needs to revisit its policy of supporting mostly short-time cultural projects. Projects that last one or two years rarely bring sustainable results. Multi-annual collaboration is essential to build the necessary experience, skills, and trust.

Across the world, technology is driving innovation, including in the creative and cultural industries. Cultural organisations in Europe, Asia, and other regions are investing in digital skills to innovate and reach new audiences.<sup>221</sup> This is where EU programs of co-creation and co-development with cultural and creative organisations and entrepreneurs in other parts of the world could be particularly valuable. The relationship between technology and culture poses many questions, and no country or region has a monopoly on the answers. Why not set up collaborative platforms between the EU and its partners?

On the European side, collaboration must be firmly anchored in understanding and knowledge of the countries and regions concerned. It is not an exaggeration to say that

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<sup>221</sup> See, for example, Department for Cultural, Digital, Media, and Sport, *Culture is Digital* (London, 2018).

many Europeans are unfamiliar with the diversity within Asia, to give just one example. That tends to irk Europe's partners, who remain sensitive to signs of post-colonial European indifference. The EU needs to promote and sustain EU-wide networks of area and country experts; funding these should be a priority of national and European research spending.

The Sustainable Development Goals imply that culture must be an integral part of policies to alleviate poverty, promote education, gender equality, and sustainable urbanisation, and build peaceful societies that respect universal human rights. This is the most comprehensive agenda for culture the world has ever seen. The EU should publish a white paper proposing to work with international partners in leading this agenda. As discussed in chapter 6, European priorities should include culture and education, culture and governance, and culture and security.

Europe, to sum up, must orient its cultural diplomacy away from dependency and towards collaboration. It is time for the paradigm to change, clearly and unambiguously. It is time for ministers to take the lead, and for the EU to communicate the change.

### **Standing up for cultural freedom**

Moving from donorship to partnership is one of two major policy changes that Europe needs to realise the potential of cultural diplomacy. The other, equally important step is allowing cultural diplomacy to be at the centre of Europe's response to the erosion of liberty around the world. As this paper has argued, this requires much closer synergy between Europe's cultural relations and EU policies to defend and promote human rights. Cultural liberty is essential to a life lived in freedom and dignity. Preserving and enhancing space for cultural liberty should be the main objective of European cultural diplomacy.

There are two dimensions to this, an external one and one that is internal to Europe. The first dimension is to weave cultural relations into the fabric of EU external policies, especially human rights policy and policies to achieve the international Sustainable Development Goals, as discussed earlier in this paper. This means that the EU must change its approach. Current policy reflects the EU's traditional approach to foreign aid and the logic of its financial instruments. Partnership, and the promotion of cultural freedom, are not the principal objectives. On the ground, in countries where artists and other groups are looking for Europe to support them in their struggle for freedom, the EU often is hemmed in by the rigidity of its financial rules, which benefit large organisations and

make it very difficult for the EU to support small scale, innovative grass roots projects. The EU must raise its game.

The Communication is no more than a first step. Its conventional philosophy barely takes account of the innovative and imaginative work of many European cultural organisations. The British Council has invited artists to respond to climate change, the Goethe-Institut has explored ways to get (British!) museum-visitors to reflect on the future of Europe, many artists have worked to support women's rights; countless exiting experiments focus on digitisation and the arts, in Europe as well as in the wider world. Little of this is reflected in the EU's policy statement. Nor has the EU clarified how the 'strategy' will be financed, or who is in charge of implementation: separate Commission DGs, the EEAS, or member states?

Meanwhile many of the EU's national cultural institutes and ministries remain wedded to their traditional practices of promoting the national language and "national" high art. Thus, much potential for European cooperation remains underutilised. Why not invest more in joint projects? For years, the national cultural institutes have been organising national "cultural seasons" with countries outside Europe. 2018/2019, for example, the Goethe-Institut has been co-organising a year of cultural exchanges with the United States ("*Wunderbar together*"). These "national" years conspicuously lack any European dimension. One option would be for the Goethe-Institut, the Institut Français, the Instituto Cervantes, and others to include a European dimension in their national programmes, such as activities co-organised with a EUNIC member from another country. A more ambitious, but equally feasible option would be for national cultural institutes to co-organise common, European seasons of cultural cooperation with selected third countries. Other possible joint projects could include adding a European dimension to national visitors programmes, or setting up European programmes to provide safe havens for artists, journalists, or intellectuals from outside the EU.

The other, parallel change that is needed is to put cultural relations at the heart of Europe's response to the populist attacks on civil liberties, democracy, and the rule of law in Europe itself.

We are witnessing growing cultural tensions in Europe – real and perceived. Education and culture can be forces of social cohesion, particularly in local communities. Cultural tensions tend to play out directly at local level, and local governments have had to adapt. Many city administrations have developed successful models of managing diversi-

ty, and national policy-makers could build on their experience. Some inspiring examples are discussed in a recent study by the Bertelsmann Foundation, which compared the diversity strategies of six cities with diverse populations (Mechelen, Leicester, Barcelona, Malmö, Toronto, Nashville). The study focused on key areas of civic activity – citizenship, education, interaction, the labour market, and the media – as the areas that shape how diversity is experienced. Political leadership, it was found, can make a genuine, positive difference.<sup>222</sup> Here is a practical set of answers to the populist narrative of cultural incompatibility between old and new Europeans.

There is much evidence that arts and culture can make communities better places to live by helping people to explore their own identity and that of others, and to connect through shared experience. Researchers in Canada found that 77% of Canadians agree that arts experience makes people feel part of their local community. Canadians who regularly attend live music reported a stronger sense of belonging to their city or town. Canadians who rate arts, culture and leisure in their community as “excellent” were three times more likely to report a “very strong” sense of belonging.<sup>223</sup>

Mobilising the power of art and cultural heritage to bring people together is a powerful way for public authorities to invest in social cohesion and build or rebuild trust in towns and cities. It also is a way to re-create spaces for open dialogue at a time when such space is under pressure from various sides. Populists shout down opponents; autocrats attack journalists and reduce space for free and open debate; social media use algorithms to seduce users into withdrawing in virtual echo chambers and epistemic bubbles; and many universities shrink from engaging controversial speakers for fear of causing offence (“de-platforming”). Safe spaces for independent thought and free speech are shrinking, and counter-measures are overdue. Public authorities must protect, and where necessary re-create the civic spaces without which democracy cannot flourish. Open minds need open spaces where people can confidently share experiences and ideas. Artists and cultural organisations can be powerful allies in creating and dynamising these spaces, whether virtual or physical. Many theatres, museums, and other cultural organisations already serve as prominent stewards of civic encounter.

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<sup>222</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung, *Learning from the World; Good Practices in Navigating Cultural Diversity* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 2018).

<sup>223</sup> Community Foundations of Canada, *Vital Signs: Arts and Belonging* (Ottawa, April 2017).

This role may not fit all cultural institutions, or at least not yet. Some cultural organisations may need support (infrastructure, money), but some may also have to step outside their comfort zone and change their approach. This will take courage. Museums, for example, could do more. One leading director believes museums should be more confident about their voice, and brave in confronting the big issues.<sup>224</sup> Museums across Europe could draw inspiration from the recent exhibition (“Restless Times”) of German archaeology by the Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte in Berlin. Rather than presenting exhibits in chronological order, the curators display them thematically, to bring out patterns of migrations and the age-old connections between Europeans, dissolving the myth of pure, national history. At a time when free, independent thinking, respectful dialogue, and understanding of European interconnectedness are under sustained attack, such *Zivilcourage* from artists, curators, intellectuals, and politicians is needed more than ever.

National cultural institutes, too, could do more to integrate the European dimension into their *modus operandi*. More than 60 years after EU governments resolved to create an “ever closer union” most national cultural institutes still treat European cooperation as an optional extra. EUNIC has been obliged to accept European Commission financing (Creative Europe fund) partly to compensate for the lack of financial support from its member organisations. EUNIC clusters currently operate in around 70 countries outside the EU, which leaves large parts of Africa and Asia without a EUNIC presence. Arguably, EUNIC needs to develop a more strategic approach to its presence in the world. But for EUNIC to operate more strategically, its member organisations will first have to develop a more strategic view of EUNIC. Is it not time, perhaps, for the Goethe-Institut, the Institut Français, the Instituto Camões, the Instituto Cervantes, and others, to include their European vocation under the Treaty in their mandates or mission statements?

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<sup>224</sup> Tristram Hunt, ‘Museums must confront the big issues’, *The Art Newspaper*, 20 December 2018.

## 10. Conclusion

The attacks on Europe's core values of liberty, democracy, and the rule of law leave no room for complacency. Europe does not lack the means to respond; what it lacks is a sense of direction. Cultural diplomacy must be at the centre of Europe's response to the erosion of liberty around the world. Cultural diplomacy's traditional model, with its dominant emphasis on displaying cultural "achievements", is no longer fit for purpose. It must be replaced by a model that not only combines national perspectives with a common, European approach, but which also has cultural freedom among its prime objectives. At the same time, national cultural institutes should do more to integrate the European dimension into their operations. Europe can no longer afford business as usual.

Cultural policy, of course, is not a panacea. In and by itself culture cannot resolve either intra-national conflicts or international ones. Soft power is a complement to hard power, not an alternative to it, and cultural diplomacy is not a ticket to success in either foreign or domestic policy. But culture can be a catalyst, for good and for ill. It can be instrumentalised by politicians to foster discord and violence, but it can also be harnessed as a force for good – although, paradoxically, *not* by politicians, at least not directly. For culture to be a force to open minds it must be employed, freely, by artists. As Simon Brault, the director of the Canada Council of the Arts, has said:

"Artists are not—and must not feel obligated to be—ambassadors in the political sense, but they are voices. And although their voices can often be conflicting and critical of our reality, artists express concerns that politicians may not even dare to raise, concerns that hit home with every human being whom their art speaks to, whether in their own country or beyond its borders. This freedom of expression is the guardian of democracy and of its renewal."<sup>225</sup>

Culture can facilitate independent thinking, dialogue, and understanding. It can inspire people to rise above themselves, and to reach out to others. The responsibility of politicians is to create the conditions that artists need to work in freedom. No more, no less.

There is no quick road to soft power; cultural diplomacy is anything but an easy fix. From its political masters it requires both modesty and ambition. Demand too much and the policy backfires; do too little and it fails to deliver. Europe will have to steer a course

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<sup>225</sup> Canada Council for the Arts, 'Cultural Diplomacy: Giving Voice to the Arts and Culture', 15 October 2018.

between the Scylla of “weaponising” culture as propaganda and the Charybdis of benign neglect.

A second requirement is a sense of realism. Culture’s current popularity among governments as a tool to promote the national brand sometimes appears built on shaky foundations. Contrary to what the soft power branding indices suggest, there is no direct relationship between culture and political power. As Nye has warned, a country’s soft power stems from three sources, not one: whether others find our culture attractive, whether others think we live up to our values, and whether others regard our foreign policies as legitimate. Soft power is not just about culture; it is first and foremost about political credibility. As the EU develops its strategy for international cultural relations, it would therefore be wise to remember that cultural diplomacy is as much about the credibility of its diplomacy as about the attractiveness of its culture.

The EU has made a start. Its “communication” on international cultural relations contains some innovative elements and hold a certain amount of promise. The mere fact of its existence is a positive development. At the same time, the EU is still a long way from realizing the potential of cultural diplomacy to defend and promote the rights and liberties that are at the core of Europe’s identity, at home and abroad. As this paper has argued, it is time for the EU to upgrade its policies for international cultural relations and integrate them with its other policies to defend and promote Europe’s values and interests.

The EU should lift its gaze. Its external cultural policies are in need of political ownership and a clear sense of direction. Europe’s politicians could provide the former, and cultural organisations the latter. The author’s modest hope is to have contributed to their discussion.



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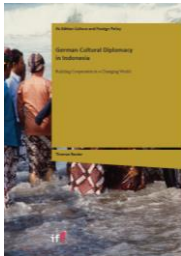
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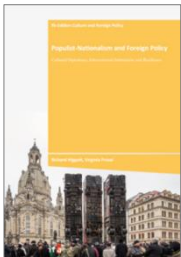
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## Cultural Freedom in European Foreign Policy

In 2017 EU ministers said that culture is “an essential part of the EU’s international relations.” But the EU is a new-comer to the field of cultural diplomacy and its policy is still in its infancy, both conceptually and in terms of implementation.

Many questions remain unanswered. How to draw the line between cultural relations and public diplomacy on the one hand and propaganda on the other? How to steer clear of neo-colonialism? How to encourage European governments, who are prone to national cultural show-casing, to work together and derive strength from unity? This paper will explore some of the contours of this emerging European Union policy, its potential as well as its limitations.