# Cultural Diplomacy of Slavic European Union Member States: A Cross-country Analysis

**Boštjan Udovič[1]**

Centre of International Relations,
University of Ljubljana,
Kardeljeva ploščad 5,
Ljubljana SI-1000, Slovenia
E-mail: bostjan.udovic@fdv.uni-lj.si

**Ana Podgornik**

People in Need (NGO)
Šafaříkova 635/24,
Prague 120 00, Czech Republic
E-mail: ana.podgornik@peopleinneed.cz

**Abstract:** *The article deals with the role of cultural diplomacy in Slavic EU Member States. Its basic idea is to present the main characteristics of cultural diplomacy as a field of possible cooperation between the Slavic EU member countries. The conclusions of the research are three: firstly, the cultural diplomacy of the Slavic EU Member States is fragmented and diversified. Secondly, each country promotes its own cultural diplomacy and there is almost no cooperation between countries in the cultural field. Finally, cultural diplomacy is still an omitted instrument of Slavic EU Member States and a fertile ground for future collaboration within the EU and in the region of Central Europe.*

**Keywords:** *cultural diplomacy, culture, Slavic EU Member States*

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[1]    Corresponding author.

*Boštjan Udovič*
*Ana Podgornik*

# 1. Introduction: *problematique* and methodological framework

At the dawn of the 1980s, it seemed that the bipolar world structure would last forever. However, in just a few years the situation changed dramatically with Gorbachev's ideas of *perestroika* and *glasnost*. The communist iceberg started to thaw and the iron curtain was rising inch by inch. Only in ten years the situation in Central and Eastern Europe changed irreversibly. The outcome was that ex-communist countries became full members of the international community, bringing with them three aces: the large low-exploited economic market, the transitional political structure, and their own culture and cultural patterns/particularities.

While the economic market was embraced strongly and quickly, because it has offered lots of opportunities and advantages for Western economic subjects, the political history and political structure of the newcomers were treated with reservation and patronising behaviour. The background for such behaviour sourced in the premise that these states have suffered a lot under the iron curtain, and therefore there has been a need to help them overcome this trauma. Despite these two factors, the most intriguing was the cultural factor. The newcomers differed from the established cultural settlement in Europe as 62 per cent of inhabitants of the *new states* were Slavs, representing 13 per cent of all inhabitants of the EU at the time of the 'big bang' enlargement in 2004. In the first phase after the dissolution of the communist bloc, cultural particularities were not treated as an influential factor; however, later on, especially when the accession of Slavic countries to the EU accelerated, the cultural patterns and particularities became more relevant, sometimes also causing unfounded moral panic (Pijpers, 2006), which can be attributed to the stereotypisation and prejudices held by the "old" (German and Latin) countries towards the "newcomers".

The big bang of 2004 had positioned Slavic cultures on the map of Euro-Atlantic integrations, causing not only a shift in the economic and political power, but also opening the Pandora box of cultural cooperation of Slavic states with their German and Latin counterparts. These rivalries led to a process sometimes named the "clash of cultures". The main issue within this process, which continues to persevere, has been that Slavic states claimed more than the German-Latin group was willing to give; in other words, they claimed equal

treatment, while the German-Latin states treated them as subordinated units. This not only heavily influenced the decision-making process within the EU, but has also caused twitches, some of them being yet unresolved.[2] The logic that countries in the EU should be treated equally and that Slavic states should invest more in fighting the misperceptions, prejudices and stereotypisation on their cultural particularities frames the discussion of the present article.

The purpose of the article is to present the framework of Slavic EU Member States' (SEUMS)[3] cultural diplomacy (CD), its consequences for the development of CD of SEUMS, and the possibility of cross-country fertilisation of CD. Within such a framework we wish to answer two research questions: (a) how and on which levels do SEUMS execute their CD; and (b) what means they use in performing national CD. Deriving from the research questions, we formulated a thesis that we aim to test, namely, that while *Slavic EU Member States primarily channel their cultural diplomacy through their Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFA), along the latter's activities other state and non-state actors also strongly influence the performance of cultural diplomacy*.

The method used to test the hypothesis is a comparative analysis of foreign policy (CAFP) (see more in Hudson & Vore, 1995; Rosenau, 1974), focusing mostly on the key actors in the SEUMS CD. Such methodological framework is necessary, because the CD combines three angles: communication, representation, and re-production (Udovič, 2011). The analysis therefore combines primary and secondary sources, with a special emphasis on case studies and comparative-critical assessment of presented facts.

The article is divided in three interrelated parts. The introduction is followed by the conceptualisation and operationalisation of the concept of CD, aiming to define the characteristics of CD. The theoretical concepts are elaborated in the second part where the article presents some concrete activities of SEUMS done to promote their own cultural particularities and specifics. The article ends with a discussion and conclusion, presenting some lessons learned and opening space for further debate on non-used possibilities of CD of SEUMS.

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[2]   The British proposal of changing Regulation 883, which according to the British Government gives significant social benefits to Eastern European countries, is not just a symptom but is rather a problem of perception of treating citizens from 2004 'big bang countries' as non-equal to citizens from the "old" EU Member States.

[3]   These are Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

*Boštjan Udovič*
*Ana Podgornik*

## 2.  Conceptualisation and operationalisation of cultural diplomacy

The globalisation era opened, alongside economic and political issues, the issue of national culture and identity. This trend, which had started after the dissolution of the bipolar system, has intensified at the beginning of the 21st century, especially after the rise of the so-called emerging economies, which have in parallel with their economic activities also disseminated their cultural particularities often labelled as cultural diplomacy (CD).[4] Due to the complexity of the concept of CD, it is not surprising that there are as many definitions as there are authors who study CD. But how should we define CD? According to Berridge's (2010) definition, diplomacy is an activity enabling "states to secure the objectives of their foreign policies without resort to force" (cf. also Benko, 1997; Holsti, 1988). His "without resort to force" means that states can use all non-coercive means to achieve their goals. Such understanding of diplomacy opens the floor to the conceptualisation of CD, defined by Nye (2004, p. 94; 2008) as the "ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment". The focus on *attracting* means that CD wants to achieve its goal by indirect rather than by direct means (Gould-Davies, 2003; Arndt, 2005). The indirectness of CD is also confirmed by Goff (2013, pp. 419ff), who says that CD "can be helpful in bridging differences" but "cannot change outcomes where policies are entrenched". According to Goff (2013), one of the main roles of CD consists in softening and clarifying different premises and expanding opportunities for connections and mutual understanding (among parties) (cf. also Kennedy, 2003; Aguilar, 1996). The importance of the latter is also acknowledged by Cummings (2003, p. 1), who defines CD as "the exchange of ideas, information, values, systems, traditions, beliefs, and other aspects of culture, with the intention of fostering mutual understanding".

The added value of Cummings' (2003) definition consists in widening the plethora of the parties involved in CD. Thus, Cummings, with the inclusion of *non-state* actors (Maack, 2001; Mark, 2008; Kennedy, 2003), replaces the *state-centric* approach (Hamilton & Langhorne, 1995; Gould-Davies, 2003;

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[4]  The development of diplomatic studies in the last twenty years have been brought to their fragmentation into some specific areas. Thus, the classical approach to understand diplomacy as one, single activity was no longer appropriate. That is why the researchers started to investigate different activities that cover just one spectrum of diplomacy, i.e. as economic diplomacy, environmental diplomacy, commercial diplomacy, science diplomacy, oil diplomacy, energy diplomacy, etc. Further on the structure of diplomacy see Udovič (2009); further on different approaches and methods in state's diplomacy see Sárvári and Szeidovitz (2016).

Faigenbaum, 2003) in CD. A similar approach is also adopted by Memis (2009), who argues that processes in the modern international community limit the power of government actors and empower actors from the public sphere, business world, and civil society.

Although a broader definition of CD is plausible, there are some problems related to the *de-etatisation* of diplomacy (Schneider, 2006). The first issue is related to *actorness* and raises three main questions: (a) who/what is the central actor in CD, (b) who/what are the supportive actors, and (c) what sort of a relation is established between central and supporting actors (coordination, hierarchisation/subordination, non-communication, etc.) (cf. Gould-Davies, 2003). The second issue deals with CD performance. In cases where CD is shouldered only by one actor (i.e. a central state actorship), it follows a straightforward, focused, and clear path. On the other hand, multi-centre CD is far more complex, since it needs coordination and division of labour among all actors if it wants to be effective (Schneider, 2006). Finally, the third issue tackles the role of CD in relation to other diplomacies (meaning economic, commercial, environmental, etc.). As already presented, the central role of CD consists of fertilising the ground for possible actions with a real outcome (Belanger, 1999; Faigenbaum, 2003).[5] Thus, CD is irrelevant per se, but it is important as a means for granting different ends—being of political and non-political nature (Aguilar, 1996).

The presented characteristics of CD frame the debate on the CD of SEUMS, with a special focus on CD actors, levels, and performative practices. The main intention of the analysis is therefore to find out (1) CD central holders, (2) cooperation/division of labour among them, and (3) good practices in different states, which can also be used in other states and can help to develop cross-country cooperation in the field of CD.

## 3.  Cultural diplomacy of SEUMS: a cross-country approach

### 3.1  A short introduction to Slavic cultural cooperation in history

A short excursion into the past shows that CD of SEUMS is not a 21st century phenomenon, but has been developing since the first half of the 19th century. At the time, today's sovereign Slavic states were divided among different (mostly) non-Slavic states—Slovenia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Croatia were part of the Austrian Empire and Kingdom of Hungary, Bulgaria

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5    If cultural cooperation is action per se, this is not CD but international relations in culture (cf. Bojinović Fenko & Požgan, 2012).

was at first part of the Ottoman Empire and reached independence after the Berlin Congress in 1878, while today's Poland was divided among different authorities—from being semi-independent to being part of the Austrian, German or Russian Empire. The romantic idea of a nation state, coming from the German cultural and political romanticism, was echoed in the Slavic world (Rocker, 1937), resulting in the national awakening of Slavic entities. The awakening proposed that the ethnic communities of Slavic States should have more rights, particularly in the use of their own (i.e. Slavic) language and culture in the public sphere. The demand to equalise Slavic cultural particularities with other cultural groups was accelerated with the 1830s' revolution and reached the point of no return during the Spring of Nations in 1848. This was the period in which Slavic nations in the Austrian Empire claimed their right to equal treatment and in some cases their independence (Grdina, 1995). In this period, we can find the first political movements of Slavic nations, known as *slavism*. Regardless which *slavism* (*panslavism*, *austroslavism*, *neoslavism* or *illyrism*) we take into consideration, all of them can be described by a common denominator—the political emancipation through the empowerment and promotion of national culture. The idea of the political leaders was that the dispersion of Slavic states from different countries can be bridged by forming a common platform where Slavic state representatives can meet. Different Slavic forums, in which different cultural tools (such as art exhibitions, thematic newspapers, student exchanges, etc.) had been promoted, were more than appropriate at that time.

WWI, however, stopped the cultural integration of Slavic nations. After the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, new Slavic states sprung onto the world map; two in Central and Eastern Europe (Poland and the Czechoslovak Republic) and one in South-Eastern Europe (the Kingdom of Yugoslavia). Even though relations among newly-established states were generous and friendly, the process of close cooperation among them was replaced by the process of political integration and fortification of own nationhood. Slavism, being a strong tie in the past, became more or less obsolete.

After WWII, due to the complex situation among Eastern Bloc countries and the ban of communication with foreign audiences, intra- and extra-Eastern Bloc cultural cooperation almost vanished. It is thus not surprising that after the dissolution of Eastern Bloc, Slavic countries, particularly due to the process of accession to Euro-Atlantic integration, enhanced their cultural promotion in "relevant" German and Latin countries (especially Germany and France), while forgetting their Slavic counterparts. The absence of a single Slavic Block (instead of cooperation, Slavic states opted for competition while joining the Euro-Atlantic integrations) resulted in a situation where Slavic states during the

EU-NATO accession process had to accept much stricter conditions than their Latin or German counterparts when they had undergone the same process of integration (cf. Wagner, 2003).

## 3.2 Slavic EU Member States in general numbers: an overview

As seen from Table 1, which presents some descriptive data on SEUMS, Poland is the largest SEUMS, measured by the size of the territory or the population. In terms of population, Poland is followed by the Czech Republic, and in terms of territory—by Bulgaria. On the other hand, Slovenia is geographically and demographically the smallest SEUMS. However, in economic terms, Slovenia has the highest GDP per capita, being economically the most developed among SEUMS. Economic health is also measured by GDP growth, especially during the current economic crisis. As seen from Table 1, Croatia was the only SEUMS in 2014 with a GDP decrease, while all other countries reported growth.[6]

*Table 1.    General data on territory, population, and economy of selected Slavic states*

| State | Territory (km²; 2014) | Population (in million; 2014) | GDP per capita (euro; 2014) | Real GDP growth (% in 2014) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bulgaria | 110,879 | 7.245 | 5.808 | 1.7 |
| Croatia | 56,594 | 4.246 | 10.179 | -0.4 |
| Czech Republic | 78,865 | 10.512 | 14.722 | 2.0 |
| Poland | 312,685 | 38.017 | 10.735 | 3.4 |
| Slovakia | 49,037 | 5.415 | 13.881 | 2.4 |
| Slovenia | 20,273 | 2.061 | 18.065 | 2.6 |

*Source: Eurostat, 2015.*

 Regarding the societal characteristics, the data is as follows: (a) Bulgaria is the only SEUMS which is predominantly Orthodox (83%), while all other countries are predominantly Roman Catholic; (b) in terms of literacy, there are almost no differences among SEUMS (Polish data is the best with 99.8%, Croatian the worst with 98.1%, comparing to Portugal with 93.3%), while there are some differences in the spread between urban and rural population; Czechs are the most urbanised (74% of total population is represented by urban population),

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[6]    GDP per capita in 2009: Bulgaria: -5%, Croatia: -5.8%, Czech Republic: -4.2%, Poland: 1.8%, Slovakia: -4.9%, Slovenia: -7.8% (Eurostat, 2015).

followed by Bulgarians (71%), and Poles (61%). It is interesting that Slovenia, as economically the most developed country, has the lowest rate of urban population (50%).[7]

The *conditio sine qua non* for the study of CD of SEUMS is the state-of-art of national culture. A quick overview shows vivacious activities within the field of culture. As an illustration:

a)  In 2000–2016, four SEUMS cities have been European capitals of culture: Cracow and Prague (2000), Maribor (2012), Košice (2013), Plzen (2015), and Wroclaw (2016);

b)  Employment in the cultural sector[8] in SEUMS is comparable to their Western counterparts (Slovenia and Croatia have 2%, the only SEUMS countries above the EU-27 average (1.7%)) (EU, 2011, p. 67);

c)  Household expenditures for culture in SEUMS are below the EU-27 average in four countries but above the level in Poland (4.3%) and the Czech Republic (5%) is third in line among the 27 countries;[9]

d)  Regarding the structure of expenditures; citizens from SEUMS spend more than 30 per cent on TV and radio equipment (Czechs 22%); less than 15 per cent on newspapers (Slovenia 21%); around 10 per cent on books (Poland 14%); 3 per cent on cinema and theatre (Czech 5%) and 8 per cent on drawing and photo material and equipment (EU, 2011).

## 3.3  Cultural diplomacy in practice: the role and activities of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and their bodies

Despite the fact that modern CD is no longer linked only to states (Goff, 2013), the fact remains that the main CD holders are still MFAs and their organs. This can be explained by quoting both Vienna Conventions,[10] which strongly emphasise the role of (state) representation in enhancing cultural relations among states. Broadening these concrete tasks mentioned by the Conventions with the provision that states should maintain good relations with their counterparts,

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7   CIA Factbook, 2015.
8   The data is measured as employment in cultural sector as a share of total employment. The last data available is for 2009. See EU, 2011, p. 67.
9   The largest amount of household funds spent for culture is in Denmark (5.6%) (EU, 2011, p. 201).
10  The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (VCDR), adopted in 1961, and the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (VCCR), adopted in 1963.

CD surely becomes one of the major activities of modern MFAs (Rana, 2002, p. 97). Based on our research of SEUMS' foreign policy strategies and personal interviews,[11] we list five tasks that are usually performed by national MFAs and their organs (see Table 2):

- Cooperation with other states in the field of culture, science, and education;
- Coordination of own embassies, consulates, missions, and cultural institutes abroad;
- Preparation, negotiation and implementation of international agreements in the field of culture;
- Upholding relations with national minorities and nationals abroad;
- Promotion of a positive image of the country through different instruments (such as exhibitions, concerts, film projections, charitable events, etc.).

Table 2. *Cultural diplomacy of Slavic EU Member States 2013*

| Country | Number of embassies | Number of cultural diplomats/ attachés | Number of cultural institutes/ centres abroad | Important actors of cultural diplomacy |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bulgaria | 83 | 10 | 11 | State Institute for Culture (independent), Directorate for Information and Communication (MFA), Department for Cultural Policy (Ministry of Culture) |
| Croatia | 51 | 45 | 1 | Division for Information and Public Diplomacy (MFA) Directorate for International Cultural Cooperation (Ministry of Culture), Council for Cultural Cooperation and European Integration (Ministry of Culture) |
| Czech Republic | 89 | 6 | 22 | Public Diplomacy Department (MFA), Foreign Relations Department, UNESCO and conceptions (Ministry of Culture) |

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[11] The interviews/debates on the topic of CD were conducted with two Slovenian decision-makers on 10 April and 13 June 2013 in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

| Country | Number of embassies | Number of cultural diplomats/ attachés | Number of cultural institutes/ centres abroad | Important actors of cultural diplomacy |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Poland | 87 | 14 | 22 | Department of Public and Cultural Diplomacy (MFA), Department of Cooperation with Polish Diaspora and Poles Abroad (MFA), Department of International Relations (Ministry of Culture and National Heritage), Adam Mickiewicz Institute |
| Slovakia | 63 | 63 | 8 | Department of Cultural Diplomacy (MFA) Department of International Cooperation (Ministry of Culture) |
| Slovenia | 42 | 0 | 1 | Department for Cultural Development and International Affairs (Ministry of Culture) |

*Source: Podgornik, 2012; and updated data from official web pages.*

Table 2 shows that Poland and the Czech Republic are (in nominal numbers) the most prominent actors in CD among SEUMS. Furthermore, calculation shows that the Czech Republic is the most active in its own CD (2.2 cultural institutes per million citizens), followed by Bulgaria and Slovakia (1.6). Taking into consideration GDP per capita, the situation changes slightly; Poland is the best performer of CD, followed by Bulgaria and Czech Republic. In both cases Slovenian and Croatian investments in CD remain marginal.

Despite the fact that cultural centres/institutes are important in promoting national culture, the role of cultural diplomats or cultural attachés,[12] being in charge of carrying out tasks of CD, should not be neglected. Usually they are members of the diplomatic staff within national embassies entitled to foster cultural relations, organise exhibitions, literary and film events, language courses, etc. In large states, the function of a cultural attaché is autonomous;

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[12]   Cultural attachés are diplomats of a lower diplomatic rank or members of the supporting staff who are assigned to diplomatic missions abroad to carry out tasks of cultural diplomacy and promotion.

small states rarely have an independent function of a cultural attaché because of human resources and financial constraints, rather, professionals engaged in the field of culture cover other soft-power diplomatic activities[13] such as public relations, media, science, economic and consular affairs, etc.[14]

However, the importance of CD for a country cannot be assessed only through quantitative data of external representation and funds disbursed for CD but also by the positioning of cultural affairs within the MFA structure (see also Udovič, 2011). It is rare that culture is positioned centrally within the national MFA, but the higher it is in the organigram, the larger impact it has in conducting of foreign policy of a country. Virtually in all countries there is a department within the MFA structure dealing with CD, but it only seldom stands alone. Mostly it is merged together with public diplomacy into a single department or even with economic diplomacy (as it was the case in Slovenia prior fall 2015). The only case where CD is not part of the MFA structure is Bulgaria, which has an independent State Institute for Culture.

### 3.4 Cultural diplomacy in practice: the role and activities of the Ministries of Culture and Ministries of (Higher) Education

In the previous paragraphs, we have presented the role and activities of MFAs in the field of CD. Even though we have found that MFAs play an important role in CD, it is clear that the key decision-maker in the field of culture is not the MFA but the Ministry of Culture and, in some fragments, the Ministry of (Higher) Education.[15] In domestic cultural affairs, Ministries of Culture/Higher Education have total autonomy and in external relations they have to coordinate their activities with the MFA. It is thus not surprising that there are some overlaps in the sphere of activities of all three ministries.

Compared to the role of MFAs, which focus mostly on framing/directing cultural relations, the Ministries of Culture/Education execute their authorities by (a) representing their own country at meetings and workgroups of international

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[13]  Therefore some reservation should be employed when the numbers of cultural attachés are taken into consideration.

[14]  At this point a short remark should be made on the relation between the cultural centres/institutes and cultural attachés at embassies. If states decide to have both institutions they opt for a complementary approach, meaning that cultural attachés follow the political guidelines on cultural diplomacy, while cultural centres/institutes are engaged more in promoting concrete activities for the promotion of national culture.

[15]  Ministries of Higher Education are important players in the fields of student and teacher exchanges carried out through different programmes, among which the most used and known in Europe is the Erasmus programme.

and regional organisations that carry out activities in the field of culture (EU, UNESCO, Council of Europe, Francophonie, Visegrád Group, etc.); (b) cooperating with cultural representations at home and abroad; (c) supporting and encouraging the development of cultural programmes of national minorities and diasporas (Podgornik, 2012).

In practice, the entitled organ to present the Ministry of Culture in external/ international affairs, is the department for international cooperation.[16] Among the countries analysed the only exception is the Bulgarian Ministry of Culture, where the major part of its international cooperation is performed by the Directorate of Cultural Policy, because the Ministry does not have an independent department for international affairs. In Poland, cultural diplomacy is also linked with the Institute of Adam Mickiewicz (IAM), established in 2000 to carry out tasks of Polish cultural promotion abroad (*Ministerstwo kultury…*, 2008).

The activities of Ministries of Culture in CD are complemented by indirect (such as student exchanges) and direct practices of Ministries of (Higher) Education (Wyszomirsky, Burgess & Peila, 2003). Although the latter mostly converge with the activities of MFAs and Ministries of Culture, it is possible to find some particularities that are only in the domain of Ministries of Education and influence the conduct of cultural diplomacy, such as:

- Cooperation with citizens living abroad, enabling them and their children to attend language courses and summer schools where they can improve knowledge of their mother tongue (or the mother tongue of their parents);
- Supervising the teaching of national language at primary and secondary schools abroad, supplying these schools with teaching and learning materials and educating teachers;
- Supervising the work of departments for national language and culture at universities abroad, educating and assigning university teachers abroad. (Podgornik, 2012)

According to aforementioned tasks, the main role of Ministries of (Higher) Education is to ensure the learning of the national language, performed usually by so-called language courses (i.e. "*lectorates*"). The idea of these language courses is not only to familiarise students with language particularities, but also to present the characteristics of the national culture. In some cases, these lectures are organised within national representations abroad (in embassies, consulates,

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16 Croatia – Directorate for International Cultural Cooperation, Czech Republic – Foreign Relations Department, UNESCO and conceptions; Poland – Department of International Relations, Slovakia – Directorate General of International Co-operation; and Slovenia – Sector for European Affairs and International Cooperation.

etc.), where students can meet national representatives and can access other relevant materials.

A simple summary of the role of the Ministries of Culture/Education in CD is that both ministries provide substance to actions and activities performed in CD by MFAs. The Ministries of Culture/Education thus promote concrete actions within the CD framework set by national MFAs. As such, both ministries are not the "ideological factor" of national CD but more its "feeder".

## 3.5 Cultural diplomacy in practice: the role and activities of non-state institutions

Up to this point we have presented two decision-making pillars of SEUMS' CD. However, (political) decisions only become relevant if they are translated into practice. That is why it is necessary that countries have their specialised agencies able to carry out concrete actions for the promotion of natural cultural particularities. Among the most used activities of countries' CD it is possible to find different (students', teachers', etc.) exchanges, art exhibitions, musical performances, film festivals, etc. The results of our research of the in-field activities of SEUMS show that they often use listed instruments for the promotion of national culture in other countries (Table 3).

However, our research has revealed that SEUMS use two approaches in performing CD activities, based mostly on geographic proximity. The approach used in European countries[17] complements 'organised' and 'ad hoc' activities,[18] while extra-European activities are only sporadic, fragmented, and partial, depending on SEUMS' *ad interim* interests. This means that in seasons when the country is interested in fostering economic/political or cultural collaboration

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[17] The majority of cultural institutes and centres are located in Europe. Most popular European locations of cultural institutes or centres are important cultural centres such as Berlin, Budapest, Moscow, Paris, Rome, and Vienna. Outside Europe one can find two Slavic cultural institutes (Czech and Polish) in New York and Tel Aviv.

[18] An important piece of information regarding cultural diplomacy in the field of SEUMS is also the time dispersion of cultural events. Our research shows that SEUMS' cultural diplomacy activities peak around important national (Independence Day, etc.) and international holidays (Christmas). In addition, two states—Slovenia and Bulgaria—have a national holiday dedicated exclusively to the celebration of national culture (8 February in Slovenia is the day of culture; and 24 May in Bulgaria is the day of national culture, education and Slavic alphabet), within which the state focuses on the presentation of its own cultural particularities. Furthermore, countries sometimes decide to focus their attention on the celebration of special "cultural" anniversaries (e.g., in 2010, Poland celebrated Chopin Year to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the birth of the famous composer) (Podgornik, 2012).

*Table 3.   The main groups of other cultural diplomacy actors*

| Group | Actor | Activities |
|---|---|---|
| Trade and Economy | Agency InvestBulgaria, State agencies CzechInvest and CzechTrade, Polish Information and Foreign Investment Agency, Slovak Investment and Trade Development Agency, SPIRIT | Promoting and presenting the home state as an interesting investment destination, providing information on the home state and its economy, trade and legislation to foreign investors |
| Tourism | Croatian National Tourist Board, State agency CzechTourism, Polish Tourist Organization, Slovak Tourist Board, Slovenian Tourist Board (renewed) | Presenting a positive image of the home state abroad, promoting home state as an interesting travel destination, coordinating the work of tourist information offices abroad |
| Theatre, film and literature | Bulgarian National Film Centre, Croatian Audiovisual Centre Croatian Centre – International Theatre Institute, Czech Film Centre, Czech Theatre Institute, Polish Film Institute, Polish Book Institute, Slovak Film Institute, Slovak centre for information on literature, Slovenian film centre, | Promoting and supporting the distribution of artistic works of domestic artists abroad |
| Media | Radio Bulgaria, Radio Prague, Polish Radio External Service, Radio Slovakia International, Radio Slovenia International, Voice of Croatia | Offering international programmes in different languages, providing information on culture, politics, economy, science and sport of the home state |

*Source: Podgornik, 2012, and updated data from official web pages.*

with the other country, cultural exchange is intensified, while in other periods SEUMS' CD in such countries is nonexistent. Although these are general trends, there are also some extra-European countries (e.g., Argentina, Brazil, Australia) in which SEUMS promote their CD intensively and on a regular basis. These countries are mostly countries with a large SEUMS national diaspora (associations) serving as the pull factor for the materialisation of SEUMS' CD.

Why do SEUMS establish two approaches when executing their CD? The first reason is the geographic proximity of EU countries, which decreases transport

(cheaper travel arrangements) and transaction costs.[19] The second issue is the cultural proximity of European countries (Hollensen, 2011), especially after the accession of SEUMS to the EU (Rašković & Svetličič, 2011). The third cause is the reactive character of Slavic nations, which enhances responsiveness instead of proactivity (Udovič, 2011). Finally, there is one more reason for the focus on European states and the lack of interest to enhance cultural diplomacy with overseas nations—scarce cooperation among SEUMS, not only in the field of culture, but in general. This lack of cooperation hinders their possibilities to take advantages offered by the globalised international system. Thus, instead of becoming an important player able to compete with Latin and German traditions, SEUMS—because of their behaviour—lose their comparative advantages and retreat to the world periphery.

## 4. Discussion and conclusion

The presented analysis outlines three characteristics of SEUMS CD that should be addressed. The first is that within the SEUMS two groups can be delineated when CD is taken into consideration—the first being the group of Central and Eastern European countries plus Bulgaria and the second group including South-Eastern European countries (Slovenia and Croatia). The division between both groups can be made with regard to the (a) number of cultural centres abroad, and (b) events organised by these centres/institutes. The dispersion in numbers illustrates that for Slovenia and Croatia CD has never been a top priority and was only established when and where it was necessary. On the other hand, Central and Eastern European countries have progressively developed[20] their CD, strengthening it not only with their closer or wider neighbours, but also promoting it in overseas countries. Last, it should be explained that in all SEUMS, CD has been developed gradually, meaning that at first countries start to execute their CD in neighbouring countries while after their consolidation in these countries they can decide to spread their activities to distant countries.

The second fact confirmed by our analysis is that the basic platform for CD is set by MFAs, while the Ministries of Culture/Education provide substance to the organised framework. This confirms the presumption that CD is still linked

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[19] Negotiations for leasing, because of the familiarity with the area and local customs, are easier and leasing is cheaper.

[20] As stated in Ociepka (2012), Poland established its first cultural institute in Budapest in 1939, while after 1994 all cultural centres/institutes have been developed under the umbrella of the MFA.

to diplomacy more than it is to culture. While diplomacy is an instrument for achieving foreign policy gains, it is not surprising that CD pertains to the area of work of MFAs. In this regard we can observe that SEUMS still promote the so-called first generation CD, being described as "passive promotion" (and involving only state actors), instead of shifting to the second generation known as active creation (which encompasses also non-state actors) (Ocipeka, 2012). Even though states continue to rely on the first generation CD, there are some good examples of coupling the first and the second generation. As explained by Ociepka (2012), such good examples were the Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU and the 2012 UEFA Championship, where "non-state actors were involved in the preparation of both events, giving unique opportunity for the development of modes of co-operation with NGOs within the frame of public and cultural diplomacy". A similar situation occurred in Slovenia during the EuroBasket 2013.

Finally, our research has demonstrated that there is no one common approach of SEUMS in CD. Instead of cooperating, SEUMS compete, instead of establishing a common ground fertilised with national particularities, SEUMS opt for independent actions/activities. To sum up, there is no common CD but there are six individual SEUMS' CDs. Even though this is *prima facie* not surprising, the problem lies in the fact that such behaviour weakens the position of Slavic states in the EU because they act independently and as such are more vulnerable to different pressures and interests of the Latin-German group of countries.

How can we explain the missing interest for cooperation in cultural and other affairs? Quite straightforwardly—SEUMS understand the denominator of Slavism as outdated. An illustration of such perception can be found in the fact that three out of six SEUMS (Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia) are not members of the Forum of Slavic Cultures. Some will say that membership in the Forum of Slavic Cultures is a question of prestige. And it may well be. However, the absence of the three core Central European states sends a strong symbolic message on the (un)importance of Slavism for them.

At this point the main issue emerges. Are the SEUMS willing to establish a common platform for developing a single approach of their CD based on Slavism in the EU? Or they would like to retain the fragmented approach, each country by itself? If they choose the second approach, nothing really can be done since the decision on how the individual CD should be conducted would remain in the hands of the national authorities. But whether these countries are interested in strengthening their position within the EU, which can be done also by establishing a single bloc in some matters, the CD can present a platform for this. However, to achieve this, instead of fragmentation in CD, the interested

countries should decide on a common solution.[21] Such approach can form a bloc of ideas which will alleviate the SEUMS to penetrate in the core of the EU decision-making processes. Such activities would be supportive also for performances in other fields within the integration. Finally, a common approach, being proactive instead of reactive, would equal the position of SEUMS in relation to the so-called German-Latin group, allowing them to contribute extensively the SEUMS pieces to the common European jigsaw puzzle. This would support the equalisation of their position with countries that have been members of the EU for decades. Thus, a SEUMS common approach to the CD and its performance in the EU can in the final stance serve as an accelerator of equal treatment of the SEUMS in the EU. Can this be the final goal?

**Boštjan Udovič**, PhD, is assistant professor in Diplomacy. He received his BA in International Relations (Faculty of Social Sciences) and his PhD in International Economics (Faculty of Economics) from the University of Ljubljana. His research interests predominantly focus on issues related to commercial diplomacy, cultural diplomacy and International Political Economy issues in Central and Eastern Europe and South-Eastern Europe.

**Ana Podgornik** received her BSc in Political Sciences from the University of Ljubljana. She has been specialising in cultural diplomacy, post-Soviet politics, modern Slavic states and languages, and development studies. She is currently working as an emergency program manager in Eastern Ukraine.

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[21] Andreosso-O'Callaghan (2003) explains that the 'big bang' countries lost many of their advantages when negotiating with the EU, because they negotiated separately instead of establishing a common block able to achieve more as a single country.

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