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# Cultural Diplomacy and Sanctions as Foreign Policy Instruments during a Time of Conflict

Dyplomacja kulturalna i sankcje jako narzędzia  
polityki zagranicznej w czasie konfliktu

**Keywords:**

cultural diplomacy,  
sanctions, Russia,  
European Union,  
Ukrainian war, Foreign  
Policy Analysis, FPA

**Słowa kluczowe:**

dyplomacja kulturalna,  
sankcje, Rosja, Unia  
Europejska, wojna  
na Ukrainie, analiza  
polityki zagranicznej

## **Cultural Diplomacy and Sanctions as Foreign Policy Instruments during a Time of Conflict**

In 2014, the EU imposed sanctions on the Russian Federation as a consequence of the annexation of Crimea and the war in eastern Ukraine. At the same time, Austria, the UK, and Germany celebrated cultural diplomacy events with Russia, whereas Poland cancelled the Polish Year planned for 2015 in Russia. Many member countries of the European Union understood cultural diplomacy as a subnetwork of public diplomacy and ascribed it to the potential for international conflict prevention in 2014. This article aims to discuss these claims, in line with Foreign Policy Analysis and to search for any coordination of cultural diplomacy with sanctions at the time of the first stage of the Ukrainian war. The authors concluded that the EU countries' cultural diplomacy and sanctions on Russia were hardly intertwined. Bilateral Years or Seasons of Culture aptly represented the EU countries' belief that the Russian Federation should not be fully isolated.

## **Dyplomacja kulturalna i sankcje jako narzędzia polityki zagranicznej w czasie konfliktu**

W 2014 r. na skutek aneksji Krymu i wojny na wschodzie Ukrainy Unia Europejska nałożyła sankcje na Federację Rosyjską. W tym samym czasie Austria, Wielka Brytania i Niemcy celebrowały wydarzenia dyplomacji kulturalnej w Rosji, a Polska odwołała Rok Polski w Rosji w 2015 r. Wiele państw członkowskich UE rozumiało w tym czasie dyplomację kulturalną jako element dyplomacji publicznej i przypisywało jej potencjał zapobiegania konfliktom międzynarodowym. Celem tego artykułu jest zweryfikowanie tych twierdzeń za pomocą analizy polityki zagranicznej i sprawdzenie, czy dyplomacja kulturalna w Rosji i sankcje na to państwo w latach 2014–2015 były skoordynowane. Wniosek z badań mówi, że tak nie było. Bilateralne lata i sezony kultury kontynuowano zgodnie z przekonaniem państw UE, że Federacja Rosyjska nie powinna być całkowicie izolowana.

## Introduction

Cultural diplomacy as a foreign policy tool has changed its objectives and methods since private associations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century established the first cultural agencies abroad. Today many member countries of the European Union ascribe the potential for conflict prevention to cultural diplomacy. The objective of this article is to discuss these claims, with the analysis based on four cases of cultural diplomacy events performed by EU countries with the Russian Federation at the time of the Ukrainian crisis and sanctions imposed by the EU on Russia in 2014–2015.<sup>1</sup>

The countries and cultural diplomacy events covered by the current study are the Austrian Season of Culture in the Russian Federation 2013–2014, the UK-Russia Year of Culture launched in April 2014, the Year of German Language and Literature in Russia 2014–2015, and the Polish Year in Russia, planned for 2015. The Polish Year was the only one cancelled by the Polish government in July 2014. All the events (Years or Seasons of Culture) planned before the conflict arose aimed to serve dialogue and understanding in international relations. Through the case studies on cultural diplomacy events at the time of the Ukrainian war (also called in 2014–2015 the Donbas conflict<sup>2</sup>) this paper explores how cultural diplomacy worked as an instrument of foreign policy, implemented at the time of conflict and targeted at Russia. We understand conflict as violent behaviour of the state and non-state actors in Ukrainian-Russian relations in 2014–2015, but first and foremost as antagonistic positions<sup>3</sup> between selected EU member countries and Russia due to the developments in Ukraine.

- 1 This study was part of a broader project on the cultural diplomacy events during international conflict. It included the cases of Austrian, British, Dutch, German, and Polish cultural events with the Russian Federation during the Ukrainian crisis, the annexation of Crimea, and the war in eastern Ukraine. The research was financed by Poland's National Science Centre Op. 12, No. 2016/23/B/HS5/00486.
- 2 S. Fischer, *The Donbas Conflict. Opposing Interests and Narratives, Difficult Peace Process*, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin 2019 (SWP Research Paper, 5): <[https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/research\\_papers/2019RPO5\\_fhs.pdf](https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/research_papers/2019RPO5_fhs.pdf)> [accessed: 20 VII 2020].
- 3 P. Wallensteen, *Understanding Conflict Resolution*, SAGE Publications, Los Angeles 2008.

The Ukrainian war and sanctions against Russia polarised the countries covered by this comparative study. Whereas Poland and the UK belonged to the hawks, Germany and Austria played the roles of the doves in relations with Russia.<sup>4</sup> However, all the governments unexpectedly<sup>5</sup> agreed on political and economic sanctions as an instrument (called hard power coercion by Simond de Galbert<sup>6</sup> or coercive diplomacy by Michal Onderco<sup>7</sup>) to force Russia to withdraw from the conflict and to stop discordous behaviour towards Ukraine. Thus, bilateral and EU-Russia relations serve as the background for analysing foreign policy instruments and provide a geopolitical context. Before the conflict, all the countries, as well as the European Union as an actor in international relations, perceived the Russian Federation as a strategic partner. The ties in business and trade were of much relevance, as in 2013, the Russian Federation was the EU's leading trading partner in the import of gas and petroleum oil.<sup>8</sup>

While approaching sanctions as a tool of coercive diplomacy in the analysis, we adopt the Giumelli proposal, which suggests "to look at how sanctions [...] fit within a broader system of instruments rather than thinking that sanctions alone can determine a behavioural change or the achievement of a policy objective". We assume that cultural diplomacy belongs to Francesco Giumelli's broader system of instruments.<sup>9</sup>

4 J. Ćwiek-Karpowicz, S. Secrieru, *Sankcje i Rosja* ['Sanctions and Russia'], Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, Warszawa 2015, p. 33; H. Sjursen, G. Rosen, *Arguing Sanctions. On the EU's Response to the Crisis in Ukraine*, "Journal of Common Market Studies" 2017, vol. 55, No. 1, p. 20

5 Ibidem, p. 20.

6 S. de Galbert, *A Year of Sanctions against Russia – Now What? A European Assessment of the Outcome and Future of Russia Sanctions*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Lanham–Boulder–New York–London, October 2015: <[https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy\\_files/files/publication/150929\\_deGalbert\\_SanctionsRussia\\_Web.pdf](https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/150929_deGalbert_SanctionsRussia_Web.pdf)> [accessed: 12 II 2016].

7 M. Onderco, *Public Support for Coercive Diplomacy: Exploring Public Opinion Data from Ten European Countries*, "European Journal of Political Research" 2016, vol. 56, No. 2, p. 401–418.

8 E. Pongas, A. Todorova, G. Gambini, *Statistical Analysis of EU Trade in Energy Products, with Focus on Trade with the Russian Federation*, "Statistics in Focus" 2014, vol. 13: <[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Archive:Trade\\_in\\_energy\\_products](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Archive:Trade_in_energy_products)> [accessed: 10 VI 2019].

9 F. Giumelli, *How EU Sanctions Work: A New Narrative*, "Chaillot Papers" 2013, vol. 129, p. 18.

Therefore, cultural diplomacy and sanctions are both means of addressing conflict. A glimpse at vast literature on sanctions<sup>10</sup> towards Russia from 2014 onwards revealed that neither research nor the European Union Common Foreign and Security Policy, despite the Culture in External Relations Preparatory Action in 2013–2014, realised the possibility of implementing cultural diplomacy or boycotting cultural events with Russia when the war in eastern Ukraine began. However, the media in some of the countries in question contributed to the debate on the rationale and role of culture at the time of war.

In its comparative approach, this study goes back to the basics of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). It does so by including “the impact of domestic determinants like strategic culture, ideas, norms, public opinion and institutions”<sup>11</sup> into our investigation of foreign policy decisions. While analysing the simultaneous implementation of cultural diplomacy and sanctions, both might be seen as subnetworks of foreign policy. Adopting FPA means focusing on the actors of cultural diplomacy and the contexts that contributed to decisions regarding the Years or Seasons of Culture.

We expect that cultural diplomacy events contribute to conflict prevention by building new ties between their participants, resulting in more communication between them and the exchange of information, such as sharing knowledge about their values. Although each event creates new ties between organisers and the audience, it is the sender country that decides on its scenario, timing, localisation, financing and content, defining the receiving country as a recipient of pre-packed proposals.<sup>12</sup> Senders may

10 *Targeted Sanctions: The Impacts and Effectiveness of United Nations Action*, ed. T. Biersteker, S. E. Eckert, M. Tourinho, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2016; J. Ćwiek-Karpowicz, S. Secrieru, *Sankcje...*; T. Forsberg, *From Ostpolitik to “Frostpolitik”? Merkel, Putin and German Foreign Policy towards Russia*, “International Affairs” 2016, vol. 92, No. 1, p. 21–42; N. I. M. Nováky, *Why so Soft? The European Union in Ukraine*, “Contemporary Security Policy” 2015, vol. 36, No. 2, p. 244–266.

11 D. Beach, R. B. Pedersen, *Analysing Foreign Policy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Red Globe Press, London 2019, p. 3.

12 Y. Raj Isar, *Engaging the World: Towards Global Cultural Citizenship*, European Union 2014, p. 102: <<https://www.cultureinexternalrelations.eu/cier-data/uploads/2016/12/Engaging-The-World-Towards-Global-Cultural-Citizenship-eBook-1.5>> [accessed: 10 VI 2020].

limit the roles played by receivers to passive reception only, which simultaneously question the dialogical and conflict-preventing understanding of cultural diplomacy.

We will start our study by explaining of what the Years of Culture represent in cultural diplomacy and foreign policy. Consequently, we will present the analysis results of governmental documents that defined the rationale, expectations, and effects of the Years or Seasons of Culture. In the governmental documents (foreign policy and cultural diplomacy strategies, plans of and reports about the cultural events, and documents of the leading governmental cultural institutes), we searched first for the definitions of cultural diplomacy and its possible role in conflict prevention, and then for the evaluation of the effects of cultural diplomacy events at the time of sanctions on Russia. FPA allowed us to identify variables relevant to the decision as to whether and how the cultural events should be continued. Among them the main ones were the intensity of economic cooperation with the Russian Federation, the climate of public opinion about the sanctions with the stress on the opinion of government members and members of parliaments (documents of parliamentary commissions and committees) as well as the voices of media (content analysis of online and social media) that reflected the elites' debates and in Poland pushed them to take decisions. The content analysis results were verified in background semi-structured interviews with officials and officers of cultural diplomacy, as well as journalists specialising in the field from the countries under research.

### **Cultural diplomacy and cultural events as instruments of foreign policy**

We understand cultural diplomacy as the network of institutions (nodes) working to promote the sender country abroad and develop international cultural relations, and the ties between them. Cultural diplomacy as an instrument of foreign policy has been studied from many angles. Historians searched for its roots and rationale at the time of the Cold War;<sup>13</sup> cultural

13 J. C. E. Gienow-Hecht, M. C. Donfried, *Searching for Cultural Diplomacy*, Berghahn Books, New York 2010; N. J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945–1989*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008.

studies shed light on its links with the cultural policies of countries<sup>14</sup> and provided for many cases and comparative studies.<sup>15</sup> Cultural diplomacy was also analysed as the core element of public diplomacy<sup>16</sup> and a network.<sup>17</sup> Many authors understand cultural diplomacy as the sphere of governments.<sup>18</sup> Its objectives reach from the promotion of the countries by their cultural achievements to the idealistic contribution to more understanding in international relations.<sup>19</sup> The latter approach is of prime relevance for the current study, as it suggests action with a conflict prevention potential. Cesar Villanueva identifies it as the cosmopolitan approach to cultural diplomacy whose “end goal is to prevent conflict, terror and even more radical consequences such as a war among nations, by engaging in the power of cultural dialogue.”<sup>20</sup> This is where we start our analysis. We assume that the cosmopolitan perspective may serve as an explanation for the organisation of cultural diplomacy events during an international conflict.

Whereas the literature on cultural diplomacy is vast, only some publications link cultural diplomacy and sanctions. One of the most recent

- 14 B. Rösler, *The Case of Asialink's Arts Residency Program: Towards a Critical Cosmopolitan Approach to Cultural Diplomacy*, “International Journal of Cultural Policy” 2015, vol. 21, No. 4, p. 463–477; C. P. Schneider, *Culture Communicates: US Diplomacy that Works*, “Clingendael Discussion Papers in Diplomacy” 2004, No. 94: <[https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/20040300\\_cli\\_paper\\_dip\\_issue94.pdf](https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/20040300_cli_paper_dip_issue94.pdf)> [accessed: 11 XII 2010].
- 15 I. Ang, Y. Raj Isar, P. Mar, *Cultural Diplomacy: Beyond the National Interest?*, “International Journal of Cultural Policy” 2015, vol. 21, No. 4, p. 365–381.
- 16 C. Schneider, *Culture...*; P. M. Taylor, *Public Diplomacy on Trial*, [in:] *Trials of Engagement. The Future of US Public Diplomacy*, ed. A. Fisher, L. Scott, Martinus Nijhoff, Leiden 2011, p. 19–32.
- 17 R. S. Zaharna, *China's Confucius Institutes: Understanding the Relational Structure & Relational Dynamics of Network Collaboration*, [in:] *Confucius Institutes and the Globalisation of China's Soft Power*, Figueroa Press, Los Angeles 2014.
- 18 I. Ang, Y. Raj Isar, P. Mar, *Cultural...*, p. 365–381.
- 19 M. C. Cummings, *Cultural Diplomacy and the United States Government: A Survey*, Americans for the Arts, Washington 2009 (Cultural Diplomacy Research Series): <<https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/MCCpaper.pdf>> [accessed: 20 XI 2015].
- 20 C. R. Villanueva, *Theorizing Cultural Diplomacy All the Way Down: A Cosmopolitan Constructivist Discourse from an Ibero-American Perspective*, “International Journal of Cultural Policy” 2018, vol. 24, No. 5, p. 683.

reports by Christian von Soest, Deborah Haffner and Jonas Sell, analysing four cases of cultural relations at the time of international conflict, found the effects of sanctions intangible.<sup>21</sup> Yolanda Smits, Clémentine Daubeuf and Philippe Kern learned that after 2014, the EU countries' cultural institutes in Russia included the sphere of Culture and Conflict in their action plans.<sup>22</sup> Such findings support our approach.

The cultural events included in the current study were Years and Seasons of Culture, and as such, they belong to the toolkit of cultural diplomacy. Years and Seasons may exceed the boundaries of cultural networks while adding some economic goals to be achieved, such as new business relations or new treaties on economic cooperation. Organising such events during political and economic sanctions provides them a new context, as they create opportunities for direct encounters between their audiences or participants and between politicians and business. Business organisations are sponsors in cultural diplomacy events. Thus they play the role of switching nodes between countries and the spheres of culture and politics.

The Years and Seasons have a relevant media dimension as they are planned in line with the logic of country promotion as media events. In our cases, the media provide information as to the debate about cultural diplomacy and sanctions during a time of war and can be analysed as nodes contributing to the decisions on the simultaneous use of both tools, as well as on the sense of implementing them at the same time to resolve or reduce conflict. Therefore, the events can impact public opinion formation, and we expected that the war would attract media attention to them.

Among the cases analysed in this study, it was only the Austrian media whose coverage of the Austrian Season of Culture in Russia 2013–2014 was

21 Ch. von Soest, D. Haffner, J. Sell, *Nebenwirkungen von Sanktionen: Kulturelle Beziehungen mit Iran, Kuba, Russland und Belarus*, Ifa-Edition Kultur und Außenpolitik, Stuttgart 2016: <[https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/54710/ssoar-2016-soest\\_et\\_al-Nebenwirkungen\\_von\\_Sanktionen\\_Kulturelle\\_Beziehungen.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y&lnkname=ssoar-2016-soest\\_et\\_al-Nebenwirkungen\\_von\\_Sanktionen\\_Kulturelle\\_Beziehungen.pdf](https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/54710/ssoar-2016-soest_et_al-Nebenwirkungen_von_Sanktionen_Kulturelle_Beziehungen.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y&lnkname=ssoar-2016-soest_et_al-Nebenwirkungen_von_Sanktionen_Kulturelle_Beziehungen.pdf)> [accessed: 13 IV 2019].

22 Y. Smits, C. Daubeuf, P. Kern, *Research for CULT Committee European Cultural Institutes Abroad. Directorate-General for Internal Policies Policy*, European Parliament, 2016, p. 49: <[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/563418/IPOL\\_STU\(2016\)563418\(SUM01\)\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/563418/IPOL_STU(2016)563418(SUM01)_EN.pdf)> [accessed: 27 XII 2019].



scarce. The Season consisted of only 50 events, and despite the war and sanctions, the audience and media users in Austria found the event to be of little relevance. However, the Austrian Season of Culture in Russia was the most extensive presentation of Austrian culture in the Russian Federation ever, even though it was relatively small compared with the other cases in this study. In addition, the Austrian Parliament did not debate on its organisation at the time of conflict. The Year of German Language and Literature in Russia 2014 was a continuation of the German Year in the Russian Federation 2012/2013. The Goethe Institute in Moscow co-organised 510 events<sup>23</sup> with the German Foreign Ministry and the German Eastern Committee of the Business Association (Ostausschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft). The 2014 UK-Russia Year of Culture, initiated by the Russian side, was given a high profile by both partners. Throughout that year, 178 British and Russian institutions were involved in cultural exchange, and 132 events were offered by the British partner, coordinated by the British Council.<sup>24</sup>

Poland is an exception among the cases in the current study, as the Polish government was the only one that cancelled preparations for the Polish Year in Russia in 2015. The decision was taken soon after the Malaysian plane was downed in July 2014. The Polish case convinces one that the catastrophe worked as a turning point not only for the EU decision regarding sanctions (and the cooperation of the EU members in the field) but also for the cultural diplomacy of EU countries with Russia. It played the role of an external shock<sup>25</sup> in the conduct of cultural diplomacy as well as in the foreign policy of the countries in question.

Russia did not stay passive as a target of sanctions and a receiver of cultural diplomacy. The Russian initiative lay behind the cultural events in the British and German cases. The explanation as to why Russia insisted on cultural festivals with the UK and Germany can be found in Russian foreign policy concepts from 2008 and 2013. Soft power tools were classified

23 *Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. André Hahn, Sigrid Hupach, Andrej Hunko, Ulla Jelpke, Kerstin Kassner, Katrin Kunert, Niema Movassat, Norbert Müller (Potsdam), Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Harald Petzold (Havelland) und der Fraktion Die Linke, Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 2015, 18/5837, p. 2.*

24 *UK-Russia Year of Culture 2014*, British Council, London 2015, p. 9.

25 Ch. F. Hermann, *Changing Course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy*, "International Studies Quarterly" 1990, vol. 34, issue 1, p. 3–21.

in Russia as non-traditional foreign policy instruments.<sup>26</sup> Despite that their relevance to improving the Russian international position worldwide, specifically in relations with EU countries, was accepted. On both sides, cultural diplomacy worked in parallel, but without coordination, with hard power tools. In addition, while imposing its sanctions on the EU, Russia did not stop its cultural events in EU countries. Even after the Polish government cancelled the Polish Year in Russia, the Russian government declared its profound belief in cultural cooperation with Poland, as mentioned by the Polish Press Agency (PAP) on 17 October 2014.

### **Governments' approach to the role of cultural diplomacy during a conflict**

In the countries under study, cultural diplomacy is a long-term project. As Peter Kampits observed in the 1980s, in the case of Austria, "its effects are more long term and less vulnerable for a crisis."<sup>27</sup> This quote is relevant as it presents a stable approach to the role of cultural diplomacy during times of crisis and conflict. Austria has a long tradition of using culture in foreign policy owing to its considerable assets in culture and national heritage. It has also been implemented with success in relations with Russia.<sup>28</sup>

The strategy for Austrian cultural diplomacy (called *Auslandskulturpolitik* – foreign cultural policy – and conducted mainly by Section V of the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs) for 2011–2014 presented a "contribution to global trust and achieving peace through dialogue of cultures and religions" as its third objective. We find this understanding to be close to conflict prevention. This finding is supported by the Austrian government's idea of cultural diplomacy as means of contributing to dialogue between religions, conflict solving and reconciliation strategies.<sup>29</sup>

26 A. Sergunin, L. Karabeshkin, *Understanding Russia's Soft Power Strategy*, "Politics" 2015, vol. 35, issue 3–4, p. 347–363.

27 P. Kampits, *Die Auslandskulturpolitik Österreichs*, Braumüller, Wien 1990, p. 13.

28 *Kulturbericht 2014*, Bundeskanzleramt Österreich, Wien 2015, p. 34, 185: <[https://www.bmkoes.gv.at/dam/jcr:ed177e33-13f2-4f28-89dd-63496b92fe69/kulturbericht\\_2014.pdf](https://www.bmkoes.gv.at/dam/jcr:ed177e33-13f2-4f28-89dd-63496b92fe69/kulturbericht_2014.pdf)> [accessed: 1 VII 2019].

29 *Auslandskulturkonzept*, Bundesministerium für Europa, Integration und Äußeres, Wien 2011, p. 5–7.

German cultural diplomacy (*auswärtige Kulturpolitik*, AKP) strategies from 2000 and 2011 openly convince one of the understandings of culture as being the third pillar of foreign policy as well as an instrument with a degree of conflict preventing potential.<sup>30</sup> While developing programs for the AKP, the German government stressed its potential for more exchange and civil society dialogue. The latter was understood as a prerequisite for peace.<sup>31</sup> The AKP was also supposed to work as an early warning system in international relations.<sup>32</sup> Its network structure allowed the transmission of the coming conflict's early signals. In response to the international crisis, the German government announced a new support programme for civil society in Eastern Partnership countries, Ukraine among them, which allowed all the government's partner institutions involved in cultural diplomacy to apply for additional financing. Cultural diplomacy was continued as it was targeted at civil society. The support for interaction within civil society in Germany and Russia had a high value for German cultural diplomacy. It contributed to the continuation of the Year of Language and Literature, and the decision to continue organising the German-Russian Year of Youth Exchange 2016–2017. The government eventually ascribed a positive balance to the 2014–2015 Year in Russia.<sup>33</sup>

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office understood cultural diplomacy as an instrument of the promotion of a country's culture and values to build positive relationships and influence,<sup>34</sup> which, in consequence, should strengthen national interests.<sup>35</sup> Connecting people to enable

30 *Auswärtige Kulturpolitik – Konzeption 2000*, Auswärtiges Amt, Berlin 2000.

31 *Globalisierung Gestalten – Partnerschaften Ausbauen – Verantwortung Teilen. Konzept der Bundesregierung*, Auswärtiges Amt, Berlin 2012, p. 15: <<https://dip.bundestag.de/vorgang/globalisierung-gestalten-partnerschaften-ausbauen-verantwortung-teilen/42288>> [accessed: 10 XII 2014].

32 H. Hoffmann, "Dritte Säule" der Außenpolitik. Zur aktuellen Diskussion um die Auswärtige Kulturpolitik, "Internationale Politik" 1996, vol. 51, No. 3, p. 16; A. Schwan, *Werbung statt Waffen. Wie strategische Außenkommunikation die Außenpolitik verändert*, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, Wiesbaden 2011, p. 135.

33 *Kleine Anfrage...*

34 *Triennial Review of the British Council*, Foreign & Commonwealth Office, London 2014, p. 10.

35 According to Tim Rivera, the same institution can foster cultural relations and be an instrument of cultural diplomacy. He claims that whereas cultural

mutual understanding and build trust between individuals and institutions internationally is a core value of the British Council. From the viewpoint of the British Council, participation in cultural events, in consequence, brings measurable effects.<sup>36</sup> The British case clearly illustrates that cultural diplomacy in the UK was meant to be just important an instrument of foreign policy as sanctions in times of political crisis. In its report on the state of EU-Russia relations after the annexation of Crimea, the European Committee of the House of Commons recommended that the EU and the Member States implement a dual-track policy. On the one hand, it suggested a solid response to Russian actions in eastern Ukraine, including tough sanctions and vigorous enforcement of rules. On the other hand, it obliged the government and EU representatives to further cooperate with Russian citizens in the fields of culture, education and science.<sup>37</sup> As stated in the information presented by the FCO, "cultural diplomacy should continue during political differences. Engagement in the cultural, education and science spheres and continued people-to-people links between the UK and Russia can promote better understanding between our two countries."<sup>38</sup>

diplomacy supports foreign policy goals and national interests, cultural ties are not concentrated on achieving political goals but aim at building mutual trust, cooperation, and understanding. T. Rivera, *Distinguishing Cultural Relations from Cultural Diplomacy: The British Council's Relationship with Her Majesty's Government*, Figueroa Press, Los Angeles 2015, p. 35. Both definitions apply to the British Council. The analysis of cultural diplomacy of the countries involved in the current project convinces one that the governments (including the British government) implemented cultural diplomacy for international understanding and, consequently, for conflict prevention.

- 36 *Trust Pays. How International Cultural Relationships Build Trust in the UK and Underpin the Success of the UK Economy*, British Council, London 2012: <[https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/trust-pays-report-v2.pdf&ved=2ahUKEWjAyOmGyvuGAXUbr\\_EDHes1C2sQFnoECBEQAQ&usg=AOvVawOIC5uC-G1GTPeG2-R1Rl6m](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/trust-pays-report-v2.pdf&ved=2ahUKEWjAyOmGyvuGAXUbr_EDHes1C2sQFnoECBEQAQ&usg=AOvVawOIC5uC-G1GTPeG2-R1Rl6m)> [accessed: 6 VI 2020]; *Annual Report 2014-15*, British Council, London 2015.
- 37 *The EU and Russia: Before and beyond the Crisis in Ukraine*, House of Lords, The European Union Committee, London 2015.
- 38 *FCO Policy towards Russia and the UK-Russia Bilateral Relationship*, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London 2016: <<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/foreign-affairs-committee/the-uks-relations-with-russia/written/27869.html>> [accessed: 21 VII 2020].

The Polish approach to cultural diplomacy for conflict prevention reminds one of the solutions adopted in Austria and Germany. A Polish governmental document from 2001 stressed the positive impact of Poland's foreign cultural policy on international dialogue and conflict prevention.<sup>39</sup> Shortly before the cancellation of the Year, in May 2014, the MFA representatives confirmed the dialogical understanding of culture and cultural diplomacy.<sup>40</sup> The Ukrainian war hardly changed their understanding of cultural diplomacy as an instrument of foreign policy.

The stress put on dialogue in the goals of cultural diplomacy doesn't have to contradict to the understanding of sanctions and their role in international relations. While targeted at relevant actors of international relations and authoritarian regimes such as Russia, they can also be discussed as dialogical. Ernest Wyciszkievicz presented such an approach to the role of sanctions implemented on Russia in 2014 and afterwards, claiming that sanctions work as messages and signals exchanged between countries.<sup>41</sup> Even if their effects are not reached, dialogue remains one of the reasons for their implementation.

#### **“Sanctions should be used with flexibility”: Economic cooperation with Russia as a background**

The political and economic sanctions were not meant to isolate Russia internationally. Authors such as de Galbert observed that regarding relations with the Russian Federation, sanctions should be used with flexibility<sup>42</sup> and if they do so, they will contribute to even more transatlantic solidarity in relations with Russia. The implementation of cultural diplomacy during the time of sanctions on Russia might be seen as a sign

39 *Zagraniczna polityka kulturalna Polski i jej priorytety na lata 2001–2003* [‘Polish Foreign Cultural Policy and Its Priorities in Years 2001–2003’], “Przegląd Rządowy” [‘Government Review’] 2001, September, p. 66, 68.

40 *Pełny zapis przebiegu posiedzenia Komisji Łączności z Polakami za Granicą (nr 62)* [‘Stenographic Record of the Meeting on 7 V 2014, Committee on Liaison with Poles Abroad (No. 62)’], Kancelaria Sejmu [‘Chancellery of the Sejm’], Warszawa, 7 V 2014.

41 E. Wyciszkievicz, *Sankcje jako forma dialogu* [‘Sanctions as a Form of Dialogue’], “Sprawy Międzynarodowe” [‘International Affairs’] 2019, t. 72, nr 4, p. 59–76.

42 S. de Galbert, *A Year...*, p. 2.

of this flexibility. Nephew observed that sanctions on Russia achieved some visible results in the economy, like a slowed down and lowered GDP together with a depreciation of the Russian currency, painful for the people of Russia, had some impact on the willingness of Russia to participate in Minsk negotiations. What the EU underestimated was the Russian ability to absorb the pain, especially as the cost of the annexation of Crimea.<sup>43</sup> However, while continuing their Years or Seasons with Russia, the countries under this study invested in painkillers. This might be identified as spoiler behaviour. Nonetheless, the scale of the crisis surprised EU countries, as the war in eastern Ukraine was beyond any scenario for a crisis during a Year or Season of culture.

The governments of countries included in the current study presented diverse approaches to using sanctions as the EU foreign policy instruments in relations with Russia. Austria supported sanctions like all other members of the EU despite solid political and good economic cooperation with Russia. However, in 2015, the Austrian government strongly criticised sanctions,<sup>44</sup> and saw Russia as a crucial trade partner.<sup>45</sup> The intensity of Austrian economic cooperation with Russia was reflected at the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis with the Austrian suggestion to regard EU relations with eastern neighbours in a way which would not place good relations with Russia counter to cooperation with the EU.<sup>46</sup>

Not only the government but also the Austrian oppositional parties underlined the cost of economic sanctions for the Austrian economy. In 2013, 43.4 pct. of all foreign investments in Austria came from Russia.<sup>47</sup>

43 R. Nephew, *The Art of Sanctions. A View from the Field*, Columbia University Press, New York 2018, p. 162.

44 E. Kaca, H. Galewicz, *The Fragile Unity of the Union: The Future of the EU's Sanctions Policy towards Russia*, The Polish Institute of International Affairs, [Warsaw] 30 IV 2015 (Bulletin, 46 (778)): <[https://www.pism.pl/files/?id\\_plik=19717](https://www.pism.pl/files/?id_plik=19717)> [accessed: 22 VII 2020].

45 *Russland-Sanktionen der EU als Streitthema im Nationalrat*, "Parlamentskorrespondenz" 2014, Nr. 826: <[https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/PR/JAHR\\_2014/PKO826/index.shtml](https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/PR/JAHR_2014/PKO826/index.shtml)> [accessed: 1 VII 2019].

46 *Außen- und Europapolitischer Bericht*, Bundesministerium für Europa, Integration und Äußeres, Wien 2014, p. IV.

47 *Außen- und Europapolitischer Bericht*, Bundesministerium für Europa, Integration und Äußeres, Wien 2013, p. 61.

In 2014, due to the sanctions, Russia lost its leadership and was only third on the list of Austria's most prominent investors,<sup>48</sup> however, it preserved its relevance for the Austrian economy mainly due to Russian gas. Austria was striving for the role of a hub for Russian gas supplies in Europe during the period of support for the Nordstream Baltic gas pipe.<sup>49</sup> The oppositional Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), seen as a Russian ally in Austrian politics, added Austrian neutrality to the arguments against sanctions.<sup>50</sup> As a factor that shapes foreign cultural policy together with its understanding as a dialogue between cultures,<sup>51</sup> neutrality must be identified as a relevant independent variable in the Austrian case.

Shortly after the EU imposed the first political and economic sanctions on Russia in June 2014, Vienna hosted President Vladimir Putin. His visit was not related to the Austrian season's festivities. To explain the controversial diplomatic event, the governing Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) stressed that Putin's presence in Austria opened new channels in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The metaphor of open channels was very frequently used as an explanation for conducting cultural diplomacy during the time of sanctions by all the countries under research. The Austrian case convinces one that, in addition, it worked as a rationale for other tools of foreign policy.<sup>52</sup> As a consequence, the Austrian government did not even "end interaction with (the) adversary" under political sanctions.<sup>53</sup> It was only the Austrian Green Party and the New Austria

48 *Außen- und Europapolitischer Bericht...*, [2014], p. 240.

49 S. Karner, O. Pavlenko, *Russland-Österreich. Von 1991 bis zur Gegenwart*, [in:] *Österreich-Russland – Stationen Gemeinsamer Geschichte*, Leykam Verlag, Graz-Wien 2018, p. 268.

50 *Ukraine-Krise und TTIP als Herausforderungen für Österreichs Politik Auswirkungen internationaler Probleme auf heimische Wirtschaft im Zentrum der NR-Sondersitzung*, "Parlamentskorrespondenz" 2014, Nr. 823: <[https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/PR/JAHR\\_2014/PKO823/index.shtml](https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/PR/JAHR_2014/PKO823/index.shtml)> [accessed: 21 III 2019].

51 B. Pavlovsky, *Austrian Foreign Cultural Policy: Europeanization through the Prism of National Interests*, "International Journal of Cultural Policy" 2018, vol. 25, issue 7, p. 6.

52 *Außenausschuss debattiert Österreichs Rolle im Ukraine-Konflikt*, "Parlamentskorrespondenz" 2014, Nr. 827.

53 T. Jacoby, *Understanding Conflict and Violence: Theoretical and Interdisciplinary Approaches*, Routledge, New York 2008, p. 28.

and Liberal Forum MPs who found a contradiction in hosting the Russian President during the time of sanctions, stressing that economic relations with Russia, especially the planned South Stream gas pipe, seemed to be more relevant for the Austrian government than human rights in Russia.<sup>54</sup> Diplomatic ties between Austria and the Russian Federation seemed strong enough to resist the negative consequences of political and economic sanctions. The same could also be said about cultural relations as ties in this domain were not affected by any restrictions. Russia's relevance was confirmed in 2017 by adding the Austrian Institute in Moscow as a new node to the network of Austrian cultural diplomacy.

German-Russian cultural relations had been deep and diverse, and the level of disturbance by sanctions was low, even though the restrictions imposed in 2014 contributed to more confrontation and less trust in German-Russian communication. However, cultural diplomacy also reflected some tensions in bilateral relations as early as 2012, when German President Joachim Gauck cancelled his participation in Russia's official opening of the German Year 2012. Authors like Tuomas Forsberg saw 2012 as the end of German eastern policy and a relevant change in German-Russian relations. This process gained momentum in 2014 when Germany and Russia cancelled the Petersburg Dialogue, launched as an initiative for dialogue and debate between Germany and Russia.<sup>55</sup> The German government supported sanctions, even if at the beginning of the conflict, Chancellor Angela Merkel opted for more negotiations and against the deepening of sanctions.<sup>56</sup> Stefan Meister claims that the crisis occurred precisely at the time when German-Russian relations started to shift from economic to political relations.<sup>57</sup> In 2012, German trade with Russia reached its highest volume, followed by five years of decline.<sup>58</sup>

54 *Außenausschuss debattiert...*

55 Ch. von Soest, D. Haffner, J. Sell, *Nebenwirkungen...*, p. 23, 39, 41, 45.

56 T. Forsberg, *From Ostpolitik...*, p. 30.

57 S. Meister, *Politics Trump Economics*, "IP Journal" [online], 5 II 2015 [accessed: 6 X 2020]: <<https://zeitschrift-ip.dgap.org/en/ip-journal/topics/politics-trump-economics>>.

58 *German Exports to Russia Totalled Roughly 25.9 Billion Euros in 2017*, "Statistisches Bundesamt" [online], 5 III 2018 [accessed: 13 IV 2019]: <[https://www.destatis.de/EN/Press/2018/03/PE18\\_072\\_51.html](https://www.destatis.de/EN/Press/2018/03/PE18_072_51.html)>.



In 2014, the sponsors of the Year of German Language and Literature and the representation of business in the Eastern Committee of the Business Association were sceptical towards sanctions<sup>59</sup> and pledged for the continuation of cultural events. In the first months of 2014, this approach was shared by many German companies, which, however, after the annexation of Crimea, reduced the volume of their investment in Russia. German exports to Russia sank by about 20 pct. in 2015.<sup>60</sup> The opinions of Germans on economic sanctions changed from the opposition before they were imposed on Russia to support after this country annexed Crimea. Forsberg summed up that “in April 2014, 60% of poll respondents considered the West’s response to the crisis appropriate, and in November there was 58% support for the economic sanctions, despite the negative effects on the German economy.”<sup>61</sup> Therefore, when the German government co-decided to sanction Russia, the celebrations of the Year of German Language and Literature 2014–2015 continued.

In the case of the UK, the government’s goal was to use instrumentally cultural cooperation to build sustainable long-term relationships and create a positive image of the UK among Russian citizens. Both the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom had strong cultural bonds<sup>62</sup> which served as a basis for organising the UK-Russia Year of Culture 2014. The UK-Russia Year of Culture was meant to improve British-Russian political relations strained by a previous series of diplomatic incidents.

Britain was among the countries which strongly supported the sanctions against Russia. After the annexation of Crimea, the British government participated in international sanctions to ensure the full implementation of the Minsk agreements and additionally decided to suspend bilateral political and military cooperation as well as to cancel several senior visits to Moscow and withdraw ministerial and VIP participation from the 2014

59 T. Forsberg, *From Ostpolitik...*, p. 34.

60 *Außenhandel und Dienstleistungen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland mit dem Ausland, nach ausgewählten Ländergruppen und Ländern*, Statistisches Bundesamt, Wiesbaden 2019, tab III A: <[https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Wirtschaft/Aussenhandel/Publikationen/Downloads-Aussenhandel/aussenhandel-dienstleistungsverkehr-5519001227005.xlsx?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile](https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Wirtschaft/Aussenhandel/Publikationen/Downloads-Aussenhandel/aussenhandel-dienstleistungsverkehr-5519001227005.xlsx?__blob=publicationFile)> [accessed: 15 VII 2020].

61 T. Forsberg, *From Ostpolitik...*, p. 34.

62 *UK-Russia Year...*, p. 3.

UK-Russia Year of Culture.<sup>63</sup> The diplomatic turbulences affected the cultural exchange as, after the outbreak of the crisis in Ukraine, HSBC and British Airlines withdrew from financing the Year of Culture. BP did not withdraw its financial support for the cultural event, becoming a strategic sponsor of the UK-Russia Year of Language and Literature 2016 and the UK-Russia Year of Science and Education 2017.

In the British case, the economic ties are less intense than cultural ones. However, Russia's oil and gas reserves and the investments of British oil companies in Russia made the bilateral relations important. In 2003, British Petroleum became a major foreign investor in the Russian oil sector via its cooperation with the state-run company Rosneft. Both partners created a joint venture that counted as the third-largest oil and gas company in Russia.<sup>64</sup>

The British diplomats, though, decided not to cancel the program for the UK-Russia Year of Culture, but instead, the government lowered the event's profile. Furthermore, the promotion of the event was silenced. In line with the opinion of British diplomats, the political sanctions should not harm civil society but rather only the Russian government and its business partners. The British Council, which coordinated the cultural program of the UK, decided to carry on the cultural exchange while distancing itself from politics, claiming that "when political or diplomatic relations become difficult, we believe that cultural exchange helps to maintain an open dialogue between people and institutions."<sup>65</sup> As the Head of International Engagement of the Science Museum confirmed, there was a huge expectation to avoid ruining the whole idea of the Year of Culture from the cultural institutions which invested a lot of effort into the preparation of the exchange.<sup>66</sup>

Poland, whose government cancelled the Polish Year 2015, strongly supported political and economic sanctions imposed on Russia despite the country's dependence on Russian gas and oil; in 2011, respectively,

63 *FCO Policy...*

64 *BP History in Russia*, "BP" [online], 2020 [accessed: 13 VII 2020]: <[https://www.bp.com/en\\_ru/russia/home/who-we-are/history.html](https://www.bp.com/en_ru/russia/home/who-we-are/history.html)>.

65 Personal interview by author, 2018.

66 Jones, personal communication by author, 2018.

94 pct. and 85 pct.<sup>67</sup> In 2013, Russia was Poland's fifth biggest export partner. The Russian Federation was Poland's second top import partner<sup>68</sup> even in the year when the EU imposed sanctions.

The high bilateral trade with Russia, in line with Onderco, should mean that Polish citizens will be less supportive of sanctions, which, however, was not the case, as in 2015 about 49 pct. of Poles supported political and economic sanctions on Russia.<sup>69</sup> While preparing for the Polish Year in Russia 2015, Poland's Ministry of Culture expected that all the planned events would contribute to mutual understanding and an acceptance of the diverse Polish and Russian approaches and opinions.<sup>70</sup> At the time the event was cancelled, business partners were yet to decide whether to support the festivities. This well reflected one of the differences in the conduct of cultural diplomacy in Poland, as hardly any business partners joined the network in 2014. The voices of Polish media and the climate of opinion on Russia explain the rationale for the decision to cancel the Polish Year in Russia 2015.

### The climate of public opinion and voices of media

The climate of public opinion in studies on media and communication was defined by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann as the process, reflecting how the perception of majority opinions influences peoples' behaviour and feelings.<sup>71</sup>

67 W. Mroczek, *Silna współzależność gospodarek Unii Europejskiej i Rosji – powiązania handlowe* [A Strong Interdependence of the EU and Russian Economies – Trade Ties], "Unia Europejska PL" 2014, nr 1, p. 7: <[http://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.desklight-da6e35a4-8b6a-4b3a-8d24-a8d4ac3db236/c/UE.pl\\_1\\_2014.3-7.pdf](http://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.desklight-da6e35a4-8b6a-4b3a-8d24-a8d4ac3db236/c/UE.pl_1_2014.3-7.pdf)> [accessed: 12 VI 2019].

68 *International Trade in Goods in 2014. EU's Top Trading Partners in 2014*, Eurostat, 2015: <<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6760204/6-27032015-AP-EN.pdf/15911e52-a591-400d-af4c-d3ac72affa8c>> [accessed: 20 VII 2020].

69 M. Onderco, *Public...*, p. 402.

70 *Zalecenia dodatkowe do Programu Ministra Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego Rosja 2015 – Promesa* [Additional Recommendations to the Ministers of Culture and National Heritage Program Russia 2015 – Commitment Letter], Ministerstwo Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego, Warszawa 2013: <[https://iam.pl/sites/default/files/statyczne/zalecenia\\_dodatkowe\\_rosja\\_2015-promesa.pdf](https://iam.pl/sites/default/files/statyczne/zalecenia_dodatkowe_rosja_2015-promesa.pdf)> [accessed: 18 VII 2018].

71 E. Noelle-Neumann, *The Spiral of Silence: A Theory of Public Opinion*, "Journal of Communication" 1974, vol. 24, No. 2, p. 146.

The same climate of opinion impacts the decision process in foreign policy, for example, the decisions on instruments that should be used or – in our case – if cultural diplomacy should be continued during the war. Thus, the climate of opinion belongs to relevant domestic determinants of foreign policy. In the current study, we discuss the voices of media and debates in parliaments<sup>72</sup> the reflections of opinions affecting decisions on the continuation or discontinuation of cultural diplomacy events during sanctions on Russia, while doing so, we start once again with the Austrian case.

The Austrian media, including social media, reported on the *Lenin Eisbrecher* art exhibition (11 articles and comments<sup>73</sup>) at the beginning of the Austrian Season of Culture in Russia in September 2013. However, it did not attract their attention that the biggest-ever presentation of Austrian culture in Russia continued after the annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of war in eastern Ukraine. Instead, public debate at the beginning of 2014 concentrated on the moral side of celebrating the Winter Olympics in Sochi during the Ukrainian crisis. This fact was mentioned in the yearly report on Austrian foreign policy as the “inducement of the criticism by the public opinion, NGOs and civil society about the human rights situation in Russia”. The same document only mentioned that Austria performed 50 events in Russia during the Austrian Season in the Russian Federation.<sup>74</sup> The media outlets did not mention any doubts about performing cultural events simultaneously. An analysis of “Facebook” and “Twitter” showed no interest in the Season in Russia either. The Austrians would claim that the conflict had not disturbed their cultural relations and that their ties with Ukraine didn’t change this attitude. They described the situation as difficult times during which cultural cooperation must be continued and serve as an open channel because mainly of friendship between the countries.<sup>75</sup> Thus, the public in Austria

72 In every case, we analysed three online media outlets, and searched for debates on “Facebook” and “Twitter”, focusing on years and seasons of culture.

73 *Media Report. Austrian Cultural Season 2013–2014*, Artmanagement, 2014: <[http://www.akfmo.org/uploads/Press\\_report\\_Art\\_Management.pdf](http://www.akfmo.org/uploads/Press_report_Art_Management.pdf)> [accessed: 29 XII 2017].

74 *Außen- und Europapolitischer Bericht...*, [2014], p. 92.

75 Simon Mraz in: *Austria Kultur International 2015. Jahrbuch Der Österreichischen Auslandskultur*, Bundesministerium für Europa, Integration und Äußeres, Wien 2016, p. 77.

reacted to the Winter Olympic Games but ignored the Austrian Season of Culture, which continued at the time of the international crisis.

The debate in Germany about Russia gained momentum after the downing of the Malaysian plane in July 2014; nonetheless, neither the developments in eastern Ukraine nor the sanctions on Russia resulted in any profound change in the conduct of the cultural events.

The German media barely mentioned the fact of the simultaneous performance of the Year as a cultural event during a time of sanctions but realised the controversy in organising the St Petersburg modern art Biennale Manifesta during the war.<sup>76</sup> The Goethe Institute, the programming node of the Year of German Language and Literature, became the most active transmitter of information about the events on social media. However, the tweets hardly reached any publicity.

The UK-Russia Year of Culture gained positive media coverage in the UK despite the political controversies surrounding the annexation of Crimea. Before the launch of the event, the media in Britain expected that the icy relations between the UK and Russia would improve; even during the unfortunate year, the tone of the press was quite moderate. Journalists did not negate the political and economic sanctions after the annexation of Crimea but were in favour of a continuation of the cultural events despite political turbulences. The opinion of a "The Independent" columnist who appealed to the British government not to cancel the event due to sanctions can illustrate the generally positive reception of Russian art in the UK. Lister commented:

And yes, we should celebrate that. We should not keep the festival quiet. Government ministers should not be studiously avoiding it. They should be shouting about it, shouting how cultural links show that even politically opposed nations can come together and understand

76 A. Prizkau, "Warum Matisse aus der Eremitage ausziehen muss", "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung", 4 I 2014, p. 11; U. Knöfel, "In Russland misstraut man den Menschen", "Der Spiegel" [online], 29 V 2014 [accessed: 31 VII 2017]: <<http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/manifesta-2014-in-st-petersburg-kasper-koenig-und-michail-piotrowski-a-972222.html>>; A. Boutsko, *Zehnte Manifesta scheut keine Tabus*, "Deutsche Welle" [online], 25 VI 2014 [accessed: 31 VII 2014]: <<https://www.dw.com/de/10-manifesta-scheut-keine-tabus/a-17734092>>.

each other better through art. Actually, that is meant to be the British Council's *raison d'être*.<sup>77</sup>

Due to its sparse promotion, the event had little resonance in social media. The majority of publicity about the event came from the British Council and other cooperating institutions, which created a network of cultural nodes without a switch to political actors and/or economic stakeholders, not to mention the public.

The debate on the planned Polish Year in Russia was much more visible in Poland. After the annexation of Crimea, the Polish government decided to cancel too entertaining events, and very soon, both partners agreed on the de-politicisation of the programme, as the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed.<sup>78</sup> In March and April 2014, the discussions of the Parliamentary Commissions displayed differences in the Polish understanding of cultural diplomacy during a conflict. Whereas the government stressed the relevance of the planned Year for dialogue and civil society development, the opposition saw the cultural events as one of the tools of Russian war propaganda. In May 2014, one of the MFA representatives still claimed that culture can reduce tensions between Poland and Russia.<sup>79</sup> Debates in parliament and voices published by media reflected the fact that Polish-Russian relations were tense from at least 2004.<sup>80</sup>

The media debate on the Polish Year in Russia, called a war about the organisation of a Polish Year in Russia,<sup>81</sup> started at the end of 2013 and reflected the trends in Polish approaches to the Ukrainian-Russian

77 "The Independent", 30 VIII 2014, p. 3.

78 *MSZ: Rok Rosji w Polsce będzie, ale ograniczony* [MFA: The Russian Year in Poland Will Take Place, but Limited], "Polska Agencja Prasowa" [online], 8 IV 2014 [dostęp: 31 VII 2014]: <<https://polskieradio24.pl/artykul/1094821,msz-rok-rosji-w-polsce-b%04%09dzie-ale-ograniczony>>.

79 *Pełny zapis...*

80 More on debates in Poland: B. Ociepka, *Cultural Diplomacy as an External Voice of Cultural Policy. The Case of Poland*, "International Journal of Cultural Policy" 2021, vol. 27, issue 2, p. 233–245.

81 D. Karpiuk, *Wojna o organizację Roku Polskiego w Rosji* [War on the Organisation of Polish Year in Russia], "Newsweek Polska" [online], 11 IV 2014 [accessed: 20 X 2020]: <<https://www.newsweek.pl/kultura/czy-powinnismy-odwolac-organizacje-roku-polskiego-w-rosji-newsweekpl/812q3yf>>.

conflict. Relations with Russia and Poland's security became the main issues of the debate about the Year. The controversies between the incumbent party and the opposition were also visible. The plans to organise a Polish Year in Russia during the war and the sanctions on Russia evoked question about artists' role and responsibility. The impact of sanctions on cultural diplomacy split opinion: the continuation of preparations had more supporters among artists, curators and media close to the incumbent party, whereas the oppositional right-wing media and politicians pledged themselves to cancellation. The Minister of Foreign Affairs made the final decision to cancel the Year.

### Conclusion

The first result of the study on the cases of cultural diplomacy at the time of sanctions on Russia is the observation that the governments reacted in diverse ways to the war in eastern Ukraine in 2014–2015. Although the cultural institutions responsible for the programmes of cultural festivities were networked, there was no synchronisation of actions taken to respond to Russian hostile behaviour. The cultural agencies made decisions based on the continuation of events themselves. As previously mentioned, only Poland decided to cancel the Year in Russia, and the British government withdrew its ministers from participating in events, both serving as an example of abrupt change. In contrast, in the other countries, cultural diplomacy was gradually adjusted to the new circumstances in relations with the Russian Federation. However, the pace of changes depended more on the foreign policy contexts, first and foremost on the situation in Ukraine and bilateral relations with Ukraine and Russia, than on sanctions. The continuation of cultural diplomacy efforts allowed for the avoidance of collateral damage and well reflected the fears of the governments in cutting down the numerous economic ties with Russia. Therefore, the governments presented the complete list of possible decisions on the cultural festivities during the conflict, ranging from the pragmatic Austrian business as usual policy to the Polish national security-driven cancellation.

In 2014, cultural diplomacy with Russia turned to an illustration of tensions between the EU member states' foreign policy objectives. The EU countries achieved no cohesion in implementing cultural diplomacy in Russia during the war. Such developments could have been observed in 2016 when

the EU set up its Platform for Cultural Diplomacy and launched work on the strategy of international cultural diplomacy<sup>82</sup> and consequently, a project in 2017 and 2018 called "Public Diplomacy: EU and Russia."<sup>83</sup> In the first stage of the war in Ukraine, cultural diplomacy mainly served the countries' national interests. Since 2022, it has hardly continued.

European public opinion and media also showed diversified patterns of reaction to the celebration of years and seasons of culture with Russia at that time. The cultural exchange with Russia was not at the top of the media agenda nor discussed on social media platforms. Also, the role of media as political actors in countries involved in cultural events with Russia during the political tensions was not very strong. They rather ignored the controversy (Austria) or passively commented on the events (UK, Germany). The case of Polish media is exceptional, but it was due to the decision of the Polish government to cancel the festivities.

Bilateral Years or Seasons of Culture served as soft power tools and aptly represented the belief that the EU should not isolate itself entirely from the Russian Federation. While continuing cultural diplomacy with Russia, Austria, Germany, and the UK did not cease interaction with their adversary, which authors see as Tim Jacoby as a stage in the international conflict process. They continued instead with a benefit conferring action<sup>84</sup> in the field of culture, which might be explained by the implementation of the dual-track policy, such as in the British case. Cultural diplomacy preserved its role as an open channel of communication while being isolated from the other channels, such as political and economic sanctions. We did not find any evidence that cultural diplomacy was coordinated with sanctions, neither at the national nor at the EU levels.

Current research revealed that cultural diplomacy for conflict prevention with Russia was abandoned at the EU level, at least in 2014. Sanctions and cultural diplomacy as subnetworks of foreign policy were hardly

82 *Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations*, "European Parliament" [online, accessed: 20 VII 2020]: <<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/api/stages/report/current/theme/europe-as-a-stronger-global-actor/file/eu-strategy-for-international-cultural-relations>>.

83 *Public Diplomacy EU and Russia 2017-2018*, EU in Russia, 2019: <[https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/public\\_diplomacy\\_2017-2018.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/public_diplomacy_2017-2018.pdf)> [accessed: 11 XI 2020].

84 T. Jacoby, *Understanding...*, p. 28.



intertwined. The EU responded to the Russian hybrid war with strategic communication: the EEAS East StratCom Task Force is aimed at the countries of the Eastern Partnership. Although well-rooted in the idea of promoting European values, it hardly mentioned cultural diplomacy.

The dialogue-supporting power of cultural diplomacy was hardly confirmed, testing negatively the implementation of the cosmopolitan approach in the EU-Ukraine-Russia cases.

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