



Call for Papers

**Reimagining European Cultural Diplomacy.
Historical Legacies and Future Prospects of East-West Relations**

**Europäische Kulturdiplomatie neu denken.
Historische Herausforderungen und Zukunftsperspektiven der Ost-West-Beziehungen**

**Repenser la diplomatie culturelle européenne.
Enjeux historiques et horizons futurs des relations Est-Ouest**

International and Interdisciplinary Conference within the Framework of the Horizon Europe Project NARDIV

27-29/11/2025, Bucharest, Romania

At a time when Europe is striving to present a united front in terms of economic strength and military security, cultural diplomacy emerges as an essential third pillar in shaping a resilient and cohesive Europe. Beyond economic and defense strategies, a common European cultural diplomacy has the potential to safeguard and promote European integration, foster long-term cooperation, and counteract the fragmentation of narratives both within and beyond Europe's borders.

Could a unified European cultural diplomacy in this context complement existing political and economic initiatives, strengthen Europe's soft power and at the same time mitigate internal differences and divisions within the EU? How can cultural diplomacy be institutionalized as a core element of European external and internal strategies? What mechanisms are needed to align national cultural diplomacy efforts into a coherent European strategy?

Cultural diplomacy, operating at the intersection of politics, history, culture, literature, the arts, communication, and many other disciplines, constitutes an important field of research by serving as a unifying force to promote solidarity among EU member states and providing a platform for engagement with neighboring countries in a way that transcends political and economic negotiations. It offers valuable insights into processes of cultural belonging and the ongoing formation of communicative and collective memory. Furthermore, cultural diplomacy presents both cultural and political scientists with the opportunity to develop new, innovative transdisciplinary methodologies. As a field where theory and practice converge, cultural diplomacy provides access to institutions such as the Goethe-Institut, the ICR, the Polish Institute, and the Institut français, which function as laboratories for studying long-term trends and assessing the effectiveness of diplomatic initiatives. However, this potential has not yet been sufficiently utilized. One of the key objectives of NARDIV is to enhance academic and practical engagement with cultural diplomacy, ultimately formulating recommendations for a more effective inclusion of civil society in what is often perceived as an abstract and inaccessible domain.

Beyond general considerations on the function of cultural diplomacy as a form tool of soft power, this conference seeks to present a nuanced and multifaceted picture of European East-West integration through case studies from various disciplines. Special attention will also be given to ongoing areas of conflict and contestation. Furthermore, to foster a more inclusive approach to civil society, the conference will explore the impact of digital and social media on cultural diplomacy.

In view of these new political challenges faced by the European Union, the Horizon Europe project NARDIV is organising an international and interdisciplinary conference to analyse cultural diplomacy strategies that can particularly promote stability, democracy and cultural resilience and that could represent common



Funded by the Horizon Europe Programme of the European Union under grant agreement No 101095171

ground for such a European cultural diplomacy. The focus is on a critical examination of the tense mutual perceptions between Eastern and Western Europe. The radical turning point of 1989-91 serves as a point of reference on the one hand, as do long-term processes of exchange and transformation on the other. What role did cultural diplomacy play in promoting sustainable cooperation during the Cold War and beyond, and to what needed to be done reestablish cultural diplomacy as an important tool countering?

This field of inquiry encompasses national, regional, and European perspectives. The following topics are of particular relevance:

- Proposals for a unified European cultural diplomacy framework. Creating a unified funding source or cultural diplomatic projects and creative industries
- The practice of cultural diplomacy: working with different publics and in diverse contexts. Making case for both domestic and international publics
- Collaboration between state institutions and private initiatives in cultural diplomacy at the national and international levels
- The historical dimensions of cultural diplomacy between East and West, before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall, with a focus on reconciliation efforts
- The representation and role of minorities in cultural diplomacy
- Feminist and postcolonial approaches to cultural diplomacy
- The significance of trilateral and multilateral approaches in cultural diplomacy
- Teaching and transmitting cultural diplomacy in academic settings: How can actors in the field of cultural diplomacy be made aware of and trained for effective cooperation with artists, academics and media representatives?
- Artistic research: Can artistic practice in the context of cultural transfer produce outputs that practitioners can use for political and/or scientific purposes?
- Best practice: examples of synergetic cooperation between practitioners of cultural diplomacy, universities, media and artists as well as actors in the cultural field
- Cultural diplomacy and nation branding: blurred boundaries in modern international relations?
- The impact of social media and digitalization on cultural diplomacy
- The multiscale field of cultural diplomacy in the last century: state, city, and citizen diplomacy
- Cultural diplomacy, symbolism, and global governance

The quest for establish a link between historical case studies and contemporary developments in order to address pressing questions, such as: How can countries like Ukraine and Moldova, as well as other EU accession candidates, engage in and benefit from a more intensive cultural exchange between East and West? To what extent are regional strategies in cultural diplomacy desirable?

Given the current geopolitical challenges, rising nationalist tendencies, and increasing global polarization, the role of cultural diplomacy in sustaining democratic values, human rights, and pluralistic societies becomes ever more critical. However, here again, different approaches can be seen in East and West. While Germany and Scandinavian countries are launching the model of a 'feminist foreign cultural policy', Poland and Romania continue to favor traditional forms of cultural diplomacy.

The conference languages will be English, French, and German. Presentations should be 20 minutes in length, followed by a 10-minute discussion. Abstracts (maximum 300 words), including a brief biobibliographical note, should be submitted via email by **May 15, 2025**. Notification of acceptance will be sent by early June. A first draft of the paper should be submitted to the editorial committee by **October 1, 2025**, to undergo the peer review process. The final version must be submitted by **December 15, 2025**, to ensure timely publication.

Please send your abstracts by 15 May 2025 to: Nicole Colin (n.colin@uva.nl), Gabriel H. Decuble (horatiu.decuble@iis.unibuc.ro)

Funding and Reimbursement Information: There is no registration fee for the conference. Accommodation costs will be covered, and travel expenses may be fully or partially reimbursed, depending on the total amount.

Scientific board: Nicole Colin, Gabriel H. Decuble, Hanna Klimpe, Irina Matei, Christian Noack, Beata Ociepa, Cristian Preda, Oana-Valentina Suci, Florin Țurcanu, Pierre-Frédéric Weber, Joachim Umlauf

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