

Topic Overview

28th National Selection Process of the European Youth Parliament in Germany

Considering the joint communication by the European Commission and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on an EU strategy for international cultural relations, how should the European Union further develop the Eastern Partnership Culture Programme II to improve cultural cooperation with its Eastern neighbours?

Name/School: Neues Gymnasium Bochum

1. Video links, graph or other visual

EU Neighbours east - Annual survey 2016: Perceptions of the European Union in Eastern Partnership Countries¹

http://www.3dcftas.eu/system/tdf/EU%20Neighbours%20East_Factsheets_2016_REGIONAL%20OVERVIEW_0.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=286

EU Eastern Partnership Culture and Creativity programme - Why culture matters? Opinions about the opportunities that culture brings to society

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AW_XQgIUplg

2. Key Terms

Eastern Partnership (EaP) – Launched in 2009, the EaP is the eastern dimension of the **European Neighborhood Policy (ENP)**. The EaP consists of the European Union and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. It is to provide an institutionalised forum of discussion and aims at assisting partner countries in their transformation. The EaP aims to strengthen bilateral relations, support reforms and bring them closer to the EU. The issues discussed range from trade to travel agreements and strive to promote human rights and the rule of law in the region.

Eastern Partnership Culture Program II (2015-2018) (EaPCP II) - The programme for the EaP countries builds on the experience of the EaP Culture programme I (2012-2015), which also included Russia. The budget apparently is either € 4.9² or 4.95 Mio³.

EU-Eastern Partnership Culture and Creativity Program - Main part of the EaPCP II (also used synonymously).⁴ The budget apparently is either € 4.2⁵ or 4.3 Mio.⁶

¹ All hyperlinks were last accessed on 4th November 2017.

² https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/2016-eastern-partnership-meeting-report-6_en.pdf

³ Almut Brunckhorst concerning citizen request (Case ID:101000183902)

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ <https://www.culturepartnership.eu/en/page/about>

⁶ <http://www.euneighbours.eu/en/east/eu-in-action/projects/eu-eastern-partnership-culture-and-creativity-programme>

Creative cities and towns initiative - An initiative by the EaP creativity and cultural programme which aims at presenting smaller and less known regions in order to “enhance their creative potential”.

Creative Europe - A programme which aims at improving and supporting the cultural and media sectors. It offers a budget of €1.46 billion.⁷

Cultural diplomacy platform - A tool managed by cultural organisations from different member states that is used to facilitate training and cultural events.⁸.

3. Relevance and explanation of the problem

Culture plays an important role in the promotion of tolerance and cooperation. After the EU and its neighbour countries were separated for decades, it is essential to work with these countries on a cultural level. The **Eastern Partnership Culture Programme II** seeks to encourage and support cultural exchange.

To achieve that, **transparency is a prerequisite**. Many organisations or cultural institutes may not know who to address for support through the EaPCP II while the majority of citizens might not even be aware of the existence of the programme.⁹ Multiple sources share inconsistent information concerning the aims, budget, runtime and accomplishments.¹⁰

Funding is another important issue since many Eastern European countries have an economic performance below EU-average.

4. Key conflicts

For historical reason, there are still conflicts between some of the Eastern Partnership countries, e.g. Armenia and Azerbaijan.¹¹ Therefore awareness of similarities in the cultures is of crucial importance for a peaceful future. Against this background it is a further potential source of conflict that not all participants are treated equally. Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, for example, are eligible to take part in the Creative Europe Programme while the participation of the others is still pending.¹²

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/about_en

⁸ See: “JOINT COMMUNICATION of the European Council and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policies TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL: Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations”, 4. a)

⁹ [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2017/585910/IPOL_BRI\(2017\)585910_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2017/585910/IPOL_BRI(2017)585910_EN.pdf)

¹⁰ Official sources with partly inconsistent information:
https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/2016-eastern-partnership-meeting-report-6_en.pdf;
<https://www.culturepartnership.eu/en/page/about> ;
<http://www.euneighbours.eu/en/east/eu-in-action/projects/eu-eastern-partnership-culture-and-creativity-programme>;

Almut Brunckhorst concerning citizen request (Case ID:101000183902)

¹¹ <https://www.reuters.com/article/armenia-azerbaijan-conflict/armenia-azerbaijan-closer-to-war-over-nagorno-karabakh-than-at-any-time-since-1994-icg-idUSL8N1IY402>

¹² https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/library/eligibility-organisations-non-eu-countries_en

Simultaneously the EU must not level the existing differences. If the partner countries do not feel individually acknowledged, the programme might not strengthen cooperation but, contrarily, disapproval of the EU. In this context, a critical issue is also the influence of western culture. Many traditionalists and nationalists across Europe blame the European Union for mainstreaming the culture of the respective countries.

The human rights situation is yet another conflict. Human rights organisations have reported many violations of political human rights - in Belarus.¹³ The most popular sources of political information besides the internet are government-controlled media. A similar situation can be observed in Azerbaijan.¹⁴

Furthermore, the EaP and EaPCP II programmes are criticised by Russia, who sees them as a way of increasing the sphere of EU influence while Russia seeks to consolidate and expand its own influence in the region.¹⁵ The Ukrainian crisis and Russia's annexation of Crimea (2014) aggravated the conflict considerably, and Russia, which was part of the EaPC I, does not take part in EaPCP II.

5. Key actors

The EaPCP Programme was initiated by the **British council** and is also supported through the **Soros foundation - Moldova**, the **National centre of culture in Poland** and the **Goethe Institut**.

European Commission: The European Commission organizes a regular exchange between administrations associated with the EaPCP II. The EaPCP II and its associates are funded by the **European Commission**.

Euronest Parliamentary Assembly: A forum in which delegations from the European Parliament and the national parliaments of the EaP countries, except for Belarus, meet.

The **country coordinators** represent the EaPCP II in the participating countries.

6. Measures in place

The EaPCP I&II have implemented several programmes and initiated multiple initiatives in order to promote cultural exchange.

The projects supported vary in every EaP country. However, some similarities illustrate the focus of the EaPCP II:

- Research, e.g. on cultural heritage in Belarus and the cultural sector,
- Capacity building, e.g. of professional journalists on cultural journalism and regional trainings that include participants from six different countries,
- Study tours, e.g. a trip for six organisations from a number of countries to Poland,

¹³ <https://www.amnesty.de/presse/2012/9/20/oppositionelle-schikaniert-und-verurteilt>

¹⁴ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-24455367>

¹⁵ <http://www.cer.eu/publications/archive/policy-brief/2017/contested-space-russian-and-eu-relations-eastern-europe>

- Online offers, e.g. the development of a website and a related Facebook page or the establishment of certified online courses for cultural managers in several languages.¹⁶
- Projects like the Creative Cities and Towns Initiative.¹⁷

7. Solutions

Seeing the conflicts between EaPCP II participants it will be crucial to advance cooperation.

First in fields of art, we encourage initiatives such as an “European Arts Contest” using the Eurovision Song Contest as a model in which both EU-member states and partner countries can participate.

In addition, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus should be encouraged to participate in Creative Europe.

As transparency has been a key point of criticism, it would be beneficial to improve the public appearance of the programme by revising the web portals in a way as to emphasise accomplishments and increase understandability.

In order to distance itself from human rights violations, the EU should look very closely at any cooperation with Belarus. As large parts of the cultural landscape are controlled by the authoritarian government, the EU has to be very careful when selecting media they want to support and work with.

In order to avoid further criticism from nationalists, it is necessary that the EU continuously tries to support and promote cultural projects that are genuine to the respective Eastern European countries to make sure that old traditions and customs of these countries remain in existence.

Moreover, the existing “Cultural diplomacy platform” shall be used to offer more training and facilitate additional cultural events in Eastern Europe.

We recommend the introduction of specific age-defined target groups. Through that, youth groups or older people could work on common culture projects.

The programme details should also be discussed at annual Euronest meetings to allow the partner countries to have a say about cultural cooperation that could be used in future programmes.

Local authorities should be encouraged to use city twinning to promote the cultural exchange in the respective areas. Another effect of city twinning would be that historical conflicts be sidelined and that resentment may turn into interest or even sympathy.

Considering the ongoing tensions with Russia the EaPCP II should clearly state that an exclusion is not desirable and that the Russian Federation is invited to join.

¹⁶ <https://www.culturepartnership.eu>

¹⁷ Can be found in Svetlogorsk, Gomel region.

8. Conclusion

Taking into account the criticism of the programme we conclude that the EaPCP II is fulfilling its aims with limited effectivity.

Some programs have proven their effectivity; however, there is still room for improvements.

With the measures that we propose we envisage a leap towards an unprecedentedly diverse EU. Despite this diversity we try to prevent conflicts and strengthen partnerships. Our aim is to promote popular culture while supporting unique local customs in Eastern Europe which we believe can contribute to our manifold European culture.