

*The Eastern Partnership Cultural Observatory was set up with the aim to provide an overview on culture in the EaP Region (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine), bringing together evidence-based materials and identifying priorities for research and new policy initiatives. Its first thematic briefs have been displayed on the Observatory [webpage](#), part of Culture and Creativity EU Programme [portal](#), administered by the British Council after the end of the programme.*

## **BRIEF NR.1: CULTURAL DIPLOMACY**

Branding the nation is a natural drive worldwide for which culture is a prime instrument. Despite their national cultural traditions rooting back many centuries (just to recall: Armenia and Belarus are actually celebrating the 500th anniversary of printing in the national language), the short record of independent statehood of the six countries particularly compels them to make their cultural values better known and seen on the international arena.

International visibility and recognition of the nation's cultural values fosters self-esteem and increases national cohesion – best needed in times of crisis. Beyond symbolic gains, the international cultural representation of the country serves practical aims. Successful country branding contributes to the political and economic standing of the nation, boosts tourism and investments.

### **The challenge of comparison**

International cultural representation happens in many fields, follows diverse aims and uses a variety of instruments. This complex issue in the six countries is compared by taking a short glance at some aspects and goes into details at others. Comprehensive information gathered from the six countries includes

- record of adherence to international cultural conventions
- list of international cultural events organized inside the six countries
- list of international cultural events organized outside the region

### **The directions of the activities**

The basic direction of aspirations of the six countries is **global**, “tout azimuth”. Nevertheless, withstanding the global diversification in the economy and some other dimensions, culture keeps gravitating towards its traditional hubs, thus the main centres of western civilisation are key targets of the efforts in all six countries. **Europe**, and particularly the countries in the European Union enjoy priority, although the strength of emphasis varies. Compared to this, the cultivation of cultural links towards the former partners in the Soviet Union receives lesser attention. Foreign policy priorities may occasionally upgrade other areas, like recent opening towards distant continents by Georgia.

In Azerbaijan, the energies spent on cultural diplomacy allow for extending interests towards additional communities: that of the **Islamic**, as well as the **Turkic** countries. Less robust are the activities of the **Slavic** countries with regard to that community, and the Moldovan focus on Romanian (or **Romance**) countries is even weaker.

**Diasporas** are important for all six nations. Historic legacies make this a central issue in Armenia, but recent waves of exodus affect the entire region. Caring for, and relying on co-nationals living abroad receives increasing attention in all six countries.

### The agents of the activities

Traditionally – and particularly in this region – the representation of the nation’s culture is the task of the **state**, a matter of soft power exerted through cultural diplomacy. The division of labour involves a broad scale in the state machinery from the presidents’ offices through various ministries (culture, foreign affairs, economic relations, tourism, diaspora) to state institutions and quasi non-governmental foundations (“the governmental civic bodies”), the comparative description and analysis of which goes beyond the scope of this brief.

With the advances of globalisation and the improvement of all means of communication other players gain increasing importance in the international cultural cooperation. **Cities and regions** are busy at branding their identity and culture also beyond the border. The **civil society** also takes its part in the operations. This ranges from artists and other professionals of the sector to non-governmental associations as well as private individuals. The decentralisation of international cultural collaboration has not yet come close to dimensions experienced in West Europe, although Annexes 3 and 4 display sample signs of private virtues, too.

### The cultural diplomacy arsenal

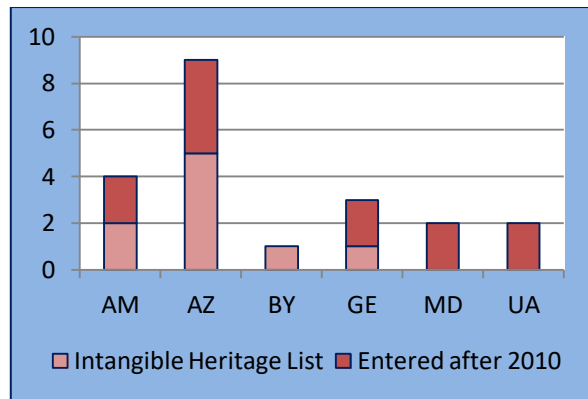
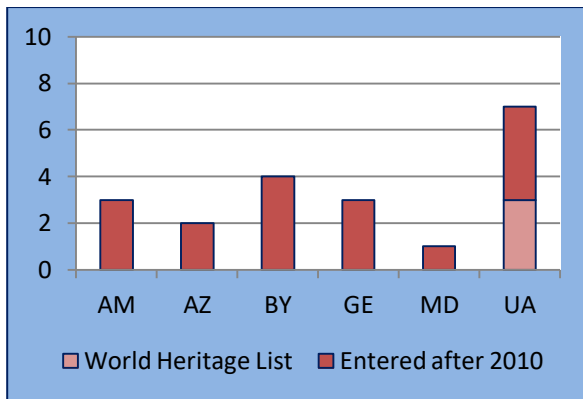
#### ❖ Conventions

Signing and adopting conventions are the basic bonds to the international community. All six countries accomplished this task in the early phase of independent statehood with regard to the *global cultural conventions* handled by UNESCO.

UNESCO	AM	AZ	BY	GE	MD	UA
Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Convention for the Protection and Promotion the Diversity of Cultural Expressions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
COUNCIL OF EUROPE						
European Cultural Convention	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada)	✓	✓	no	✓	✓	✓
European Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Valletta)	✓	✓	no	✓	✓	✓
Framework Convention on Social Values of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro)	✓	no	no	✓	✓	✓
European Convention on Cinematographic coproduction	✓	✓	no	✓	✓	✓
European Landscape Convention	✓	✓	no	✓	✓	✓
European Convention for the Protection of the Audiovisual Heritage	no	no	no	✓	no	S
Council of Europe Convention on Offences relating to Cultural Property	S	no	no	no	no	no
(S = signed)						

Belarus is not a member of the Council of Europe at present. Therefore besides the European Cultural Convention, Belarus has not acceded to the remaining seven European cultural conventions listed in the table. (Two of these conventions are only beginning to collect accessions.)

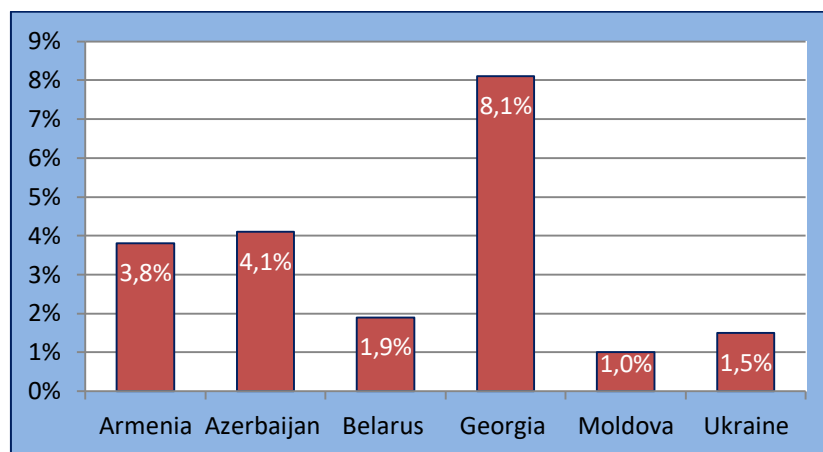
Ratifying conventions is one thing, applying them is another. The two graphs show that all six countries are represented with at least one item on both global registries connected to the UNESCO conventions on *tangible and intangible heritage* respectively: Ukraine has recently been particularly active in the former, and Azerbaijan in the latter.



### ❖ International events at home

Cultural diplomacy begins at home, by portraying culture in ways that catch the attention of the international community and attract foreign participants and visitors.

One area where the economic impact of culture is particularly tangible is *tourism*, a sector that represents a growing share in the GDP worldwide. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council, these were the percentage contributions of travel and tourism to the GDP in 2016:



*Festivals* can act as magnets for tourists. One international festival has survived the collapse of the Soviet Union: the Molodist film festival in Kyiv has had 46 editions since 1970. There are nine more prestigious cultural events that are roughly the same age as their republics. Next to these, the **Annex** lists another seventeen established festivals boasting more than ten editions, and a handful of emerging events born in the past ten years. Some of these have become flagship events, feeding national pride, are festive showcases of the state of the art in the respective genres, bring foreign artists and managers to the region and foster international connections. Their appeal to the global mainstream media, however, is still limited. (Will [the selection](#) of two emerging festivals among the 26 “Laureate” European festivals bring about a breakthrough?)

Internationally organised top cultural events have undoubtedly greater potential to catch global attention. *Eurovision* galas were hosted by the region twice in the past period. These occasions have indeed managed to attract concentrated attention to Baku in 2012, and Kyiv in 2017.

A number of top single cultural events have been arranged with national efforts in the past few years, tailored to the place and the occasion. Several of them celebrate major national jubilees (like the centenary of the Armenian Genocide Centennial), others are linked to global causes (like the

world forums on intercultural dialogue in Azerbaijan), and almost all of them absorb concentrated efforts of the state. They have great domestic impact and considerable diplomatic echo.

❖ **Permanent outposts abroad**

Establishing stable cultural outposts improves the effectiveness of international cultural cooperation. The six nations are handicapped against those countries that could build large networks of national cultural institutions over the decades. Nevertheless the issue is on the agenda and measures have been taken at an accelerating pace.

Cultural diplomacy platforms can exist and work in a variety of forms.

- The basic variant is a stand alone state owned institution, reporting to either the foreign or the cultural ministry. Belarus has run such institutions in Warsaw and Shanghai both since 2011, and Beijing since 2017. The Ukrainian government has just decided to establish such institutes in a number of capitals.
- Bodies at arm’s length from the government can also establish such centres, like the Azerbaijan Cultural Centre in Paris of the Heydar Alijev Foundation.
- Foreign based independent bodies and the diaspora represent a third option, with which the governments cooperate (or are prepared to). This is how the Ukrainian Institutes were founded and operate in London, New York and Stockholm. The scheme has developed the largest with the network of Armenian cultural centres in more than 23 countries, thanks to AGBU (Armenian General Benevolent Union); complemented by the strong backing of bodies like the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon.
- Smaller scale centres are active in the frame and usually on the premises of the embassies, like the Belarusian centres in Moscow and Paris.
- Some cultural centres are embedded into institutions of the host country. Belarus has one in the State University in Riga and one in the National Library in Islamabad.
- Finally, businesses can be involved, which is how the Belarusian Cultural Centre acts in Chisinau.

❖ **Taking part in events and actions abroad**

The evaluation of the achievements of cultural diplomacy in the six countries at the main international cultural arenas of the world (art and architecture expos, book fairs, film and art festivals, various rankings etc.) will be the topic of future briefs.

Arranging public commemorations and jubilee festivities is practised regularly, like the Days of Ukrainian Culture in various countries dedicated to the 25 Anniversary of Independence in 2016.

Holding national days of culture has also become routine. Belarus has held them in seven countries since 2010, and the days of Ukrainian cinema in Belgium and Netherlands is another example.

From the point of view of focused attempts at international visibility, *stand-alone affairs* abroad are a special genre. Investing considerable amount of capital in them is a particular feature of Azerbaijan.

The title of Guest of Honour for Georgia at the 2018 Frankfurt Book Fair promises an exceptional opportunity.

MAJOR CULTURAL EVENTS AND INVESTMENTS ABROAD (selection)		
The restoration of Roman catacombs (Saint Marcellino and Pietro)	2014	AZ
Opening Ann of Kyiv Cultural Centre, Senlis, France (non-governmental initiative)	2014	UA
Opening of Ukrainian Institute in Stockholm (non-governmental initiative)	2014	UA
Azerbaijani Village on Palais Royal Square before the Louvre Museum	2015	AZ

Inauguration of the Park of Azerbaijan in France	2016	AZ
Erection of a statue of Mahsati Ganjavi in Cognac, France	2016	AZ
Trapezitsa Architectural Museum Reserve in Veliko Tynovo, Bulgaria	2016	AZ
Inauguration of a statue to Khurshidbanu Natavan in Belgium	2016	AZ
Renovation of the Saint Gevorg Cathedral in Tbilisi	2016	AM
Restoration of martyrdom of the Saint Queen Ketevan in Convent of Graça, Portugal	2017	GE
Georgia will be Guest of Honour at the 2018 Frankfurt Book Fair	2018	GE

### **Conclusion**

The common historic legacies and shared geopolitical realities explain a number of similarities in the approaches to cultural diplomacy efforts of the six countries. The relative isolation that was the fate of these nations in the twentieth century – which was an era of lower level of international mobility worldwide, anyway – gave way to an opening to the world, a momentum that is on the increase. Actual aims and measures demonstrate a broad scale nevertheless the basic pattern is similar. International cultural connections are indeed best characterised by cultural diplomacy, the state being the main actor and nation branding the dominant aim. Our brief review has revealed manifestations of two-way and multilateral cooperation as well as the diversification of stakeholders, too, but these are not the decisive paradigm in any of the six countries.

### **Impressum**

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### **ANNEX: INTERNATIONAL EVENTS ORGANIZED INSIDE THE COUNTRY**

<b><u>Prestigious key festivals (from before 1997)</u></b>	<b><u>First edition</u></b>	<b><u>Country</u></b>
Molodist international film festival in Kyiv (46 editions)	1970	UA
Golden Lion International Theatre Festival in Lviv	1989	UA
Maria Biesu International Opera and Ballet Festival in Chisinau	1990	MD
Bookfest International Book Fair in Chisinau	1991	MD
New Music Days International Festival in Chisinau	1991	MD
Slaviansky Bazar in Vitebsk	1992	BY
Autumn Tbilisi International Music Festival	1993	GE
Listapad International Film Festival in Minsk	1994	BY
International Book Forum in Lviv	1994	UA
Eugene Ionesco Theater Biennial in Chisinau	1994	MD

<b><u>Other established festivals (10+ editions, from before 2007)</u></b>	<b><u>First edition</u></b>	<b><u>Country</u></b>
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GIFT - Georgian International Festival of Arts in Tbilisi	1997	GE
Ukrainian Fashion Week	1997	UA
Tbilisi Jazz Festival	1998	GE
Gyumri Biennial of Contemporary Art	1998	AM
Yerevan Perspectives – International Music Festival	2000	AM
Chronograph International Documentary Film Festival in Chisinau	2001	MD
Ethno-jazz Festival in Chisinau	2002	MD
Prometheus International Film Festival in Tbilisi	2002	GE
Koktebel International Jazz Festival)	2003	UA
Docudays UA: International Human Rights Documentary Festival in Kyiv	2003	UA
Art Gene traditional and folk culture Festival in Tbilisi	2003	GE
High Fest – International Performing Arts Festival	2003	AM
Aram Khachaturian International Music Competition	2003	AM
Golden Apricot international film festival in Yerevan	2004	AM
Baku Jazz Festival	2005	AZ
Mstislav Rostropovich Baku International Festival	2006	AZ
Batumi International Art-House Film Festival (BIAFF)	2006	GE

<b><u>Emerging new festivals</u></b>	<b><u>First edition</u></b>	<b><u>Country</u></b>
ArtPole World-Music and LandArt Festival	2007	UA
GOGOLFEST - International Annual Multidisciplinary International Festival of Contemporary Art Kyiv	2007	UA
Yerevan International Music Festival	2007	AM
Black Sea Jazz Festival	2007	GE
Lviv International Short Film Festival Wizz-Art	2008	UA
Biennale Week of Actual Art in Lviv	2008	UA
ReAnimania International Animation Film Festival of Yerevan	2008	AM
The International Biennial of Painting	2009	MD
ZaxidFest Music Festival	2009	UA
International World of Mugham Festival	2009	AZ
Uzeyir Hajibeyov International Music Festival	2009	AZ
Gabala International Music Festival	2009	AZ
The Art Villa Garikula interNational Contemporary Arts Festival	2009	GE
Tbilisi Fashion Week	2009	GE
Tbilisi International Festival of Theatre	2009	GE
Respublica Street Art and Music festival	2010	UA
Odessa International Film Festival	2010	UA
International Arsenal Book Festival, Kyiv	2010	UA
Armenian Composers' Art Festival	2010	AM
International Festival of Class Fest Theater Schools	2011	MD
Baku International Theatre Forum (biennial)	2010	AZE
International Ashyg Festival	2010	AZE
Alfa Jazz Fest Lviv	2011	UA
International Animation Film Festival - Nikozi	2011	GE
Aram Khachaturian Music festival	2013	AM

Baku International Tourism Film Festival	2013	AZE
International Festival of Film and Urbanism "86" in Slavutych	2013	UA
CineDOC-Tbilisi International Documentary Film Festival	2013	GE
Batumi MusicFest	2013	GE
Faine Misto Festival, Ternopil	2013	UA
Sheki International Theatre Festival (biennial)	2014	AZ
Kavkaz Jazz Festival	2014	GE
Azerbaijan Fashion Week	2015	AZ
Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week Tbilisi	2015	GE