

Bonds Beyond Borders

Analysing partnerships in EU-financed cultural projects

Péter Inkei – Marta Lis – Diyana Josifova, Budapest Cultural Observatory

Part 2 of the Connexus Dossier (ConDo 02) *Analysing the EU Culture Programme*. Part 1 was prepared by Euclid International. The full report has been available for [Connexus](#) members since September.

INTRODUCTION

In the frames of the Culture Programme financial grants are given under various “strands” or categories. This report focuses on the three strands of co-operation projects. These projects involve at least three partner organisations from at least three eligible European countries. The three categories are smaller projects with 3-4 partners (#1.2.1), larger projects with 6 or more partners (#1.1), and small projects involving at least one partner from a “third country” outside the eligible European ones (#1.3.5).

By July 2011 the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency of the European Commission (EACEA) had published on [its website](#) the data on grants won by 3197 projects. This covers the first five years’ operation of the seven years of this programme. Of these, 564 belong to one or other of the three kinds of co-operation projects. Our analysis aims at identifying the “social network” of the cultural community in Europe, manifested in the choices of partners to co-operate with in the projects that won financial support from the EU.

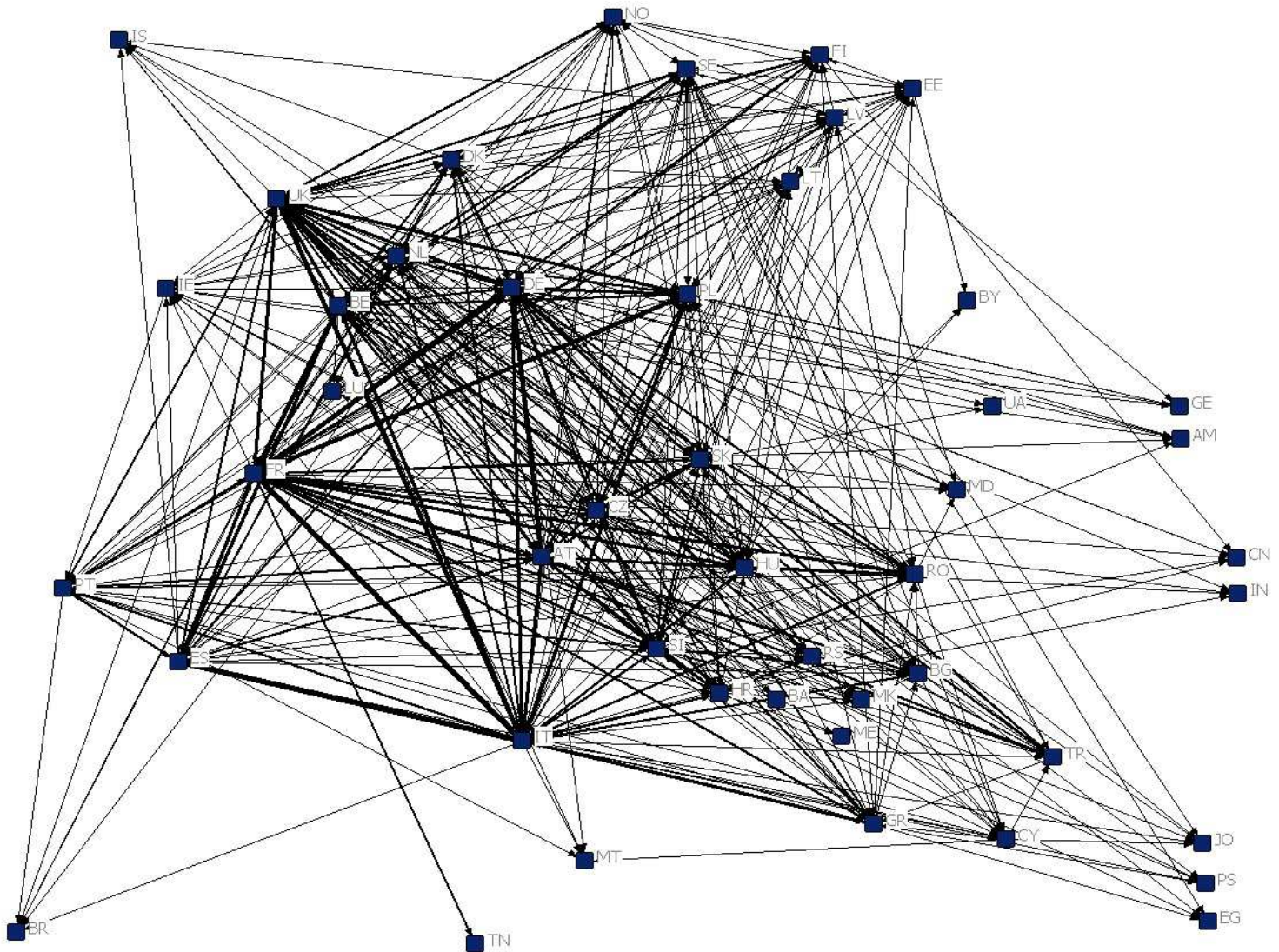
Since in each co-operation project the leader (the beneficiary) had to select partner organisations from at least two other countries, the 564 projects implied at least ($2 \times 564 =$) 1,128 bonds (links, choices, couplings...). Astonishingly, as many as 136 projects did not step beyond this minimalist threshold, limiting collaboration to a leader and two foreign co-organisers. All in all, there were 1,982 bonds in the 564 co-operation projects, the average bond by project being 3.5. The typical leader chose three or four partner organisations.

The 564 co-operation projects were divided between 32 countries. To this were added 15 countries that played a passive role: some of their culture organisations were involved in a project but they did (could) not produce a project leader. All 1,982 bonds appear twice in our analysis: at the inviting and at the accepting end. The division is, however, very uneven. There were ten countries with a lot of winning projects, who invited more foreign organisations than what they could “delegate” to other countries’ projects. In 22 cases the balance was the other way round, their organisations were “guests” in foreign projects in greater number than what their leaders could invite as partners.

In addition to cross-border co-operation bonds, the projects could and often did select co-organisers from their own country, too. The most populous project in the five year period was led by an organisation from the UK in 2008, it had 27 co-organisers, including 3 from the leader’s country. Cross-border collaboration being in focus of the following analysis, co-organisers from the home country were disregarded.

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

The 1,982 bonds displayed on a schematic map. The thickness of the lines corresponds to the number of connections: cultural co-operation links.



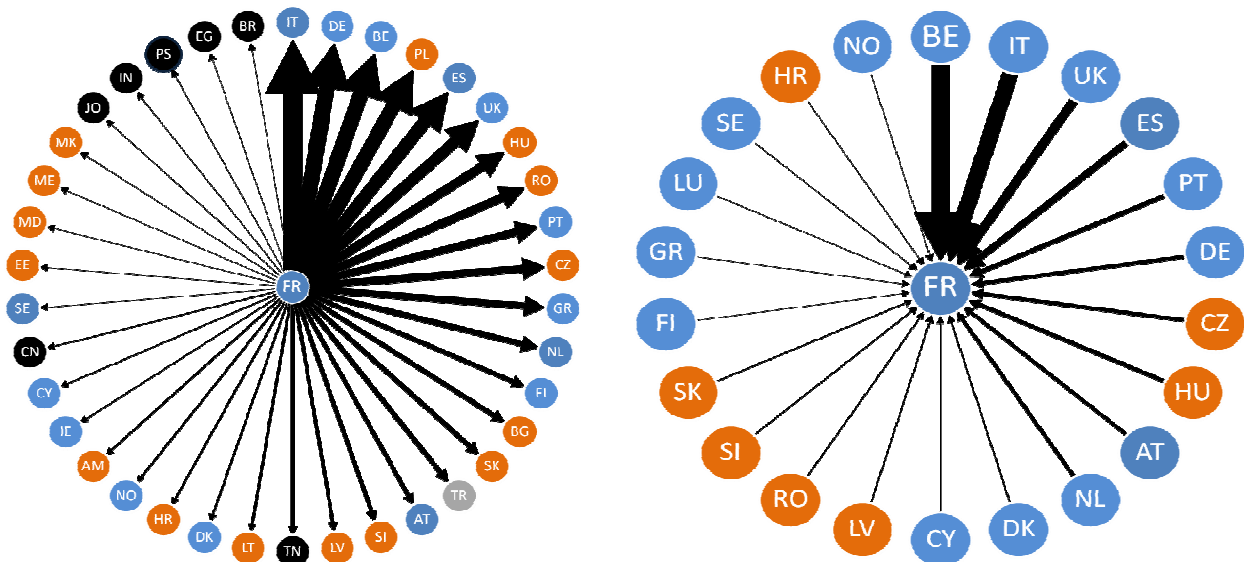
WHO CHOOSES WHOM FOR CULTURAL CO-OPERATION? ANALYSIS BY COUNTRY

Introductory remark

The scores of 32 countries are displayed on “bi-cycles”, more simple charts present the remaining 15 countries. The arrows (the “spokes” of the wheels) represent *initiatives*, will and decisions to include a co-organising partner from another country. Thus the thickest spoke on top of the very first wheel, aiming from FR to IT, reads as 29 French decisions to involve Italian co-organisers into a winning project. Similarly, the top spoke on the right stands for 26 Belgian project leaders’ initiative to invite French partners. (In a different logic, the arrows could aim in the opposite direction, expressing that 29 Italians were *pulled* into French projects.) The special focus of the Budapest Observatory on Eastern (including east-central) Europe explains why the post-communist countries are distinguished by an orange colour in these graphs.

France

This analysis should definitely begin with France. French cultural organisations have been the most successful in winning co-operation grants during the first five years of the programme. With 288 selected foreign co-organisers they are the indisputable champions of cultural co-operation. This high number makes visualisation difficult. However, our double circles try to cope with the challenge.



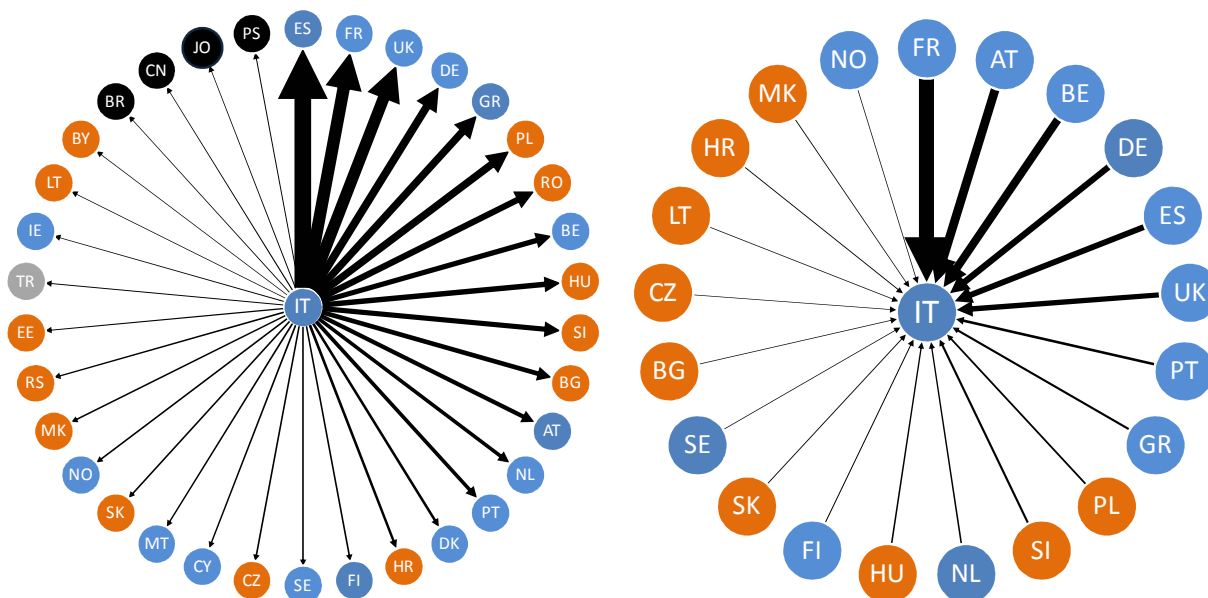
The 29 partners from Italy represent a key collaboration axis (we shall see, however, that it is the second strongest only in Europe). It was predictable to find five neighbours among the first eight countries by the number of selected co-organisers: the presence of three countries from Eastern Europe in this top eight, however, is a pleasant and great surprise – from the standpoint of the Budapest Observatory. The 22 invitations towards Polish organisations belong to the strongest bonds on the entire co-operation map. Without a closer look at the 23 Belgian choices we risk little by supposing that in their majority they represent the French community of Belgium.

France has opened its gate the widest globally, including 12 links with seven non-European countries, more than any other EU-member, in which the involvement of five Tunisian partners represents the strongest connection.

The visible imbalance between organisations involved from abroad, and French ones “delegated” elsewhere is one of the greatest. The circle on the right side presents 125 links (compared to the 288 on the left). This imbalance is particularly striking in the Polish relation: the 22 invitations extended to Polish co-organisers were compensated with – none! Czechs and Hungarians are positioned relatively higher in going for French partners; it remains to be seen at their graphs what the 6-6 choices represent in their scales of priorities.

Italy

241 cross-border bonds with 34 countries make Italy a close runner-up to France in cultural co-operation. Italian organisations have woven the single strongest bilateral collaboration rope of 32 bonds with Spanish partners. Between no other couple of countries was such an intensive relationship over the 5-year span. This liaison, however, reminds somewhat the one-sided French-Polish relationship, because Spanish operators chose French partners barely a third less often (11 times only).

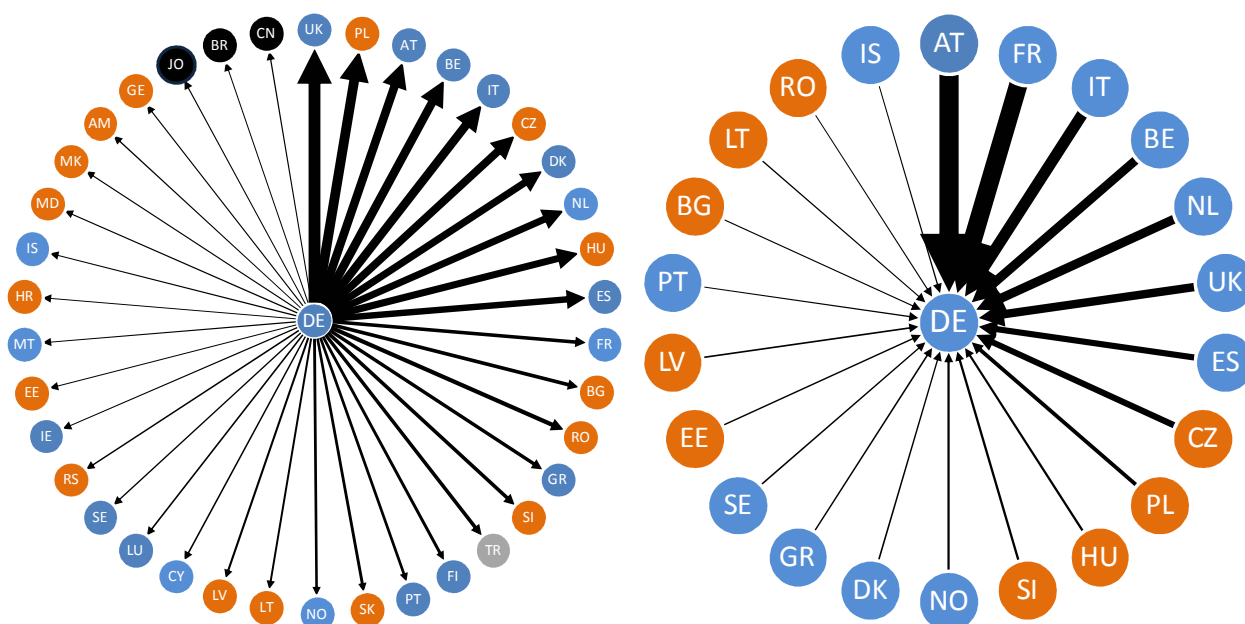


More balanced is the French connection: Italians chose them 23 times and the 29 invitations of course dominate the wheel on the right. The bi-cycle nicely shows this strong two way traffic.

Relations between Italian and German culture are also pretty equalised, since Germany occupies fourth position in both directions.

Germany

Which takes us to the German scores.



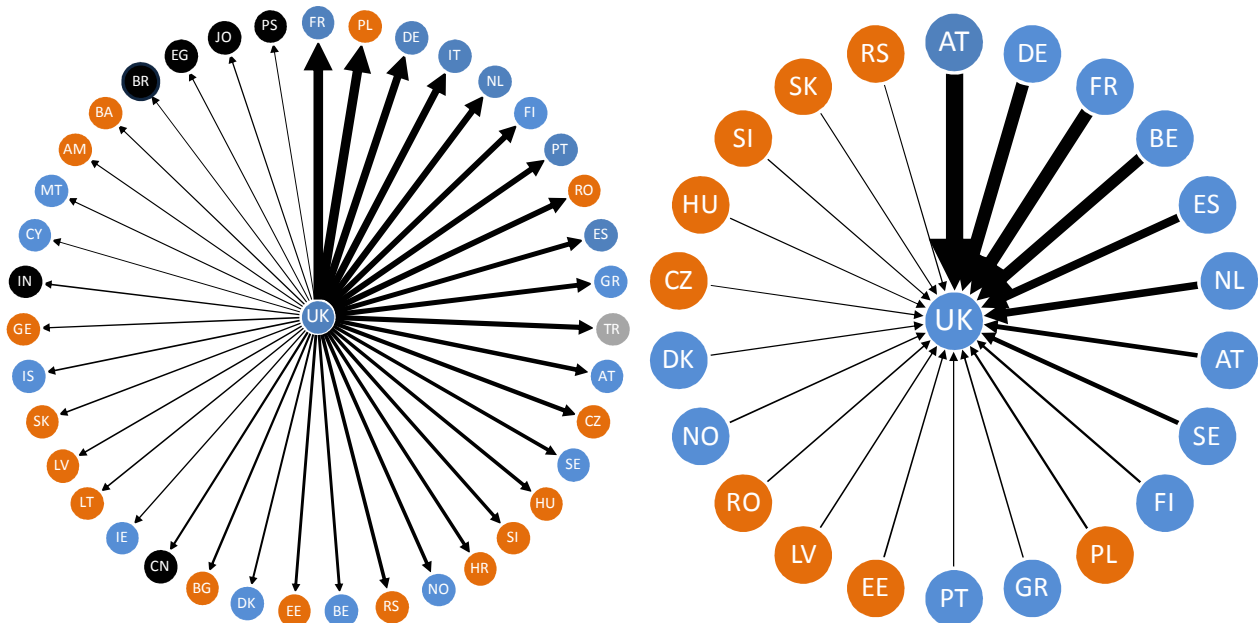
German leaders chose co-organisers from as many countries as France (38), although the total number of links is much lower (192). Only three of those links reached outside of Europe, leaving more room for European action.

With 17 choices, UK partners proved to be the most attractive for German cultural operators, followed by Poles. They received this favour a bit less coldly than in the French case, involving five German partners into their winning projects. The German-Czech relationship looks more stable. Cultivating mutually strong links with German speaking Austria is only natural.

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom turned out to be the champion of diversity, involving partners from 39 countries, more than anyone else.

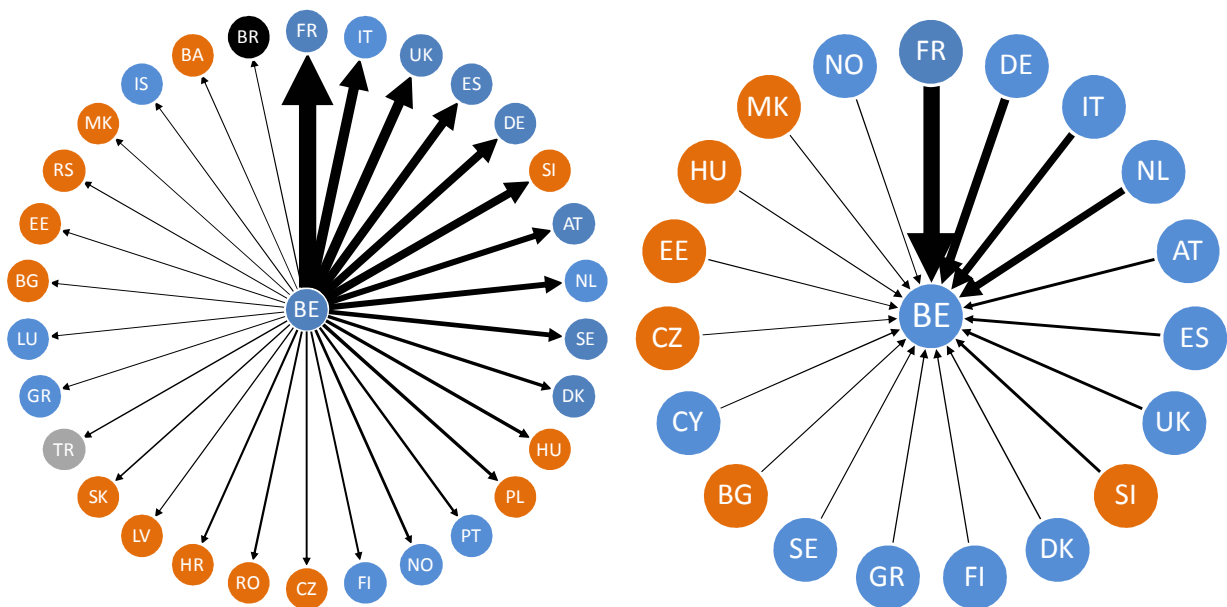
Similarly to the previous three cases, Polish cultural operators exerted the greatest attraction from east Europe, here too showing feeble reciprocity of 3 against 13 instances.



And still, with those three choices Poles were the most active to select British partners from east Europe. On the whole, we would have expected greater symmetry between the two wheels. The United Kingdom is a magnet for people from all professions and geographical areas, but particularly from Eastern Europe – and not only for the language. On the other hand, the British are often labelled as eurosceptics, yet our data contradicts this: 56 winning projects involving 182 co-organisers, although only 128 collaborating UK organisations included elsewhere (which is still slightly more than the French).

Belgium

The fifth position of Belgium, a notch ahead of Austria, is a positive surprise. And because the average Belgian leader engaged four co-organisers, their social network with 168 bonds confirms this impressive position. The involvement of 168 foreign partners is exactly the double of the number of Belgian operators acting in foreign projects.

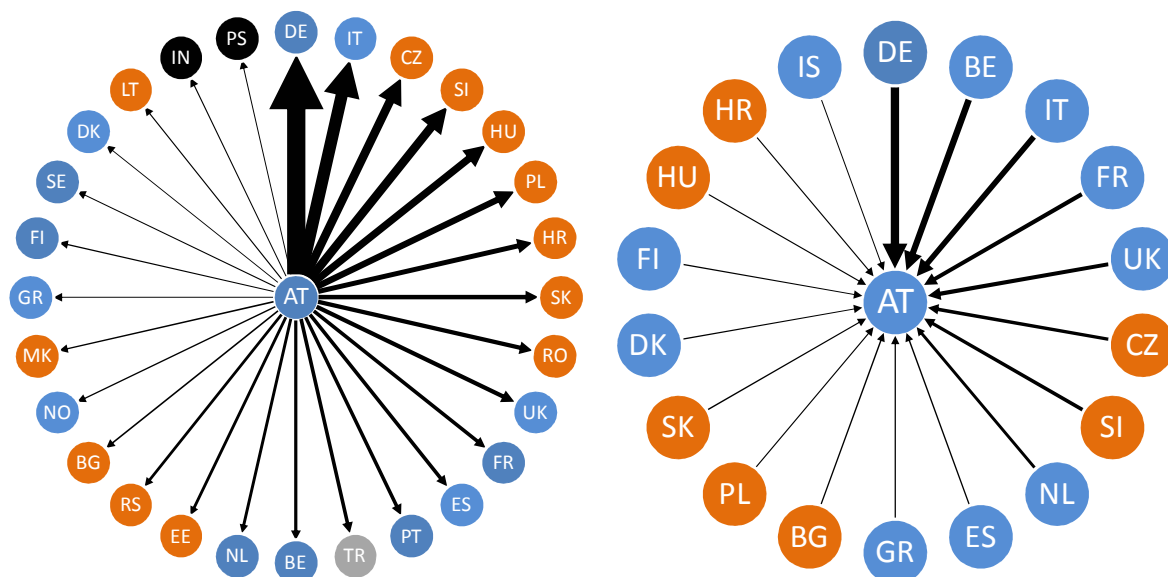


Nevertheless, without the privileged French-Belgian collaboration the diversity is less convincing. Adding up the 26 + 23 links on the two directions, and if we suppose that they all belong to the French community of Belgium, 19.6% of the co-operation belongs to francophony. In addition, if we suppose that all 9 + 10 Dutch-Belgian partnership are connected to Flanders (7.6% of all links), much less is left for real intercultural collaboration. The scope, as the two wheels show, is impressive even after this extreme calculation.

Austria

Similarly to Belgium, here too we should start with the weight of “germanophony”; the prominent German orientation represents 16.2% of the total scale, both senses.

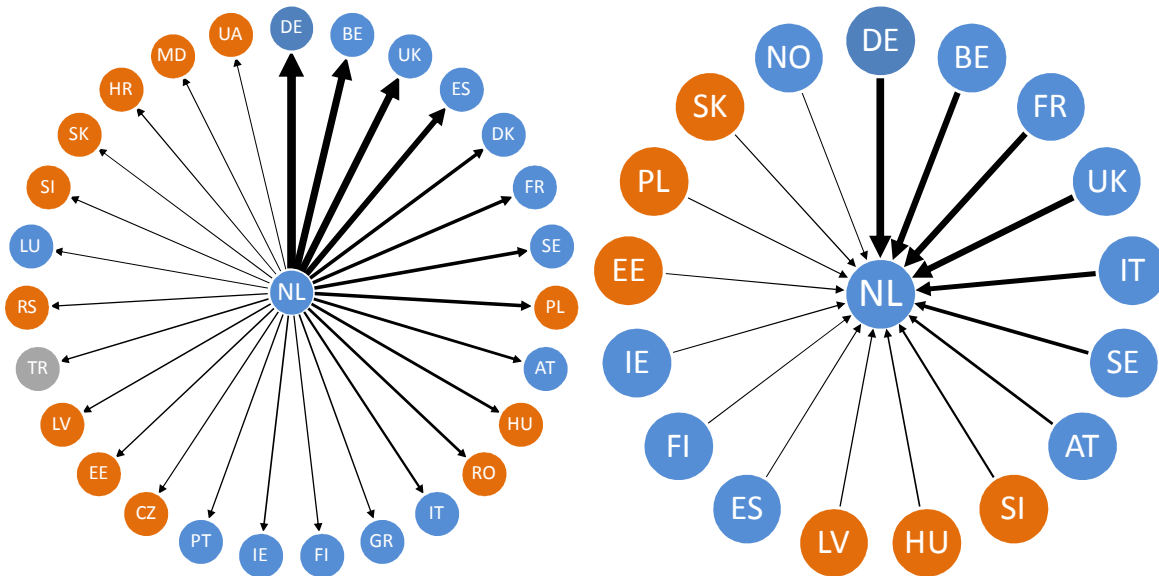
After the German choice, leaders favoured co-organisers from countries that fully or partly belonged to the empire a hundred years ago.



The saldo in favour of inviting foreign partners into Austrian-led projects is one of the highest, 2.3 times more than the number of Austrians elsewhere. We know that among the disparate conditions of the tenders in the Culture Programme one can not speak of conscious national strategies. Nevertheless the figures suggest a country that is more active in building co-operation than in accommodating itself to other countries' initiatives.

Netherlands

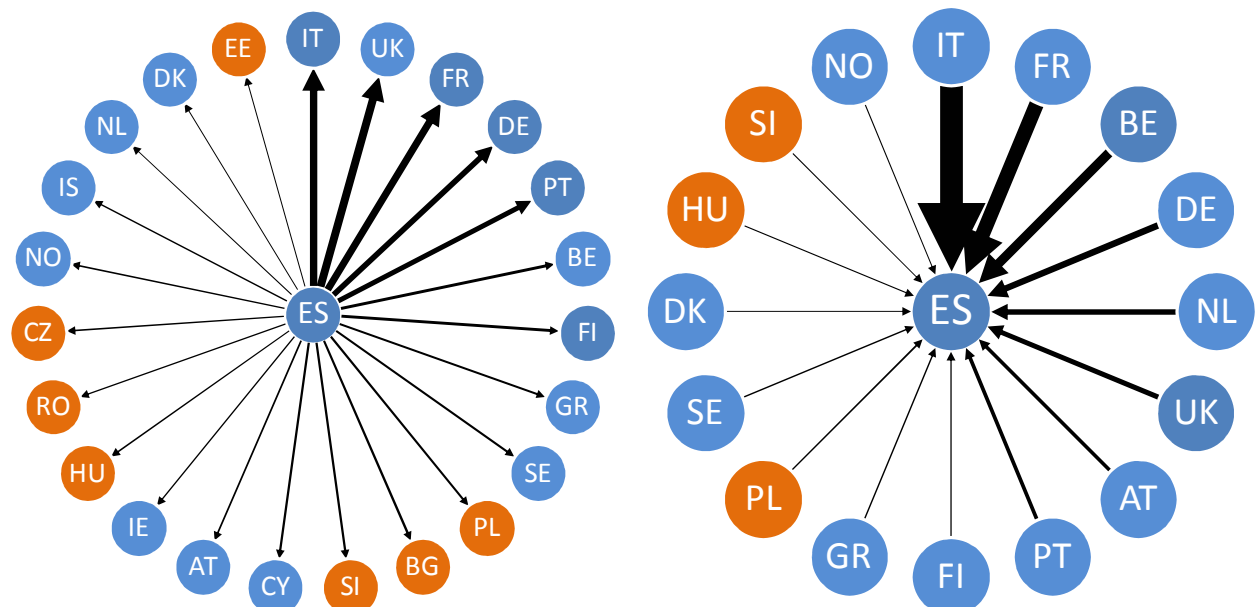
The Netherlands follows after a gap in the list of countries, with only 99 bonds against 153 in Austria, although the involvement of Dutch co-organisers (right wheel) is nearly a par.



National preferences are rather predictable on both sides, offering no surprises. German is on top like in Austria but its smaller weight leaves more room for other connections.

Spain

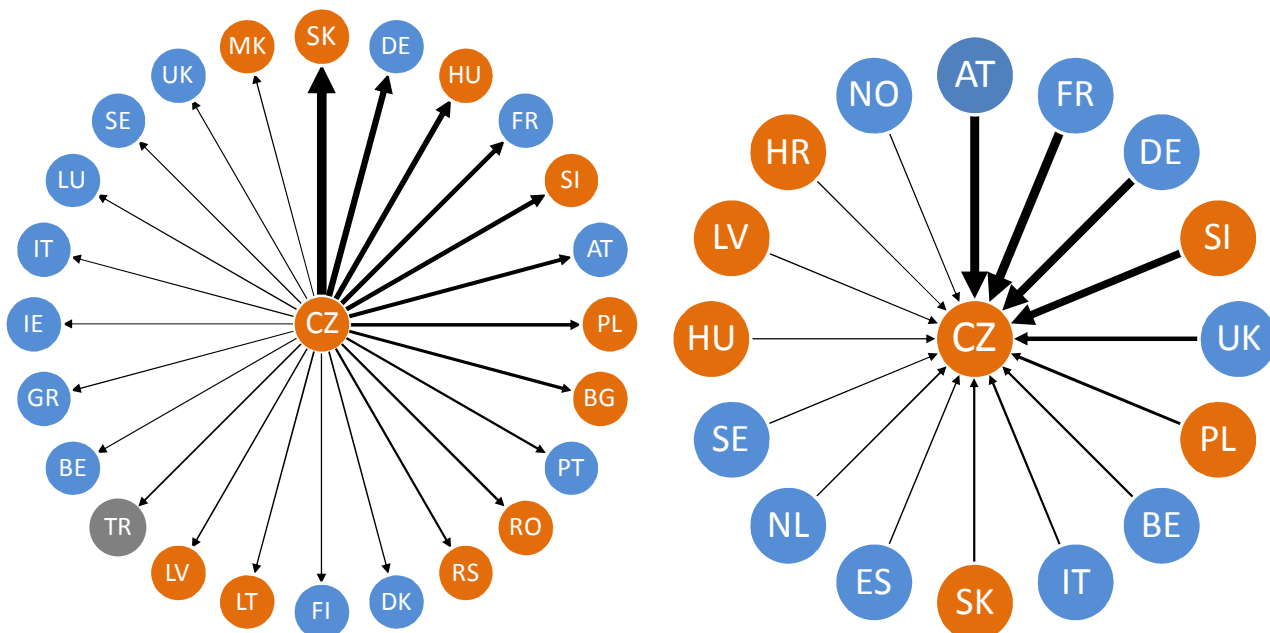
Spain has a negative saldo in initiating activity: its organisations were selected 111 times while Spanish leaders invited 90 partners only. (This of course could also be explained with the attractiveness of their culture organisations.) If the record number of 34 invitations into Italian-led actions was only its half, the Spanish would break even.



The lower frequency of links makes the Spanish graph airier than that of the Dutch, an average of 3.5 partners per project against 3.8 in the Dutch case.

Czech Republic

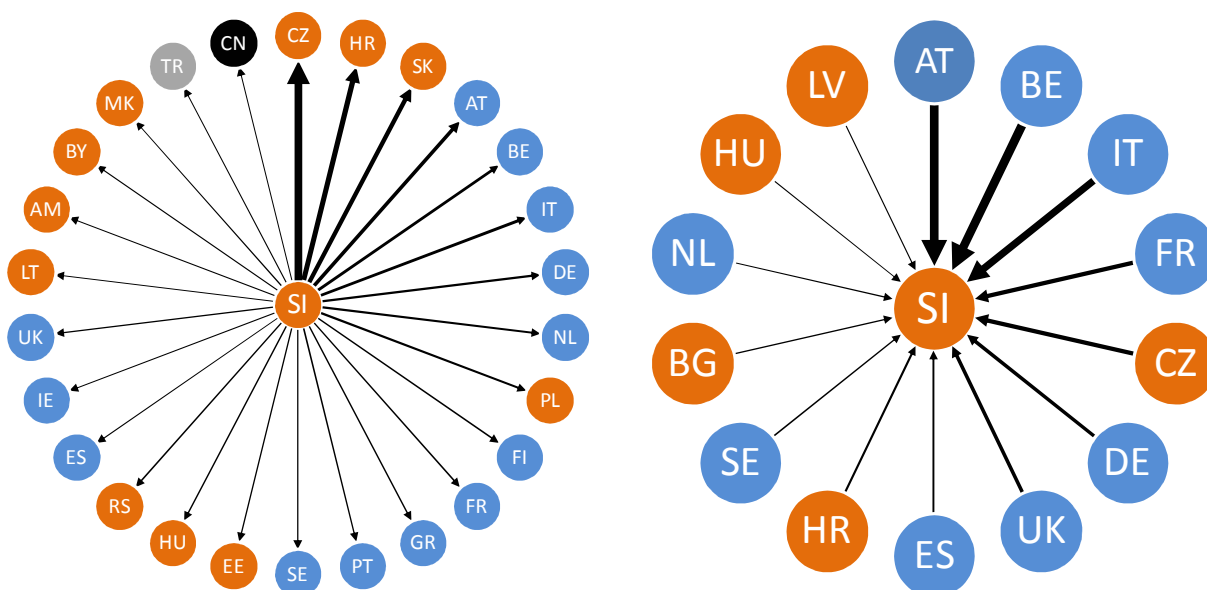
The champions of the (former) eastern bloc, Czechs won 24 co-operation projects, enabling them to involve 88 co-organisers from 24 countries. They chose the easy way by inviting 13 Slovak partners who speak a very similar language. On the other hand, none of the next three countries is Slavic. On the whole, operators from post-communist countries (in orange) participated in Czech-led projects in nice numbers.



The wheel on the right, standing for the 73 cases when a Czech cultural organisation was selected as a co-organiser, is rather dominated by western European countries. Slovaks did not choose Czech partners more often than Italians did. As we could see, the 12 invitations to Austrian projects meant the third position in the Austrian ranking. For the French, the same 12 links to Czech partners put this relation at the tenth place.

Slovenia

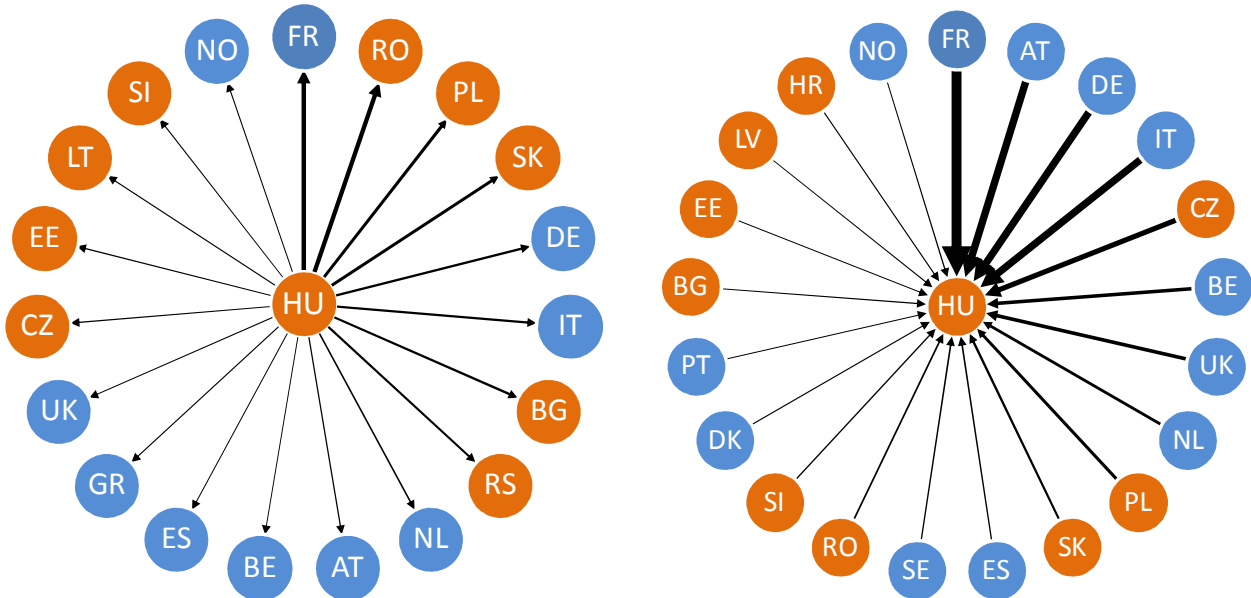
Slovenes led a quarter fewer projects than Czechs, but the relatively high frequency allowed for 70 bonds, divided between 26 countries. Czechs were their favourites, the ten links leave behind the seven Croatian and six Slovak cases. The top four, complete with Austria, reflects strong orientation of Slovene cultural operators towards the former Austro-Hungarian monarchy.



The great spread on the left, and the high concentration on the right conceal the almost equal number of bonds in the two courses (70-69). Austrians, Belgians and Italians excelled in including Slovenian co-organisers into their undertakings.

Hungary

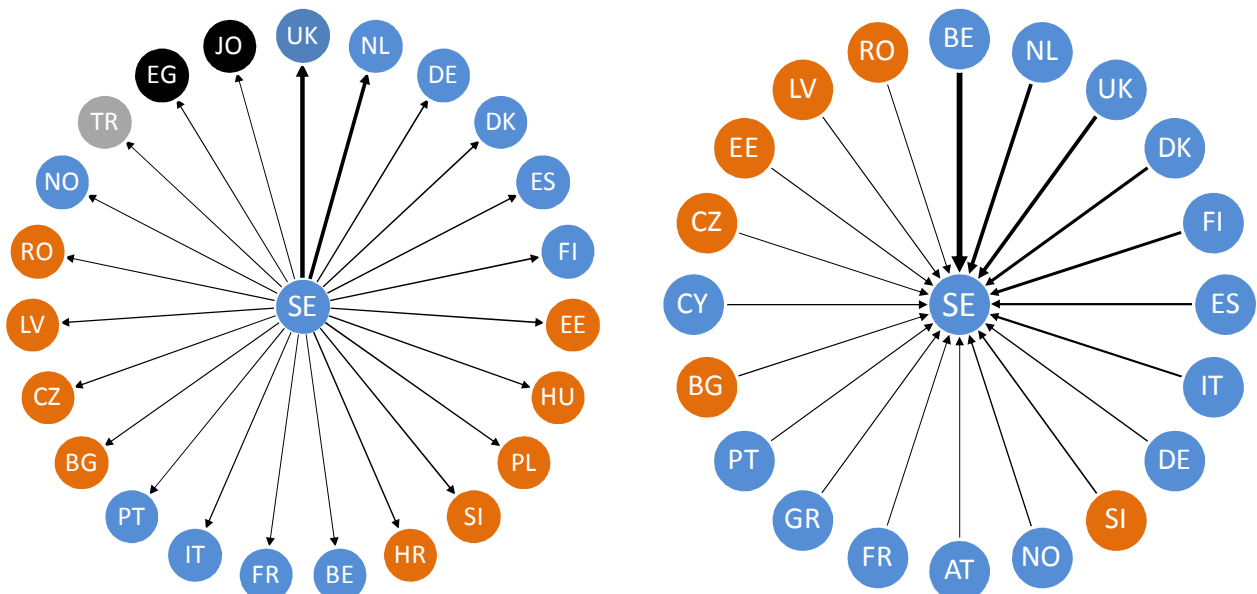
The first example of a seriously passive balance: twice as many Hungarian organisations joined foreign projects than what their leaders were able and willing to incorporate into schemes run by Hungarian operators (on the left).



With only 44 bonds on the right side we have reached the range where judgment becomes less reliable. The pattern is nevertheless clear, important eastern partners and a surprisingly strong French position in both directions. Is Paris still the world capital of culture in the eyes of Hungarians? They incorporated one partner only from Austria (while Czechs and Slovenes both involved five).

Sweden

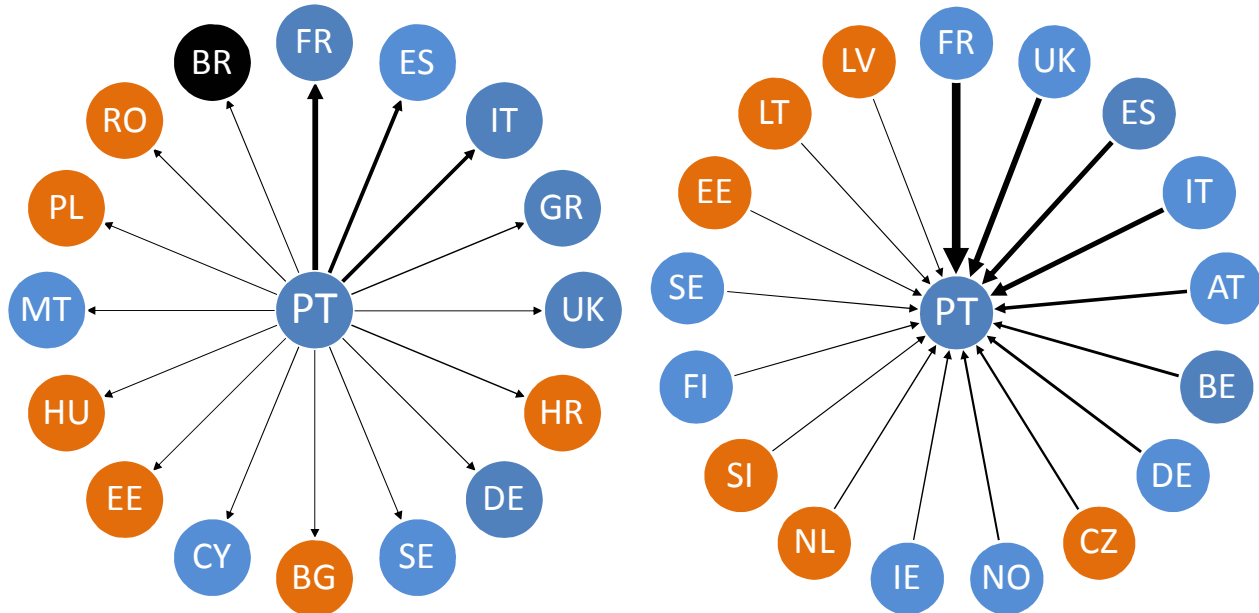
Projects leaders in Sweden, the most successful Nordic country in this context, chose co-organisers at one of highest average rate. The 4.6 links per project have expanded their range of choice, reaching 23 countries.



As to the reverse direction, Swedes are apparently too distant for easterners to choose – even from across the Baltic Sea.

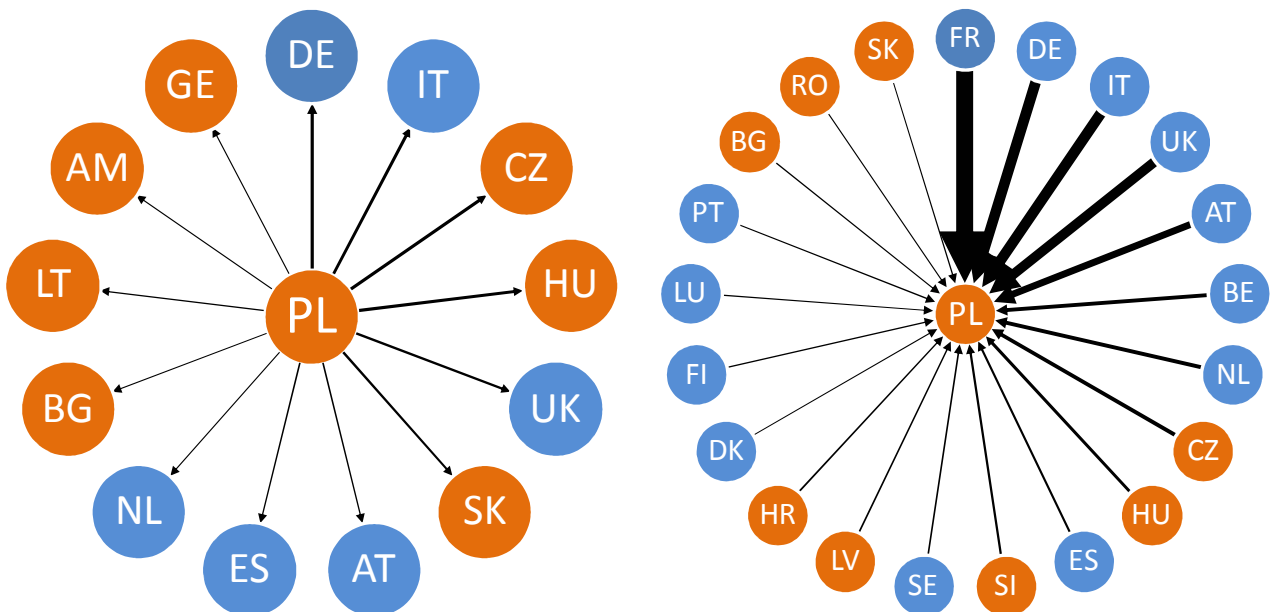
Portugal

Relatively passive, Portuguese involved 33 co-organisers, letting to be involved 64 times. The French domination is clear in both senses. Other Latin positions are also strong.



Poland

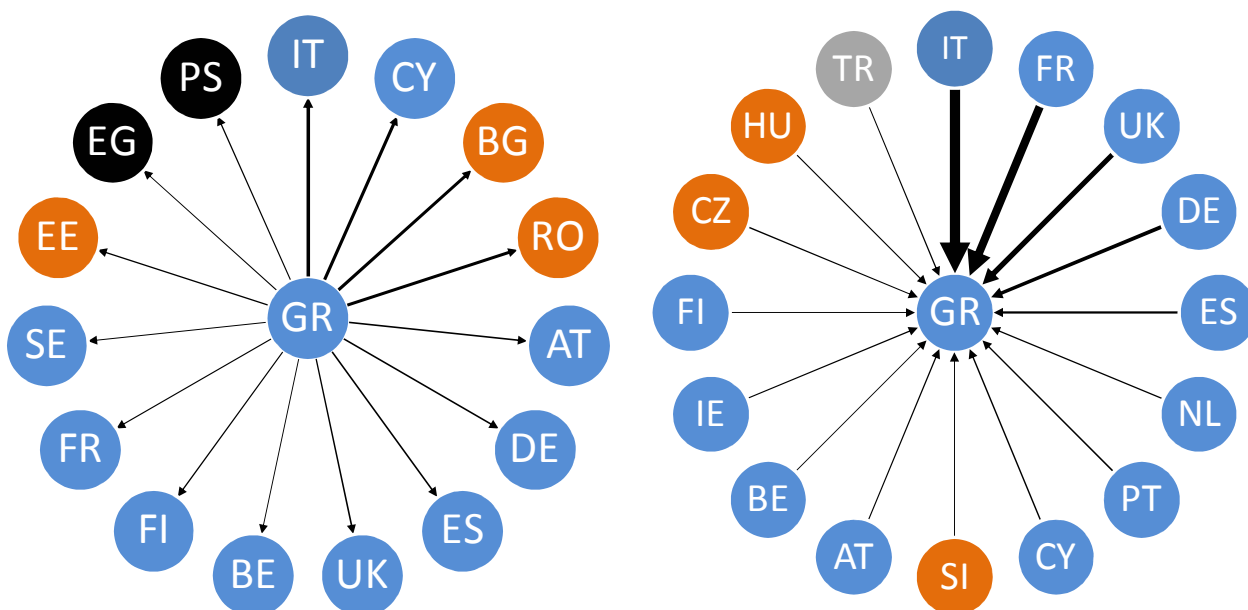
The Polish performance in the first five years of the term is a mysterious disappointment. Poland had 12 leaders building 32 partnerships, with 2.7 one of the lowest average rates. Maybe the two contacts in the Caucasus deserve mentioning.



On the other side, the 110 choices testify about the lively interest towards Polish cultural bodies, particularly on behalf of the French. We have noted above the irony of no French co-organiser among the 32 options. The Polish appeal on German, Italian and British project leaders is also remarkable.

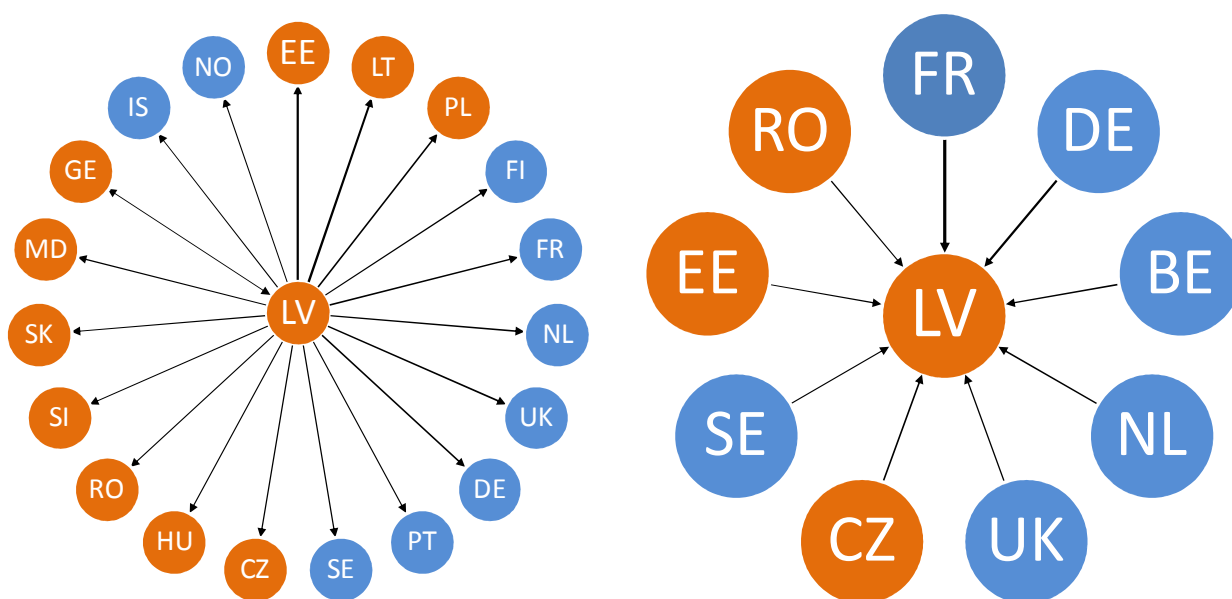
Greece

The top position of Italian organisations in both senses is a bit surprising, otherwise the Greek profile offers little to ponder about. With a higher rate of partner involvement (the average is 2.6 per project) Greek culture could certainly be deeper involved in European collaboration.



Latvia

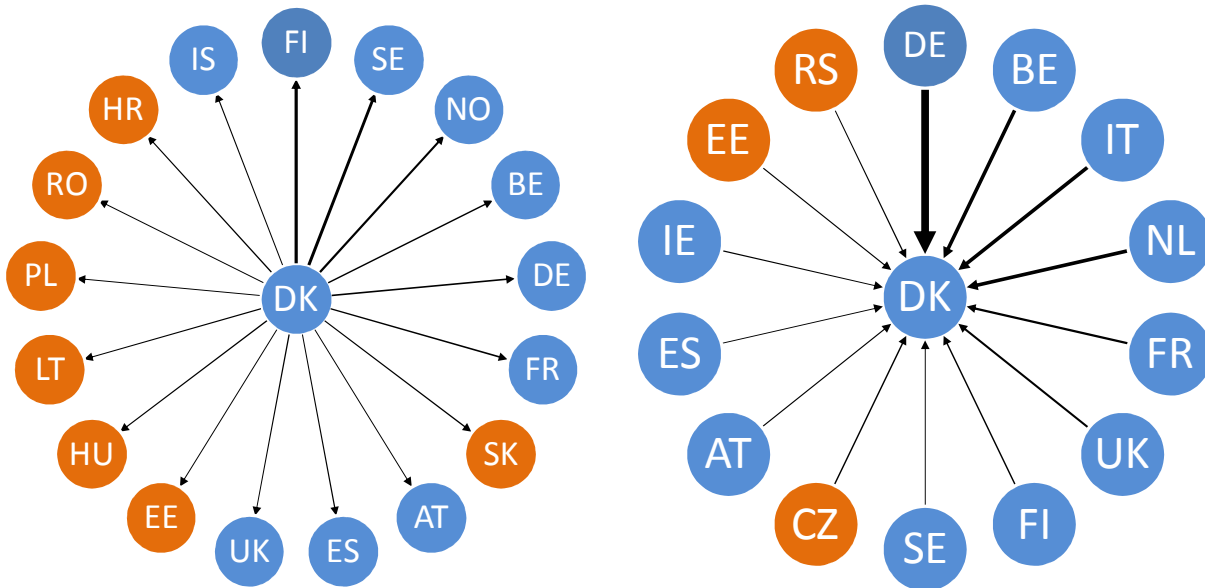
Latvia had only seven projects but 29 links at an average frequency of 4.1, way ahead of the other two Baltic republics. The span is also wide, reaching 19 countries, more than the previous three cases possessing higher numbers of ties to extend. The first two positions are nevertheless reserved to the Baltic neighbours.



The other side of the coin is the limited interest for Latvian co-organisers elsewhere.

Denmark

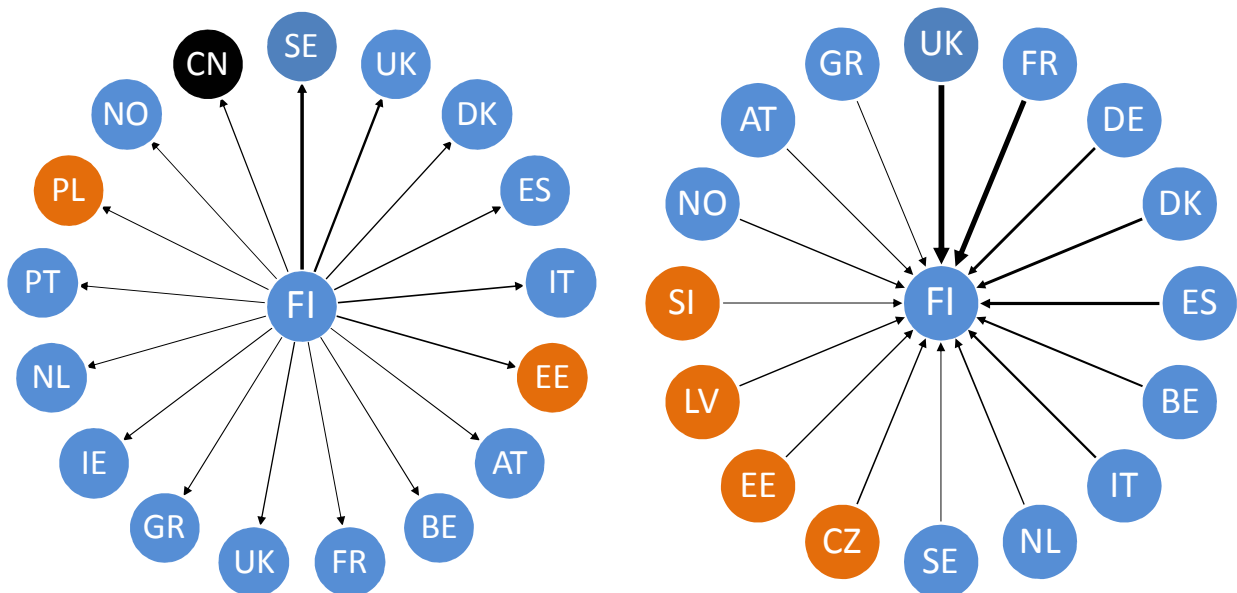
The Danish are the champions of networking with 4.8 bonds in an average project, enabling them to reach 29 partners to their six projects. Their preference is Nordic, this is the only wheel with Finns on top.



As the width of the arrow indicates Germans are fond of involving Danish partners.

Finland

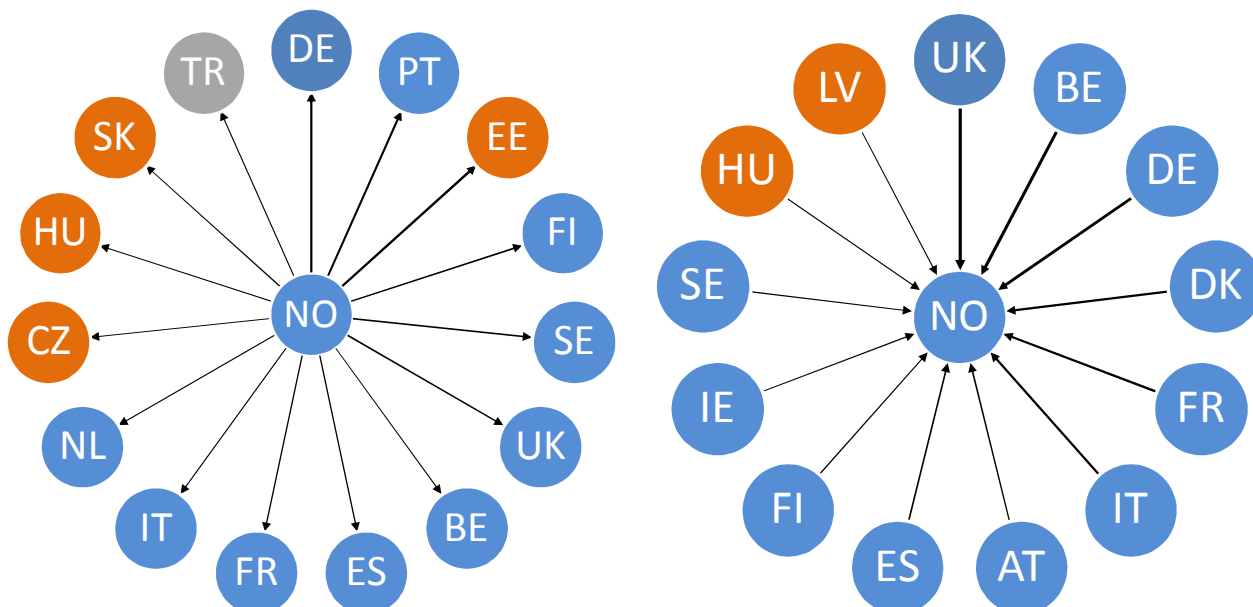
Differently from other countries in the north, Finns perform low intensity in their projects, with a 2.8 average rate of link.



The outer world reveals livelier interest, the wheel on the right represents almost twice as many bonds as the one on the left.

Norway

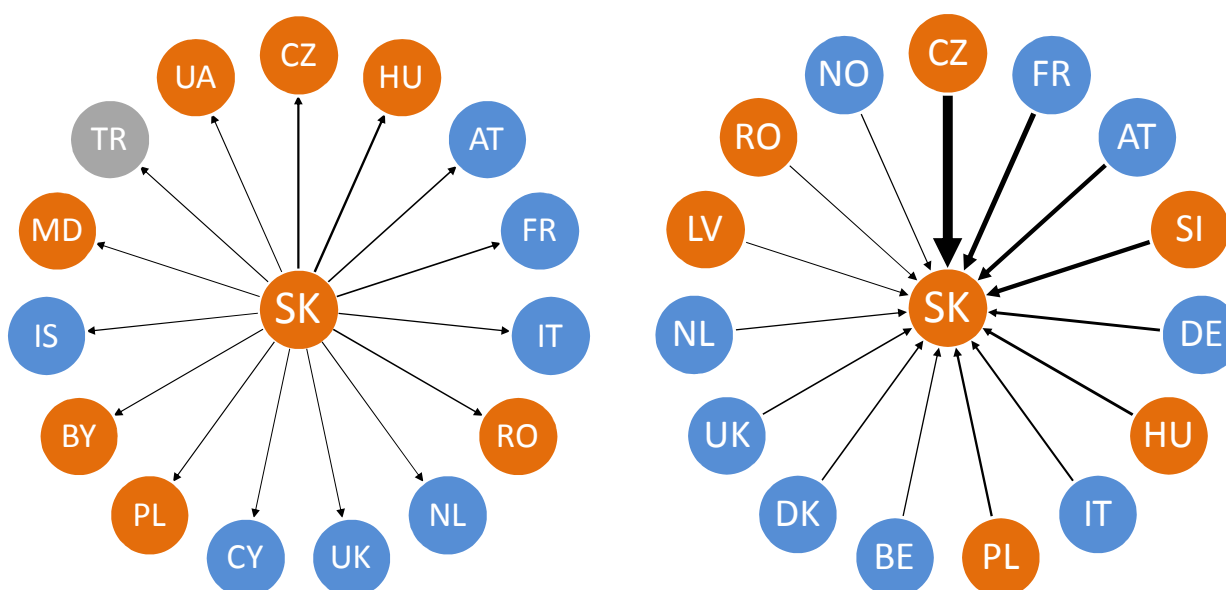
Norwegians keep to the Nordic habit (excepting Finland) of involving numerous co-organisers from abroad, in their case an average of 4.0 per project. Thus 24 partners participated in the six Norwegian-led schemes. The numbers are nevertheless too small to draw clear patterns of geographic preferences even if we watch them together with the 31 instances when Norwegians participated in foreign projects.



Or maybe, is this lack of geographical commitment a specific feature?

Slovakia

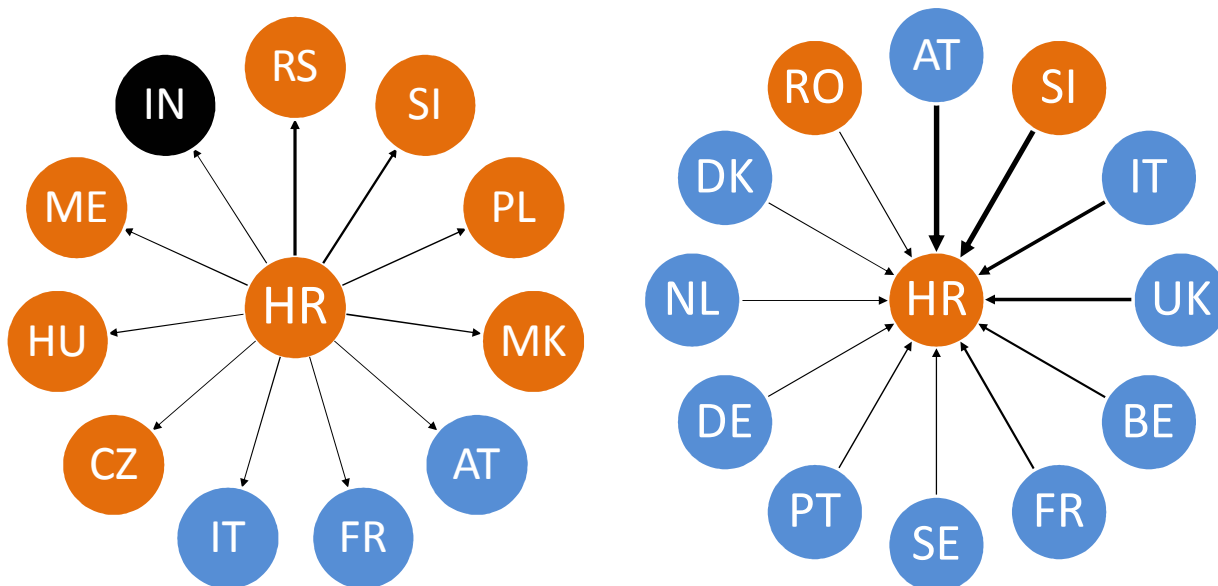
The 56 occurrences of Slovak culture organisations participating in foreign-led schemes outnumber the 23 links attached to the six projects won by Slovak bodies (even if we disregard the 13 Czech choices).



Slovak project leaders are explorers in the sense that they involved quite a few partners from countries which are absent from most other charts.

Croatia

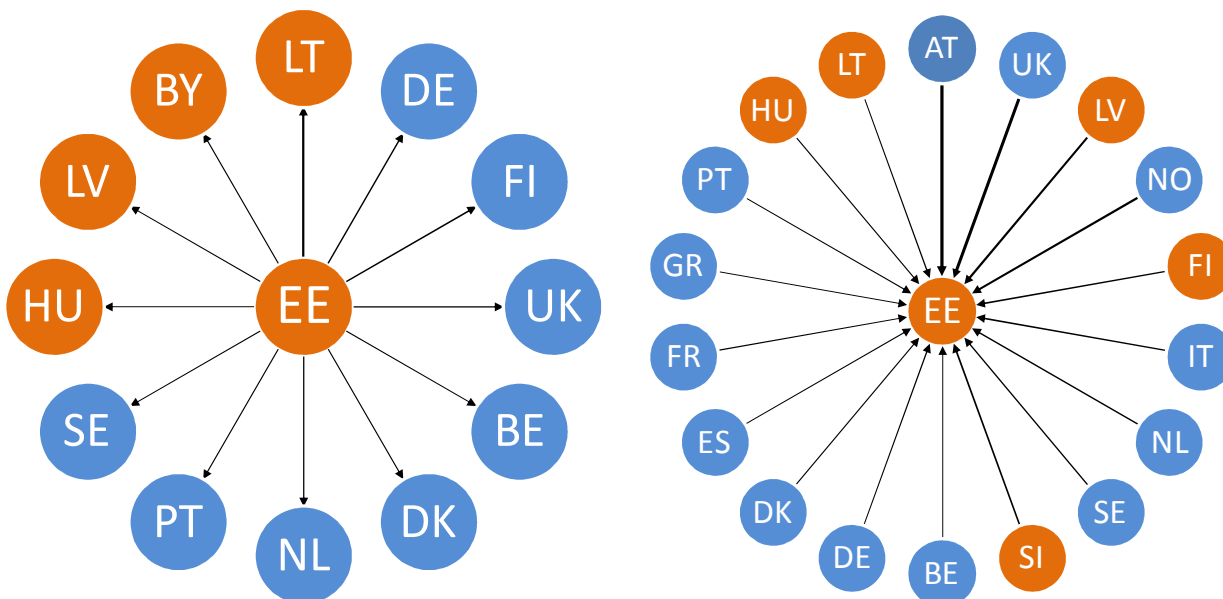
Of all post-Yugoslav countries Croatian leaders stuck to partners from the former federation in the highest number: ten out of the 19 co-organisers, more than half of the cases. (Serbia 5, Slovenia 3, Macedonia 2, Montenegro 1). Slovenia, too, has approached ten partners from former Yugoslavia but it was a small part of the 70 instances.



The list of countries from where leaders reached out for Croatian partners is not at all dominated by ex-YU, limited to seven invitations from Serbia out of the altogether 38 links. Adding the two directions 5+12 represent a strong cultural bond between the two neighbours. The colours clearly reflect the difference between Croatians' orientation, and the appeal they have to other Europeans.

Estonia

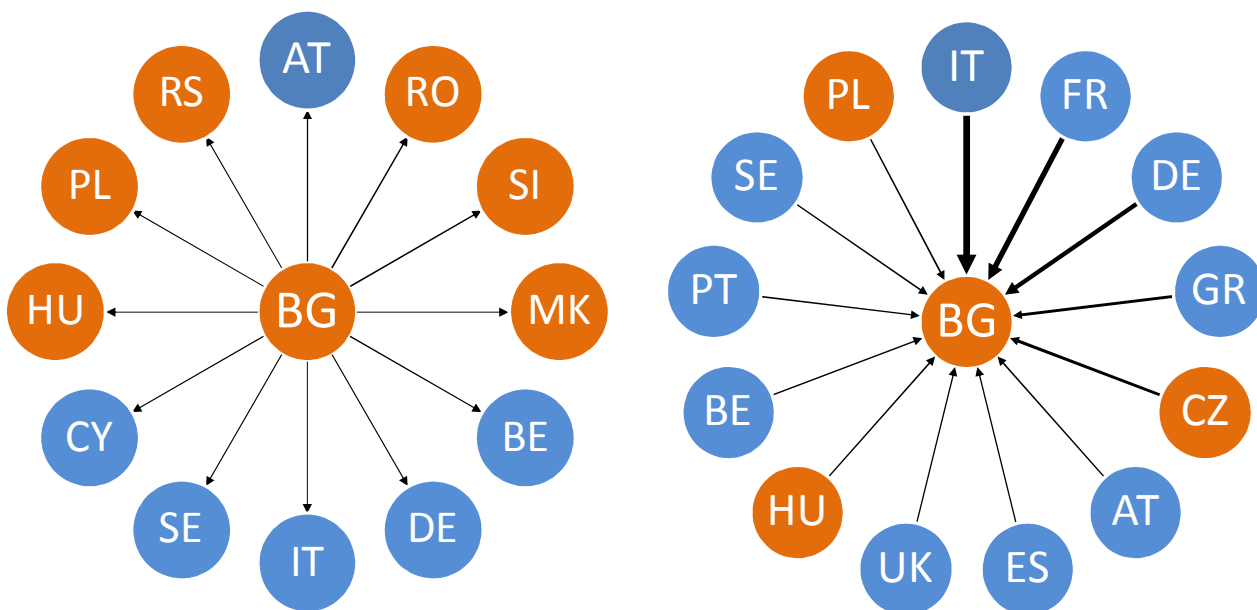
Into the few (five) projects of theirs Estonian leaders invited 17 partners, which reflects an average frequency of 3.4, very near the European standard. The three invitations extended to Lithuanian organisations propelled that country to the top of the list.



Twice as many were the instances of Estonians incorporated into foreign cultural undertakings, where the geographical division did not follow clear patterns. Nevertheless the four links to distant, small Austria are noticeable.

Bulgaria

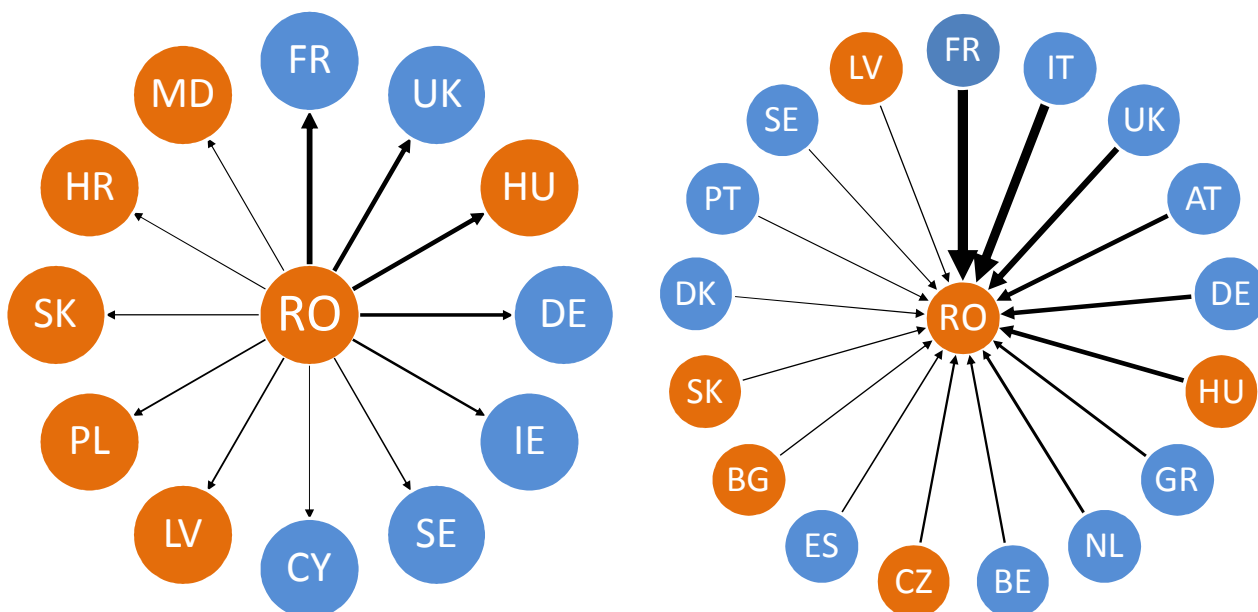
Bulgarians had one more winning project than the Estonians, but the very low average of bonds (2.7 per project) resulted in one less partnership contacts. These linked 16 operations to Bulgarian schemes, primarily from the broader eastern region (to incorporate also Austria).



Livelier was the interest for Bulgarian bodies from abroad, altogether 45 bonds; the nine choices from Italy is especially worthy of note. Strange is the balance with the neighbours. Bulgarians involved no-one from Greece, although they were invited to four Greek projects; with the rest the opposite happened, invitations to Romanian, Macedonian and Serbian bodies were not returned by involving Bulgarians.

Romania

One of the most imbalanced country profiles. Romania ranked the 9th at delegating co-organisers, but 24th only at involving foreign partners

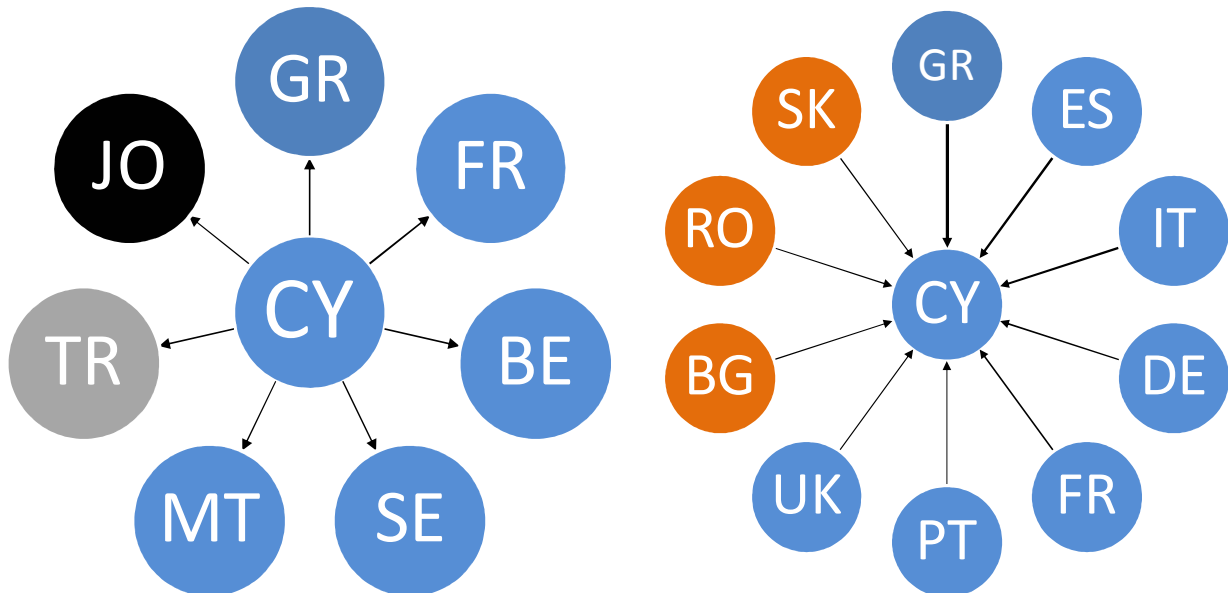


Romanian leaders favoured French and British co-organisers twice, which are feeble responses to the 13 invitations to French projects, and 8 positions in UK ones. Still better than the Italian relation, where against 12 Romanian co-organisers stands zero Italians in Romanian-led schemes.

Cyprus

With a decent average number of three bonds per three winning projects Cypriots could involve nine partners.

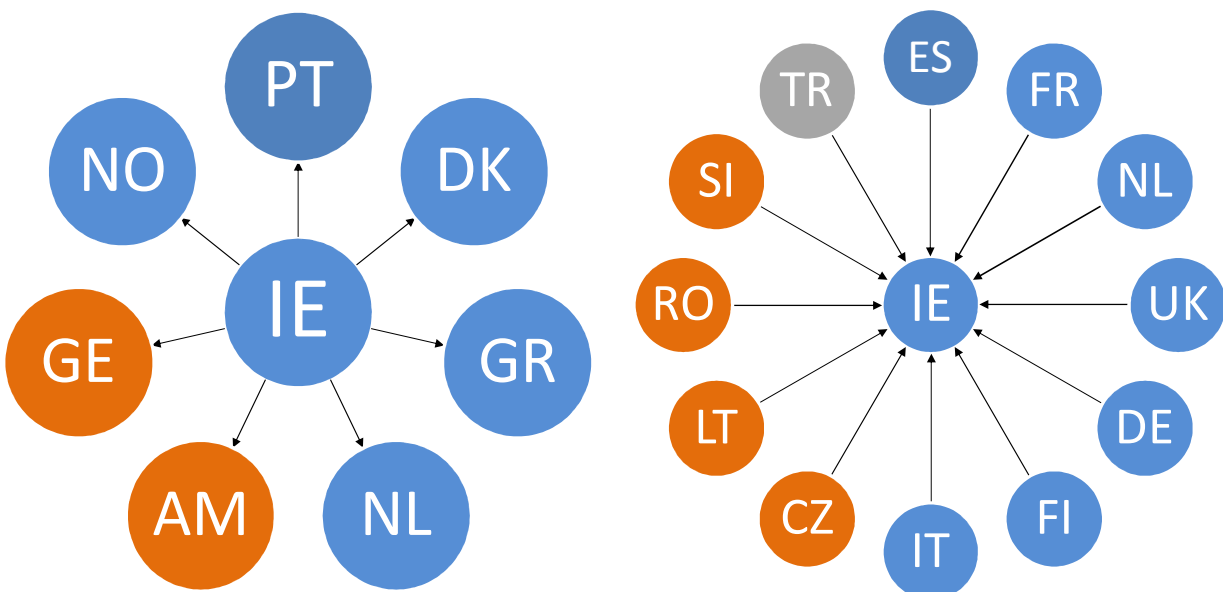
On the other side, a bit more than double, 19 foreign winners reached out to Cyprus for a co-organising partner.



Among the $9+19=28$ bonds $2+4=6$ were with Greeks; hellenophone co-operation took 21.4% of the network of relationship.

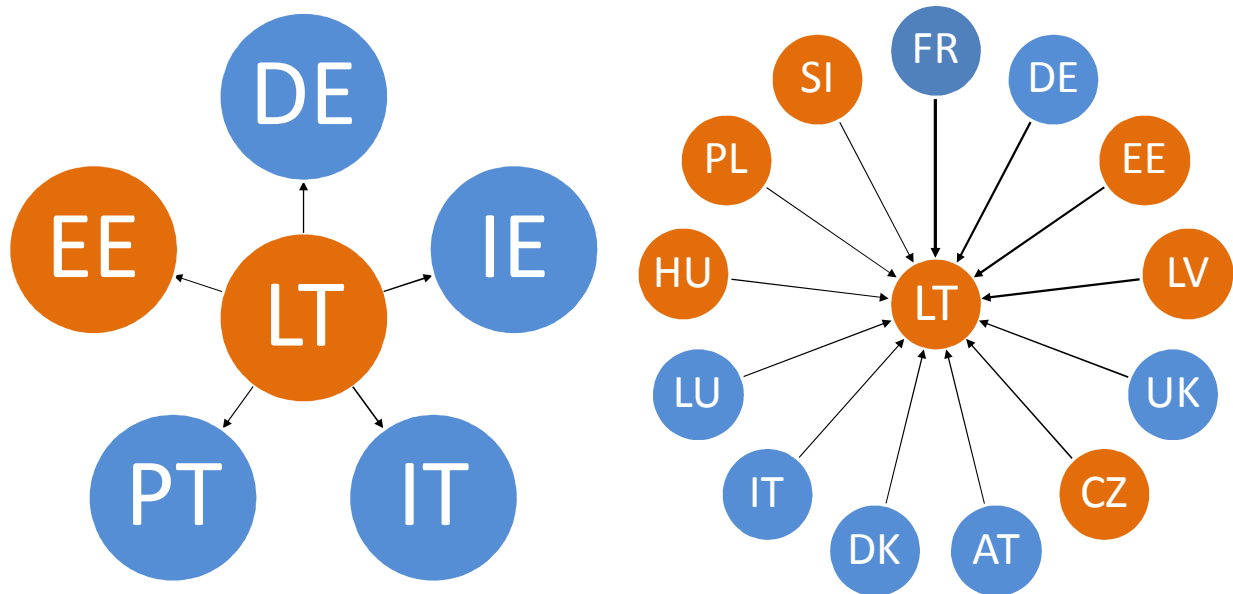
Ireland

Eight bonds in three winning projects one the one (left) hand and 16 Irish bodies involved on the other (right), making altogether 24 links, of which 2 connect the two English language states only. Instead of this easy choice, Irish winners reached long distance, for Armenian and Georgian partners. (Greece isn't a neighbour either.)



Lithuania

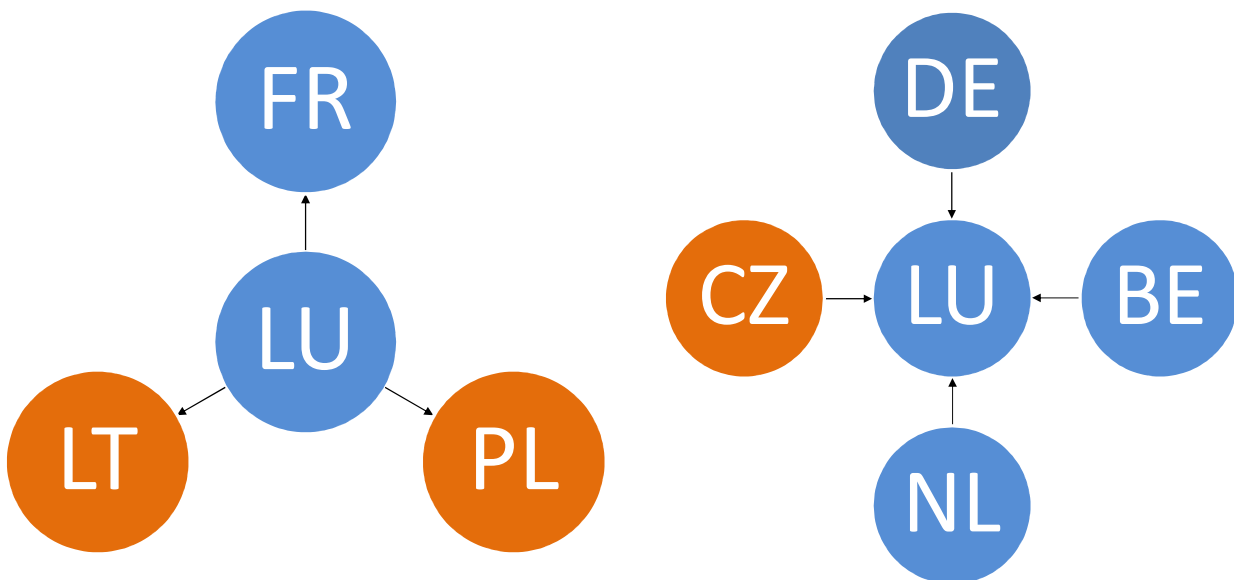
In this unassuming achievement one of the two (indeed, only two) Lithuanian leaders has involved the minimum of two co-organisers, and the other winner risked one more only (amounting to altogether five bonds).



The modest outreach was returned by almost five times, with 24 Lithuanian co-organisers involved in European co-operation. On this side some Baltic cohesion is discernible, among the 24 six operations were attracted by Estonian or Latvian winners.

Luxembourg

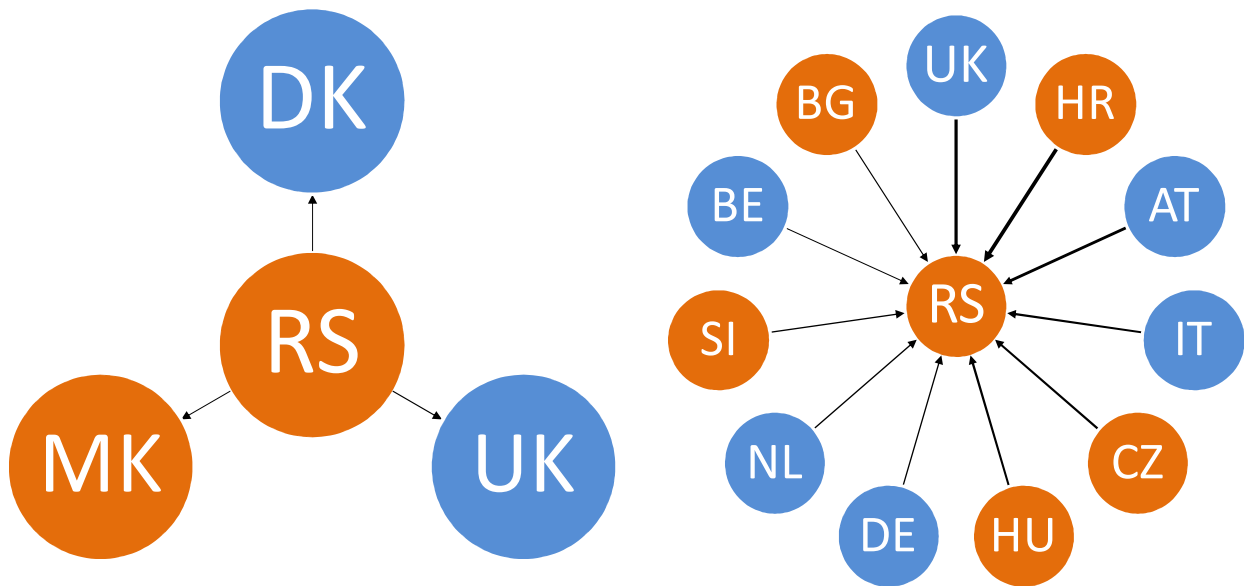
The score of Luxembourg over five years is one winner, three co-organisers (from Eastern Europe by two third).



Plus invitations to five organisations (two from Germany).

Serbia

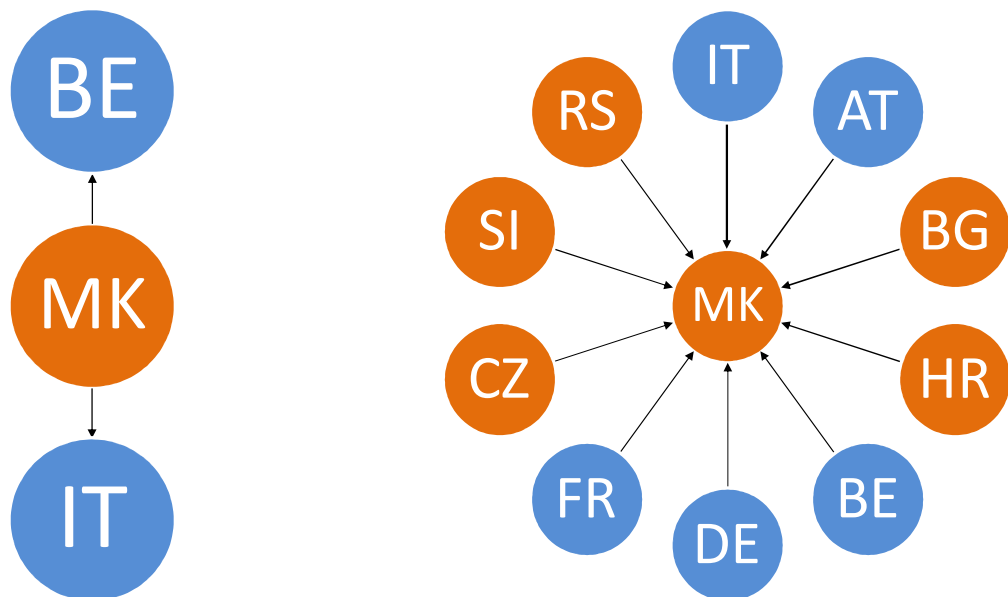
Made eligible under the Culture Programme recently only, Serbia had one winner and three co-organisers, like Luxembourg. Serbian involvement into foreign projects is, on the other hand, impressive.



Five inclusions into UK projects is the most noteworthy, followed by four to Croatian and Austrian cultural initiatives.

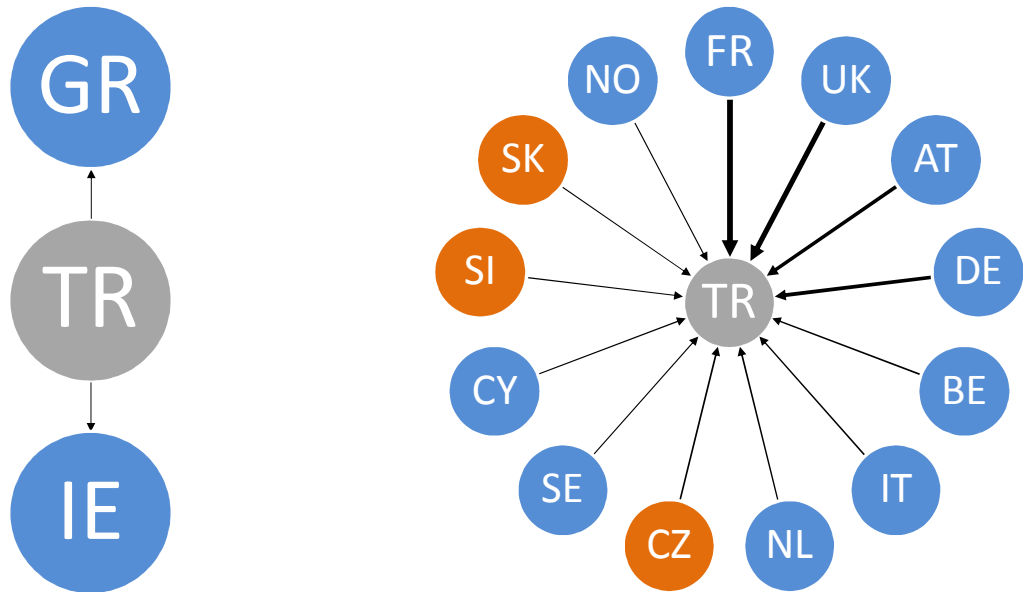
Macedonia

Another recent participant, Macedonia has one minimalist project and fifteen involvements elsewhere.



Turkey

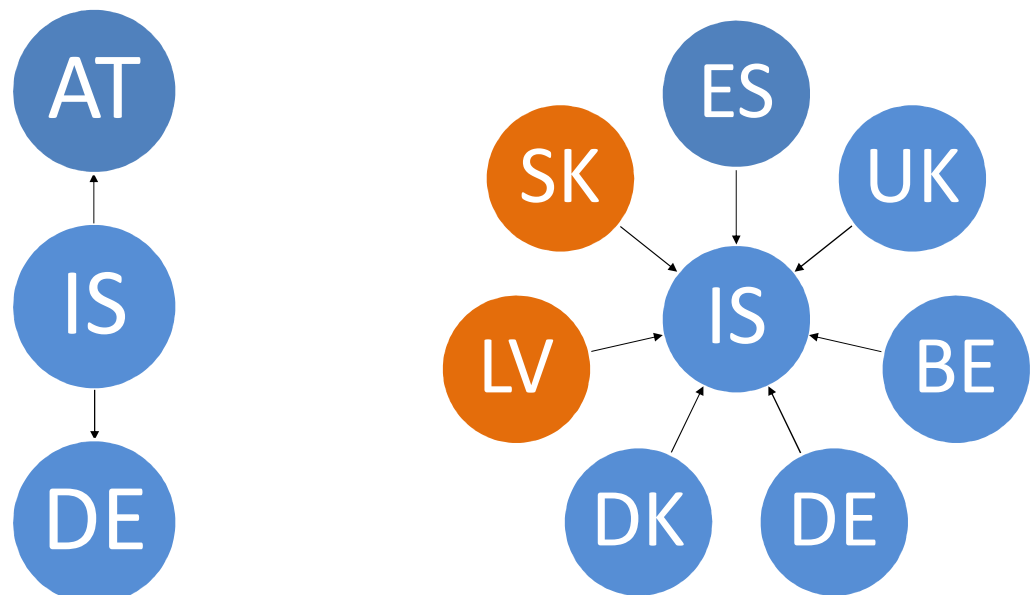
37 Turkish organisations took part in a cultural co-operation project during the five years – the 38th was a leader who invited two partners.



The seven countries that excel in attracting Turkish co-organisers are the seven top in our list also.

Iceland

It would not be fair to expect more links from a small country like Iceland.



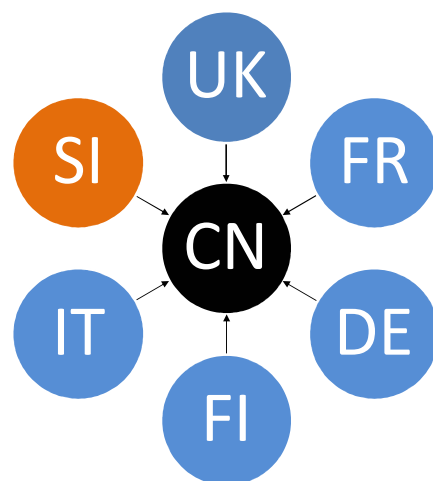
Except maybe for the only leader, who could have bother with more than the two German speaking co-organisers.

China

The sequence of our analysis strictly follows the frequency of collaboration links. This is how an odd country comes next: non-eligible to the Culture Programme and not European.

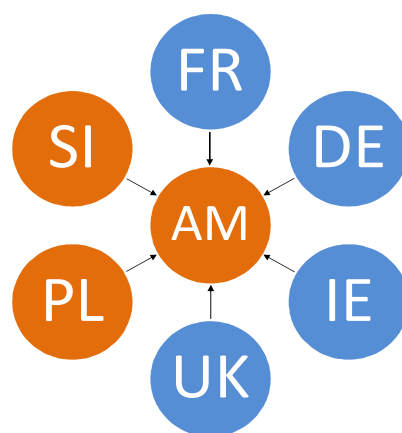
Nonetheless with its nine links China leads the group of countries that had no project of their own.

When there was an opportunity, six countries grabbed it and invited Chinese partners into cultural collaboration. UK took the lead with three instances.



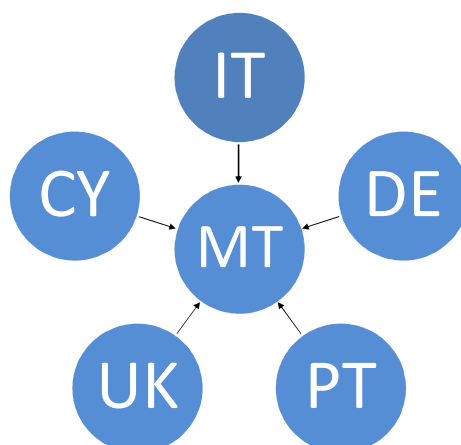
Armenia

Eight Armenian organisations were included into projects from six countries. One each, except for three from France.



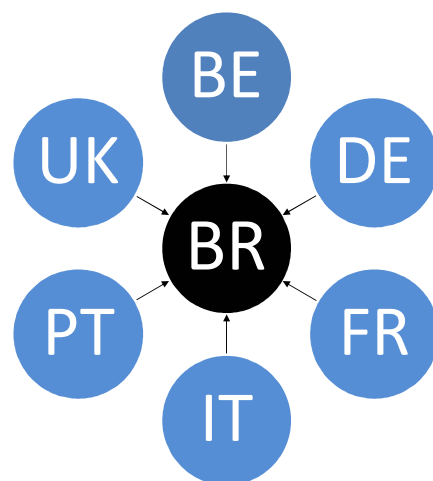
Malta

The smallest EU member state could boast no culture co-operation project of its own during the five years. On seven occasions were Maltese culture organisations involved in collaboration, three if these into projects led by Italian beneficiaries.



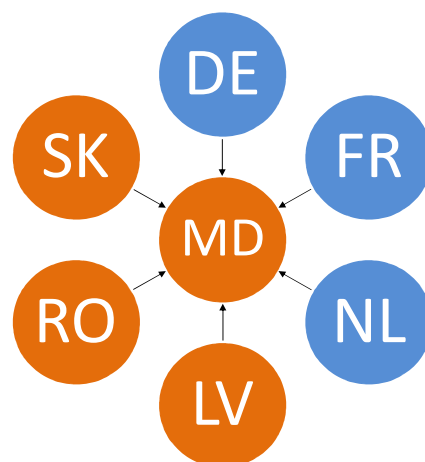
Brazil

Brazilian organisations are indeed rare partners in European projects. The Culture Programme enabled six operators from six countries to avail with the opportunity.



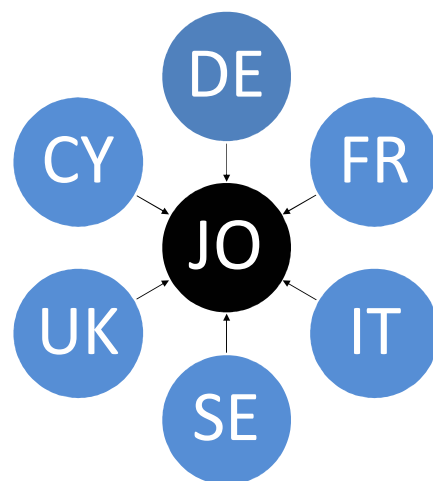
Moldova

Numbers are the same as in case of Brazil, six leaders from six countries involved Moldovan partners. Half of them from fellow post-communist world.



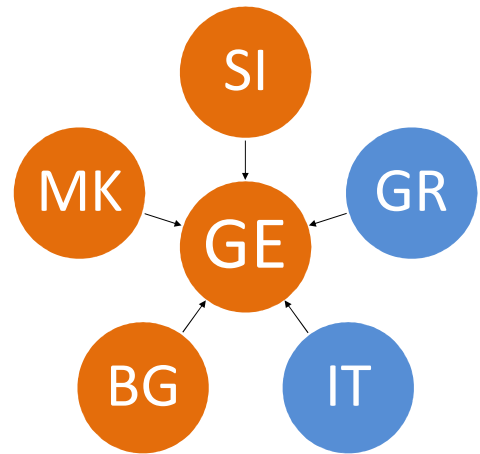
Jordan

The same formula repeated for the third time: six involvements to six countries. No east Europeans (Cyprus not included into this political term); our region remained indifferent towards all four Arab nations, in addition to Jordan Palestine, Egypt and Tunisia.



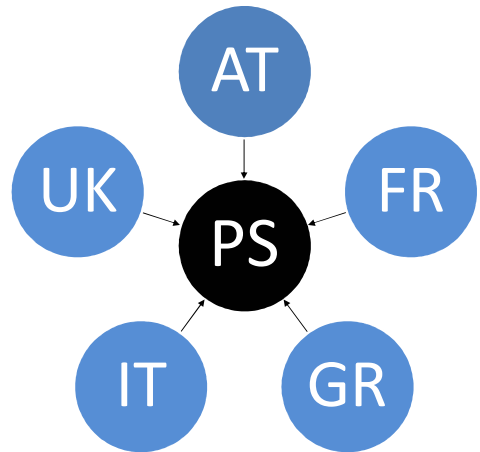
Georgia

British leaders involved Georgian partners twice, this is how the six instances were shared between five countries.



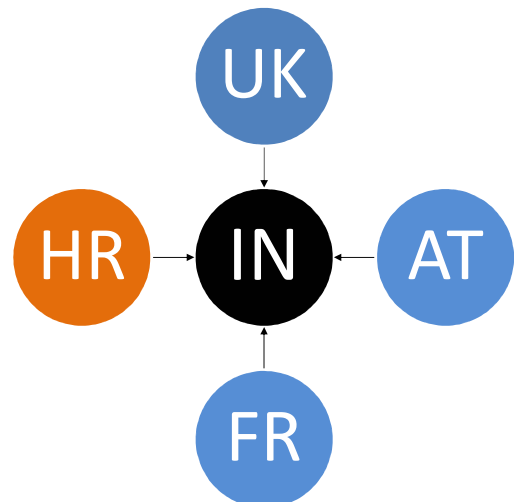
Palestine

Five Palestinian inclusions into five projects.



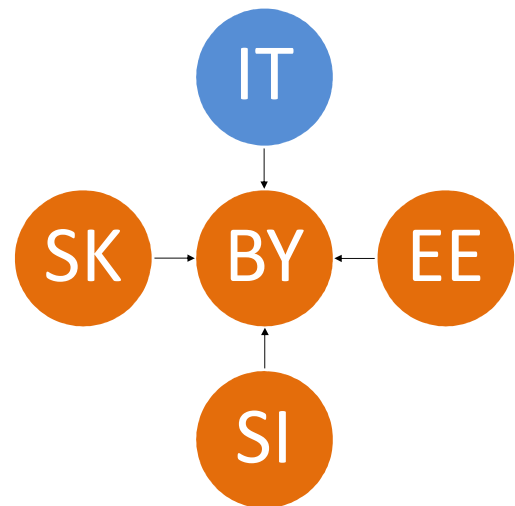
India

The UK is represented by two links, the other three one each.



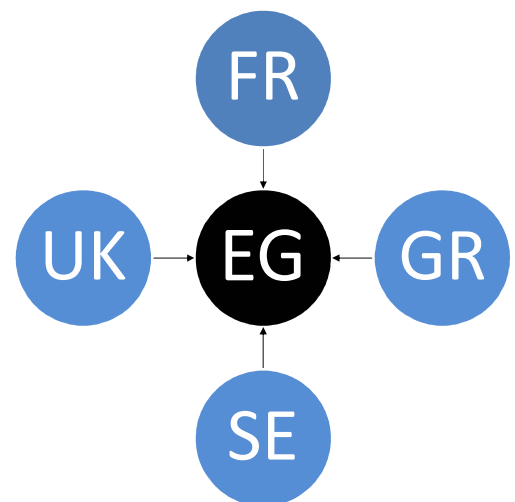
Belarus

Four partnerships divided equally between four countries.



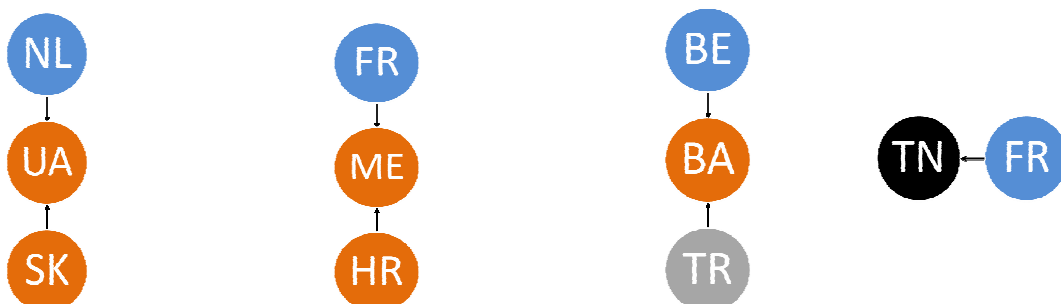
Egypt

Four partnerships the same as above, with four entirely different leaders.



Ukraine, Montenegro, Bosnia, Tunisia

Reaching the end of the row we have arrived at countries that have been occasional participants in the Culture Programme.



Organisations from Ukraine, Montenegro and Bosnia took part in two projects each. Which is way behind the five opportunities that Tunisians had, although all from the same country.

A GLANCE INTO THE FUTURE

The co-operation projects constitute probably the most emblematic strands of the cultural actions of the European Commission. It is most likely that they have the greatest impact on the cultural life of Europe – acknowledging, however, that the European Capitals of Culture have the greatest marketing value for the European Union. The remaining two years of the Culture Programme will further diversify the social network of cultural operations in Europe, including the extension to other continents. We very much hope that grants enhancing cross-border co-operation will remain a decisive feature of the cultural actions of the Union also in the next seven-year period – particularly important in the light of increasing tendencies for nation-state isolationism in cultural policies.