



# Routes4Youth

*Cultural heritage as a way to ensure cultural diplomacy across national borders in the Danube Region*



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# Cultural heritage as a way to ensure cultural diplomacy across national borders in the Danube Region

The following paper briefly explores the potential of heritage as a base for cultural diplomacy on regional development in the Danube Region. It states the place of cultural diplomacy in the context of traditional public diplomacy. The paper outlines the opportunities for the development of a non-formal platform for partnership and cooperation, facilitated by cultural diplomacy based on heritage in the Danube Region and also shapes a model for methodology on cultural diplomacy

The sphere of cultural diplomacy, based on heritage integrated into traditional diplomacy is a ground for strategies, policies, and efficient mechanisms to foster international cooperation. Because of its specific characteristics, it can provide a unique approach as a core or as an extension to public diplomacy on intergovernmental and intersocial dimensions. Heritage as an integral part of Cultural Diplomacy can bring a new aspect to the process of development and strengthening the overall public diplomacy through integration of the cultural diplomacy. First, if heritage is rationally considered as common or shared, it can create a positive narrative for multilateral dialogue in the Cultural Diplomacy between the nations and societies, so this is enough ground for the establishment of cultural diplomacy relationship. Second, nations or societies supporting the heritage of other nations and societies can prove capacity for the development of cultural diplomacy relationships. Third, if the cultural diplomacy based on this heritage becomes a central part of the diplomatic approach on a horizontal and vertical level, its power for strengthening overall diplomacy can be seen. Combining public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy approach based on heritage, the diplomacy process can become more complex and synergic and achieve better impact.

Cultural diplomacy in the Danube Region is a chance for sustainable economic growth. An additional added value to this statement can be highlighted, because of the diversity of the cultural heritage in the Danube Region. For example, this can be illustrated with the certified Cultural Route of the Council of Europe "European Route of Industrial Heritage" and its opportunity to be used as a testimonial and foundation for business and industrial cooperation. Its sites can be seen as a distinctive venue for thematic business events. Connecting the private sector and the Cultural Routes can be seen as a feasible responsibility of the private sector for preservation and promotion of the Cultural Routes, and also for boosting the cultural entrepreneurship. It has the potential to facilitate international collaboration and develop a platform for cooperation on economic and social development in the Danube Region. Heritage diversity can become a core value for the cultural diplomacy in the Danube Region, and all involved parties and stakeholders have to be sensitized about its unique characteristics for its sustainable implementation. This chance can be exemplified again in the background of the European Route of Industrial Heritage because it consists of sites which are not part only of one region and here

the significant value is the connection of the EU and not EU member countries. It can be concluded that the cultural diplomacy, based on similar heritage in the Danube Region is a perfect approach for building foundations of trust between the businesses, civil societies, academia and all other relevant stakeholders in the background of the fast globalizing world. This is an essential fact for highlighting the diversity in the Danube Region as a value, baseline for economic development. Cultural diplomacy based on heritage has a conceivable potential to bring an added value to the regional development in the Danube Region if it is integrated into the business development strategy and vision of the enterprises. Going beyond the separate interests, cultural diplomacy has hypothetical power for innovations, new markets, business transformations and this is an important aspect of the improvement of the overall business environment in the countries, part of the Danube Region.

Moreover, a common vision for cooperation and development, based on cultural diplomacy can be developed and unanimously adopted by the nations in the Danube Region. More advanced, the power to go beyond the heritage diplomacy, to go beyond the separate interests can be additionally highlighted in the Danube Region. The Danube Region consists of EU and non-EU member countries, so cultural diplomacy is bringing this important precondition for the development of international cooperation, going beyond the borders.

Cultural diplomacy is a way for public diplomacy and exterior politics to include all involved parties and stakeholders together – governmental bodies, media, academia, civil society structures, private sector, etc. This can be illustrated within the Impressionisms Routes (certified "Cultural Route of the Council of Europe" in 2018), in the context of the cooperation of the Eau et Lumière Association with the academic field through the Scientific Committee, museums all over the world and the publisher "Les Itinéraires". Specific characteristics of cultural diplomacy can be seen, when comparing cultural diplomacy based on heritage and traditional public diplomacy. An important characteristic of public diplomacy is the main focus on intergovernmental relations, mostly concerning official bodies. Comparing to public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy based on heritage is extending the reach of its interventions to the citizens of the nations that are part of the Danube Region. An example for this statement can be the Cultural Route Transromanica – The Romanesque Routes of the European Heritage, which is focused on the common cultural heritage of the Romanesque art and architecture in Europe.<sup>1</sup> In this framework, the development and implementation of two additional projects– CrossCulTour and e-CREATE - can be seen as a good practice for diplomacy and collaboration between international actors and stakeholders and also for the inclusion of society and the citizens. This good practice can be also adapted and transferred for other initiatives, projects which are non-directly related to the Cultural Routes, but orientated to the regional development while using some elements referring to a specific Cultural Route. It can be concluded that cultural diplomacy is a perfect approach for international cooperation and advocacy on a governmental and institutional level as well as on the level of the society and the citizens.

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<sup>1</sup> *TRANSROMANICA – About the Association*, see <https://www.transromanica.com/about/association/>, accessed 8 July 2020.

Approaching the dimension of the society it can be stated that cultural diplomacy based on heritage can facilitate community engagement in the process of cooperation for regional development. This can be an important step for the extension of the capacity of civil society when implementing development activities, not only directly, but also indirectly related to the heritage. Comparing the results, cultural diplomacy based on heritage has the potential to realize more long term results in the field of international cooperation. This can be seen within the Impressionisms Routes and its partnership with actors and stakeholders opening the horizons for the great opportunity of planning cultural events of general interest accessible to all, as well as an occasion to raise the public awareness about the of the sites they pass by every day and to their extraordinary worldwide renown.<sup>2</sup>

Cultural diplomacy has a greater potential for strengthening the cooperation between the nations of the Danube Region. This potential can be realized through the establishment of a platform for multilevel and multi-stakeholder cooperation on the exchange of ideas, expertise, and good practices for promotion of the cultural heritage. This is an essential component because the Danube Region is characterized by a significant shared diverse heritage as a connecting element at regional and local levels. Cultural heritage bears, therefore, a strong potential for transnational cooperation in the Danube Region.<sup>3</sup> The cultural diplomacy based on heritage in the Danube Region can be an approach for going beyond the separate national interest of the government, to the sustainable development of the whole region. This statement can be exemplified by the Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route, integrating the roman heritage and wine production: these components can be seen as connecting and shared elements, a baseline for cooperation and cultural entrepreneurship.

Going beyond the borders, individual interests' heritage can be highlighted as a common value and the cultural diplomacy has the necessary preconditions to reach the humanitarian dimension of the international cooperation in the Danube Region and beyond. It can be a non-formal ancillary dimension of humanitarian diplomacy, because of its apolitical approach. Cultural diplomacy based on heritage is a chance for the international humanitarian agencies and organizations to develop their capacity and expertise in the countries of operation in the Danube Region. Concerning the humanitarian dimensions of cultural diplomacy, common heritage can be perceived as an optional solution for the needs of awareness-raising of global humanitarian topics on regional level in Danube Region. A hypothetical example can be the facilitation by European Route of Industrial Heritage to encourage business social responsibility and sustainable development goals or the Impressionisms Routes for highlighting the role of the art in the promotion of world peace.

Cultural heritage and sustainability as a way to ensure culture diplomacy can be framed by a methodology for evaluation of cycle of the diplomatic interventions related to the goals and results on the background standards for the usage, of cultural diplomacy. In this process the cultural diplomacy, based on heritage can be perceived both as a tool and output. The prerequisites can be subjectively assessed by specific indicators on similarities and differences between heritage sites in different

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<sup>2</sup> *Impressionism Route, THE "ART ET LUMIÈRE" EXHIBITION; Available at [www.impressionismsroutes.com/exhibitions/](http://www.impressionismsroutes.com/exhibitions/), accessed 8 July 2020.*

<sup>3</sup> *Routes4U Feasibility Study (2018), see <https://rm.coe.int/16808ea46f>, accessed 8 July 2020.*

counties in the region. Taking into consideration the specific social and economic background, the most suitable culture diplomacy tools can be chosen – social media, theatre, television, literature, arts, structural dialogues, exchanges etc. As a result of this process framed by a methodology, the potential outputs can be more effectively planned on the background of standards and principle for usage of heritage in the diplomacy. To ensure the proper usage of heritage in cultural diplomacy and prevent its discretization, a set of ethical principles must establish a framework on the sustainable use of heritage in cultural diplomacy. All involved parties and stakeholders have to be sensitized about the responsibilities when relying on the diplomacy, based on heritage. Such methodology can be a durable solution for establishment of long-term relationships for common goals on the economic development in the Danube Regions and beyond. The designation of Cultural Routes ambassadors and observers in the regions can be suggested for the coordination of the proper and sustainable usage of the cultural diplomacy within the Cultural Routes.

A platform for cultural diplomacy based on the heritage can act as a booster of economic development through entrepreneurship. It has the potential to bring a totally new perspective to the culture entrepreneurship based on material and non-material cultural heritage and traditions by adapting and innovating with a focus on youth and technologies. It has the great potential to bring a new life to small and remote places by using their unique heritage as a baseline resource on development of the cultural entrepreneurship. This can be exemplified within the Cultural Route ATRIUM, Architecture of the Totalitarian Regimes of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Europe's Urban Memory. These sites can bring a whole new approach to the places where they are situated by making them a live repository of the time and the memory.

Productive work can be done in reading more carefully how the international governance of culture works and moves across space and boundaries, wherein networks of intergovernmental and non-governmental actors now mediate the dance between the national and the international.<sup>4</sup> Extending this approach to new dimensions not only in the Danube region but in Europe and the world, cultural diplomacy, because of its specific characteristics, can also be used as a global diplomacy approach, going not only beyond the national interests but beyond the regional interests, facilitating the constructive dialogues between nations, governments, societies, and citizens. As a step ahead is the promotion of the Cultural Routes in countries outside of Europe and even more – building bridges between the European Cultural Routes and cultural heritage all over the world. The efforts of the EEAS – European Union External Services – can be identified as a good practice to promote the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe in China and to identify Chinese cities rich of cultural heritage and related to the concept of "route".<sup>5</sup>

It can be concluded that the potential for development through cultural diplomacy, based on heritage in the field of intersocial and intergovernmental cross-border cooperation, entrepreneurship development and extension of humanitarian diplomacy in the Danube Region and beyond. The exposed

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<sup>4</sup> Winter T. (2015), *Heritage diplomacy*, in: *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 21:10; p. 997-1015

<sup>5</sup> See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/newsroom>, accessed 8 July 2020.

statements in the paper are guided by the principle perceiving the diversity of the heritage as a core value in the Danube Region.

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