

**Culture &  
Creativity**

EU-Eastern Partnership Programme



# STATE – CIVIL SOCIETY COLLABORATION IN UKRAINIAN CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

*A policy brief for Culture & Creativity  
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# Summary

Promoting the country's culture abroad is an integral part of the policies of most European countries. Today, the state policy of Ukraine on this area requires an increase in effectiveness, which individual examples of successful cooperation between the State and civil society have proven to be possible.

The current state bodies responsible for the promotion of modern Ukrainian culture abroad are:

- The Office for International Cooperation of the Ministry of Culture;
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Department of Cultural Diplomacy);
- State Committee of Television and Radio Broadcasting;

The main problems in the implementation of an effective policy promoting culture abroad are:

- Obsolete/limited/lacking financial instruments in the public sector, which leads to inflexible planning and untimely financing of cultural projects;
- Lack of administrative skills and modern management skills of individual officials.

Solution: **Creation of the Ukrainian Institute**, a non-governmental organisation working as a partner with the State and financed, partially and not exclusively, from the public budget.

The **main goal** of the establishment of the Institute is the launch of new mechanisms for the effective promotion of Ukrainian culture abroad, and the solving of a number of internal problems between the state and non-state sectors that are hampering the development of cultural diplomacy.

# Key Functions of the Ukrainian Institute

- Introduce grant programmes to support projects promoting Ukrainian culture abroad;
- Create educational programmes and platforms for communication between representatives of the State and cultural managers and professionals from civil society;
- Mediate the processes of improving the regulatory framework for the implementation of cultural diplomacy projects;
- Coordinate Ukraine's participation in large-scale international fairs, festivals, exhibitions and conferences;
- Launch a network of foreign missions and the development of legal and conceptual frameworks for their activities.

The **main principles** of the Ukrainian Institute should be autonomy and the transparency of its work with the help of the Supervisory Board with a transparent system of appointment of members. The autonomy of the Institute envisages making it impossible for state institutions to influence the project activities of the Institute, but does not exclude mediation by the Supervisory Board in an advisory capacity.

## Benefits of the Ukrainian Institute

- Start of systematic communication between state institutions and civil society organisations;
- Taking the cultural sphere beyond administration by ministries;
- Creation of opportunities for independent creation of exportable cultural content;
- Creation of mechanisms for open and transparent grant selections, tender programmes, residencies for professionals and organisations active in the cultural sector;
- Inclusion of contemporary Ukrainian culture in global cultural processes.

Cultural initiatives, with a predominantly holistic vision of the progressive and representative course of Ukraine's foreign cultural policy, are in the main party activists who operate by relying on their own efforts – without dialogue with the

State. The main problem of these initiatives is that they are legally, financially and resource “starved”.

On the other hand, the State has often proven to be incapable of qualitative and systematic promotion of Ukrainian culture abroad.

The establishment of the Ukrainian Institute in the proposed configuration should become the response to the challenges of building systematic cooperation between the State and civil society organisations in matters relating to the promotion of contemporary Ukrainian culture abroad.

## Introduction

For most European countries promoting cultural diplomacy is an integral part of international politics and communications. However Ukrainian state policy has yet to develop a transparent model of interaction with civil society in international actions. This significantly reduces Ukraine’s effectiveness in cultural diplomacy.

There have been examples of successful cooperation. Ukraine was the guest of honor at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2016 and the ministries of culture and foreign affairs joined forces with the Ukrainian Association of Publishers and the three largest literary events in Ukraine: Book Arsenal, Lviv Publishers’ Forum and Meridian Czernovitz. This experience was an opportunity for Ukrainian book publishing to reach a new level and higher quality of international representation, according to experts,<sup>1</sup> A year earlier experts and volunteers publicly announced the failure by the state to fulfil the obligations it had undertaken at that book fair. They set up a national stand in crisis mode by themselves.<sup>2</sup> Presumably it was the public discontent, open debates and criticism of the previous experience by the public sector in 2015 that have prompted government institutions to review their policies and to engage more actively in to the cooperation in 2016.

This study deals with the question of how to move from individual successful cases to systematic changes in State - civil society cooperation in promoting Ukrainian culture abroad.

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<sup>1</sup> Dana Pavlychko, Anton Martynov, [How Ukraine Presented Itself during the 68th Frankfurt Book Fair. Publishers’ Opinions](#). Ukrayinska Pravda, Culture. 26 October 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Olga Zhuk, [Frankfurt: How the State Goes Abroad Through Volunteers](#). Ukrayinska Pravda, Culture. 22 October 2015.

# Current Situation and Challenges

Today the responsibility for promoting Ukrainian culture abroad is shared by the International Cooperation Department of the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) (culture and information centres, attachés at embassies and the department of cultural diplomacy) and the State Committee for Television and Radio Broadcasting. Support for book publishing, a translation school and the promotion of Ukrainian literature at the international level through exhibitions, poetry festivals and other cultural events are laid down in the mission of the Book Institute,<sup>3</sup> which the Minister of Culture announced in September 2016. Today the Institute is only just being formed and the open call for the post of director is under way.<sup>4</sup> It is still early to speak of any achievements.

The establishment of the department of cultural diplomacy under the MFA in 2016 can be seen as a breakthrough. This department has provided support for about 50 cultural institutions and initiatives in terms of solving logistics issues, visa assistance, counselling and advice, help in finding partners and sponsors, and communication with embassies.<sup>5</sup> The work of the department revealed a number of obstacles on the path to effective cooperation between civil society organizations and state bodies in matters of cultural diplomacy abroad. For example in accordance with the Decision on the Procedure for Using Funds for Image the MFA can still finance cultural projects connected exclusively to the Ukrainian diaspora,<sup>6</sup> whereas/ the target audience of cultural diplomacy is not so much Ukrainian compatriots as foreigners who know little about Ukraine or have a distorted view of it.

Respondents interviewed for this study link the sector's problems to two atavistic post-Soviet practices of the state system<sup>7</sup>:

1. The ideological ambitions of certain groups of officials who tend to view "management of culture" not from the point of view of modern management and administration, but rather as a personalised, individual right to create content that should actually be created by civil society and the expert community;

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/pg/UkrainianInstituteBooks/about/>

<sup>4</sup> [The Ministry of Culture Announces Competition for Director of Book Institute](#). Chytomo. 12 May 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Olga Zhuk, Annexes.

<sup>6</sup> Decision [On the adoption of the Procedure for Using Funds Allocated in the State Budget for Financial Support for Ensuring Ukraine's Positive International Image and for Carrying Out Activities for the Support of Ties with Ukrainians Living Outside Ukraine](#).

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Olga Zhuk, Annexes.

2. Partial obsolescence, limited or absent effective financial instruments in the public sector, which generate inflexible planning and untimely financing of cultural projects.

## Solution: Establishment of the Ukrainian Institute

One of the solutions may be the creation of the Ukrainian Institute, a non-governmental institution that would interact with the State as a partner and in many ways (but not exclusively) receive support in the form of funds and resources from the State. An example of this are the foreign cultural institutions operating in Ukraine. Often, they support the visits of artists and cultural figures of their countries to Ukraine, with performances, exhibitions, shows, participation in festivals or creative collaborations. The programmes of large-scale international cultural events in Ukraine largely depend and are formed precisely on the basis of such support. These institutes establish a cooperation network between artists/NGOs of their countries and their Ukrainian colleagues, which has a positive impact on both the image of these states and the development of the cultural sector as a whole.

The Ministry of Culture introduced the concept of the establishment of the Ukrainian Institute (the Institute of Taras Shevchenko) in June 2015.<sup>8</sup> The corresponding draft law was published on the website of the Ministry of Culture on 13 April 2016,<sup>9</sup> despite the intention to create the Institute by the end of the year, and on 9 February 2017, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Pavlo Klimkin, presented the vision and groundwork of the MFA on this issue.<sup>10</sup> The Ukrainian Institute is not planned to be an immediate component of the MFA but rather structurally connected with this state body. Work is currently under way on the draft Statute for the operation of the Institute and the establishment of its Supervisory Board.<sup>11</sup>

Best practice in neighbouring countries can be helpful in developing operating models for the future Ukrainian Institute. The Polish Institute is a successful case of productive interaction between the state and non-state institutions in promoting a country's culture abroad. The forms and types of interaction depend on the priorities of cultural policy and rely on mechanisms that have already been approved. This includes open calls and grant support. The Polish Institute accepts applications

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<sup>8</sup> Vyacheslav Kyrylenko. [Decision to Establish the Ukrainian Institute To Be Adopted by End of the Year](#). 11 June 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Draft Law [On the Ukrainian Institute](#).

<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs: [Ukrainian Institute: Soft Power to Promote Contemporary Ukraine in the World](#). 9 February 2017.

<sup>11</sup> Pavlo Klimkin. [Ukraine's Cultural Diplomacy by MFA](#).

quarterly from Ukrainian and Polish organisations on an equal basis. The decision to provide support is taken by the institute's Expert Council, which discusses projects and draws up a quarterly budget. According to representatives of the Polish Institute, cooperation with NGOs constitutes roughly 50% of all supported projects. The Polish Institute is a mission of the MFA of Poland, and in many places the department of culture and science present in embassies.

The newly-established Ukrainian institution could be guided by the state's priorities and needs and have sufficient autonomy that will not only help to improve the quality of the cultural product offered abroad, but also help to solve systemic problems of interaction between non-governmental and state actors engaged in its promotion. A Supervisory Board, the leading collegial body, which should include authoritative representatives of the media and civil society who are active in the field of culture, and a lawyer charged with monitoring the establishment and observance of clear legal principles for the activities of the Institute, can ensure this autonomy. Their appointment should be as transparent and clear as is possible so as to ensure a high level of confidence in the decisions of this body. A detailed procedure could be set out in the statutory documents, with the following essential elements:

- Duration of terms limited to three years;
- Number of terms limited to no more than two in a row;
- The right of civil society organisations to nominate their representatives to be members of the Board.

The project activities of the Institute could be carried out by an executive body, a team of managers headed by the Director, who reports to the Supervisory Board. The MFA and other state bodies can influence the activities of the Institute solely with the help of the Supervisory Board in an advisory manner rather than a directive manner. Furthermore, the Institute can create expert councils for specific areas of activity (theatre, literature, cultural heritage, etc.).

The Ukrainian Institute should focus on the following key tasks at the beginning of its operation:

- Introduction of grant programmes to support projects promoting Ukrainian culture abroad;
- Creation of educational programmes and platforms (roundtables, etc.) for communication between representatives of state bodies and cultural managers as well as professionals from civil society;
- Mediation of processes of improving the regulatory and legal framework for the implementation of cultural diplomacy projects;



- Coordination of Ukraine's participation in large-scale international fairs, festivals, exhibitions, and conferences;
- Launching a network of foreign offices and the development of legal and conceptual frameworks for their activities.

With the aim of building up the trust of representatives of civil society – potential partners and allies – the Ukrainian Institute could ensure the overall availability of information on the implementation of ongoing projects and reporting of delivered projects (in particular, transparent indicators and reports on the allocation and use of funds), and create modern online communication tools (platforms, websites, etc.) with NGOs and between NGOs and government organizations of the relevant sector from the very start.

The establishment of the Ukrainian Institute would create new mechanisms for the effective promotion of Ukrainian culture overseas, and solve a number of internal problems (mentioned above) between the state and non-state sectors that are hampering the development of cultural diplomacy.

## Benefits of the Creation of Ukrainian Institute

1. Start of systematic communication between state institutions and civil society organisations and formation of a discourse community, paradigms, conceptual and terminological apparatus and a culture of interaction between representatives of the cultural sector thanks, in part, to the development of the skills of members of staff;
2. Mainstreaming of the procedure already initiated earlier of taking the cultural sphere beyond administration by ministries. Creation of opportunities for independent creation of exportable cultural content;
3. Creation of mechanisms for open and transparent grant selections, tender programmes, residencies for professionals and organisations active in the cultural sector;
4. Development of long-term institutional relations and the inclusion of contemporary Ukrainian culture and the Ukrainian Institute, which represents it, in more global cultural processes.

## Alternatives

In the search for alternative ways to develop relations between the state and civil society organisations in issues relating to the promotion of contemporary Ukrainian culture abroad, we face a limited horizon of opportunities. On the one hand, the right to deal with these issues can be completely left within the purview of the State and existing institutions. Another option is complete rejection of interaction between the State and civil society in this sphere, which would provide for a market-based scheme for the provision of Ukrainian cultural products. Each option has its advantages and its considerable disadvantages.

### **Alternative 1: Leave the function of establishing cooperation with NGOs in the cultural diplomacy of Ukraine to existing state institutions**

Until the time that Ukrainian Institute is fully operational, civil society can interact with existing state institutions, primarily the Department of Public Diplomacy under the MFA. Official contact information is available on the MFA's website,<sup>12</sup> and to solve operational matters, it is possible to contact the cultural diplomacy team on social media.<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that in order to receive the support of Ukrainian embassies next year, NGOs should engage in dialogue and plan projects jointly at the start of this year.

The merits of this scheme include the fact that it already exists, as does the possibility to use its resource right now. At the same time, such a system does not for the time being solve the problems identified in this paper. Therefore, NGOs will in any case have to independently initiate and push for change in the ideological and practical areas of reforming cultural diplomacy in Ukraine through advocacy mechanisms, educational activities, initiation of joint events for representatives of the public sector and civil society, proposing draft laws, official proposals and other tools for engaging in dialogue.

### **Alternative 2: The free market as the only regulator of the processes of supplying Ukrainian cultural products abroad**

In the context of free market principles in application in the cultural sphere, Ukrainian civil society organisations have to act as autonomously as is possible with regard to implementing their projects abroad, relying on non-state sources of funding and not counting on cooperation with the State and public funding. Such a scheme involves minimal accountability and the absence of cross-interference in the activities of both state and non-state institutions.

Such a scheme now seems inappropriate for independent implementation for many reasons, including: the lack of sufficient resources in many civil society organisations,

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<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine: [Departments and Bureaus](#).

<sup>13</sup> [Ukraine's Cultural Diplomacy by MFA](#).

which are essentially interesting at their core, but not powerful enough in their financial, human and image capital to be able to independently implement projects abroad. The limitations already present in existing state-level institutional resources, etc., are also inefficient.

## Alternatives

Despite the positive growth of activist-led cultural initiatives at different levels of budgeting – grants, local financing, private investments, crowdfunding platforms, MFA financing – these initiatives, with a predominantly holistic view of the progressive and representative course of Ukraine’s foreign cultural policy, operate in the main by relying on their own efforts (without dialogue with the State) and find themselves in a situation of incomplete legislative and legal information and “resource starvation”. At the same time, it is fairly difficult for state institutions, which have considerable resources at their disposal, to advance contemporary Ukrainian culture abroad qualitatively and coherently without engaging civil society and non-governmental cultural initiatives in the process. Therefore, work on the development of systematic cooperation between the State and NGOs in cultural diplomacy is the cornerstone of befitting representation of Ukraine abroad and the effective work of all the actors of this process.

Taking into account the above aspects, the very establishment of the Ukrainian Institute in the proposed configuration can be the response to the challenges of building systematic cooperation between the State and civil society organisations in issues relating to promoting contemporary Ukrainian culture abroad.

## Annexes

**Transcriptions of interviews (All texts were read and agreed to by the respondents before publication):**

1. Anna Ten, independent curator ([Text](#))
2. Irena Karpa, Cultural Attaché in France ([Text](#))
3. Olena Pravylo, representative of the NGO Active Citizens and facilitator ([Text](#))
4. Olga Zhuk, Head of the Department of Cultural Diplomacy at MFA<sup>14</sup> ([Text](#))
5. Iryna Vikyrchak, Head of the Creative Europe Ukraine Desk<sup>15</sup> ([Text](#))

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<sup>14</sup> At the time of publication, Olga Zhuk had left her position at the Department of Cultural Diplomacy.

<sup>15</sup> At the time of publication of the survey, Iryna Vikyrchak refused to extend her contract with the Ministry of Culture as the head of the Creative Europe Ukraine Desk.

# Note

The policy briefs are the result of capacity building work undertaken by the EU-Eastern Partnership Culture and Creativity Programme in 2016-2017 with 240 Programme Associates, who had completed a series of eight workshops in business management for mid-career cultural operators. The purpose of these briefs is to help them additionally understand the role of professionals in providing concise and neutral policy advice in the area of their competence. The task was to identify problems within the sector, provide potential models, options and solutions, support critical thinking, evidence-based policy analysis and the formulation of recommendations. The ideas were developed by the Associates themselves.

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