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Gierat-Bieroń, Bożena

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The EU and Japan in the Process of Building Creative/Progressive Cultural Relations

Abstract

The EU is promoting cultural relations with Asian countries. While building interpersonal and institutional connections, the EU pays special attention to Japan. The image of the EU and its mutual relations with Japan are generally recognised as predominantly good and trustworthy. This paper will examine the process of building creative/progressive cultural relations between the EU and Japan based on two hypotheses; first: despite the fact that the EU tried to develop cultural relations within Japan, the embassies of the EU Member States are far more active in cultural programs than the EU Delegation; and secondly: the reception of the EU as a historic and cultural project is rather fragmented (as opposed to being holistic) in Japan. The aim of this research is to analyse, compare, and evaluate both the effort and achievements made by the EU and Japan in the process of building creative cultural relations. The research will demonstrate an analytical approach in the political sciences discipline.

Keywords: External Cultural Relations, Cultural Diplomacy, European Union, Cultural Policy

Introduction

The European Union maintains a close relationship with Japan and regards this Asian country as one of its new “strategic partners”¹ for the 21st century, especially in terms of economic policy.² On 1st February

* **Bożena Gierat-Bieroń** – The Jagiellonian University, e-mail: bozena.gierat-bieron@uj.edu.pl, ORCID: 0000-0002-4527-4748.

¹ EU-Japan Strategic Partnership, Fact Sheet, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu-japan_factsheet_may-2020_1.pdf (access 28.08.2020).

² Recently the EU and Japan concluded an Agreement between the European Union and Japan for an Economic Partnership. Since the agreement took effect, in February 2019, they have strengthened their economic and business relationships.

2021, both sides met (via video link) to discuss the details of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA).³ Within it, the Union pursues its economic interests, promoting a more open trade system and further developing EU-Japanese economic ties. The EU and Japan have already established fine relations in the sense of value-based relationships. Both partners share fundamental principles such as the rule of law, and a respect for democracy, tolerance, and human rights.⁴ It appears that Japan and the EU have reached the point of refreshing and developing their partnership even further; the EU wants to strengthen its political influences in East Asia as a counteraction for the increasing technological and market power of China, while Japan has the ambition to assume a greater role in global leadership.

In 2012, the then Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe, said that he believed that “soft power is the key to achieving this” – which means to “communicate a correct understanding of Japan and cultivate supporters through sharing the diverse appeals of the country”.⁵ This is an interesting starting point for Japan, which considers the EU as a large-scale single market, and appreciates its importance. Japan and the EU differ, however, in their methods of deploying soft power. The EU is expected to promote a mutual understanding between itself and Japan through its cultural diplomacy and encourage citizens of both sides to appreciate each other’s culture. Japan, though, works on traditional, bilateral, and multilateral cultural exchange bases and builds its cultural policies as an export-oriented mechanism.

This paper will examine the process of building creative/progressive cultural relations between the EU and Japan, and whether the two following hypotheses hold: 1. Despite the fact that the EU tried to develop cultural relations within Japan, the embassies of the EU Member States are far more active in cultural programs than the EU Delegation, 2. The

³ Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA): https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/economy/page6e_000013.html (access 10.05.2021).

⁴ It was confirmed by the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Motegi Toshimitsu, who attended the EU Foreign Affairs Council in January 2021, when he talked about the “promotion and consolidation of fundamental principles of the international community” see: Foreign Minister Motegi’s attendance at the EU Foreign Affairs Council (virtual format), https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press1e_000168.html (access 16.03.2021); see also the article 2 of TEU (consolidated version), OJ C 115/13, 9.05.2008.

⁵ A.S. Warren, *Japan is using cultural diplomacy to reassert its place in the world – but is the message too exclusive?*, November 12, 2018, ‘The Conversation’, <https://theconversation.com/japan-is-using-cultural-diplomacy-to-reassert-its-place-in-the-world-but-is-the-message-too-exclusive-106463> (access 26.08.2020).

national reception of the EU as a historic and cultural project is rather narrow in Japan. The aim of this research is to analyse, compare, and evaluate both the effort and achievements made by the EU and Japan in the process of reaching stable cultural international relations.

Cultural Diplomacy of Japan: Between Tradition and Innovation

When it comes to the specifics of cultural diplomacy in Japan, some of the governmental policies are unilateral rather than mutual. One example is its major branding initiative – the ‘Cool Japan’ strategy,⁶ which was introduced in the last decade (imitating former British Prime Minister Tony Blair’s “Cool Britannia”). It was dedicated to promoting Japanese traditional and pop culture overseas and its strategy was organised mainly by the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry of Japan. Its aim was to attract tourists and stimulate the domestic economy. Since this project was implemented, there have been various discussions in Japan about the difference between traditional diplomacy and Nye’s⁷ concept of soft power. Japan is more eager to show its interest in public diplomacy rather than in public cultural diplomacy,⁸ which is a relatively new phenomenon for Japanese stakeholders. In this area, the government pays less attention to Europe geographically and focuses rather on its neighbouring countries, the Asia-Pacific region, and, historically, the US.⁹ Bilateral relations and people-to-people exchanges are also considered to be an important point of focus.

Currently, Japan’s public cultural diplomacy at the governmental level is mainly arranged by three actors: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the Agency for Cultural Affairs (ACA), and the Japan Foundation (JF). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) is responsible for Japan’s public diplomacy and supervises independent administrative agen-

⁶ See: D. McGray, *Japan’s gross national cool*, “Foreign Policy”, no. 13/2002, pp. 44–54, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/3183487>; K. Valaskavi, *A brand new future? Cool Japan and the social imaginary of the branded nation*, “Japan Forum”, no. 25(4)/2013, pp. 485–504, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09555803.2012.756538>.

⁷ J.S. Nye, *The Future of Power*, New York 2011 and J.S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Cambridge 2004.

⁸ T. Ogawa, *Origin and Development of Japan’s Public Diplomacy*, in: N. Snow, Ph.M. Taylor, *Routledge Handbook of Cultural Diplomacy*, New York–London 2009, pp. 270–282, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429465543>.

⁹ In recent years, Japan has reconsidered the importance of developing cultural relations with South Korea and China in order to overcome historical issues, especially targeting young generations through the „Cool Japan” strategy.

cies which deal with cultural diplomacy. MOFA carries out PR activities which are targeted towards foreign citizens, overseas media, as well as cultural exchange programmes through its own operations, embassies, and consular offices. The Ministry has led several reforms during the last two decades and established the Public Diplomacy Department, which has engaged in forming aims and strategy for external cultural exchanges. The Agency for Cultural Affairs (ACA) was established in 1968, and its purpose is to implement a variety of measures to facilitate international culture and artistic exchanges as well as to protect overseas cultural heritage. The main aim of the ACA was defined as: “(...) supporting the Japanese cultural sector to expand activities at an international level, increasing cultural exchanges and co-operation, fostering people-to-people contacts and intercultural dialogue, and, a little less obviously perhaps, promoting dialogue and building trust with foreign publics, are all ‘very important’.”¹⁰ The Japan Foundation (JF), established in 1972 as an agency under the supervision of MOFA, is Japan’s only institution devoted to conducting comprehensive cultural projects all over the world. This is a government-affiliated corporation created to undertake international cultural exchanges. The agency has three fields of programmes: cultural exchanges, Japanese language education, and intellectual exchanges.¹¹ The organisation plays a similar role as the cultural institutions (run by the European Member States) – such as the Goethe Institute and the British Council – but its scale is substantially smaller. It possesses 25 overseas offices, most of which are located in the Asia-Pacific region. In 2003, the Japan Foundation (JF) was relaunched as an independent administrative institution under the supervision of MOFA. Since then, the JF has been able to plan and organise its own programmes and support individuals and institutions by itself, within the shared visions of MOFA. When it comes to statistics, according to the research of Rod Fisher, the Japan Foundation has “supported 707 projects related to EU Member States in the fiscal year 2011/12 in the areas of arts and cultural exchange, Japanese language education, Japanese studies, and intellectual exchange. 114 of these projects were with Germany, 88 with France, 71 with the UK, 53 with Italy, and 41 with Spain. Specifically in the area of arts and cultural exchange, 392 projects were supported in EU States by the Foundation and the same five countries were involved in the highest number of these”.¹²

¹⁰ R. Fisher, *Japan Country Report, Preparatory Action. Culture in EU External Relations*, Brussels 2014, p. 8.

¹¹ Within these three programs, it operates numerous sub-programs, often in partnership with other organisations, see more <https://www.jpff.go.jp> (access 26.11.2020).

¹² R. Fisher, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

Margaret Wyszomirski, in her *International Cultural Relations: A multi-country comparison*,¹³ notes that the fundamental concept of public cultural diplomacy in Japan relies on strengthening Japan's presence abroad, which is achieved by raising a pro-Japanese approach and promoting the comprehension of Japanese history, as well as arousing favourable attitudes towards Japan. Both Wyszomirski and Tadashi Ogawa¹⁴ understand this strategy as one which aims to establish 'flat' relationships with other countries. This regards not only the culture sector, but also development policy.

The EU's External Cultural Relations

The European Union formally maintains external relations in the field of culture on the basis of the Treaty of Lisbon (2007). The regulations on the EU's cultural policy were enshrined in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).¹⁵ One of these regulations is one which defines the EU's external relations (Part Five). According to TFEU, the Union and its Member States "foster cooperation with third countries" (Art. 167(3)), based on its respect for "their national and regional diversity" and at the same time "bringing the common cultural heritage" (Art. 167(1)), as well as "improving the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European peoples, the conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage of European significance, non-commercial cultural exchanges"; and their promotion of "artistic and literary creation, including in the audiovisual sector" (Art. 167(2)). The EU's role is to provide "encouragement" and "support" for its Member States' activity in both internal and external policies; in other words – to implement the principle of subsidiarity. The Union's competences in culture are supplementary in its nature (Art. 6 TFEU). Title V of the Treaty on European Union defines the principles of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and defines the competences of EU institutions in this area. The aims of the EU's foreign and security policy therefore include (Art. 21–22): safeguarding the EU's values and interests, consolidating democracy, the rule of law and human rights in the world, preserving peace, preventing conflicts and strengthening security, and encouraging the integration of countries into the global economy.

¹³ M.J. Wyszomirski, C. Burgess, C. Peila, *International Cultural Relations: A multi-country comparison*, Ohio 2003.

¹⁴ T. Ogawa, op.cit.

¹⁵ Consolidated version of the Treaty on the European Union, OJ EU C 326/13, 26 October 2012.

According to the Lisbon Treaty, the culture sector is not a priority area of the CFSP or EU's external actions. In the decision-making processes, it is taken into account only as an element of cooperation with third countries in commercial and development policy. The cultural policy is present in the Union's external relations, and can therefore strengthen the CFSP, contributing to the protection of democracy and human rights and to socio-economic development. The cultural sector is controlled by the institutions responsible for external relations, i.e., the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR), the European External Action Service (EEAS), the Council of the EU and the European Commission.

EU Delegations and Their Partners

The TFEU's provisions concerning EU delegations state that "Union delegations in third countries and at international organizations shall represent the Union" (Art. 221(1)) and that "Union delegations shall be placed under the authority of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. They shall act in close cooperation with Member States' diplomatic and consular missions" (Art. 221(2)).¹⁶ Member States are therefore partners of the EU delegations in third countries. According to the Art. 24(2) of TEU,¹⁷ the European Union conducts common foreign and security policy based on the development of mutual political solidarity among Member States and the EU. Article 24(3) TEU specifies that the Member States support the Union's external and security policy actively and unreservedly in the spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity. Article 35 TEU defines the cooperation of the EU states' diplomatic missions, stating that the diplomatic and consular missions of Member States – as well as EU delegations – work together and are present in third countries, at international conferences or as representatives in international organisations. The EU's external actions in the area of culture are implemented by EU delegations in cooperation with representatives of the Member States. These activities should be precise, cohesive and based on solidarity.¹⁸

¹⁶ A consolidated version of the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union, OJ EU C 326/47, 26 October 2012.

¹⁷ A consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union, OJ EU C 326/13, 26 October 2012.

¹⁸ A. Nitszke, *Europejska Służba Działań Zewnętrznych – Nowa jakość Dyplomacji Unijnej?*, „Politeja”, no. 3/2019, pp. 257–269, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12797/Politeja.15.2018.54.17>.

Article 5(7–10) of the Council Decision of 2010¹⁹ regulates the activity of the EU delegations. Their job is to facilitate contact between the European Union institutions and third countries or international organisations in which the EU is accredited; the head of a delegation represents the Union as a whole when representing it in a third country or an international organisation where it is accredited. He or she receives instructions from HR and is responsible for their implementation, as well as for answering to the EEAS. The delegation's staff must follow the interests of the European Union, regardless of any pressure exerted on them by the representatives of Member States. To clarify the competences, and referring to the EU delegations' handbook from 2012,²⁰ it is important to note that a delegation can spend funds within European projects (including the field of culture) conducted jointly with third countries.²¹ Delegations are recommended to engage in activities promoting education and culture by cooperating with universities and academic communities in third countries in order to permit the promotion of programs such as Erasmus Mundus. According to the recommendations of the handbook, "culture should be a major element of our public diplomacy and cooperation".²²

The Role of the EUNIC

A network of European Union National Cultural Institutes (EUNIC) was established in 2006. On 21st February 2007 in Brussels, the official opening of EUNIC took place. Cultural institutes have become an additional partner for EU Delegations, alongside Member States' embassies and consulates. EUNIC members have discovered that it is possible to work together in various configurations on specific projects, funded from different sources, but have always contributed to enhancing knowledge on the EU's external relations. This was the origin of cultural institute clusters. These clusters, which are an international cooperation consortia, have become a useful mechanism and platform, which has made it possible to apply for EU funds for projects in the "Creative Europe" programme (2021–2027). However, there is a major problem in EUNIC's cooperation with EU delegations; a potential clash in the interests of the po-

¹⁹ A consolidated version of the Treaty on the European Union, OJ EU C 326/13, 26 October 2012.

²⁰ *Information and Communication Handbook for EU Delegations in third countries and to international organizations*, December 2012, Ref. Ares(2013)32604 – 11/01/2013.

²¹ Assistance to third countries is provided from EU funds, such as the European Development Fund, the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument or the Financing Instrument for Cooperation with Industrialised Countries.

²² *Information and Communication Handbook for EU Delegations...*, op.cit., p. 5.

litical entities participating in it. When defining their national objectives, cultural institutes act on the basis of guidelines of a Member State's foreign policy, which do not necessarily correspond with the EU's strategic objectives. Institutes, which operate regionally, promote EU values in the area through endorsing a greater involvement of local actors in EUNIC's activity. The significance of these actions are quite positive. Finding ways to bring countries' positions closer together in order to ensure a common interpretation of cultural external actions in third countries is an important task for the future.

From February to June of 2016, EUNIC carried out evaluation work on the effectiveness of 39 artistic projects financed from EUNIC Global budgets in 2013–2015. The Brussels office of EUNIC Global published the results of this evaluation in 2016 as *Cluster Fund 2012–2015. Evaluation Report*.²³ In the report's conclusions, the authors argued that the biggest problem with the cultural institutions' network at the time was the lack of partnership from Member States, as well as a paucity of far-reaching strategies of action which caused efforts to have been fragmentary. The organisers of cultural events were troubled by the lack of in-depth analyses on the influence of the proposed artistic events on socio-cultural changes in cities and regions, as well as the weak promotion of clusters as tools of European Union policy in the world.

European Cultural Actions in Japan

The EU has commissioned two organisations in Japan to promote its cultural policies; the Delegation of the European Union to Japan and the "EU-Japan Fest". The former's task mainly comes down to managing educational projects, and the latter organises projects related to the European Capital of Culture and encourages the co-production among artists in the EU and Japan. Both of these organisations operate long-term projects and target young generations. Therefore, they are expected to contribute to promoting the EU-Japanese relationship in the long run. EUNIC Japan plays a supplementary role to their partners – both the EU Delegation and the "EU-Japan Fest".

Taking into account the formal and legal analyses discussed above, as well as the recommendations for the EU cultural sector in the context of the EU's external relations and the CFSP – which expose both the weaknesses of the EU delegations' cultural competencies and the excessive power of Member States and the EUNIC network – it is important to consider the efficiency of the EU's diplomacy system in Japan. Experts

²³ *Cluster Fund 2012–2015*, Evaluation Report. EUNIC Global, Brussels 2016, p. 68.

usually observe a kind of “tension” between the foreign policy objectives of the EU representation in a third country and those of the Member States represented by all the institutions of these countries, which are also accredited in third countries. The case of Japan seems to be a little different, due to the fact that the EU Delegation’s activities show strong engagement into European promotion and professionally organising schedules for events. Most of the Delegation’s budget is spent on film events organised within the partnership of EUNIC Japan.²⁴ The EU Delegation collaborates with its partners – the embassies and consulates of the EU Member States in Japan as well as Japanese universities, and cultural and information centres.

One important event, organised by the EU Delegation and its partners, is a series of meetings, exhibitions, concerts and conferences, which is held periodically and lasts for a number of weeks in May, June, and July. These are organised under the umbrella of the “EU-Japan Friendship Week”.²⁵ Thanks to Robert Schumann’s Declaration (9th of May 1950), May is regarded as European Month. Exactly on this day, the EU Delegation celebrates “Europe Day”,²⁶ which aims to commemorate peace and unity. “EU-Japan Friendship Week” brings together a variety of cultural productions from Europe, which are provided through the embassies and cultural institutes of the EU Member States. The embassies decide what kind of film to propose to the Japanese audience. The EU Delegation has been responsible for the overall coordination of the event since 2010. There are many activities incorporated into the general schedule of the program, such as: the history of the European Royal Families, a presentation of chosen pieces of French literature or German music, the paintings of Jean Monnet, an EU Books exhibition, European cooking, a European coins exhibition, etc.²⁷ The program mixes tradition with modernity as well as popular culture with elite culture.

Within the framework of the “EU-Japan Friendship Week” there is a sub-festival called “EU Film Days” – the main cultural offering operated by the EU Delegation and organised in the four Japanese cities of Tokyo, Kyoto, Hiroshima, and Fukuoka. It started in 2001 and it aims to

²⁴ L. Vandewalle, *In-depth Analysis. The increasing role of the EU’s culture, education and science diplomacy in Asia*, Directorate-General for External Policy (DG EXPO), Policy Dept., Brussels 2015, p. 17.

²⁵ https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/japan/22284/node/22284_en (access 26.11.2020).

²⁶ <http://www.findglobal.com/JP/Minato-ku/1636710406654641/EUNIC-Japan> (access 17.09.2020).

²⁷ EU-Japan Friendship Week 2019, 13th April 2019, pdf, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fw2019_list_en_mp_correction.pdf (access 5.01.2021).

showcase the distinction of film making in the EU Member States. This annual festival screens films from the EU Member States over several weeks in Tokyo and other cities in Japan. The European Commission's framework programme "Creative Europe 2014–2020" used to support this event.²⁸ Taking all of this into consideration, film making has the potential not only to show the rich culture of the EU Member States, but also to promote EU-Japanese relations in the field of creative industries. "EU Film Days" is a successful initiative in Japan. In 2018 it was organised in cooperation with the National Film Archive of Japan (NFA) – a part of The National Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo – and run between 26th May and 21st June.²⁹ 25 Member States of the EU showed their films (including the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, and Portugal, among others) in Tokyo as well as in the "Museum of Kyoto" and the "Hiroshima City Cinematographic and Audio-Visual Library". Among the invited guests were film directors Borys Lankosz from Poland and Kamen Kalev from Bulgaria, who were also chosen as keynote speakers for this edition of the event. In 2019, Lithuanian film director Mindaugas Survila attended the screening of his documentary film "The Ancient Woods" in Tokyo, Kyoto, and Fukoka. The "EU Film Days" in 2020 took place between 12–25th June³⁰ and 20 European countries participated and was organised as an online event. All events were coordinated with the embassies of the European countries in Japan and cultural institutions of the EU Member States.³¹ In many cases the movies shown at the event are recognised, award-winning European films such as Poland's "Ida" from 2015 (winner of the Best Foreign Language Film Academy Award).

A number of cultural activities and workshops have been held annually from May to July and give the Japanese public an opportunity to learn more about the EU. The events are mainly managed by the EU Information Centres located in university libraries across Japan. This is how the EU Delegation promotes cultural diplomacy from an educational perspective. Film screening is suitable for attracting public interest and comes with the prospect that the EU and Japan propose cross-border co-production. Since the EU Delegation cooperates with schools and con-

²⁸ Press and information team of the Delegation to JAPAN (2017). *EU-Japan Cultural & Public Diplomacy*. Retrieved from 3rd June, 2020 from https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/japan/19234/eu-japan-cultural-public-diplomacy_en (access 3.06.2020).

²⁹ https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/japan/44836/eu-film-days-2018-kick-26-may_en (access 26.11.2020).

³⁰ <http://jp.mvcp.hr/en/news/eu-film-days-2020,62000.html> (access 25.11.2020).

³¹ <https://eufilmdays.jp/> (access 26.11.2020).

ducts events for the young generation, Japanese citizens will gradually learn to understand more about the EU in the near future.

EUNIC Japan Initiatives

The EUNIC Cluster in Japan was initially established in February 2008 in Tokyo under Austria's Presidency. It collaborates with EU Delegations and Cultural Institutes of the EU Members States. The last Director of EUNIC Global was Anna-Maria Wiljanen from the Finnish Cultural Institute. In April 2020, this role was assumed by Anita Nagy, Director of the Hungarian Cultural Institute in Tokyo, who has held it since then. The EUNIC in Tokyo consists of the following Cultural Institutes: Ars-Flanders Japan, the Czech Centre Tokyo, the Goethe Institute, Instituto Cervantes, the Camões Institute, Institut Française du Japon, Instituto Italiano di Cultura, the Finnish Institute in Japan, Instytut Polski w Tokyo, and the Austrian Cultural Forum in Tokyo. EUNIC Cluster's collaboration with the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival³² is famous for promoting the spirit of European movies. It concentrates on cultural cooperation with relevant partner institutions in Japan within the thematic framework of Culture and Media, Multilingualism, Culture and Education, Intellectual Property, Culture and Crisis, and other topics.

International Dance Day (29th of April) is an occasion to present different genres and traditions of European dancing. The Cultural Institutes from Europe in Tokyo are working under the umbrella of EUNIC Japan and regularly invite dance ensembles (i.e., the Hungarian National Dance Ensemble, Poland's The "Śląsk" Song and Dance Ensemble, and Ireland's famous dance troupe "Riverdance") in order to introduce their dancing to the Japanese audience. Some performances are presented online at the embassies and they are available on the Unesco website, and feature a "Songs and Dance Celebration" in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.³³ EUNIC Japan has also proposed the sharing of videos which introduce various types of dances – both traditional and modern – from several European countries.

The European Day of Languages event (26th of September) is one whose aim is to introduce the diversity of European languages and cultures to the Japanese audience. One of the methods of presenting different

³² <https://www.yidff.jp/2009/cat099/09c100-e.html> (access 2.12.2020).

³³ <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/baltic-song-and-dance-celebrations-00087> (access 5.06.2021). Festivals were in 2003 proclaimed by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity and in 2008 added them to the List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

European languages is singing traditional songs and reading transcript of texts, with the purpose of building awareness of the importance of learning multiple languages. The main organiser of this event is the Goethe Institute. The EU Delegation in Tokyo, together with EUNIC Japan, used to organise the “European Literature Festival”,³⁴ which was a series of meetings and discussions with European writers and Japanese professors of literature. “Short Shorts Film Festival & Asia” saw two of its events held in Tokyo in October 2019 and 2020.³⁵ The latter was titled “Animated Spirits” and it “illustrated the spirit of contemporary experimentation, while reflecting on the potential of traditional and original techniques”.³⁶

EU-Japan Fest: European Capitals of Culture (ECOC)

The European Capital of Culture (ECOC) is the oldest of the EU’s cultural programmes – it has been held for over 30 years. Japan is involved in some initiatives related to the celebration of the ECOC. In 1992, one year before the Maastricht Treaty came into effect, the EU-Japan Fest was founded to organise cultural exchange programmes between the EU (at that time the EC) and Japan. This was due to the fact that the government of Belgium requested Japanese participation in the European Capital of Culture Antwerp in 1993. Since then, the EU-Japan Fest has continued to support activities related to the ECOC. The European Capital of Culture contributes to promoting not only mutual understanding between the EU Member States within EU territory, but also the EU’s external cultural diplomacy referring to the EU-Japanese relationship.

The main message of the ECOC programme is to show that European cities were the most important centres of urban and social development. The programme periodically covers artistic events offered by a given city. The cities which have been chosen to celebrate the ECOC, follow the direction of the EU cultural policy, using its potential to revitalise various urban spheres’ reality, which corresponds with the general European idea of “urban rebirth”. Tibor Navrascisc,³⁷ the former EU Commissioner responsible for Cultural Affairs and Education, rightly pointed out in 2016 that, “building the image of attractive and creative European cities would

³⁴ In 2019, the European Literature Festival was called „Transcending of Borders in European Literature”.

³⁵ Began in 2015 in New York, organised by EUNIC New York.

³⁶ <http://www.findglocal.com/JP/Minato-ku/1636710406654641/EUNIC-Japan>, more details see: <http://animatedspirits.org/tokyo-2020/> (access 15.07.2020).

³⁷ EU-Japan News, March 2016, V. 14, <https://www.eu-japan.eu/sites/default/files/publications/docs/march16.pdf> (access 15.07.2020).

make them more open to the whole world". The ECOC plays a fundamental role in the processes of integrating a city's inhabitants, as well promoting the city itself and its international connections. It proves the cities' ability to build multicultural integrated societies (new urban communities).

During its 30 years, the ECOC has built a solid foundation for artistic exchanges and a process of networking between European and non-European artists. Thousands of great orchestras and philharmonics from around the world have participated in a variety of events of the festival. One of the most exceptional performances of the last ECOC was a concert of the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra (held on 26th of May 2013) in the Kosice ECOC 2013 (Slovakia).³⁸ The concert was held at the House of Arts in Kosice and it was conducted by Kazuhito Koizumi.

As was mentioned, "The EU-Japan Fest" was founded to organise cultural exchange programmes between the EU and Japan. This NGO has supported the creative activities of Japanese artists and curators in the ECOC as well as the formation of global networks in the fields of culture. "The EU-Japan Fest" operates within a budget from both sides: from Europe, Japan, along with the European Commission, local and national governments, the Japanese Ministry of Culture and donations from the Japanese business community such as: Mitsubishi and Toyota Motor Corporations, the Olympus Corporation and Fuji Xerox Co. and so on. Also, the organisation is funded by Japanese counterparts such as the EU-Japan Fest Committee. "The EU-Japan Fest" is dedicated to maintaining friendship between the EU and Japan in the field of cultural exchanges. The organisation's objectives are considered to be universal and contributing to the global activities of the artists and the progress of society. According to the policy of "The EU-Japan Fest", the event is meant to support "artistically and spiritually creative activities while continuously examining the merits and the demerits of globalisation".³⁹ In other words, the committee has a critical perspective on globalisation, while both the EU and the Japanese government promote their cultural exchange programmes through the support from the organisation. This shows that "The EU-Japan Fest" tries to remain as neutral as possible so as to avoid one-sided propaganda. Its policy suggests that the organisation supports the activities of young people and appreciates creative activities, on which their evaluation remains unformed.

³⁸ <http://www.kosice2013.sk/en/tokyo-musical-typhoon-in-kosice/> (access 2.12.2020).

³⁹ EU-Japan Fest Japan Committee, *The 26th EU – Japan Fest Official Report*, EU-Japan Fest Japan Committee, Tokyo 2019, p. 10 (access 2.12.2020).

The Foundation contributes to ECOC events, although not necessarily every year. In Lisbon 1994, Japanese artists were engaged in a Contemporary Music Festival, a “The Day after Tomorrow” exhibition, a “Namban Costume Exhibition”, Dance by SankaiJuku, a Buddhist and Shomyo Music Concert, and finally, the 2nd EU-Japan Cultural Exchange Symposium. In Patras ECOC 2006, the Foundation supported an exhibition of photography as well as dance and traditional Japanese music performances. It also participated in a series of events in Sibiu and Luxemburg ECOC 2007.

Table 1. A schedule of Japanese artistic participation in the programmes of Porto and Rotterdam ECOC 2001

Cultural Capital of Europe Porto 2001
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edo Firework • Photography Exhibition 「European Eyes on Japan 3/Japan Today」 • Dance & Opera of Ryukyu (Okinawa) in Porto & Marseille, France • The 9th EU-Japan Fest Official Reception • Namban exhibition
Cultural Capital of Europe Rotterdam 2001
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NFI / Surface -Contemporary Photography, Video and Painting from Japan- • Exchange program for curators
Photography Exhibition 「European Eyes on Japan Japan Today
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photography Exhibition European Eyes on Japan 1/Japan Today in Ehime, Hokkaido & Hyogo • Photography Exhibition European Eyes on Japan 3/Japan Today in Kumamoto, Yamanashi & Gunma • Photography Exhibition European Eyes on Japan/Japan Today
works by Swedish Photographers in Sweden

Source: <https://web.archive.org/web/20071113002731/http://www.eu-japanfest.org/english/program/past.html#10> and subsector: <http://www.eu-japanfest.org/english/program/past.html> (access 16.11.2020).

As presented in the table above, the Japanese artists mostly participated in photography exhibitions. Traditional dance is also a popular choice for Japanese artists, as it is a successful instrument of promoting Japanese culture. There are some curator exchanges programmes proposed, which serve the purpose of sharing knowledge and skills in the visual arts area. It is also important to pay attention to Post ECOC projects. In 2017, a Polish choir group was invited to Japan to hold concerts as a continuation of the International Music Festival of Youth in Wrocław. Members of this

choir also joined several social events in Japan as goodwill ambassadors. The annual Festival of Japanese Culture was held in Wrocław in 2016. The event was founded by the Polish-Japanese Friendship Foundation NAM, which has been dedicated to introducing Japanese culture among Polish citizens. In 2019, the programme comprised of a variety of workshops on Japanese traditional culture. In addition, as an expansion of the International Drawing Triennale in Wrocław, Japanese artists have been co-producing artworks with Polish partners and organised joint exhibitions both in Wrocław and Japan between 2016 and 2018. That gave the young artists the abilities to build international networks. The Post ECOC Project's aim is to establish a lasting relationship between the EU Member States and Japan. This project promotes cultural exchanges between its members, as well as an international co-production of artworks.

How to Strengthen EU-Japan Cultural Relations?

Public partnership between Japan and the EU in the cultural arena is rather advanced. Nevertheless, there are some reports and analyses aimed at describing the opportunities of managing obstacles in the future development of both partners' international relations. One of these reports is *Preparatory Action: Culture in EU External Relations: Engaging the World: Towards Global Cultural Citizenship* from June 2014,⁴⁰ prepared by EUNIC and commissioned by the EC. It considers various possibilities for the EU for conducting intercontinental external relations in the culture sector. It contains several conclusions: cultural relations have a huge potential to increase European influences in many parts of the world; a "combined" international cultural relations strategy should be developed on the premise of common values and shared responsibility for global cultural citizenship, which demands financial support from the EU budget; and pilot projects should be launched immediately to bring about change in international cultural relations. In Japan's case, the conclusions are significantly less optimistic. Having said that, the EU and Japan share a common view about global affairs, so therefore they maintain close cultural relations. As the authors have emphasised, Japanese cultural practitioners

⁴⁰ *Preparatory Action: Culture in EU External Relations: Engaging the World: Towards Global Cultural Citizenship*. Executive Summary, Brussels 2014. The report was prepared under the supervision of Yudhishtir Raj Isar, an Indian cultural researcher and long-time UNESCO expert, in cooperation with the Goethe-Institut, the British Council, the Danish Cultural Institute, Institut Français, KEA European Affairs, the European Cultural Foundation, the BOZAR Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels, and the IFA (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen) from Stuttgart.

may find it difficult to cooperate with the EU as an entity, in contrast to their projects with individual Member States.⁴¹ Thanks to their financial and diplomatic power, major European countries such as France and Germany can promote their cultural policies in Japan. Consequently, their culture, tradition, and artworks, are widely appreciated and accepted by Japanese citizens. On the other hand, the culture of relatively small Member States is somewhat under-represented in Japan. While the Delegation of the European Union has organised movie showcases and promoted cultural exchanges, an even more active cooperation between the EU and the Japanese cultural professionals is expected in order to demonstrate the diversity of the European culture. The Japan Country Report⁴² also suggested that EU National Institutes for Culture were only partially active in Japan.⁴³ Another report – *The EU Through the Eyes of Asia. Media, Public and Elite Perceptions in China, Japan, Korea, Singapore and Thailand*⁴⁴ (2007) – confirms the conclusions presented above. For a long time, Asian countries have had a general, even enigmatic understanding of European culture as a whole. “The EU is almost completely absent from the consciousness of Asian people. Knowledge about the EU is limited to information about its currency – the euro – and its economic potential”.⁴⁵

Since Japan’s cultural policies are currently export-oriented, Japan is expected to promote the reception of foreign culture and tradition. In fact, the diversity of EU Member States is not visible in Japan. If the EU activates international cooperation among artists and cultural experts between itself and Japan, more opportunities for both citizens to appreciate each other’s culture will develop. The experts, however, may face administrative difficulties such as the visa procedure. The EU can negotiate as an administrative structure with its Japanese counterparts and modify the current system. To give an example of the ongoing international cooperation between artists, the EU has been managing the European Capitals of

⁴¹ It is much easier for example to invite small groups of artists from so called “cheaper” European countries to Japan than big orchestras composed of musicians from other, “more expensive” European countries.

⁴² R. Fisher, *Japan Country Report, Preparatory Action. Culture in EU External Relations*, Brussels 2014.

⁴³ Ibidem, p. 15.

⁴⁴ *The EU Through the Eyes of Asia. Media, Public and Elite Perceptions in China, Japan, Korea, Singapore and Thailand*, eds. M. Holland, P. Ryan, A.Z. Nowak, N. Chaban, Fundacja Azja-Europa, National Centre for Research on Europe, Ateneo de Manila University and Warsaw University, 2007.

⁴⁵ *The EU Through the Eyes of Asia. Media...*, op.cit.: R. Fisher, *Kultura jako niezbędny komponent relacji zewnętrznych Unii Europejskiej*, in: *Szkice i eseje na dwudziestolecie Międzynarodowego Centrum Kultury*, MCK, Kraków 2011, p. 425.

Culture project since 1985 and encouraging Japanese artists to participate in cultural exchanges since 1993. The EU-Japan Fest works as a counterpart of the European Union in Japan and supports long-term cultural projects.

Another problem is the language barrier; something that may present an obstacle for smooth communication. Education plays a key role in solving this problem, and since the young generation is responsible for the future of cultural relationships, young people should be the target for cultural programmes and education. The EU Delegation in Japan has organised cultural programmes in the field of education. As the *Preparatory Action* report suggested, that cooperation between the EU Member States and Japan would be fruitful and the European Capital of Culture has the potential to promote those activities. According to *In-depth Analysis*’ “*The Increasing Role of the EU’s Culture, Education and Science Diplomacy in Asia*”,⁴⁶ Japan is still less active in cultural diplomacy with the EU in comparison to the EU-Japan educational exchange and scientific relations. Japan is also less active in the cultural area in comparison to China, South Korea, and India.

Conclusions

Japan and the EU are developing their cultural relations. Although they present a different approach to cultural policies and cultural diplomacy, they have both expressed their will to work more closely. It is important to emphasise various limitations of praxis of cultural diplomacy in both cases: weakness of competences of the EU Delegations operating in third countries, as well as a lack of pro-European cultural strategies launched by the Japanese government. Japan had not signed the UNESCO Convention of 2005,⁴⁷ which was mandatory for the EU Member States. Japan is said to “have never expressed a specific interest in dialogue in this field”.⁴⁸ When it comes to the internal presence of Europe in Japan, it is much more evident in cases of the EU Members States and EUNIC co-operation, as well as “EU-Japan Fest” with the ECOC program than in the case of an EU Delegation. Some improvement in this area of activities has been visible during the last decade, especially when the Delegation demonstrated its cultural interests. It proves the truth of the first research hypothesis of this article which states that despite that the EU

⁴⁶ L. Vandewalle, op.cit.

⁴⁷ The UNESCO Convention on the protection and promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, 22nd October 2005.

⁴⁸ L. Vandewalle, op.cit., p. 17.

having tried to develop cultural relations within Japan, the embassies of the EU Member States are far more active in cultural programs than the EU Delegation. Nevertheless, there are prospects that the EU Delegation will play an increasing role in promoting European culture in Japan as a whole, while the Member States' position in this area will be decreasing. The ECOC programme plays a major role in this process, as do European film Festivals, and educational events. The EUNIC networks also serve as a strong instrument which has the power to help in planning European promotion campaigns in Asia by preparing joint cultural projects, which demonstrate their synergy of actions, artistic solidarity, and organisational partnerships, despite significant difference in national cultural policies.

Due to the fragmentation of the European cultural message – which is caused by the excessive power of the EU Member States – the Japanese audience's chances of getting to know more of the pan-European cultural narratives are minuscule. The European cultural policy in the field of external relations is probably still an enigmatic phenomenon for cultural spectators in a third country, which was stated in the second research hypothesis (the reception of the EU as a historic and cultural project is rather general in Japan). The EU-Japan cultural exchange projects have room for further improvement. Japan is searching to transmit novelty and a more universal message to the world, while the EU has become more open to intercontinental dialogue. Both sides are seeking for a progressive model of cultural diplomacy.

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