

## THE PECULIARITIES OF THE CULTURAL DIPLOMACY ACTIVITY OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA IN THE CONTEXT OF REALIZATION OF EUROPEAN PATH

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### **Abstract:**

*This article analyzes the peculiarities of the cultural diplomacy activity of the Republic of Moldova in the context of the realization of the European path. The authors investigate cultural diplomacy as a distinct sphere within the foreign policy of states, with specialized bodies and autonomous means. They set the strategic objectives of cultural diplomacy, distinguishing the tasks of cultural diplomacy. It analyzes the peculiarities of the activity of cultural diplomacy of the European Union and of the Republic of Moldova, as well as the general objectives and directions for developing the cultural policy of the Republic of Moldova. The main instruments of cooperation in the European area are bilateral and multilateral agreements and cultural collaboration programs with different countries. The practices of Moldovan cultural diplomacy in the European space are based on the fundamental objective, that of European integration, which has become the major force of political and social cohesion. The image and interests of the Republic of Moldova must be realized through proper cultural diplomacy and appropriate measures.*

**Key words:** *culture, diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, cultural cooperation, state image, foreign policy, European Union, Republic of Moldova*

Currently, relations between countries are established through a specific form of collaboration and realization of the foreign policy of the state, namely through diplomacy. As a special means of interstate cooperation, diplomacy has developed towards the end of the XX century, has acquired various connotations, depending on the interests they have to accomplish. One of its forms is cultural diplomacy, which is an essential dimension in approaches of interstate relations that address various issues: political, economic, cultural etc. This instrument of diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, can change the perception of foreigners about a particular country by presenting as much as possible national values. Cultural diplomacy can promote the culture of a country through the actions of individuals or groups.

*Cultural diplomacy* can be defined as a distinct sphere within the foreign policy of states, with specialized bodies and autonomous means, which function is to promote cultural influence on the international stage by disseminating, propagating and institutionalizing their cultural norms abroad. Through this, a government is communicated with the public from abroad in order to influence them positively and to promote a favorable image of the state abroad.

Over time, the concept of cultural diplomacy has seen a number of nuances that have better defined its sphere of comprehension. In essence, cultural diplomacy means the expansion by specific means of ideas, information, arts and other aspects of a culture to other nations in order to develop mutual understanding. While the culture of a nation is the totality of its achievements, the expression of its identity and its own way of thinking and acting, cultural diplomacy is the method by which they are presented to other nations.

Starting from the identified priorities we can set the strategic objectives of cultural diplomacy, which include: developing bilateral and multilateral relations with other countries through culture; promoting the cultural values of the country; building and consolidating the image of a state abroad; supporting language learning through specialized programs and institutions; supporting cultural centers/institutes abroad; facilitating the mobility of artists and works of art; participation in cultural programs and projects[19].

Thus, cultural diplomacy is a common and necessary form in the day-to-day work of a state. The premise of emergence and the conditions of development were largely due to the attempts of states to increase their influence in different regions. In an increasingly globalized, interdependent world, the proliferation of mass-communication technology ensures that cultural diplomacy is essential to promoting peace and stability throughout the world. Cultural diplomacy promotes and applies at all levels the ability to influence global public opinion at the level of people, communities, cultures and nations, which has been able to accelerate the realization of principles to promote it: respect and recognition of cultural diversity and universal heritage; intercultural dialogue at global level; justice, equality and interdependence; the defense of international human rights; universal peace and stability.

*M. Cummings* describes cultural diplomacy as the exchange of ideas, information, system values, traditions, beliefs, and other aspects of their own culture and civilization, in order to facilitate mutual understanding and knowledge [20]. In a wider sense, anyone who facilitates knowledge in a foreign environment of another culture practices cultural diplomacy.

Information development has helped to create a favorable framework for the development of cultural diplomacy, because governments have made use of new foreign policy instruments to launch its outward cultural policy through available technological means. Thus, many countries have created a diplomatic strategy in line with new international realities, optimizing the effects of cultural influence. In this context, cultural diplomacy gains a status of an autonomous institution within the state, with its own functioning mechanisms. Typically, such an institution is subject to a specialized agency that determines the objectives and priorities of cultural diplomacy, and sets out actions to be taken in practice. A practical result of the realization of cultural diplomacy initiatives is the creation by the state of cultural centers abroad which aim is to communicate to the foreign public about the directions and particularities of its state.

At this time, the great powers use the culture and tools of cultural diplomacy to strengthen their international influence and national identities, to maintain state sovereignty and integrity, as political and economic instruments become insufficient for this. Cultural diplomacy deals with all directions of the foreign policy of the state and contributes to the initiation and maintenance of cooperation in all fields among the nations and at the same time becoming the most effective means of promoting an attractive image of the state abroad [18]. Even though this form of diplomacy, based on international cultural exchanges, is still at its initial stage, it is already perceived as an innovative instrument of international politics, bearing stability and independence, contributing to the consolidation of a multipolar world.

The coordinate system established at the moment in the world in terms of international cultural activity allows to distinguish *the tasks of cultural diplomacy*: familiarizing the foreign public with the culture of their own state; the use of cultural exchanges and other cultural projects to valorize on the prestige and image of the state; creating favorable conditions for improving collaboration in related

areas, such as the economy and politics; familiarizing the national public with the achievements of other states in the field of culture; contributing to scientific exchanges; cooperation in the field of sport and tourism; strengthening the position and role of the language of the state abroad; providing cultural services to its fellow citizens abroad.

Despite the national specificity of the culture and cultural diplomacy of each state, the tasks in front of it are, in principle, established according to the above-mentioned list, although their realization takes place by different techniques and methods and, of course, depending on the means and the resources that each state holds. It is clear that cultural communication and cultural exchanges are values in themselves. They enrich national cultures, contribute to improving the intelligence and morality of mankind. However, state power often sees culture as a means of improving the image and creating favorable conditions for influencing the public opinion of foreign states, forming and introducing of some visions and beliefs.

As far as the cultural diplomacy of the *European Union* is concerned, we note that *the resolution adopted by the European Parliament on 12 May 2011* mentioned that the EU must make greater use of cultural aspects in its diplomatic efforts to promote human rights, democracy and development of third countries. The subject of a separate resolution, but of the same family "on the cultural dimension of EU policy", drew the attention of the EU to give more support to cultural creators. Moreover, members of the European Parliament support the establishment of a cultural diplomacy in the context of the organization of the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the appointment in each of the EU's external representations of a person responsible for coordinating cultural relations and interactions between the EU and third countries and promoting European culture [7, p.31].

The resolution adopted reiterates the EU's acknowledged and recognized official views on *policy strategies through culture* that specify that culture can and should facilitate development, inclusion, innovation, democracy, human rights, education, conflict prevention and reconciliation, mutual understanding, tolerance and creativity. Europe is characterized by cultural diversity in linguistic, literature, theater, cinematography, broadcasting and television, dance, art, architecture, etc. [14]. The EU is developing support programs that address specific cultural areas, encouraging them to take advantage of the opportunities offered by information technologies. In this context, the EU creates a dynamic environment for these areas, supporting them from the point of view of the administrative aspect and facilitating their access to finance. The EU also supports various research projects, encouraging cooperation with partners inside and outside the Union. Thus, the cultural component is present in many areas of EU action, such as education, science research, information and communication technologies, social policy and regional development.

With the Maastricht Treaty (1993), the EU has begun to engage not only economic actions but also cultural ones, aimed to protect, spread and develop culture in Europe. However, the EU places a special emphasis on fostering cultural collaboration between member states in order to facilitate the development of EU countries' cultures, to highlight their common cultural heritage, also ensuring that their national diversity is respected. To this end, the EU has created tools to support cultural activities, such as the program "*Culture*" or the initiative "*European Capital of Culture*". The program covered various cultural activities, with the following aims: to promote actions of awareness and preservation of cultural products of European importance; to support the mobility of people in the cultural sector; to facilitate the circulation of cultural and artistic products at EU level; to stimulate intercultural dialogue, etc. [2].

Thus, culture and cultural activities are used to develop the process of democratization, to promote education, human rights and freedom of expression. The EU has exchanges between students, teachers, journalists, artists and partnerships with third countries. Namely, the diversity of cultures makes Europe attractive. Diversity is an image in itself.

Analyzing the peculiarities of the cultural diplomacy activity of the Republic of Moldova, we must start with the fact that in the context of the processes carried out in order to obtain the independence

of our state, the impact of the cultural phenomenon was played in the context of the formation of the country's political strategies. The increased attention to culture and cultural policy at that time is explained by the special attitude of the population towards the symbols of the state and the national identity: language, Latin script, flag, cultural values, national heritage, traditions etc. The struggle for the revival of national identity, culture and national cultural values constituted the pillar of the statehood of the Republic of Moldova. The culture, statehood and cultural identity of our country constituted the essence of the issue of its development as an independent state, because the Republic of Moldova as a state, territory and political entity had a long history of foreign domination. At this stage of affirmation of state sovereignty and integrity, state governance policies, the economy, and cultural policy, respectively, went through the transition period. The collapse of the old system has led to a substantial decrease in the incomes of the population, decreasing allocations budget field and, respectively, in the field of culture.

Under created conditions and based on the acute deficiency of financial sources for the development of the cultural sector, the need for a new approach towards cultural policy was created. The Decree of the President of the Republic of Moldova No. 203 of September 21, 1992, "*On the unprejudiced measures regarding the development of culture*", which emerged after the settling of the armed conflict on the Dniester, reflects the serious situation created in the field. This decree has basically put the foundation of public policies in the field of culture.

Moldova has ratified important international cultural treaties and conventions. The Republic of Moldova joined UNESCO in 1993 and signed the European Cultural Convention in 1994. It is also a full member of the Agency of Francophone. At the same time, it is noted that even if the Republic of Moldova joined a number of international organizations, whose activities included also activities in the cultural sector, a well-defined cultural policy and a strategic document containing cultural diplomacy, has not been elaborated. During this period various public policy documents were developed, very diverse, both according to the way in which the problems were addressed, and by a broad dispersion in the formulation of priorities.

The current degree of vulnerability of the cultural process has been caused by such negative factors as the lack of consistency of government in the protection of national patrimony, the lack of incentive measures for innovation and the modernization of cultural infrastructure, the negligent attitude towards the human factor, including the notorious personalities in the field of culture. The current cultural policy of the Republic of Moldova is a rather redoubtable, defensive one, with the means and the way they have tried to self-preserve their cultural values, in crisis. It is a policy that corresponds to the controversial, dramatic reality of the transition period. The identity crisis, common to all post-communist countries, is a key phenomenon in the relation of culture with power in the Republic of Moldova and, consequently, in the difficult process of promoting a cultural policy appropriate to the period it goes through [13, p.502].

The aim of *Moldova's Culture Development Strategy 2013-2020* is to develop the leaders' lines for the evolution of the sustainable cultural process in the Republic of Moldova, meant to contribute to the social-economic development of the country. In the vision of the strategy until December 2020, the Republic of Moldova will have a consolidated, independent and creative cultural sector, a protected cultural heritage and integrated into national and regional public policies, including in the sustainable development activities: educational, social, economic, tourist and the environmental. In the following we list the *general objectives and directions of development of the cultural policy of the Republic of Moldova*, set in the Strategy: safeguarding the national cultural heritage; ensuring the real and virtual circulation of the cultural product; increasing the economic weight of the cultural sector and creative industries; increasing the contribution of culture to the development of social cohesion [16].

The cultural diplomacy of the Republic of Moldova is closely correlated with the aspects of traditional diplomacy, which are in tandem with national interests. So, the external image of the state

is the main element that determines the degree of celebrity on a world scale, facilitating relations with world actors. It was only after the declaration of independence that the external image was regarded as an international recognition plate. In this context, it has been found that creating and defining an image is a difficult process that must combine the actions of both governmental institutions and those not directly involved in this process, for example the diaspora. The geopolitical visibility of the Republic of Moldova is also an important factor in the process of creating the external image.

Of course, from the theoretical and conceptual perspective, the Republic of Moldova has started from the examples and experience of other states, but our state does not have an individual model of diplomacy and cultural policy. All cultural activities have been classified, sometimes quite confusing, in local, national and international activities. However, *the major objectives of national cultural policy* are to protect and preserve the cultural heritage, to support the system of institutions that provide the framework for the development of spiritual life.

In the absence of concrete programs, well-grounded and in line with realities, the promotion of state policy in the field of culture does not have the expected effectiveness. It imposes a system of measures, taking into account the importance of projects and the available material resources, deadlines and responsibilities.

Over the past few years, international cultural collaboration has focused *on three main directions*: bilateral collaboration, multilateral collaboration and promotion of the country's image. The basic institution that implements all the cultural diplomacy activities of the Republic of Moldova is Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration (MFAEI) which manages a series of actions that contribute to the development of cultural relations and contacts with foreigners and is responsible for affirming the external image of the state.

Diaspora is an important way in carrying out the cultural diplomacy activities of the state [12, p.192]. At present, a large number of working population in the Republic of Moldova is found in the big European countries. It is an ethnic group outside its borders that is influenced and interacts with both the country of origin and the destination country. Diaspora contributes to the development and maintenance of relations with the social, cultural community between the two states. From the European space, Italy is the state with a significant destination for Moldovans, we also have migrants in countries like France, Greece, Israel, Turkey, Spain, Cyprus, Romania, Ukraine etc.

At the same time, public associations and NGOs play an important role in the achievement of cultural diplomacy objectives, often achieving a visible result in the accomplishment of foreign policy tasks and a positive impact in the formation of the state image. Thus, NGOs are designed to facilitate cultural, economic, social, educational links. A large number of NGOs which activate on the territory of the Republic of Moldova have the aim to create a social spirit, to develop civil society and to build a decent public. Due to these organizations, the main national holidays of the Republic of Moldova, such as: Limba noastră, Mărțișorul, Gustar, Wine Day, etc., have become known in many states of the world.

The native cultural system is not equipped with a well-defined strategy of cultural diplomacy, but is highlighted with a small number of successes as a result of international cultural events. However, among the basic cultural activities of the Republic of Moldova, there are successful activities that attract the foreign public. Thus, the main priorities in the field during the last years were the following activities: the active involvement of Moldova in the projects initiated by the Council of Europe, the European Union and UNESCO, the promotion of the cultural image of the country through the participation of artistic groups in cultural events abroad; promoting tourism.

The list of those actions includes the "*Mărțișor*" *Festival*, which is the basis of the most interesting and important legends and beautiful holidays in the state. Thus, every year a specific program is launched for this festival that is celebrated throughout the republic as well as in some regions abroad. Also, the national culture is characterized by the international fame of the culture people such as

Maria Biesu, Eugen Doga, Grigore Vieru, etc., who have had an essential contribution to the development of the system. Another essential element in promoting the national culture is the cinematography of the Republic of Moldova and *the "Cronograph" Festival*, organized annually since 2001, representing the only documentary film festival of international rank in the country and which managed to include our state in a multinational cinema group.

Another festival, launched for the first time in 2009, which contributes to promoting the external image of the state in the world, carry the generic name of "*Gustar*". This festival combines history and modernity, tradition and globalization and truly brings a major success to each annual edition. The festival takes place annually at the end of August in the historical-cultural complex Orheiul Vechi, which makes it unique, becoming a national cultural and musical event that has managed to bring a great performance and accumulate a large external audience.

Sport and sports activities also contribute to the development of national cultural potential. Since 1994, native athletes do not miss a chance to participate in the Olympic Games either in the summer or in the winter. Regarding Eurovision Song Contest, we should mention that for the first time the Republic of Moldova started in 2005, being represented by the Zdob si Zdub band, which managed to rank the 6th in the final of the contest. We also mention the results of the SunStroke Project group in May 2017, which have ranked our state in this competition in 3rd place. In this context, Eurovision is an essential way of promoting the image of the country and extending the external public.

Analyzing national cultural policy, the promotion of the state through tourism is an operational objective. In 2013, the Republic of Moldova was declared by the Lonely Planet Travel Site as the most unexplored tourist destination in Europe, being a country virtually unknown to foreign tourists. And in 2015, Moldova jumped 28 positions in adventure tourism development rankings accomplished by Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) [4]. Our country has been declared the world's most advanced destination, especially in the category of hospitality and safety.

Elaboration of state strategies and policies in the field of tourism have as purpose the development of domestic tourism and promoting the state as an external tourist destination, as well as ensuring the provision of international tourism and hotel services standards. The basis of the national tourist activity is the vineyard/wine, rural, religious branches and less social, ecological, sport and gastronomic aspect. In 2014, by decision no. 338, the Government of the Republic of Moldova has developed the tourism development strategy "*Tourism 2020*" and the *Action Plan for its implementation* in 2014-2016. The development of the state branding focused on the elaboration of the institutional framework, than the creation of the message, the application of the logotypes on the best national products and establishing the most effective mechanisms for their active promotion. As a result take place organization of cultural and sport events, attraction of investments and promotion of exports. In this context, the Republic of Moldova launched on November 20, 2014, a new tourist brand, focusing on the "*Tree of Life*" symbol, which represents the traditional values of our state, such as hospitality and sincerity and the slogan "*Discover the routes of life*" which join the older "*Experience Europe like never before*" [6]. Tourism product promotion programs include a set of strategic initiatives for the tourism sector, including: a tourism marketing plan, the positioning of the national tourist offer and other factors.

The tourism industry is one of the fastest in the world. In 2013, tourism generated total global exports worth US \$ 1.4 trillion. As a service sector, tourism contributes to the country's economic development through interconnected industries such as public catering, transport, production, and the development of rural communities, is also a factor of image of the country. New dimensions of promotion of the Republic of Moldova as a tourist destination were accomplished by launching in September 2012 the largest tourist information platform - *MoldovaHoliday.travel*, which drew 300 thousand visitors and the number of visits exceeded 1 million. Another innovation, which responds to the trends and contributes to the accessibility of tourist attractions for visitors, is the *MoldovaHoliday* mobile application, launched in the spring of 2015. For foreign tourists coming to

visit Moldova on its own, the application presents the top 50 tourist attractions and an interactive map available offline.

In 2017, the advertising spot “*Be Our Guest*” was launched in order to promote the Republic of Moldova as a tourist destination. At the same time, the campaign also aims to encourage all Moldovan citizens, both home and abroad, to promote their country of origin, to invite foreign friends to visit Moldova, being their hosts and guides, thus becoming true ambassadors of natal place. The “Be Our Guest” campaign is part of the Moldova Promotion Program under the auspices of the country tourism brand - The Tree of Life.

As a result, the Republic of Moldova has been included in the Top 10 of beautiful countries that attract the least number of tourists, made by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). Our state also was placed 8th in the “Best in Europe. Our hotlist of European destinations you need to see in 2017” ranking, where is described as “the land of the secret cellars and monasteries crowned on the cliffs, situated on the border of Europe, a little explored land, lost in time and always surprising” [8].

Particular importance for the cultural diplomacy of the Republic of Moldova is the international exhibitions to which it belongs. The most impressive country stand, internationally noted, is the one presented in Germany on 9-11 March 2018, by 9 travel agencies and 5 national agencies. The concept of the country stand meant the promotion of the projects “Moldova 2018 - World Wide Tourism Capital” and “Hospitality Year”. During the five days, the delegation of our country promoted Moldovan hospitality, especially through the “Adopt a tourist” action, which offered tourists the opportunity to live authentic experiences and to discover the culture and traditions of our state.

Wine and its promotion has become an important component of state promotion. The “*Wine of Moldova*” program, launched in 2013, could contribute to increasing wine exports to 200 million liters by 2020 and doubling the volume of bottled wine on the local market. The brand was officially launched during the visit of US Secretary of State John Kerry to Chisinau. The logo of the Moldovan wines is a stork that surrounds with its wings a bunch of vines representing the outline of the Moldovan map. The country branding slogan is “*A living legend*”.

The results of the exhibitions, attended by the Republic of Moldova, have demonstrated the impact of the new dimensions of state promotion. In 2017, according to the National Bank, the share of EU countries in the total export of Moldovan alcoholic beverages increased from 33.1% in 2016 to 33.6% in 2017 [17]. The results of the promotion of the country wine brand made, in 2017, Moldovan wines to win over 300 medals and about 60% of them to be gold and their export to be extended to 40 other countries. Two of the most complex promotional activities of our wines have taken place in the largest supermarket network in Poland, one of our strategic target markets.

In the last few years, the brands manufactured in Moldova began to be very firm on the market. The textiles and clothing sector is an essential for the economic and social development of the state, considering that exports are being generated, jobs are being created and the perceptions of the quality of products made in Moldova abroad are changed. At the beginning of 2018, 11 native producers, reuniting under the country's unique light industry brand “*From Heart*”, came with impressive presentations on foreign markets. France, Italy, China and Ukraine are the countries where clothing, footwear and accessories made in Moldova have been remarkable at the January exhibitions. At the “Bijorhca International Jewelry Exhibition” in Paris, Europe's largest exhibition of accessories, participated three handmade jewelry brands “From Heart”: “Ana Popova”, “Marinelle” and “Rodica Braga”. The last one was ranked among the top 25 trends of 2018, out of a total of 214 brands throughout the world. The participation of national brands in international events confirms the high level of competitiveness of Moldovan products and demonstrates that they have a great export potential, with a rapid growth in the light industry of the Republic of Moldova.

At the same time, the problems of protecting the cultural heritage, completing collections of museums and libraries, training of artistic cadres and specialists in the field, improvement of the

management of cultural institutions and their technical and material endowments, etc., remain very serious.

Further we have to mention that the intent to integrate into European structures is present, the Republic of Moldova will continue to extend its bilateral cultural cooperation agreements, to participate in multilateral programs and to enhance its cultural exchanges with various European countries. An important objective is to develop relations with UNESCO and the Council of Europe, in particular regarding the preservation and protection of cultural heritage and the promotion of cultural diversity and minority culture.

Relations between the Republic of Moldova and the EU started with the signing of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) on 28 November 1994. The PCA institutionalized the relations between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union and raised them at a partnership level. The nominated agreement granted the Republic of Moldova the status of a direct partner of the European Union and provided the necessary normative basis for engaging in an open multi-level dialogue, including printing the political dimension of the cooperation processes and identifying new means for the continuity of dialogue. The document that has a practical value is the European Union - Republic of Moldova Action Plan signed on 22 February 2005 and contains a set of recommendations that Moldova has undertaken to implement in its path towards European integration [8, p. 23]. The biggest benefit for the Republic of Moldova was the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). Launched by the European Parliament, this project aims to deepen cooperation with neighboring countries and avoid the emergence of a dividing line in the European integration process.

The launch of the Eastern Partnership in Prague in May 2009 corresponded with the political changes in the Republic of Moldova, the coming of the Alliance for European Integration to the leadership of the country, which aimed to integrate the Republic of Moldova into the EU as a priority objective. Through this initiative, the EU has proposed to support reforms in partner countries aimed at strengthening democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and an open market economy. The Eastern Partnership also provides association agreements with each of the states.

The advantageous context allowed the deepening of Moldova's relations with the EU in 2011, by formalizing a new partnership, based on three pillars: political association, economic integration and free movement of persons. Among these successes are the negotiation of the political part of the Association Agreement, the opening of negotiations on the Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the EU, the launch of the operational phase of the visa liberalization dialogue and the negotiation of the Common Aviation Area Agreement. Chisinau also promoted an active dialogue with the EU Member States.

On November 29, 2013, at the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius, the Republic of Moldova initialed the Association Agreement with the European Union. This agreement symbolizes the opening of the Republic of Moldova and the EU to cooperation, and presumes the formal assumption of commitments towards the community forum and the establishment of a general framework of relations between the parties. Later, on 13 November 2014, the European Parliament ratified the EU-Moldova Association Agreement, which includes an in-depth and comprehensive trade agreement. The agreement is the foundation for a stronger political association and economic integration between the EU and the Republic of Moldova, offering free market access to each other.

The main instruments of cooperation in the European area are bilateral and multilateral agreements and cultural collaboration programs with different countries. Regarding the practices of Moldovan cultural diplomacy in the European space, we mention that the European integration remains not only a fundamental desideratum of Moldova's domestic and foreign policy, but also the major force of political and social cohesion [11]. The field of culture both in the internal and external context of the European space is mentioned in the Governance Program (2016-2018), but it is not



seen as a development priority [10]. Thus, the following objectives are presented in the document, with a cultural impact, among which:

- Developing the legal framework for the protection of national cultural heritage, promoting artistic creativity and cultural industries.
- Founding and development of the national system of documentation, evidence, preservation and protection of the national cultural heritage.
- Valorization and integration of cultural heritage and creative potential into national and local community development projects.
- Promoting the national cultural heritage and integrating it into the system of European and world values.
- Training of the institutional capacities necessary for the implementation of the Culture Development Strategy “Culture 2020” (Institute of Monuments, Moldovan Cultural Institute, Culture Training Center).
- Supporting the Program “Creative Europe” to promote cultural projects of public associations and cultural institutions.
- Strengthening cultural relations with other countries, including the diaspora.

In the context of Moldova's bilateral cultural cooperation with the countries of the European Union, special attention is offered to the cultural relations established with Romania, France, Italy, etc. It should be mentioned that some of the most important aspects of cultural policies are presented through the cultural cooperation of the Republic of Moldova with Romania, marked by literary, theatrical, musical activities, artistic, architectural, cinematographic, radio/television, photographic, circus, folk, archives and libraries, book publishing, scientific research, cultural tourism. The Romanian Cultural Institute, the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs of Romania and the Department for Relations with the Diaspora of Romania are also very active in supporting cultural projects in the Republic of Moldova (partnership, research projects, book publishing and other cultural publications, etc.). It is notable that on September 29, 2010, the Romanian Cultural Institute “Mihai Eminescu” was inaugurated, aiming to build new spiritual bridges between the two sides of the Prut, but also to find and consolidate the community of language, culture and traditions.

A relevant example of cultural diplomacy are the cooperation protocols between the Ministries of Education of Moldova and Romania, where more than 1,000 Moldovans study annually in various institutions in Romania, including art universities and cultural research centers. The implementation of these programs is carried out and financed by the Government of Romania. On August 26, 2010, the collaboration protocol was signed between the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Moldova and the Ministry of Education of Romania on the mutual recognition of diplomas and certificates of study from the Republic of Moldova and Romania and thus from the European Union. The document provides the unification in the near future of curricula of educational institutions in both countries and the mutual recognition of scientific titles.

Mentioning to the Moldovan-French cultural relations, we can notice that at their base is the creation of the French Alliance of Moldova (1992), the Treaty of friendship, understanding and cooperation (January 29, 1993), the Agreement on cultural, scientific and technical cooperation (November 24, 1994), the Convention on the creation of bilingual classes in the Republic of Moldova (September 4, 1998), the Framework Program for cooperation and cultural activities of the Republic of Moldova (July 2000), creation of the International Francophone Organization (January 2006), International Francophone Day (March 20).

Currently, the French Alliance supports seven resource and information centers about contemporary France in the Bălți, Bobeica, Cahul, Tiraspol, Nisporeni, Calarasi and Ungheni localities. As a result of the bilateral collaboration, some Moldovan cultural institutions introduce the experience of French cities, ensuring the participation of the guests at “Night of Museums”, where young people are encouraged to visit the museums free of charge. On a Saturday in May, some

museums in Chisinau, like the other over 2000 museums in 39 countries, open their doors for a wide night, starting with sunset and up to a morning time, becoming scenes for shows, theaters, reading and song. The link between all the Alliances in the world is the International Journal of the French Alliance Foundation "Le Fil d'Alliances", which in October 2012 consecrated the front page of its newsletter to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the French Alliance in Moldova, as well as the inauguration of the new Médias Tech Space. Better mutual knowledge of Moldovan and French citizens has become possible thanks to TV5 Monde and "Radio France International" [15].

The Republic of Moldova participates in several European cultural programs. *Creative Europe* is the most important funding program of the European Union dedicated to support creative, cultural and audiovisual fields, being the first cultural program signed under the bilateral agreement between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union [5]. The program has a total budget of € 1.46 billion for the 2014-2020 and is managed by the European Commission through the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, which receives and evaluates applications. Creative Europe has three sub-programs: Media, Culture and a cross-sectorial component dedicated to securing bank lending for cultural and creative sectors and cooperation in the field of cultural policies.

Promoting the image of the country is the backbone of cultural diplomacy. The optimization of the cultural diplomacy of the Republic of Moldova can be achieved by developing effective strategies and policies to promote the image of the state. It is therefore necessary to analyze the strengths of the Republic of Moldova and the prospects for modernizing the cultural diplomacy of the Republic of Moldova in the European space, in order to promote the national interests and its positive image abroad. At the present stage, one of the strengths is the neighborhood with the European Union. The European Union represents a European community and economic construction.

The geopolitical changes have a particular importance for the Republic of Moldova, because appear new opportunities for the use of cultural diplomacy tools. Moldova became the neighbor of the European Union, which was interested in having stable and democratic neighbors, in order to secure the eastern border. For this, various projects have been launched, through which the process of exporting democracy, implementing reforms, modernizing and Europeanizing them has begun. At the same time, the EU has shown interest in resolving the conflict on the territory of our country. The Republic of Moldova has begun to benefit from the opportunities offered by EU proximity since 2005, when the European Union observation mission at the Transnistrian border was introduced and the EU obtained observer status within the Transnistrian conflict negotiation format.

The threats to the social security of the Republic of Moldova are: the high degree of population migration, the reduction and aging of the population, the high poverty rate, large differences between villages and towns, low wages, politicization of state institutions, and others. These factors, coupled with the lack of budget allocations to promote the image, the absence of an institution or agencies responsible for promoting the country's image, a clear promotion strategy and the unstable economic situation, energy dependence are significant obstacles and damages in promoting the image of the Republic of Moldova.

To these weaknesses we can add the biggest problem faced at the present stage of the Republic of Moldova, that of corruption, which is a considerable impediment in the development of the Republic of Moldova as a democratic state, with consequences on the domestic and foreign policy.

Promoting the culture of the country is the main element of cultural diplomacy. The optimization of the cultural diplomacy of the Republic of Moldova can be achieved by developing strategies, techniques and policies taken from large states with a rich experience in the field, such as the EU. The Republic of Moldova is the state that certainly has a rich cultural heritage and a varied folklore which can be an important element in promoting the external image of the state but which, however, is seen as a lack of interest and care from the civil society, on the protection of national heritage objectives.

The Republic of Moldova is trying to turn the embassies into the most important state actors of cultural diplomacy not only in the relations with the diaspora but also with the citizens of other states. In this context, the Moldovan embassies have undertaken several contacts with foreigners in order to provide channels of communication and to respond to the diaspora's concerns and, implicitly, to organize cultural diplomacy activities, especially to support the citizens abroad. One of these basic activities is the project "Embassy comes closer to you" [3], which aims to facilitate access to consular services.

The political transformations in our country have led the authorities to pay more attention to its citizens abroad, being aware that they represent a considerable political and economic force. The government authorities have proposed to attract Moldovan communities from abroad as equal partners and to initiate a complex dialogue between the embassies and its associations. Special attention is paid to the second generation of Moldovan migrants. To achieve this, the Bureau for relations with diaspora organizes the program "Dor" [1]. Intended for representatives of the Moldovan community from abroad, this program aims to raise consciousness among young generation of migrants about their cultural identity to create emotional ties between the native country and representatives of the Moldovan diaspora. Diaspora can become a platform for promoting national interests, especially when it comes to European integration; a platform for promoting ideals, traditions and, of course, the image of the Republic of Moldova.

The strong points of the Republic of Moldova in the process of promoting the image of the state are: the neighborhood with the European Union and NATO, the favorable geographic location (Eastern Europe, neighborhood with the Romania, Ukraine and Russian Federation), the multiethnic society, cultural heritage and a rich folklore.

At present, the cultural diplomacy of the Republic of Moldova is quite a significant element of state policy. In the context of integration into the European Union, our state is challenged to join European cultural ideas and values, reflecting the fact that the EU sees culture as a driving force for reform, promoting tolerance and social cohesion.

Being a multinational state and wanting to be part of an international cultural community, the Republic of Moldova must be prepared to deliver its cultural values and be open to cooperation with the cultures of the member states. In order to continue political, economic, social, cultural integration in the European Union, our state must use the tools and mechanisms of cultural diplomacy, namely:

- Strengthening the cultural capacity of governmental and non-governmental authorities;
- Facilitating cultural exchange between the representatives of our country and the EU Member States;
- Ensuring the monitoring and coordination of cultural projects;
- Exchange of experience between cultural representatives from the Republic of Moldova and the EU.

Although it is quite difficult at present to talk about the achievement of the proposed objectives, it is obvious that our country is heading towards the consolidation of the Moldovan culture with the European one. At the same time, we recommend that the Republic of Moldova, as a sovereign and independent state, having its own culture, its own values and traditions, should not dissolve in European cultures, but should get a place alongside other European cultural codes.

Thus, investigating the given problem, we can formulate the following *conclusions*.

In the multicultural contemporary world, understanding and tolerance towards representatives of another culture are essential imperatives for maintaining peace and effective cooperation. The process of globalization has reached not only the economic or political domain but also the cultural one, so culture becomes, on the one hand, an effective instrument of state policy and, on the other hand, a means of influencing other nations. The culture of a people represents the phenomenon that belongs only to a certain human society and has been formed for centuries. Therefore, in order to

establish a more cohesive society, states use cultural instruments which goal is to promote and assimilate their own cultural codes in the international context.

Therefore the culture of a people is their business card that represents them in front of the whole world. Unlike material values that are ephemeral, cultural values are eternal. The cultural wealth of a nation is its most valuable asset. The culture of a country is thus constitutive of its symbolic identity, which it will attempt to defend and promote. The symbolic or cultural identity is given by the set of representations which a country offers about its own identity, whether for its inhabitants or for the foreign public. This collective identity, necessary for the social cohesion of a nation, is defended within the borders by the ministry of culture and, externally, by cultural diplomacy.

Cultural diplomacy is the area of diplomacy that aims to establish, develop and support relationships with other states through culture, art, education and science. Cultural diplomacy activity is a process of externally designing a state's cultural values system and promoting it at the level of bilateral and multilateral relations.

The tendency to use cultural diplomacy as an element of soft power becomes more and more popular, especially when it is impossible to use hard power. In addition, cultural diplomacy, with its elements such as cultural sections within embassies, cultural institutions, cultural events, etc., is a much cheaper means than conducting a military campaign or maintaining a military-industrial complex. Thus, in the contemporary world, cultural diplomacy represents a means of international cooperation.

As far as the Republic of Moldova is concerned, we find that at present the cultural diplomacy of our state is a rather significant instrument. In the context of integration within the European Union, the Republic of Moldova is in a position to join the European cultural ideas and values.

Desiring to be part of the European community, the Republic of Moldova must be ready to convey its cultural values, to manifest its traditions and dignities of national culture, and at the same time to be open to the influence and impact of the cultures of the EU Member States on its own culture.

The external image of a state is a most complicated mission. However, this can be done well through proper cultural diplomacy and appropriate measures in this concern. To promote the image and interests of the Republic of Moldova through cultural diplomacy it is necessary to: strengthen the national culture inside and outside the state; transmits national values abroad through different means of cultural diplomacy; supports and promotes international cultural cooperation; prevent the intrusion of the destructive elements of a foreign culture into the sphere of national culture.

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