

Implications of Media on European Union Cultural Diplomacy Towards China

A Case of Helan Online Platform at Radio Nederland

Wereldomroep (RNW) Media in The Netherlands

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**I dedicate this thesis to my partner Sander Coolen and my
parents-in-law, Christianne Coolen and Mart Coolen and I am
sincerely grateful for their support.**

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Abstract: The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the importance of the role of media platforms encountered in cultural diplomacy of the European Union. By looking closely into the case of Helan Online Platform at the *Radio Nederland Wereldomroep*, hereafter known as the RNW Media in the Netherlands, what this thesis aims to explore are the potential positive impacts brought by media in terms of European Union cultural policies and the necessity of the EU to apply media platforms to its cultural relations with other countries. The analyses touch upon the following questions: (1) What is the definition of cultural diplomacy and why is it an significant part in foreign policies? (2) How far have China and major European countries developed in cultural diplomacy during the past decade and how is the cultural relation between them? (3) In the context of information age, why and how does the EU need to incorporate social media into its strategy to improve its cultural diplomacy towards China? These and other sub-questions will be investigated on the basis of existing academic literatures and the archived information from RNW Media.

1. The existing literature of cultural diplomacy and its definition

Cultural diplomacy is a relatively little studied subject in the field of diplomacy. When we talk about cultural diplomacy, we generally refer to the cultural diplomacy as part of public diplomacy, but not so often as an independent tool in international relations. In the past few decades, however, more and more diplomats and researchers have noticed the impact of culture on foreign policies. By improving a country's image and increasing its attractiveness towards the rest of the world, cultural diplomacy reaches out to both government and non-government audiences. It revolves fundamentally around what is better known as the presentation of 'soft power'.

1.1. The existing literature on cultural diplomacy

As we can see, the effect of soft power in maintaining diplomatic relations is enormous and significant and there is also a massive amount of literature on the relevance of soft power. Joseph Nye, Jr is the first scholar who clearly coined the term 'soft power' and he strongly believes that positive norms and values work better than coercion. This can be consulted in his research pieces, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (1990), *The Paradox of America Power* (2002), *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (2004) and *The Future of Power* (2011). Another American diplomat, Cynthia Schneider argues in her article, *Culture Communicates: US Diplomacy that Works* (2004) that cultural diplomacy is also a prime example of soft power.¹ Besides Nye and Schneider, scholar Alan Chong asserts also in his book, *Foreign Policy in Global Information Space: Actualising Soft Power* (2002), that the strength of soft power in reality politics issues has always been underestimated.

After that Joseph Nye, Jr mentioned the term 'soft power' for the first time in the 1990's, the debates over cultural diplomacy as a contributing component of soft power have never been really settled. It is an essential aspect of soft power and the growing relevance of soft power in world politics, an increasing amount of research has since been done by scholars and specialists in the field of international relations. Some ideas and argumentations from some publications that are worth being noted will be mentioned in the following paragraphs. By looking carefully into these publications that go about cultural diplomacy as an independent diplomacy tool, where they agree or disagree with each other, what have been achieved and what is still lacking in terms of research can be shown. The most commonly debated themes in these publications can be roughly summed up into these categories as follows: (1) Should cultural diplomacy be deemed as a small part of public diplomacy or as an

¹ Cynthia P. Schneider, *Culture Communicates US Diplomacy that Works*, Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael' ISSN 1569-2989, No. 94, September, 2006, pp. 2.

² Helena K. Finn, *The Case for Cultural Diplomacy: Engaging Foreign Audiences*, published on Council on 7

independent diplomacy tool by itself? (2) How effectively can cultural diplomacy influence the outcome of foreign policies? (3) How much does the US diplomacy benefit from its cultural strategies? (4) What is the future position of cultural diplomacy in international relations like?

A research publication edited by Jan Melissen in 2003, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, gathers a series of research papers on public diplomacy with an emphasis on the role played by soft power in international relations, which indicates that light has been shed on the growing significance of culture in global politics. This is an important publication because it categorizes many systematic academic research papers on the subject of soft power and practices of public diplomacy from a more cultural perspective in countries, such as America, China and European countries. By reading these articles, it allows us to see clearly how the concept of cultural diplomacy has developed over time and how it has been put into practices of international relations. The same year, there is another article by Helena K. Finn, *The Case for Cultural Diplomacy: Engaging Foreign Audiences*, where the United States is discussed as the good example of incorporating cultural diplomacy as a vital part of its global strategy.² Finn points out in the article that nowadays policy makers are lacking a cultural perspective when they try to solve issues in international politics. This is not because culture per se is not so significant, yet quite the opposite. It is just that, as is mentioned previously, culture is more valued in principles than in practice, as its output acquires long-term effort to be seen. That's why many policy makers are inclined to apply hard power in an actual case of dispute can be more of a sufficient response to these conflicts and disputes.³

In 2005, the U.S. Department of State published a paper under the title *Cultural Diplomacy The Linchpin of Public Diplomacy*. In this paper, it is pointed out that

² Helena K. Finn, *The Case for Cultural Diplomacy: Engaging Foreign Audiences*, published on Council on Foreign Relations, Vol. 82, No. 6 (Nov. - Dec., 2003), pp. 15-20.

³ Helena K. Finn, *The Case for Cultural Diplomacy: Engaging Foreign Audiences*, published on Council on Foreign Relations, Vol. 82, No. 6 (Nov. - Dec., 2003), pp. 15-20.

cultural diplomacy is a core component of public diplomacy, one that ‘*can enhance national security in subtle, wide-ranging and sustainable ways*’.⁴ The potential of cultural diplomacy as a powerful tool of diplomacy has drawn a great attention from scholars and politicians.

In 2009, Mark Simon wrote a systematic paper that clearly separates cultural diplomacy from public diplomacy, where he explores the semantic confusion surrounding cultural diplomacy, sets out the core elements of it, examines the role of cultural diplomacy in presenting a national image, its connection to nation branding as well as its contribution to national domestic objectives, and discusses the prerequisites for realizing cultural diplomacy’s full potential.⁵ Apart from that, articles have been written on EU cultural diplomacy such as *European Integration without Europeanization: Assets and Limits of Economism as a Pragmatic Frame of European Politics* by Jos de Beus and Jeannette Mak in 2005, *Political communication in international settings, The case of the European Union* by Chiara Valentini in 2008 and *Representing Europe: The Emerging ‘Culture’ of EU Diplomacy* by Maureen Benson-Rea and Cris Shore in 2012. In these articles, a closer look has been conducted at the role of public relations in political communication during the development of the European Union and its impact as a whole entity on its policy to the rest of the world. A more cultural perspective in this regard has been applied. What is mentioned here as ‘cultural perspective’ means that cultural elements have been more often used in diplomacy.

Undoubtedly, in recent years, cultural diplomacy has received increasing scholarly attention as a new trend that stands out from the conventional diplomacy and has been researched on as a more independent diplomatic strategy rather than a component of

⁴ *The Linchpin of Public Diplomacy: Report of the Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy Cultural Diplomacy*, U.S. Department of State, September, 2005, pp. 1.

⁵ Simon Mark, *A Greater Role for Cultural Diplomacy*, DISCUSSION PAPERS IN DIPLOMACY, Netherlands Institute of International Relations ‘Clingendael’ ISSN 1569-2981, 2009, P. 1-7.

public diplomacy. When we look into these academic pieces on the subject of cultural diplomacy, however, it is not difficult to find out that most of the research on cultural diplomacy is US-centered and that cultural diplomacy has not yet been primarily brought out as a fully independent field of diplomacy. Besides, the research that is conducted both on a more EU-relevant perspective and on cultural diplomacy as a separate diplomatic tool is also far from sufficient. The current available literature on this subject is, to a large extent, draws on the impacts that EU cultural diplomacy has brought on the process of European integration in terms of boosting a common European identity, common economic interests and common political interests within the EU member states. In other words, the purposes of the research so far are in general inwards oriented, whereas little work has been done on EU cultural diplomacy in a broader global context.

Since the year 2008 when the Eurozone crisis broke out, the European Union has been undergoing an unprecedentedly difficult period as a result of economic recessions and a growing distrust in EU credibility within the member states. In times of crisis, strategic political, economical and cultural partnership with emerging powers is vital to further development for the EU. The leading EU member states have started realizing the essential role of cultural policies in world politics and how much a country can benefit in the longer term from its well-advertised soft power. In other words, the better a state presents itself to the world, the more chances it might have in the global system. Culture, in this case, is where the dynamics for development can be generated. In March 2016, a Cultural Diplomacy Platform was launched in Brussels to enhance the European Union's engagement with third countries and their citizens. The Platform is designed to advise EU institutions through cultural diplomacy activities to strengthen the communication between the EU and audiences and stakeholders in third countries.⁶ The Vice- President of European Commission and

⁶ Source can be found at the website of European Commission:
http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/fpi/announcements/news/20160401_1_en.htm .

High Representative for Foreign affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini made it clear in her speech that “*cultural diplomacy is an integral part of common foreign policy of the EU*”.⁷

Furthermore, emerging powers such as Turkey, India, China, Russia, Brazil have also become the interesting targets for new partnership the EU too seek closer cultural cooperation with. Over the past ten years, the EU and China have been cooperating closely on areas of education and culture and the cooperation mostly consists of regular policy dialogues at the governmental level and some other projects or events organized at the non-governmental level. In 2012 all the activities organized by the two parties have been integrated under the EU-China High Level People-to-People Dialogue, as the third pillar that compliments the High Level Economic and Trade Dialogue and the High Level Strategic Dialogue.⁸ These three pillars have then formed *The China-EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership*. The third pillar of the strategic partnership indicates that the EU has officially brought China onto its agenda for cultural policy and that cultural diplomacy has its own essential role in the relation between the two major global powers. It is worth noting that in the last two years, scholars in China have shown growing academic interest in how EU cultural diplomacy affects its foreign policy towards China and what kind of policy implications EU cultural diplomacy has brought on EU-China relations. There are two noteworthy articles available about this: *EU Cultural Diplomacy: Strategic Pursuits and Policy Implications towards EU-China Relations* and *The Third Pillar of the China-EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership: China-EU High-level Cultural and Educational Exchange and Dialogue Mechanism*. According to these articles, as a result of globalization, EU policy makers developed a greater awareness of cultural policies, since cultural policies are not only considered as significant for the

⁷ Source can be found at the website of European Commission:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/fpi/announcements/news/20160401_1_en.htm .

⁸ *EU-China High-Level People-to-People Dialogue – Detail*. Source can be found on website of European Commission: http://ec.europa.eu/education/international-cooperation/china_en.htm.

integration process within the European Union, but also are essential for projecting the values and ‘attractiveness’ of the Union as a whole towards the outside world. Therefore, the European agenda for culture has far-reaching implications on its position in the international system as a rising power. However, these two articles only clarify the EU cultural policy towards China from a relatively general and technical perspective, but they fail to specify the effectiveness of the People-to-People Dialogue in practice and what actual challenges EU cultural diplomatic strategies have to encounter.

1.2. A summary of the latest definition of cultural diplomacy

In definition, cultural diplomacy is not referred to the diplomacy we use to describe the conventional governmental relationships between countries, but much to the various modes of cultural exchange that are used in international politics, which can be defined as the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understandings (Milton Cummings, 2003), or, as self-interests strategies of foreign policy based upon a nation’s cultural interests (Myung-sub Kim, 2003).⁹ Cultural diplomacy is an interaction between culture and politics, where cultural activities and cultural exchanges help shape the future political agenda of the governments. This interaction is not based upon hard power, but upon ideas, values, tradition and identity, which can be deemed as the core of soft power. For example, Olympic Games provides countries with a prime opportunity of presenting their attractiveness to the world and adjusting itself to an international level. Under external and internal pressures, governments are encouraged to invest more in social infrastructure to solve some of the existing problems or at least to improve the overall conditions of the society.. The

⁹ Hwajung Kim, *Cultural Diplomacy as the Means of Soft Power in an Information Age*, December 2011, pp.2.

Source can be found:

http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/academy/index.php?cdr_academic-articles_soft-power.

effect of this major cultural activity does not only stay within the cities where the games are held. These host cities have erected a set of new social standards, such as new standards for social etiquette, new rules for the maintenance for social orders, new benchmark for urban pollution and so on. From these new standards, usually more advanced, the rest can learn and the lead of which can be followed. Unlike other types of diplomacy, cultural diplomacy is not restricted within the governmental agenda, but can also be practiced through private resources and by civil society. Apart from national cultural events, pandas have long been used by the Chinese government to forge a benign relation with other countries. In diplomatic terms, ‘panda’ is now a symbol of friendly ties between China and other countries.¹⁰

1.3. The research question

Based upon on the research that has been done, I have found some vacancy on the subject of EU-China cultural diplomacy, as I have mentioned earlier in previous paragraphs that EU-China cultural relations in view of media is not so often researched on. Therefore, in my following research paper I would like to fill in what is lacking in this regard by focusing on the third pillar of the EU-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership – the People-to-People Dialogue and elaborating further on the challenges the Dialogue are confronted with in practice and what could the implications on the EU and China be.

According to the EU-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, People-to-People Dialogue is one of the most significant components on the agenda. The EU cultural diplomacy is underpinned by people-to-people contact, which plays a crucial role in the promotion of the EU-China relationship. The EU-China People-to-People Dialogue is in essence about forging communication between people in the EU and

¹⁰ Falk Hartig, *The Latest Round of China's Panda Diplomacy: Winning Hearts in Belgium, Rising Soft Powers: China*, USC Center on Public Diplomacy, 2015., pp. 59-60.

China either through governmental resources or non-governmental resources. For this reason, in order to achieve the best outcomes from this agenda, high-level exchanges should go hand in hand with effective unofficial communication between societies that is generated by non-governmental resources. In that case, online media has created an excellent platform for this type of informal communication to happen regardless of time and location. In other words, the information age provides cultural exchange with a greater deal of possibilities as online media generates communication efficiently all over the globe, which can be deemed as a type of spontaneous cultural exchange directly made by peoples themselves. Therefore an effective cultural diplomacy is based upon not only a benign social or political environment but also a favorable online environment.

As we know, unfortunately, people in China have limited access to online information due to the Internet censorship imposed by the Chinese Central Government, which undermines a smooth online information exchange environment between the Chinese and the rest of the world. It does not only challenge very negatively the practice of cultural diplomacy of the EU in Mainland China, but also in the longer run creates a barrier that hinders further cooperation between the EU and China. China's censorship on media is indeed one of the formidable problems that confront foreign medias. In this paper, by consulting the existing relevant literatures, publications or data, I am going to explain to what extent censorship in mainland China emasculates the effectiveness of the People-to-People Dialogue within the framework of EU-China Strategic Partnership and what spillover effects it might bring to a closer political and economic partnership between the EU and China. Is this also mentioned earlier among your research questions? By further looking into the case of the Helanonline Platform funded by the Dutch Foreign Ministry, I am going to elaborate on the benefits of re-imported media platforms in the context of censorship.

2. Methodology

In this thesis, I will choose qualitative analysis as my research method, in the regard of which, a case study of Helan Online Platform will be introduced to further argue how significant and effective unofficial communication can be in the presentation of a state's image. Helan Online Platform is chosen mostly because it is a media platform towards China sponsored by the Dutch Foreign Ministry that works closely with culture in order to achieve policy goals. Despite of the rigorous censorship in China, has successfully applied cultural diplomacy and e-diplomacy to promote the Netherlands in full perspective to the local audiences, which is so far quite impressive among peers and has caught up with the rising awareness among politicians of the significance of cultural elements in foreign relations. The operation of the Helan Online Platform gives good insights into two critical aspects that are relevant to the core of my argument: how does cultural diplomacy work via media in foreign policy and what are the foreseeable positive impacts of it? Furthermore, the sudden interruption of the Platform has also revealed other problems between member states' and EU's cultural agenda. These insights are highly useful for the EU because the combination of media and cultural diplomacy offers a communicative space for foreign relations, from which a new perspective is provided for politicians to review the integration process in terms of European identity, policy coherence, EU competences and such. For this reason, I believe that the case of Helan Online Platform should invite quite a few critical thinking about cultural diplomacy in the EU, about the connection between EU member states' cultural policies and EU cultural policies and, moreover, about the future development of EU diplomacy.

Findings for this thesis come from primary sources provided by the EU institutions, relevant existing literatures, RNW Media archives and extra information on content production and the operation of the organization, which is collected during my internship at RNW Media. All these findings will be carefully sorted out and examined before being put into use for the purpose of the thesis. As is necessary, subject-relevant figures or data sets will also be consulted as evidence for my arguments. All the analysis and conclusions will be based upon the findings.

This thesis will be conducted from perspective of the interest of the European Union without over-debating on whether the policies made by the Chinese authorities that clash EU agendas are justified or not. Depending on the outcomes of my research, I would like to see what the problems are, those that might weaken the effectiveness of EU cultural diplomacy and try to offer some constructive suggestion on policy-making as an academic person.

3. The role of cultural diplomacy in international relations

Cultural diplomacy is a soft power resource that aims to promote the status of a state in world politics.¹¹ Cultural diplomacy has the capability to influence the outcomes of international relations as it helps build up a foundation of trust between people by demonstrating national values and forging friendship, upon which policy makers rely to obtain further economic and political aims.¹² Furthermore, it can also provide with positive information on a country foreign publics who cannot reach a country through conventional functions of diplomacy. The core of cultural diplomacy is to create a platform for people-people contact so as to encourage a positive agenda for cooperation despite the differences that exist in policy-making between countries.¹³

¹¹ Joseph Nye, Jr, *Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy*, filed under Endnote, Past Issues, Winter 2010: Cultural Diplomacy on website of Publica Diplomacy Magazine. Source can be found:
<http://publicdiplomacymagazine.com/soft-power-and-cultural-diplomacy/>

¹² Hwajung Kim, *Cultural Diplomacy as the Means of Soft Power in an Information Age*, December 2011, pp.2. Source can be found:
http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/academy/index.php?cdr_academic-articles_soft-power

¹³ Hwajung Kim, *Cultural Diplomacy as the Means of Soft Power in an Information Age*, December 2011, pp.2-4. Source can be found:
http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/academy/index.php?cdr_academic-articles_soft-power

According to Joseph Nye, “the most effective communication often occurs not by distant broadcast but in face-to-face contacts”.¹⁴

The importance of cultural elements in cultural diplomacy, such as fine arts and cultural heritages has long been recognized by politicians for building a positive image of the states. Fine arts and cultural heritages not only help shape the identity of a state in historical and cultural aspects, but also attract tourists from outside the country.¹⁵ Tourism enables people to experience what they have been in and to forge their own personal image of the culture based on their own experience. It generates a straightforward and efficient way of communication between people with different cultural backgrounds, through which, misunderstanding and prejudices can be shifted to better understanding and open-mindedness to some extent.¹⁶ Cooperation on education is by any means one of the most effective ways of nurturing old friendships and building new partnerships, since knowledge and technology are the most important resources for long-term success in the globalized world where both societies and individuals would benefit a lot. According to the report of Education Indicators in Focus (EDIF) in January 2013, education leads ultimately to the well-being of the society. It not only brings more opportunities to individual in labour market, but also helps to improve the overall health conditions of the citizens, promote more positive and active citizenship and contains violence.¹⁷ It is not

¹⁴ Joseph S. Nye, Jr. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs, 2004, pp. 142.

¹⁵ Marta Ryniejska – Kiełdanowicz, *Cultural Diplomacy as a Form of International Communication*, IPR-Institute for Public Relations, January, 2009, pp. 2. Source can be found: http://www.instituteforpr.org/wp-content/uploads/Ryniejska_Kieldanowicz.pdf.

¹⁶ Marta Ryniejska – Kiełdanowicz, *Cultural Diplomacy as a Form of International Communication*, IPR-Institute for Public Relations, January, 2009, pp. 6-15. Source can be found: http://www.instituteforpr.org/wp-content/uploads/Ryniejska_Kieldanowicz.pdf.

¹⁷ The report of EDIF can be found: [https://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/EDIF%202013--N%C2%B010%20\(eng\)--v9%20FINAL%20bis.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/EDIF%202013--N%C2%B010%20(eng)--v9%20FINAL%20bis.pdf).

difficult to comprehend that the well-being and the healthy development of a society are the essence to its attractiveness.

Through such a course of actions based on cultural aspects, audiences are enabled to participate in and experience first-handedly a different society and culture. Cultural relations that are directly established through direct contact between people, rather than between public sectors, have a priceless quality that helps more effectively lay the foundation for the better understanding, fundamental trust and long-lasting healthy diplomatic relationships.¹⁸ Since public opinions also play an essential role in the process of decision-making and later on the consequences of these decisions, relationships between two countries with a more solid base forge a much more benign platform that is easier to seek common grounds on high politics issues, global challenges and economic cooperation. Cultural relations mainly focus on human relations and personal ties and involve informal communication between people outside the formal political framework.¹⁹ In short, the audience of cultural diplomacy aims both at foreign governments and foreign publics. What cultural diplomacy is supposed to do primarily is erect a relatively positive attitude among the foreign publics towards one's national culture. In the 21st century, by virtue of rapidly growing and advancing science and technologies, the potential of cultural diplomacy is given more opportunities to be realized.²⁰

¹⁸ Carmen Jimenez, Jan te Kloeze, *Analyzing the Peace through Tourism Concept: The Challenge for Educators, Sociology and Anthropology* 2(3): 63-70, 2014, pp. 64. Source can be found: <http://www.hrpub.org/download/20140205/SA1-19601223.pdf>.

¹⁹ Jan Melissen, *The Cultural Diplomacy of the EU towards China and the vice versa*, Summary from Framing China-European Cultural Relations, Spoken Colum. This spoken column was delivered in the opening session of the conference "Culture and Understanding in China-Europe Relations, 19-21 September 2013, Clingendael Institute, The Hague, which was co-organized with the Charhar Institute (China) and the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (Germany), with support from the Robert Bosch Stiftung.

²⁰ *Cultural relations and education policy in an age of globalization: Gaining partners, spreading values, representing interests*, Berlin: Federal Foreign Office, 2011,

4. Cultural diplomacy in Europe and China

In recent years, there has been an increasingly significant role of cultural diplomacy in international relationships. This is in particular true after the world has moved from the bi-polarity of the Cold War to the present multi-polar structure filled with more uncertainties than ever. The multi-polar world structure has given nations more room and freedom to reconstruct and project their national identity. Thus, cultural factors together with religious and ethnic elements plays also a bigger part in shaping self-identity.²¹ Emerging powers such as the EU and China are also trying to use the same way to enhance their political weight in international affairs.²²

4.1. The development of China's Cultural Diplomacy

During the 1980s, most countries that reached cultural cooperation agreements with China were mostly developing countries. By the year 2011, 752 executive plans for cultural exchange with 145 countries had already been signed and exchanges established with 1,000 international cultural organizations.²³ Since the 1980s, the necessity for China to have a stronger cultural diplomacy role at the world stage has been further emphasized, since the development of its cultural sectors that generate soft power lags behind its rapid economic growth. It is rather commonly believed in China that, due to different cultural conventions and social ideologies, China has

<http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/cae/servlet/contentblob/602724/publicationFile/161963/AKBPKonzeption-2011.pdf> [23/02/12].

²¹ Kirsten Bound, Rachel Briggs, John Holden and Samuel Jones, *Cultural Diplomacy*, DEMOS, 2007, pp. 17.

²² Hwajung Kim, *Cultural Diplomacy as the Means of Soft Power in an Information Age*, Cultur, December, 2011, pp. 6-9. Source can be found:

http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/academy/index.php?cdr_academic-articles_soft-power

²³ Edited by Hongyi Lai and Yiyi Lu, *China's Soft Power and International Relations*, Routledge, 2012, pp. 88.

received quite a few ‘biased’ critiques on its values and norms from the Western media.²⁴ In order to gain more understanding from the rest of the world, the Chinese Government is thus seeking a closer cultural cooperation with great powers such as the United States, the EU, Russia and Japan.²⁵

Nowadays, cultural diplomacy is already a pillar of China’s foreign policy. It has not only been used by the Chinese Government to persuade national interests in world trade, but also in nation-branding to promote its attractiveness to the global community. The importance of the role of cultural diplomacy in China’s foreign policies has increased considerably and more soft power initiatives have been generated and put into practice worldwide. Educational exchange is considered to be the most vital aspects of China’s cultural agenda.²⁶ The best-known and most successful initiative of cultural diplomacy in practice is the international network of Confucius Institute. Confucius Institute is an educational organization that is sponsored by the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China. The Institute seeks and forges internationally co-operative relations with universities, higher-educational institutes and secondary schools, organizes cultural events and offers scholarships to promote Chinese culture and Chinese Language.²⁷ The ultimate purpose is to advertise a new image of China by increasing the communication between Chinese

²⁴ Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian, *How China Won the War Against Western Media*, Source can be found here: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/03/04/china-won-war-western-media-censorship-propaganda-communist-party/>

²⁵ Judith Staines *Mapping Existing Studies on EU-China Cultural Relations*, EENC Short Report, March, 2012, pp.7.

²⁶ China’s Policy Paper on the EU, 2003/10/13, Key Document on the website Mission of the People’s Republic of China to the European Union. <http://www.chinamission.be/eng/zywj/zywd/t1227623.htm>.

²⁷ Contributions by R.S. Zaharna, Jennifer Hubbert and Falk Hartig, *Confucius Institutes and the Globalization of China’s Soft Power*. CPD Perspectives on Public Diplomacy, paper 3, 2014, pp. 7.

youths and youths from outside China and providing information and knowledge about contemporary Chinese society.²⁸

4.2. China's Cultural relations with the leading countries in Europe

So far, the global view on China is in general favourable. However, across 43 nations, there are still 32% that offer negative rating. Most of these people lie in the US and Europe. Many of these negative ratings come from the controversial record of human rights in China.²⁹ By seeking cultural diplomacy, the Chinese Government expects that better understanding can, to some extent, return a more positive image of China to European audiences.³⁰ Therefore the Chinese authority expresses explicitly that China's image will benefit from encouraging cultural exchanges with European countries, which will help European people to grow a better understanding about China and recognition for its culture and values.³¹

Austria, Germany, the UK, France, Italy and the Netherlands are the European states that have had a relatively long and stable diplomatic relation with China. The official diplomatic relation between Austria and China started in the early 20th Century. Since the early 2000s, the Austrian and the Chinese Governments have participated many political initiatives (2002 *Abkommen über kulturelle Zusammenarbeit* and 2001 *Abkommen über die Touristische Zusammenarbeit*) in the areas of tourism and higher

²⁸ Contributions by R.S. Zaharna, Jennifer Hubbert and Falk Hartig, *Confucius Institutes and the Globalization of China's Soft Power*. CPD Perspectives on Public Diplomacy, paper 3, 2014, pp. 33-34. 36. 57.

²⁹ *How Countries View China*, Pew Research Center, Source can be found here: <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/07/14/chapter-2-chinas-image/>.

³⁰ Written by Yolanda Smits, Edited by Yudhishtir Raj Isar, *China Country Report*, Preparatory action 'Culture in EU External Relations', May 19th, 2014, pp.27.

³¹ China's Policy Paper on the EU, 2003/10/13, Key Document on the website Mission of the People's Republic of China to the European Union. <http://www.chinamission.be/eng/zywj/zywd/t1227623.htm>.

education with an attempt to promote further cooperation in the fields of trade, science and technology, and industries.³²

³² Elisabeth Gumpenberger, Franz Halbartschlager, Arnhilt Johanna Höfle, Susanne Oberpeilsteiner, Caroline Sommeregger, *Mozart meets Panda: die österreichisch-chinesischen Beziehungen im Überblick*, EU-China Civil Society Forum, 2010, pp.3. Bilateral agreements between China and Austria from 1971-2010 are:

“2010 Abkommen über die Einführung von Chinesisch als Lehramtsfach (noch nicht in Kraft)

2010 Abkommen über die biogenetische Zusammenarbeit (noch nicht in Kraft)

2007 Abkommen über die Errichtung eines Generalkonsulats der Republik Österreich in Guangzhou

2006 Abkommen betreffend die Zusammenarbeit auf dem Gebiet der Tiergesundheit und -quarantäne

2006 Abkommen über die gegenseitige Anerkennung von Gleichwertigkeit im Hochschulbereich

2002 Abkommen über kulturelle Zusammenarbeit

2001 Abkommen über die Touristische Zusammenarbeit

1998 Änderung des Abkommens über den zivilen Luftverkehr

1997 Abkommen bezüglich der Beibehaltung des Österreichischen Generalkonsulates in der Sonderverwaltungszone Hongkong

1996 Abkommen über die wirtschaftliche, industrielle, technische und technologische Zusammenarbeit

1992 Abkommen zur Vermeidung der Doppelbesteuerung und zur Verhinderung der Steuerumgehung auf dem Gebiete der Steuern vom Einkommen und vom Vermögen

1990 Abkommen über die Zusammenarbeit im Gesundheitswesen

1986 Abkommen über die Förderung und den gegenseitigen Schutz von Investitionen

1986 Abkommen über den zivilen Luftverkehr

1985 Abkommen über wissenschaftlich-technische Zusammenarbeit

1984 Übereinkunft zwischen den Regierungen der VR China, des Königreichs Norwegen, des Königreichs Schweden und der Republik Österreich über die Ausstellung der Terrakotta-Figuren

1977 Notenwechsel betreffend Gegenseitigkeit in Markenschutzangelegenheiten

1974 Abkommen über die „Ausstellung der Archäologischen Funde der VR China“ 1973 Handels- und Zahlungsabkommen

As the leading member state of the EU, Germany's natural advantage in international politics has been dwindling from its declining scale of young population. The problems that have occurred in its aging society have had an impact on its economy. The decreasing share of young work labour will effect negatively on the productivity as well as the per capita income of Germany, whereas the growing share of old people will also impose a burden on public finances and welfare. Therefore, the German Government is also looking for new dynamics from cultural diplomacy that will increase its soft power to attract more global talents to ease the stress from the aging society.³³ The cultural relations between the Germans and the Chinese started more or less after the political and economic cooperation and have been enhanced since the 1990s. In 2016, the fourth German-Chinese intergovernmental consultations were held in Beijing, where the leaders of both countries expressed their wish to enhance cooperation between Germany and China. It was in particular pointed out that Germany and China have a strategic partnership that goes beyond economic cooperation and that cultural and academic cooperation is also on top of the agenda. An outstanding example of cultural and academic work-together between the two countries is the current Chinese-German Year of Pupil and Youth Exchange.³⁴

The UK is also another very important strategic partner country of China. Since 1978 the cultural exchange between the UK and China has become very frequent. 1986 was a remarkable year of the British-Chinese cultural relations, when the cooperation projects increased from 10 to 72. Festivals of Chinese culture were held in London

1971 Gemeinsames Kommuniqué über die Aufnahme diplomatischer Beziehungen Bilaterale Abkommen zwischen China und Österreich³³ Die genannten Jahreszahlen beziehen sich auf das Datum des In-Kraft-Tretens der jeweiligen Abkommen.“

³³ *Cultural relations and education policy in an age of globalization: Gaining partners, spreading values, representing interests*, Berlin: Federal Foreign Office, 2011, <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/cae/servlet/contentblob/602724/publicationFile/161963/AKBPKonzeption-2011.pdf> [23/02/12].

³⁴ Source can be found on the website of Federal Foreign Office of Germany: https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/Aussenpolitik/Laender/Aktuelle_Artikel/China/160613_RegKonsultationen.html.

and educational programmes of teaching the Chinese language appeared on the TV in the UK.³⁵ These two countries have so far cooperated in cultural, educational and scientific fields. An existing prime example is the Royal Academy, which has collaborated with the British Council in organizing exhibitions on architecture in Asian countries like China and Japan.³⁶

In addition to Austria, Germany and the UK, the Netherlands has also developed a long-term diplomatic relation with China. Globalization, immigration and the changing geopolitical situation are all factors that to a very large extent influence Dutch diplomacy and its international cultural relations. According to Ben Hurckmans, a more coherent cultural diplomacy is now needed to go hand in hand with the government agenda, which is of utmost importance when it comes to the justification of the attempt of the Netherlands to help more immigrants from Islamic background to integrate.³⁷ This is especially important since there have long been conflicts between Islamic and non-Islamic people in the Netherlands, but the government's effort in promoting integration of the new Islamic population can often be interpreted as 'discrimination' or disrespect for cultural diversity. This gives a more room for the government to put a more concrete cultural policy in place. The Netherlands and China have been maintaining a good diplomatic relationship in terms of political and economic cooperation. The two countries are both committed to deepening the existing partnership by seeking more common interests and staying open and friendly towards issues on which the opinions of the two parties may differ. Since the year 2006, China has been a priority country on the Dutch cultural agenda. Both

³⁵ Werner Meissner *Cultural Relations between China and the Member States of the European Union*, *The China Quarterly*, No. 169, Special Issue: China and Europe since 1978: A European Perspective (Mar., 2002), pp. 181-203, pp. 186.

³⁶ Kirsten Bound, Rachel Briggs, John Holden and Samuel Jones, *Cultural Diplomacy*. London: Demos. 2007, pp.27-28.

³⁷ Ben Hurckmans, *Still a World to be Won: An Outline of Today's Cultural Diplomacy in the Netherlands*, Clingendael Institute, October 2008. Source can be found: <https://www.clingendael.nl/publication/world-be-won-cultural-diplomacy-netherlands?lang=nl>

governments have been actively seeking new opportunities to encourage cultural cooperation.³⁸ The Dutch cultural policy towards China is aimed at creating a stable and effective platform for leading Dutch institutions and businesses in China. The contemporary art market in China is enormous and lucrative, the Dutch Government helps increase market access there for leading Dutch artists by more frequent cultural communication. The Netherlands has always been a popular destination for foreign visitors and the Chinese are the growing force among others in recent years. Tourism contributes dramatically to national economy because tourists spend money on hotels, restaurants and other touristic attractions and facilities. According to the figures released by Statistics Netherlands, the increase in Dutch GDP due to tourism rose from 3.2 percent in 2010 to 3.6 percent in 2013.³⁹ What attracts so many Chinese to visit in the Netherlands is its unique culture, which includes its landscape, fine arts and traditional activities.⁴⁰ Therefore, a deepened cultural relation with China is beneficial to the Dutch economy as more Chinese tourists come to visit and more Chinese businessmen come to invest. Therefore, the ultimate goal for the Dutch is to strengthen the bilateral relations through solid cooperation of cultural sectors and eventually guarantee their economic interests in China.⁴¹

Culture is very vital when it comes to stimulating communication between people, since the impact of culture is very powerful and far-reaching. When a country is undergoing a reputational crisis due to serious political reasons, the attractiveness of its culture and values does not cease to function. Instead, it helps set peace at difficult

³⁸ Information on relations between the Netherlands and China can be found on the website of Government of the Netherlands. <https://www.government.nl/topics/international-relations/contents/china>.

³⁹ *Why the Netherlands attracts more Chinese tourists in recent years*, article from the website of China Chamber of Commerce in the Netherlands, Why the Netherlands, October, 2014. Source can be found: <https://www.dccchina.org/2014/10/why-the-netherlands-attracts-more-foreign-tourism-in-recent-years/>

⁴⁰ *Why the Netherlands attracts more Chinese tourists in recent years*, article from the website of China Chamber of Commerce in the Netherlands, Why the Netherlands, October, 2014. Source can be found: <https://www.dccchina.org/2014/10/why-the-netherlands-attracts-more-foreign-tourism-in-recent-years/>

⁴¹ Information on relations between the Netherlands and China can be found on the website of Government of the Netherlands. <https://www.government.nl/topics/international-relations/contents/china>.

time for a country with the masses abroad and to some degree prevents the resentment towards the country from exploding. For example, the Iraq War has done a serious reputational damage to America,⁴² and anti-Americanism has developed all around the world, but the role of soft power in the US has helped obtain favourable outcomes after all.⁴³ The function of culture forges a rather benign international context at difficult time where new negotiations that adjust themselves to the new situation are made possible. By investing more in cultural sectors, a country can bring new dynamics in international relations for the future. In short, the context of globalization provides with the increasing cross-cultural exchanges more advantageous opportunities for the Europeans to increase Chinese trust in them by enabling the Chinese to learn more about the EU and Europe and vice versa, so that the distance between Chinese and Europeans in terms of value perception can be narrowed down and better understanding can be generated.⁴⁴

4.3. EU Cultural diplomacy towards China

The European Union has developed its own cultural diplomacy in the past few decades to promote its economic and political role in global politics. Internally, EU Cultural diplomacy has become alive since the launch of Schuman Plan, which has successfully brought European states together on the basis of diversity into the unprecedented process of European integration. Internal cultural cooperation entails

⁴² Nicholas Burns, *Iraq War Damaged US Credibility*, News Archive of Harvard Kennedy School, 2011, Source can be found here: <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/news-events/news/news-archive/iraq-war-damaged-us-credibility>.

⁴³ Joseph Nye, Jr, *Can America Regain Its Soft Power After Abu Ghraib?*, YaleGlobal, 2004, Source can be found: <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/can-america-regain-its-soft-power-after-abu-ghraib>.

⁴⁴ Timo Graf, *The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in China-EU and Muslim-US Relations: An Empirical Analysis of Public Perceptions*, Prepared for The ICD Annual Conference on Cultural Diplomacy 2012, Berlin, Germany, December 13-16, 2012 pp.7-8.

European exchange study programs, cultural exchange programs, work exchange programs, foreign language promotion programs, etc.⁴⁵ The EU Erasmus is a successful story in this case.⁴⁶ This program helps, to a very large extent, to promote a shared idea of Europe by showing that more mobile students and Erasmus students have stronger relationships with Europe than non-mobile students and that over the period of study abroad, these students tend to decrease their affiliations with their home city or home country while become more willing to embrace the concept of Europe as a whole.⁴⁷ It has been repeatedly pointed out that Erasmus offered a majority of students interviewed the first opportunity to experience other European countries, not just for vacations or short trips, but also as students who live and study. This opportunity is valued much by most Erasmus students since their European perspective has been substantially improved.⁴⁸ Further progress in European integration, such as free movements of goods, labour, capital and services have also largely enhanced the EU cultural diplomacy.

Externally, among all the strategic partners of the EU, great significance has been attached to the cultural cooperation with China, since China is one of the largest fast-growing global actors while the EU is the world's largest community of developed states and it possesses economic and political powers that cannot be neglected in the international context. On the one hand, the EU is now the biggest trading partner of China whereas China is the second biggest one of the EU. Thus a deepened relationship between the two economic powers will in the longer run help

⁴⁵ Marta Osojnik, *Cultural Diplomacy and the European Union: Key Characters and Historical Developments*, Introduction. Source can be found: <http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/pdf/case-studies/cd-eu.pdf>

⁴⁶ *The Erasmus Impact Study: Effects of mobility on the skills and employability of students and the internationalisation of higher education institutions*, European Commission Education and Culture, September, 2014, p. 126-128.

⁴⁷ European Commission, *The Erasmus Impact Study*, September 2014, pp.129-136. Source can be found: http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/study/2014/erasmus-impact_en.pdf.

⁴⁸ European Commission, *The Erasmus Impact Study*, September 2014, pp.132-133. Source can be found: http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/study/2014/erasmus-impact_en.pdf.

shape the global economy. On the other hand, by virtue of the nature of the EU as a normative power, China and the EU are assumed to have no fundamental conflict of interest and they pose no threat to each other⁴⁹, which will be briefly explained later in this paragraph. According to Timo Graf, the perception of realistic threat is a major determinant of the ‘cultural effect’ from China to the EU or the other way around.⁵⁰ What ‘perception of realistic threat’ here refers to the attitude of a group of people from a certain cultural background towards a third culture. In plain words, the perception of realistic threat is basically to what extent is one culture perceived by another culture as a threat.⁵¹ A positive cultural effect considerably improves the attitude from one side to the other side. So far the EU is generally perceived rather positively within China and European culture is not viewed by most people in China as a threat against Chinese culture.⁵² Besides, the European ways of doing business, European ideologies such as democracy and social welfare and European cultural goods are all well received by Chinese urban citizens.⁵³ In China, European culture is usually perceived as favorable, which significantly contributes to the favorable

⁴⁹ Source can be found on the European Commission Press Release Database: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-10-199_en.htm

⁵⁰ Timo Graf, *The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in China-EU and Muslim-US Relations: An Empirical Analysis of Public Perceptions*, Prepared for The ICD Annual Conference on Cultural Diplomacy 2012, Berlin, Germany, December 13-16, 2012 pp.10-13.

⁵¹ Timo Graf, *The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in China-EU and Muslim-US Relations: An Empirical Analysis of Public Perceptions*, Prepared for The ICD Annual Conference on Cultural Diplomacy 2012, Berlin, Germany, December 13-16, 2012 pp.17.

More relevant information on Chinese attitude towards the EU can be consulted in paper by Henk Dekker and Jolanda van der Noll, *Attitudes towards the European Union among Chinese Citizens, and Their Origins*, Paper for the XXIIInd World Congress of Political Science, Session RC21 Political Socialization and Education, Panel 4 International Political Socialization and Its Effects, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Madrid, July 8 to 12, 2012. Source can be found: http://paperroom.ipsa.org/papers/paper_17009.pdf

⁵² Timo Graf, *The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in China-EU and Muslim-US Relations: An Empirical Analysis of Public Perceptions*, Prepared for The ICD Annual Conference on Cultural Diplomacy 2012, Berlin, Germany, December 13-16, 2012 pp.7.

⁵³ Timo Graf, *The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in China-EU and Muslim-US Relations: An Empirical Analysis of Public Perceptions*, Prepared for The ICD Annual Conference on Cultural Diplomacy 2012, Berlin, Germany, December 13-16, 2012 pp.7-8.

attitude of the Chinese towards EU's role in international relations and the EU-China relations per se.⁵⁴

Moreover, although China's economic power is indeed universally acknowledged, its cultural influence over the world is not proportionately recognized. The Chinese Government in the past few decades has also realized the potential of its cultural sector, which would help promote the international status of the country in the form of cultural diplomacy. Therefore, with an attempt to strengthen the core of its soft power, the government has considerably increased its recent expenditures in the cultural sector.⁵⁵ Since the year 2010, the Communist Party has conducted substantial government policies that aim at promoting its cultural sector so that its soft power will be able to catch up with its fast growing economy. The Chinese Government has decided the expenses in this should be more than doubled, from 2.5 to more than 5 percent of national GDP.⁵⁶ According to the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen in Germany, by the year of 2016 cultural expenditures shall rise to 5 percent of the country's GDP.⁵⁷ Thus, due to the common interest in cultural relations shared by the EU and China, relations between the two can be directed pragmatically into the direction of creating more opportunities for work-together to achieve collective goals and interests. This is a vital step not only for EU-China future but also for the future of the international system because smooth diplomatic relations between the two help, in the very first place, to stimulate more trade possibilities and a greater profit on both

⁵⁴ Timo Graf, *The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in China-EU and Muslim-US Relations: An Empirical Analysis of Public Perceptions*, Prepared for The ICD Annual Conference on Cultural Diplomacy 2012, Berlin, Germany, December 13-16, 2012 pp.11.

⁵⁵ Ben Hurckmans, *Still a World to be Won: An Outline of Today's Cultural Diplomacy in the Netherlands*, Clingendael Institute, October 2008. Source can be found: <https://www.clingendael.nl/publication/world-be-won-cultural-diplomacy-netherlands?lang=nl>

⁵⁶ Judith Staines *Mapping Existing Studies on EU-China Cultural Relations*, EENC Short Report, March 2012, pp. 11.

⁵⁷ Judith Staines *Mapping Existing Studies on EU-China Cultural Relations*, EENC Short Report, March 2012, pp. 11.

sides. Secondly, with the help of strengthened bilateral ties, both China and the EU would be able to cooperate better regarding global challenges.

4.3.1 EU-China Strategic Partnership

Since the year 2007, cultural relations between the two parties have been raised to the top of EU strategic agenda towards China. In 2007, with the attempt to further develop cooperation in cultural field within the Community, the European Council approved a strategic framework on a European Agenda for Culture, in which the European Commission has been given a bigger role in promoting culture. The fundamental outcomes that are expected from the Agenda are the promotion of cultural diversity and increased intercultural communication between EU member states, as well as the promotion of cultural as a vital element in the foreign policies of the Union's.⁵⁸

The most remarkable accomplishment for EU-China cultural relations is the current EU-China Strategic Partnership that evolved from the EU-China Trade and Cooperation Agreement in 1985.⁵⁹ The current EU-China Strategic Partnership consists of three pillars, which are known as the High Level Economic and Trade Dialogue, the High Level Strategic Dialogue and the EU-China High Level People-to-People Dialogue (HPPD). During the 12th EU-China Summit, the previous Premier of China Wen Jiabao and the President of European Commission agreed on the significance of cultural relations between China and the EU and the need of

⁵⁸ See Strategic framework - European Agenda for Culture, source can be found: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/policy/strategic-framework/index_en.htm.

⁵⁹ Written by Yolanda Smits, Edited by Yudhishtir Raj Isar, *China Country Report*, Preparatory action 'Culture in EU External Relations', May 19th, 2014, pp. 28.

holding a regular forum for it.⁶⁰ Moreover, the authorities of the EU and China designated 2012 as the EU-China Year of Intercultural Dialogues.⁶¹ The HPPD Joint Declaration was set up in 2012 as an outcome of the 14th EU-China Summit. The framework of HPPD is made of annual dialogues and summits to reinforce and deepen the existing cooperation in cultural aspects. These aspects include the policy dialogue on education, culture, multilingualism and youth.⁶² In 2014 the second meeting of the EU-China High-Level People-to-People Dialogue was held in Beijing, the focus of which was on education. Education is a vital part of EU cultural policy towards China and more funding is encouraged to promote educational activities.⁶³

4.3.2. What has been done so far via HPPD?

The first round of the EU-China HPPD was held in Brussels on 18 April 2012, where a Joint Declaration was signed and a document with follow-up actions was endorsed. Apart from this, an HPPD Forum was held later that day as a follow-up to the first round of the dialogue.⁶⁴ In 2013, the 16th EU-China Summit took place. A year later, the second round of the EU-China HPPD was held, during the time of which, HPPD Joint Communiqué was signed and the follow-up actions document was updated. In

⁶⁰ Marián GÁLIK, *REPORTS/OPINIONS: SOME REMARKS ON THE FIRST WORLD CULTURAL CONFERENCE, SUZHOU, MAY 18 – 19, 2011, Asian and African Studies*, Volume 20, Number 2, 2011, pp. 289.

⁶¹ Source can be found on EU-China Year of Intercultural Dialogue:
http://ec.europa.eu/culture/tools/eu-china-intercultural_en.htm.

⁶² Written by Yolanda Smits, Edited by Yudhishtir Raj Isar, *China Country Report*, Preparatory action 'Culture in EU External Relations', May 19th, 2014, pp. 28.

⁶³ Written by Yolanda Smits, Edited by Yudhishtir Raj Isar, *China Country Report*, Preparatory action 'Culture in EU External Relations', May 19th, 2014, pp. 28.

⁶⁴ The detail of EU-China High-Level People-to-People Dialogue can be found:
http://ec.europa.eu/education/international-cooperation/china_en.htm

2015, a joint statement was signed on the occasion of the third China-EU HPPD to reiterate the commitments from both parties.⁶⁵

4.3.3. Objectives of the Joint Declaration

The Joint Declaration mentioned above has revealed and consolidated the wish between the EU and China to deepen the understanding and mutual trust between the two peoples, which is deemed by both parties as vital to the sustainability and stability of the development of EU-China relations.⁶⁶ In this regard, the EU-China High Level People-to-People Dialogue is established to serve to this purpose. During the first meeting of the Dialogue, Ms Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth and Ms Liu Yandong, State Councillor of the People's Republic of China reiterated the agreement between the leaders of both sides that a third pillar of EU-China cooperation on “people-to-people” exchanges should be established.⁶⁷ “People-to-people” exchanges have been attached great significance in the EU-China relations, which have accelerated in the last decade and have generated concrete outputs in the area of culture, education and research. The objectives that have been set in the Joint Declaration are as follows.⁶⁸

- *Contributing to the knowledge and common understanding between the EU and China, through the enhancement of contacts between the peoples of both sides;*
- *Opening a new channel for the informal discussion of strategic societal issues of common interest to the EU and to China, through informal contacts;*

⁶⁵ The detail of EU-China High-Level People-to-People Dialogue can be found: http://ec.europa.eu/education/international-cooperation/china_en.htm

⁶⁶ Joint Declaration on EU-China Cultural Cooperation, source can be found: https://ec.europa.eu/education/international-cooperation/documents/china/jointculture_en.pdf

⁶⁷ Joint Declaration on the First Round of the EU-China High Level People-to-People Dialogue, source can be found: https://ec.europa.eu/education/international-cooperation/documents/china/joint12_en.pdf

⁶⁸ Details of Joint Declaration can be found: http://ec.europa.eu/education/international-cooperation/documents/china/joint12_en.pdf

- *Identifying opportunities for cooperation based on mutual interest and reciprocity, to trigger concrete actions based on the full exchanges of information and to support the positive evolution of our societies through concrete actions in the full respect of our highly valued diversity.*

The Joint Declaration highlights in particular the role played by regional and local stakeholders in the deepening cooperation regarding the cultural and creative sectors. In order to promote cultural cooperation and to create a conducive environment for this, both parties will explore how to encourage information gathering, sharing and dissemination between China and the EU at all levels, which includes promoting mapping exercises and studies, information and communication tools as well as networking of relevant actors.⁶⁹ *Mapping the EU-China Cultural and Creative Landscape* serves to be a good example for what is mentioned here as ‘promotion of mapping exercise and studies. This is a joint mapping study prepared for the Ministry of Culture of China and DG Education and Culture of the European Commission, which is produced in the context of the EU-China Policy Dialogues Support Facility II. This mapping study, based upon the information collected by EU-China experts, primarily investigates the status of EU-China stakeholders, partners and projects of common interest in areas of cultural heritage, cultural and creative industries and contemporary art.⁷⁰ The EU-China Dialogues Support Facility follows the main principles of the Joint Declaration and aims at a comprehensive deepening strategic partnership between China and the EU.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Details of Joint Declaration can be found:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/international-cooperation/documents/china/joint12_en.pdf

⁷⁰ *Mapping the EU-China Cultural and Creative Landscape*, a joint mapping study prepared for the Ministry of Culture of the People’s Republic of China and DG Education and Culture of the European Commission, September 2015, pp. 5-6. Source can be found:

<http://ec.europa.eu/culture/library/studies/eu-china-cultural-mapping-2015.pdf>.

⁷¹ *Mapping the EU-China Cultural and Creative Landscape*, a joint mapping study prepared for the Ministry of Culture of the People’s Republic of China and DG Education and Culture of the European Commission, September 2015, pp. 5. Source can be found:

<http://ec.europa.eu/culture/library/studies/eu-china-cultural-mapping-2015.pdf>.

4.3.4. Internet censorship and the follow-up of Joint

Declaration

The current Internet censorship in China has become a great challenge for the EU to achieve the goal of the People-to-People part of the Strategic Partnership.

People-to-People contact does not only happen under the framework of non-governmental cooperation, but also during the everyday life between peoples in China and the EU. Information technologies have enhanced the role of social media and social network in distant communication among people of various nationalities and the circulation of information beyond time and space. The government surveillance on media in China hinders Chinese citizens from receiving information from outside the country. Although in the joint declarations and follow-up actions, China has shown its determination to enhance cultural cooperation with the EU, it has not specified any actual policy change that aims at improving a cyber environment that is more benign for information collection and circulation.

When the cultural diplomacy of EU and EU-China relations are being discussed, the importance of people-to-people exchanges has been highlighted, as this is the most effective form of cultural diplomacy. Nevertheless, barriers to further cooperation still remain, such as the disadvantageous media environment in China, which, to a large extent, prohibits European countries that seek to fully engage in cultural diplomacy with Chinese citizens. Why does the media environment play a role that cannot be neglected in promoting EU-China cultural relations? This is because the EU-China PPHD is in essence about forging communication between people in the EU and China either through governmental resources or non-governmental resources.

Therefore, in order to achieve the best outcomes from this agenda, high-level exchanges should go hand in hand with effective informal communication that is generated by non-governmental resources. In that case, online media has created an excellent platform for this type of informal communication to happen regardless of time and location.

5. Cultural diplomacy in the information era

In the information era, Internet offers a new way of communication in a cyberspace, which provides more opportunities for the development of cultural diplomacy via an expanded target audience and a widened media platform. Facebook, Twitter and other social networks are among the most successful outcomes from the development of science and technology, since they intensify people-to-people daily communication across national borders. The affordable presence of Internet has enabled the average person to perform activities on computers more easily than ever before. Through social networks, many individuals can be seen by posting their daily life activities online, the information of which can be reached by others, since the limitation of time and space has thus become less relevant.⁷²

During the past decade, the involvement of media in revolutionary movements has been significantly noticed and its impact on national politics, economy and culture is enormous. Although media is not considered to be the deciding force in this regard, its role as a key factor cannot be neglected. With the attempt of making a social change, more and more young adults participate through social media platforms to voice their opinions against the government's action on issues that matter directly or indirectly to their everyday life.⁷³ The increased engagement of today's generation with media has resulted in dramatic political implications that must be taken into account by decision-makers.

⁷² Hwajung Kim, *Cultural Diplomacy as the Means of Soft Power in an Information Age*, December 2011, pp. 10-11.

⁷³ Cariline S. Sheedy, *A Case Study of Social Media Use in the 2011 Egyptian Revolution*, A Capstone Project presented to the Faculty of the School of Communication in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Masters of Arts in Public Communication, April 28, 2011, pp. 23-30.

What is conducted in diplomacy aims fundamentally to promote the interests of the state and to fulfill the government's top national agenda within the international system. In order to do so, the stability in this international system is well needed, which can be achieved by the maintenance of a benign and complimentary relation among different states. In times of information technology, the opinions of global audiences behind the stage of policy-making have also the power to influence the outcomes of foreign policies and governments are no long the only major actors in this regard.

5.1. Internet use and media censorship in China

China has the world's largest Internet population in absolute numbers, 623 million, yet the effectiveness of the usage of Internet is still questionable as the Internet penetration rate is about 46.9 percent,⁷⁴ which means that there is a majority of Chinese citizens which has no access to it. Regardless of the relatively low Internet penetration rate in China, the censorship imposed by the Chinese Government on Internet and other social media has also prohibited the existing Chinese netizens from reaching more information freely, and that has further reduced the actual effect of Internet use.⁷⁵

Chinese government often takes measures to 'tackle' the free circulation of information. These measures include erecting monitoring systems and firewalls to

⁷⁴ Edited by Marko M. Skoric, Peter Parycek, and Michael Sachs, *CeDEM Asia 2014 Proceedings of the International Conference for E-Democracy and Open Government*, 4-5 December 2014, Hong Kong S. A. R. China, pp. 70. Source can be found: http://www.donau-uni.ac.at/imperia/md/content/departement/gpa/zeg/bilder/cedem_asia/cedemasia2014_proceedings.pdf

⁷⁵ Marina Svensson, *Internet in China and its Challenges for Europe: Dealing with Censorship, Competition and Collaboration*, the Europe-China Research and Advice Network (ECRAN), August 2014. Source can be found: <http://digitalchina.blogg.lu.se/files/2014/12/Internet-in-China-Marina-Svensson-for-ECRAN-1.pdf>

control the flow of information on media, hiring personnel to watchdog the operation of these systems, shutting down publications or websites that are considered to contain too much content about politically sensitive issues, imprisoning journalists, bloggers and activists critical of the authorities.⁷⁶ Moreover, the Chinese Government tends to block websites that are sustained through foreign resources because they are considered to be potentially dangerous to the stability of the regime. Wikipedia is one those best-known examples of foreign websites encountering Chinese Internet censorship. Chinese Wikipedia was launched in 2001, however, due to political controversy, it was blocked 3 years later in 2004, the day before the 15th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Movement of 1989.⁷⁷ From the year 2005 on, the unblocking and blocking process of Wikipedia continued. At the moment, both the Chinese and the English Wikipedia are accessible for Internet users in Mainland China, but the content that is politically sensitive is sanitized or blocked. For instance, information concerning Tiananmen Square Movement, Taiwan or Senkaku Islands cannot be accessed completely.

Government intervention and censorship in China have both international and domestic implications regarding the development of media. International media products such as Google, Wikipedia, Facebook, Twitter and Youtube have been confronted with a great deal of challenges exploiting the media market in China. The ban of Facebook, Twitter and Youtube together with restrictions on other foreign social media products has provided with China-made social media products a breeding ground, since the censorship diminishes the competition from foreign companies within the domestic market. Microblogging platform Sinaweibo has become China's biggest replacement for Twitter, which is now one of the central aspects of many Chinese citizens' private, professional and public lives. The ban of

⁷⁶ Beina Xu, Media censorship in China, Council on Foreign Relations, , April 7, 2015, pp. 1. Source can be found: <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/177388/Media%20Censorship%20in%20China.pdf>

⁷⁷ Beina Xu, Media censorship in China, Council on Foreign Relations, , April 7, 2015, pp. 1. Source can be found: <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/177388/Media%20Censorship%20in%20China.pdf>

Youtube has fueled many other Chinese online media companies that enjoy a fast growing popularity among Chinese netizens, such as Youku, Tudou and Aiqiyi. Despite the quick advancement of China's domestic social media products, due to their agreement to complying with the censorship with the Chinese Government, the abovementioned online media platforms do not fulfill their competences for sharing information and news or for engaging people in public debates to the full extent. For example, Sina is responsible for censoring certain topics and users, in order to achieve which, the company introduced in the year 2012 the real-name registration.⁷⁸ This means that Sina Weibo users have to register with their real names on their ID Cards to create an account, so that all personal information of these users can be filed in records. In that case, every speech or comment they released afterwards on Sina Weibo can be traced back to the IP addresses and individuals.⁷⁹ Moreover, on numerous sensitive occasions, many critical Weibo accounts were forced to be closed.⁸⁰

Given what is being discussed above, against censorship in China is a long-term battle, as I believe, since censorship in this case is no longer a problem caused merely by democracy or human rights, but also an economic opportunity for Chinese enterprises. The vested interest behind censorship is enormous, the issues caused by which, are believed to be long lasting. Nonetheless, the boom of domestic media platforms has indeed created a great number of media users in China. This is the case in particular

⁷⁸ Marina Svensson, *Internet in China and its Challenges for Europe: Dealing with Censorship, Competition and Collaboration*, the Europe-China Research and Advice Network (ECRAN), August 2014, pp. 4. Source can be found:

<http://digitalchina.blogg.lu.se/files/2014/12/Internet-in-China-Marina-Svensson-for-ECRAN-1.pdf>

⁷⁹ Marina Svensson, *Internet in China and its Challenges for Europe: Dealing with Censorship, Competition and Collaboration*, Report for the Europe-China Research and Advice Network (ECRAN), August 2014, pp. 2. Source can be found:

<http://digitalchina.blogg.lu.se/files/2014/12/Internet-in-China-Marina-Svensson-for-ECRAN-1.pdf>

⁸⁰ Marina Svensson, *Internet in China and its Challenges for Europe: Dealing with Censorship, Competition and Collaboration*, the Europe-China Research and Advice Network (ECRAN), August 2014, pp. 2. Source can be found:

<http://digitalchina.blogg.lu.se/files/2014/12/Internet-in-China-Marina-Svensson-for-ECRAN-1.pdf>

during the last decade, since there have been more than 500 million Internet users in the country⁸¹ and most are young adults, not to mention that the size of the online social network is still growing.⁸² The Chinese government spends several billion dollars and hires 20,000 to 50,000 personnel to watch over the information environment.⁸³ Despite the tightened surveillance, the massive population and land scale do make the government control over online information very challenging and the censorship cannot be too careful in preventing the internet generations in China from getting themselves informed about the world through different media platforms, which means these internet users market still has a great deal of potential for foreign media.

So what new opportunities do media in general bring for diplomacy? On the occasion of the rise of media, diplomacy has become more open than in the past. Diplomacy in digital age is termed as ‘ediplomacy’ or ‘networked diplomacy’⁸⁴, which gives greater space for non-state actors and citizen involvement.⁸⁵ This means that diplomacy is no longer dictated by state actors and the ‘horizontal’ relationship with people plays a bigger role in diplomatic practices.⁸⁶ With the help of media, diplomats and foreign

⁸¹ Accenture China Consumer Insights: Communications, Media and Technology Industries, *The Digital Lives of Chinese Consumers*, pp. 10.

Source can be found:

https://www.accenture.com/t20150523T022409_w_us-en_acnmedia/Accenture/Conversion-Assets/DotCom/Documents/Global/PDF/Dualpub_1/Accenture-China-Consumer-Insights.pdf.

⁸² Accenture China Consumer Insights: Communications, Media and Technology Industries, *The Digital Lives of Chinese Consumers*, pp. 10.

Source can be found:

https://www.accenture.com/t20150523T022409_w_us-en_acnmedia/Accenture/Conversion-Assets/DotCom/Documents/Global/PDF/Dualpub_1/Accenture-China-Consumer-Insights.pdf.

⁸³ Gary King, Jennifer Pan, Margaret E. Roberts, *How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression*, *American Political Science Review*, May 2013, pp.1.

⁸⁴ Fergus Hanson, *Revolution @State: The Spread of Ediplomacy*, Lowy Institute for International Policy, March 2012, pp. 3: “There is no agreed definition of ediplomacy. A slightly revised working definition is the use of the web and new ICT to help carry out diplomatic objectives.”

⁸⁵ Brian Hocking and Jan Malissen, *Diplomacy in the Digital Age*, Clingendael Report, July 2015, pp.27.

⁸⁶ Brian Hocking and Jan Malissen, *Diplomacy in the Digital Age*, Clingendael Report, July 2015, pp.27.

policymakers are able to connect to the network of the publics that were beyond their reach geographically. Communication in diplomacy is no longer confined within the official authorities of states, but also available among the ordinary people as the tools for communication are now more personalized than before. For example, now public opinions regarding a certain domestic or global issue can be presented and transmitted by Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms, through which the voice of the people is empowered and it generates a better interaction between public audiences and the governments.

Political, social and economic change can be accelerated by faster circulation of information. A more direct and efficient interaction between the publics and the governments is just one aspect. Another opportunity that occurs with the advent of social media is that communication among people all over the world is more unimpeded than ever before, which contributes to the unofficial interaction between different cultures. More interaction leads to more understanding and more opportunities for building trust. These kinds of interactions serve not only the purpose of maintaining regular contact among the network members, but also circulate information that carries political, cultural and social implications. This is also a type of cultural exchange, which, instead, is conducted directly through ‘people to people’, but not through official authorities, this type of communication is thus more personal, more subtle but also more straightforward, long-lasting and efficient.

6. A case study of RNW Media (Radio Nederland Wereldomroep)

RNW media is a non-governmental organization that is funded by the Dutch Foreign Ministry for social change in areas around the world where people have limited freedom of speech.⁸⁷ RNW is specifically aimed at using the influence of media to

⁸⁷ Information about RNW Organization, source can be found: <https://www.rnw.org/organisation>.

convey the values of democracy, good governance, sexual health and rights as well as international justice. It is hoped that with the help of RNW, younger generations in freedom-restricted areas and all around the world can transform culture and society over time for a better future in their own ways. The organization itself developed from Radio Netherlands Worldwide from earlier times, which was a network for public radio and television that was officially founded in the year 1945. It was for initially a programme for the Dutch who were not living in the Netherlands, but in its territories outside the country and RNW was then granted the mandate for both domestic and international broadcasts. In 1947, the Dutch Government decided to operate separately the domestic and international broadcasts. Under the international broadcasts many other languages were introduced subsequently during the next 30 years, such as Indonesian, Spanish, English, Arabic, Afrikaans, French and Portuguese. In the year 2011, there came an end to radio broadcasts by RNW because of the decreasing usage of shortwave among the listeners.⁸⁸

6.1. What is RNW Media and what does it do?

The mission of RNW Media is to connect communities and change-makers through innovative use of media and training to enable the younger generations to make informed choices that are needed to make lives better. RNW Media is currently active in China and 17 other countries in Sub Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Arab world.⁸⁹

Since the year 2008, RNW Media launched an online platform, under the name of Helan Online, in the Netherlands, which is targeting college students and young professionals between 15 and 30 years old in China.⁹⁰ Helan Online belongs to the

⁸⁸ RNW Media History, source can be found: <https://www.rnw.org/rnw-history>.

⁸⁹ Information about RNW Media, source can be found: <https://www.rnw.org/>.

⁹⁰ Information about RNW Media, source can be found: <https://www.rnw.org/about-rnw-media>

program of “Citizen’s Voice” of RNW Media and it aims at providing a podium to young Chinese people so that their opinions can be heard in societies where they are excluded from participating in elections and social issues related to citizenship, democracy, engagement and good governance.⁹¹ By 2014, Helan Online has established partnerships with over 40 media outlets and NGO’s both within and outside China and has over 5 million visitors on the website, more than 100 million views and 500,000 followers on relevant social media platforms like Wechat and Weibo.⁹²

6.2. How does Helan Online assist in promoting communication between the Netherlands and China on non-governmental basis?

Helan Online deals with sensitive issues by weaving deftly through the maze of Chinese censorship on Internet and it covers a wide range of heated topics regarding politics, economics and culture in China, the Netherlands against the background of the European Union and a more international environment. There are 7 major sections on the website, where a team of young bloggers and journalists raises critical questions on issues that receive good attention from both domestic and overseas audiences: Focus on China, Speak about the world, Life in the Netherlands, Love and sex, Young people in China and the Netherlands, Cultural and social trends and China in the Dutch perspective.

-Focus on China

This is a section that mainly deals with political, economic and social matters that provoke a certain degree of concern among the Chinese citizens. Topics revolve

⁹¹ RNW Media Annual Report 2015, source can be found: https://www.rnw.org/sites/flagship.rnw.org/files/annual_report_rnw_2015_en_0.pdf

⁹² RNW Archive, *Helan Online wins Ifeng Best Partner Award*. Source can be found: <https://www.rnw.org/articles/helan-online-wins-ifeng-best-partner-award>

around major governmental decisions at the regional or national level, democracy, human rights conditions, corruption, poverty, judicial system, urban design, environmental challenges, social morality, religion, food safety, housing problems, human trafficking, prostitution, flaws in current educational system and such.

Information (usually critical) on these topics is presented, in purpose of letting the audience have a better knowledge of issues that concern their everyday life interest and motivating them to stand up for their own rights, once encountering injustice.

-Speak about the world

This section discusses the question “*how does China locate itself in the world*”. The question has a global connotation that China is no longer isolated in the international system. What happens in China has a definite impact on the rest of the globe and vice versa. That is why it is of great importance for the Chinese citizens to have stronger global awareness. In line with the intention to increase the global awareness, in particular for the Chinese audience who are able to go out of the country as often as they wish, articles with rich and interesting content and visual aids are published on this session. By reading these articles, the audiences in China are given an opportunity to get informed about the outside world and the linkage between China and the other countries. Furthermore, by commenting or conducting another written piece, the Internet readers are also allowed to voice their own opinions in relevance to the content of the articles.

-Life in the Netherlands

The mission of Helanonline is also to promote the relation between the Dutch and the Chinese. The Netherlands has always been a popular destination for the Chinese tourists. Therefore, it is also important for the website to notify the Chinese audiences about what happens in the Dutch society. Interesting written pieces about the Dutch, ranging from politics, economics, culture to personal life stories that reflect the core of the development of the society, can be easily found on this session.

-Love and sex

Love and Sex session is one that produces articles that are highly relevant to the rights of social minority groups in both the Netherlands and China. The social minority groups here in particular refer to the minority who enjoy very limited sexual rights, such as prostitutes and LGBT people.

-Youth in China and the Netherlands

Young people are always the leading force of social change. The ideas the younger generations have and the actions they take to change the world are vital for the development of society. Nowadays, more and more youth are engaged in social media as part of their everyday life. For this reason, Helanonline is a good platform where the youth in China and the Netherlands are connected for further exchange of positive and passionate thinking about the world. Here, articles can be found about how teenagers and young adults in both countries seek their way to participate in social events and to voice their opinions on global issues.

-Cultural and social trends

This session covers a relatively broad range of subjects that are considered to represent the popular cultures or new social trends in both China and the rest of the world. Content production for this session gives the Chinese audiences a clearer picture of the latest cultural and social trends in China and other parts of the world and how they are interconnected in a global background.

-China in perspective of the Dutch

‘China from the Dutch perspective’ is a section that is interesting for the Chinese Internet users to see the “China from a non-Chinese perspective”. In this session, articles written on major events in China by the mainstream Dutch news media are translated and published. By reading these articles and extra information attached, the Chinese audiences are enabled to look into the issues from a different perspective and more critical thinking will be encouraged.

6.3. A successful story of the Helan Online platform in China

World major media platforms have never stopped trying to engage themselves in the local Chinese market, but with the tightened-up policy that empowered the Chinese government control on the circulation of domestic and foreign information, non-Chinese media platforms find it more and more formidable to break through the policy barriers to deliver news in their respective perspectives. Despite the failure of launching themselves in China by other big news media in Europe and America, such as BBC News, Deutsche Welle and the Voice of America, through the maze of the powerful censorship, the Helan Online platform has succeeded in raising critical questions on issues towards the Chinese audiences in China.

Mirror or ‘story telling’ strategy⁹³ is the core to the success of the Helan Online Platform, which reveals the situation in China by mirroring the current affairs in the Netherlands or in Europe. By not directly referring to the problems in China, on the one hand, the Chinese audiences are left a lot of room to think critically in comparison with what happens in rest of the world. On the other, this strategy makes the way the platform approaches the audiences less aggressive, which also protects it from being blacklisted by the government surveillance. In addition to its successful information delivery, the content on Helan Online is republished on a regular basis by state media that includes The People’s Daily and China Radio. With the recognition

⁹³ RNW Media Annual Report 2015, pp. 15, source can be found:

https://www.rnw.org/sites/flagship.rnw.org/files/annual_report_rnw_2015_en_0.pdf. A brief explanation on “mirror strategy”: “The ‘mirror technique’ has been further developed. This involves describing situations in the Netherlands and Europe that can be related directly to current discussion topics in China. The hypothesis is that ‘mirroring’ the approach to a particular problem leads to new insights into the underlying situations and into the motives of others, thereby creating greater understanding among young people. The focus is on human rights issues.”

of Chinese state media, the content of the platform has gained more attention and possibility from a broader audience.⁹⁴

6.4. Problems of Helan Online Platform

Due to the Eurocrisis, the government in the Netherlands introduced a widespread austerity programme to balance out the national budgets. Higher education, the arts, defence and public broadcasting system were all undergone major financial setbacks and reorganization. The Dutch Government then decided to cut down 70% of the budget of RNW, from the initial 46 million euros to the current 14 million.⁹⁵ A year later in 2013, instead of by the Education and Culture Ministry, RNW has been sponsored by the Dutch Foreign Ministry.⁹⁶ At the moment, due to the major cuts in its funds from the Foreign Ministry, the primary mission of RNW is no longer to provide information for overseas Dutch people or to inform the rest of the world a realistic image of the Netherlands. Its primary mission is to engage itself in countries or areas where free speech is strictly limited and to promote freedom of speech in these countries and areas. The Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte commented what RNW has done during a press conference after the cabinet meeting, “Radio Netherlands Worldwide will limit itself to one role, promoting free speech. I think the other tasks RNW performs are nice, valuable, but not enough to finance them with public money.”⁹⁷

With now limited funding from the Dutch Government, RNW is going through a difficult time for reconstruction. Many employees and projects that have been going on for years are seriously affected. Helan Online platform is among these affected

⁹⁴ RNW Archive: <https://www.rnw.org/activities/helan-online>

⁹⁵ RNW Archive: <http://archieff.wereldomroep.nl/english/bulletin/million-euro-golden-handshake-rnw-director>.

⁹⁶ RNW Archive: <https://www.rnw.org/archive/radio-netherlands-worldwide-refocus-slashed-budget>

⁹⁷ RNW Archive: <https://www.rnw.org/archive/radio-netherlands-worldwide-refocus-slashed-budget>

projects and it has to give up what it has done in past few years to adjust itself to the reorganization. When RNW was still funded by the Education and Culture Ministry, Helan Online received sufficient funds every year to operate as a platform that introduced Dutch culture, politics and economics to the audiences in China. The content of the website was produced by highly qualified young authors, educators and journalists. It not only provided the audiences with a very good perspective to get to know about the Netherlands and how its society works, but also a very good source of information from which the Chinese could learn to observe and judge what happens in the Chinese society. After the budget cuts, however, the Helan Online platform was forced to give up content production with a strong human focus, but to steer into the direction of content on the Dutch industries with a very technical smack. It focuses less on culture, human rights issues or democracy, but more on industrial innovation. The reason for the Platform to do so is directly linked to the budget cuts and by advertising the Dutch industries, more attention from the Chinese investors will be drawn and more financial opportunities will come for the organization. Otherwise, once the projects that have been operated in China cannot attract enough funding from what they do, the Dutch Foreign Ministry does not offer extra money for them to continue, these projects have to be all shut down.

For the sake of the continuation of the Helan Online Platform, the change of its content focus does not seem to have brought a drastic change, but for the audiences the platform has attracted, it is another story. The traditional followers of the Platform on all social media branches, who are more interested in the Dutch culture, politics and society in China, have lost a very valuable source of information. Also, the primary mission of RNW has to sit in line with what is decided by the Dutch Foreign Ministry, which is to promote free speech in countries and areas where the freedom of speech is breached by the authorities to a dangerous level. In content wise, the transformation of the Helan Online Platform, from focusing on humanities to business, is now farther away from this mission by only producing content on industries. This dramatic shift in its content urges the Chinese Team at RNW to find another way to

comply what they do with what is requested by the Dutch Foreign Ministry. Currently, they are going to set up another project that concerns female rights against domestic violence in China. In order to put the new project into actual operation, sustainable partnership with local NGOs specialized in domestic violence is urgently required. However, the leading women's legal aid center in Beijing, known as Zhongze, which has already signed a final contract to establish partnership with the RNW new project, was forced suddenly to shut down by the Chinese authorities in January 2016.⁹⁸ Therefore, the new-born project at RNW Media was interrupted and postponed till a new partner organization was found. After Zhongze being shut down, more and more foreign-funded NGO's all over the country have been repressed.⁹⁹ The repression on NGO's in China makes it even more difficult for RNW Media to forge a sustainable partnership with a partner organization in China, which is needed in order to put the new project into operation.

The new situation that RNW Chinese Desk has encountered is also encountered by other language teams in the organization. This means that Chinese-speaking audiences are not the only ones that have been affected by the budget cuts of RNW, but also a wider range of audiences RNW used to target at all over the world. RNW Media is a major Dutch organization that devotes itself to the promotion of cultural exchange. The budget cuts on such a successful organization that goes in line with cultural diplomacy does not seem to be a wise decision, as cultural diplomacy does bring long-term benefits to a country. In the following Chapter, the implications of RNW budget cuts on EU cultural policy will be discussed.

⁹⁸ Didi Kristen Tatlow, *China Is Said to Force Closing of Women's Legal Aid Center*, *The New York Times*, January 29, 2016.

⁹⁹ Jiang Jie and Chen Heying, *Women's legal aid center in Beijing closed*, *Global Times*, February 2, 2016.

7. RNW budget cuts and its implications on EU Cultural diplomacy

In October 2015 the annual meeting GD7 was held in the headquarters of RNW Media in Hilversum, the Netherlands. Chief editors and fellow colleagues from VOA (Voice of America), BBC News, DW (Deutsche Welle), RFI (Radio France International) and RFA (Radio Free Asia) came to participate in discussions about the current situation of foreign media platforms in China. During the three-day meeting, the current problems these media platforms have been facing were put on the table and possible solutions were being discussed.¹⁰⁰ All the Chinese websites or international websites of these top media platforms in America or in Western Europe have been blocked by the Chinese Government under the Internet censorship, except from the Helan Online Platform from RNW in the Netherlands. Due to its less aggressive approach of story telling to the audience in China, here is little doubt that RNW Media is a very effective and promising media platform that connects the Chinese and the Dutch as well as the Europeans. Nonetheless, the platform now has been given up merely because of its own financial decision in the Dutch Cabinet. The former foreign minister Bernard Bot considered the decision made by the new cabinet as incomprehensible, as he pointed out that the financial cuts on the budget of RNW do not comply with the long-term interests of the Dutch citizens and the Netherlands.¹⁰¹ The Editor-in-Chief of RNW, Rik Rensen also saw the decision as unreasonable because Radio Netherlands Worldwide has made a remarkable contribution in multiple languages round the clock, which has served as a bridge for tens of millions of people around the world to get themselves connected to the Netherlands. According to him, this budget cut is a backward move.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Information about the annual GD7 Meeting was collected by author of this thesis as an intern during the meeting and the use of this information has been approved by RNW Media, as the purpose for this internship is to collect relevant information for the thesis.

¹⁰¹ RNW Archive: <https://www.rnw.org/archive/radio-netherlands-worldwide-refocus-slashed-budget>

¹⁰² RNW Archive: <https://www.rnw.org/archive/radio-netherlands-worldwide-refocus-slashed-budget>

The Eurocrisis has indeed imposed a major strain on the economy of the Netherlands and an austerity programme could not be avoided. Meanwhile the European Union is seeking more opportunities with big emerging powers in the world to bring in new dynamics to boost its declining economic situation and cultural relations are being one of the major source of these expected dynamics. So to see, the decision made by the Dutch Government on RNW Media and its consequences that are seen so far do not seem to work in line with EU's agenda. It is well understandable that, for the current economic issues the Dutch Government has to deal with, they were forced to make a way out for the payment and balance just because it could simply not afford these projects anymore. Yet the austerity in a promising and successful cultural diplomacy project indicates a discord between the Netherlands and the EU in the regard of cultural policies. This indication leads to two questions: what causes such a atomization in cultural agenda's between the member states and the EU and what is the EU supposed to do about it to improve its cultural diplomacy? These two questions will be discussed at large in the following paragraphs of this chapter.

7.1. The European External Action Service

The European External Action Service, officially launched in 2011, is the diplomatic service of the European Union, which serves to assist the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to guarantee and promote the interest of the EU and its citizen in the world. It works closely with EU's international missions in the fields of diplomacy, trade, human rights, development and humanitarian aid. To some extent, the launch of the EEAS is an achievement of the Union in enhancing its role of culture in external relations. The RNW Media budget cuts, however, has instead manifested a cultural role of the EU that is less than effective and sufficient. The European Commission and the empowered High Representative brought about by the Lisbon Treaty are expected to lead the EU's cultural policy into more coherence, effectiveness and closer cooperation. As a matter of fact, most foreign policy still fall

under the competences of member states and the crucial decision-making authority is still preserved at the national level. This has made the EEAS mostly an invisible and reactive bystander in this regards as it lacks strategic focus and a clear policy that underpin its cultural role in the EU.¹⁰³

To seek bigger role of leadership in EU foreign policy, ‘culture’ is the key word for the European Commission and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to renovate the current position of the EEAS. Without casting aside the conventional ways of promoting culture, the EEAS has started to work closer with industrialized countries in the dimension of People-to-People contact, so as to boost mutual understanding between cultures and exchange of knowledge. This part of the Instrument for Cooperation with Industrialized Countries covers areas of North America, Asia-Pacific and the Gulf region and its related programmes are primarily linked to the field of education that includes research and innovation.¹⁰⁴ These policies, to a large degree, have created more room for the future improvement of EU’s cultural diplomacy.

7.2. Why does the EU need such a Media Platform in China

First of all, the current fragmentation and incoherence in the processes of decision-making and policy follow-ups have notably hindered the European project, which has become more noticeable after the outbreak of Eurozone crisis in 2010. Since then, the reputation of the EU has been tarnished in times of crisis and the Union has been surrounded by instability. Internally, according to Eurostat, the declining interest among the public in Europe has been detected and their perception

¹⁰³ *Review of the Balance of Competences between the United Kingdom and the European Union*, HM Government, 2013, pp. 37. Source can be found: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/227437/2901086_Foreign_Policy_acc.pdf.

¹⁰⁴ Source can be found: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/fpi/what-we-do/ici_en.htm.

of the EU is becoming more and more skeptical and negative.¹⁰⁵ These negative opinions towards the EU include inefficient bureaucracy, paternalism, quibble policy-makers, fatigue and cumbersomeness brought by its size extension and lack of transparency and democracy.¹⁰⁶ Externally, according to a series surveys conducted by the Rasch Analysis solely on the external perceptions of the EU, public opinions outside the Union from pre-crisis period are said to be favourable and positive towards the EU. The pre-crisis EU was generally perceived as ‘attractive’.¹⁰⁷ Yet, as a global actor in comparison with the US and China, the EU is reported to have been granted a lower level of importance.¹⁰⁸ Public perceptions from post-crisis period indicate that, regardless of Eurozone crisis, in the eyes of general publics, the EU remains to be a ‘positive light’ that has set good examples in democratic practices, human rights issues, social development and good governance.¹⁰⁹ However, a visible deterioration of the EU has indeed been observed in worldwide public opinions and the EU is not perceived by global audiences as the most favoured region.¹¹⁰

The perception of EU in China, which is a new powerful international actor and one of the EU’s most important strategic counterparts in world politics, is also very

¹⁰⁵ Kathinka Dittrich van Weringh and Ernst Schürmann, *Does Europe Need a Foreign Cultural Policy*, More Europe-external cultural relations, March, 2012. Source can be found:

<http://www.moreeurope.org/?q=content/does-europe-need-foreign-cultural-policy>

¹⁰⁶ Kathinka Dittrich van Weringh and Ernst Schürmann, *Does Europe Need a Foreign Cultural Policy?*

February 2004, source can be found:

<http://www.moreeurope.org/sites/default/files/Does%20Europe%20need%20a%20Foreign%20Cultural%20Policy.pdf>, pp.5.

¹⁰⁷ Edited by Natalia Chaban and Martin Holland, *Communicating Europe in Times of Crisis*, The European Union in International Affairs Series, Palgrave Macmillian, 2014, pp. 148-152.

¹⁰⁸ Edited by Natalia Chaban and Martin Holland, *Communicating Europe in Times of Crisis*, The European Union in International Affairs Series, Palgrave Macmillian, 2014, pp. 150-151.

¹⁰⁹ Edited by Natalia Chaban and Martin Holland, *Communicating Europe in Times of Crisis*, The European Union in International Affairs Series, Palgrave Macmillian, 2014, pp. 153.

¹¹⁰ Edited by Natalia Chaban and Martin Holland, *Communicating Europe in Times of Crisis*, The European Union in International Affairs Series, Palgrave Macmillian, 2014, pp. 154.

crucial. Despite that the Chinese elites highly recognize the significance of the EU, they have their concerns over the discord in the EU over how to move forward in difficult times. Worries in new perceptions are shown that the EU no longer serves to be a good model for the development of China in terms of political system and social welfare. The Chinese elites are concerned that the essential role of the EU in international affairs and the existing relation between the China and the EU will be negatively affected as the EU continues to be discredited in its disunity.¹¹¹ Moreover, most ordinary people in China do not understand the EU very well or are very poorly informed about it. They still have quite limited knowledge of and interest in the EU in spite of their positive perception of Europeans.¹¹² This reality is somewhat to the contrary of what the EU aims to achieve – to bring in new dynamics for its stagnated economy and to have a bigger say politically in world politics by increasing its soft power. Negative perceptions of the EU have become increasingly overwhelming for the development of the European project. Many stronger sentiments that are against the EU have been triggered by the withdrawal of membership of the UK, one of the most powerful member states. The challenges that the EU leaders have been confronted with have reflected two crucial problems whose impact on the Union cannot be underestimated in the longer run. The first is that the awareness of European identity has lagged behind the deepened and extended process of European integration. Hereby, awareness of European identity does not refer to one that eliminates the varieties of social or cultural elements in member states, but an awareness of sense of belonging to the EU and awareness of the actual benefits or convenience in everyday life of citizens brought by alliance and cooperation between member states. The second is that the current European integration is stagnated. In order to keep the current success of European integration from being at stake, the EU needs to improve these two realities so that it can increase its charm both within and

¹¹¹ Eva Schilling, *When the Rising Dragon Sees Fading Stars: China's view of the European Union*, CEPS Special Reports, No.72, November, 2012, pp. 3-5.

¹¹² Edited by Natalia Chaban and Martin Holland, *Communicating Europe in Times of Crisis*, The European Union in International Affairs Series, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 153-154.

outside the Union and promote its status in world politics. Therefore, there is a pressing need for the EU to take measures to improve its cultural diplomacy towards the audiences in its strategic partners, in our case, China.

Secondly, cultural diversity in the EU and its implications have long been at the center of the conflict occurred during the integration process, but the protection of cultural diversity and the management of the conflicts it has created have only been passively addressed by restricting the competences of the EU institutions. The failure of a common constitution in 2003 has clearly manifested the fear of member states for a single European identity that might water-down the uniqueness of various European cultures. Minority cultures feel in particular threatened by more powerful majority cultures.¹¹³ More than two decades later, agreeing to a common policy that is tightly linked to culture and identity still receives enormous resistance among states leaders. Although in 2010 the European External Actions Service was launched, the EU has not yet been granted enough power to influence substantially over the areas of external policies. The decision-making still remain primarily as a member states' competence. Indeed, issues brought up by cultural cooperation revolve themselves namely around the old questions of European identity, European citizenship, coherence in policies between member states and the EU and the legitimacy of the intervention of the EU institutions in foreign policies. Certainly, European cultures cannot be perceived as a homogeneous cultural identity, yet it does not mean that they do not share sufficiently homogenous features in their cultures. In the course of history, European states and their cultures are intertwined with one another. Although European culture developed with a complex range of elements throughout the centuries, there is little doubt, due to the far-reaching influence from Greco-Roman culture and Judaeo-Christian culture, that a lot of similarities are shared in modern

¹¹³ Armin von Bogdandy, *The European Constitution and European Identity: Text and Subtext of the Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe*, I.CON Volume 3, Numbers 2&3: Special Issue May, 2005, pp. 295-315, pp. 312.

European cultures in terms of language, religion, democratic polity, catering culture and traditional customs. In the 18th century, Europe was the cradle of the Industrial Revolution and thus became the economic center of the world. After the Second World War in 20th century, Europe saw its decline until the European integration. European culture has laid a solid foundation for the modern world history, of which, humanism and Christian Culture are two essential elements that have deeply rooted in every European culture.¹¹⁴ By establishing an EU media platform that aims to present the EU to the world, therefore, not only the Union is then given an opportunity to promote what it has accomplished in the processes of European integration, but also its member states are able to effectively introduce themselves to the audiences both as an unique European country and as part of Europe.

Thirdly, the example of Helan Online platform from RNW, regardless of its discontinuation, has a rather successful approach to the Chinese audiences and its impact on the young educated adults in China is obviously seen. Personally, I have also been a long-term follower of the Helan Online Platform even before I came to the Netherlands more than three years ago. This platform provides me with information I am in need of for choosing a destination country in Europe for further education. The more I read about the Netherlands on the Platform, the more I know about the climate, the lifestyle, the mentality, the norm and values that are appreciated in the Dutch society. Moreover, during my internship at RNW Media, as an assistant of the chief editor of the Helan Online Platform, I received regularly every week feedback regarding the content we produced from the Chinese audiences. Interestingly, quite a few followers of the Platform were pleased to find out that Dutch is spoken in the Netherlands but not German and through this platform they are better informed about Europe. As we can see, a media platform as such has a great deal of potential in terms of cultural diplomacy.

¹¹⁴ Edited by Florian Kläger and Gerd Bayer, *Early Modern Constructions of Europe: Literature, Culture, History*, Routledge, 2016. The narratives are based on the consultation of the book.

Last but not least, the EU should benefit from it, if the European Union develops a media platform like the Helan Online. To some extent, I assume, it should help increase the awareness of 'Europe' across both Europe and the globe, in particular towards the important partner countries with which the EU seek cooperation currently and in the near future. Internally, if such a platform is aimed at European audiences, the scale of it will be much bigger, thus expertise of different languages and other relevant fields is required, which is also a promising international work opportunity for educated youth and young adults in Europe. These youth and young adults are the generation that functions as the future of the European integration. By participating in an endeavor like this, they will be given a chance to experience first-handedly the beneficial output of the European project, to gain and develop new insights into the EU and to involve more other young people to forge a powerful force that helps the EU spread its values and norms and increase its charm to the outside world. Externally, the practice of Helan Online Platform proves that when dealing with media censorship in countries or areas where freedom of speech is severely sabotaged by the local governments, the less aggressive approach that a platform as such has used to convey information to the audiences is rather successful and effective. Besides, such a platform can facilitate more direct and intensive communication between the younger generations in Europe and that in China in our case. An international network can be built up in such a manner.

8. Conclusions

Cultural diplomacy is an independent diplomacy tool that interacts between culture and politics, the purpose of which is to help shape government agenda and to achieve foreign policy goals through soft power resources such as values, norms and other cultural elements. By fostering unofficial contact between people, it has become an essential component of foreign policy, which compliments the official agenda of the government. The positive impact of cultural relations can be very powerful and

far-reaching. In recent years, elites in China and in the EU have an increased awareness of the necessity of investing in cultural sectors and using cultural diplomacy to enhance their international role. Strategically, they seek opportunities to consolidate their existing cultural relations with each other. In regards of what has been achieved in terms of the EU-China cultural cooperation, the EU-China High-Level People-to-People Dialogue is considered to be a milestone, as it clearly states the importance of cultural exchange in foreign relations and shows the determination of the EU and China in deepening their cultural cooperation in fields of education, tourism and science. What is outstanding about the Dialogue is that leaders of both parties also point out that in order to encourage people-to-people contact between Europe and China, a benign Internet environment is required, where unofficial communication happens everyday beyond the restrictions of time and space. Smooth Internet communication is crucial to the follow-up of the EU-China High-Level People-to-People Dialogue. In that case, media plays a significant role here. However, in face of the strict media censorship in China, the EU needs to find out a solution, through which, unofficial contact can be better conducted on Internet between the Europeans and the Chinese. Regarding such a solution, there is certainly a successful model to be consulted. This refers to the Helan Online Platform at RNW Media in the Netherlands. As is mentioned previously in the thesis, although the contribution of the Platform to cultural exchange between the Dutch and the Chinese is notable., it was forced to shut down due to austerity policy. Such a decision made by the Dutch policy-makers does have some valuable implications on EU's cultural diplomacy. One is that the existence of a worsening disunity in decision-making does not act in favour of the EU. Taken into account the fact that there is rising Euroscepticism across and outside Europe and its possible negative impact on EU's future, the member states do need to cooperate more closely in culture to improve the current situation. Establishing a media platform towards the Chinese by using the Helan Online Platform as a model, in that case, can be where a closer cooperation is brought on. The reasons why the EU is in need of such a project are summed up in the following three points. First, cultural diplomacy is vital part of foreign policy and the

discord in decision-making in this regard prohibits the EU from enhancing its international role. Second, China is a strategic partner of the EU, the cultural relations with which is one of its agenda priorities and has great potential. Last, so a media platform is not only where presents itself towards the Europeans and towards the world, but where new dynamics can be brought in for further European integration.

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