# Monitoring Russia-EU Cooperation in Culture

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## Introduction

The European Commission’s European Agenda for Culture[[1]](#footnote-2) unveiled in May 2007, is based on three principles: cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue; culture as a catalyst for creativity; and culture as a key component in international relations. As part of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and the Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions[[2]](#footnote-3), the European Union must play a new and more dynamic role in international connections, as well as integrate European culture with other regions and countries as a vitally important part in the continent’s external relations.

The EU's Culture Programme (2007-2013)[[3]](#footnote-4), which states strengthening intercultural dialogue as its main goal, is one of the vehicles for implementing the European Strategy for Culture.

In accordance with act 5-1 decision[[4]](#footnote-5) No 1855/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of Europe 12 December 2006 establishing the Culture Programme (2007-2013), participation is open to all EU member countries and candidates (Turkey, Croatia and the Federal Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), as well as to West-Balkan countries pursuant to procedures laid out for these countries by framework agreements for participating in EU programmes (Serbia), provided that a Memorandum is signed with these countries; so far Croatia, the Federal Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and Serbia have signed such memoranda with the EU. The Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission and Montenegro in November 2009 signed a Memorandum of Understanding that enables the latter to participate in the Culture Programme (2007-2013), and, in turn, European operators will be able to work with Montenegrin partners starting in 2010. The EU’s strategy is focused on the vital role of culture and international connections, so it is not fortuitous that the Culture Programme is the first European programme to include Montenegro since gaining its independence in 2006.

The current Partnership and Cooperation Agreement[[5]](#footnote-6) between Russia and the European Union, however, **does not provide for the Russian Federation take part in the Culture Programme of the European Union**. Having come into force on December 1, 1997, this was initially an agreement over ten years that is automatically extended annually, starting in 2007, should both decide not to pull out of it. Now, both Russia and the EU are panning out a new agreement.

The EU and Russia agreed to enforce their partnership during a 2003 summit in St. Petersburg by creating four “C**ommon Spaces**[[6]](#footnote-7)as part of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. The fourth Common Space on science and education, **including cultural aspects,** sets out to develop cooperation in research, education and culture, using exchange programmes as one of the means for doing so. A package of Road Maps[[7]](#footnote-8), including the necessary measures for implementation of the four Common Spaces, was adopted during the Moscow 2005 summit.

The “Institutional Building Partnership Programe (IBPP): Supporting Partnership Initiatives in Culture”[[8]](#footnote-9) was produced to support initiatives in the area of culture and is a part of the EU-Russia’s Cooperation Programme. The Delegation of the EU to Russia has been running contests for partnership projects annually since 2007.

Moreover, the Russia-EU cultural partnership is being carried out as part of the Northern Dimension Working Programme[[9]](#footnote-10) and the Cross Border Cooperation: Neighbourhood Programmes under Tacis[[10]](#footnote-11), both of which include the culture and protection of historical heritage. Both of these initiatives are oriented to North-West Russia. These are the current legal bases for the Russia-EU cultural partnership.

## Monitoring Russia’s Cultural Cooperation with the European Union

Creating a programme’s national contact point is one of the conditions for participating in the EU's Culture Programme (2007-2013). These points, which are set up across all EU member countries and the majority of other states taking part in the Culture Programme, are responsible for disseminating programme information, recruiting as many countries and specialists as possible to take part in it, supporting information exchange with national institutions of culture, establishing contacts between various European Community programme participants and providing links to other sources of information on the EU's activities.

Since Russia is unable to participate in the Culture Programme (2007-2013), there is currently no national contact point in the country. Running cultural exchanges and reaching other Road-Map goals are made much more difficult because there is practically no information distributed to Russia's professional communities on topics such as cultural partnership with European countries, strategies, policy, cultural programmes and instruments for cooperation. Whether through the print press or Internet, people can find information about only separate international events at the time they are being held.

A Russia-EU Meeting of Specialists on implementing the Road Map’s fourth common space (culture) was organized as part of the Finnish Presidency in the EU and was held September 18-19, 2006 in **Kajaani**. That was followed up by a meeting of specialists in Moscow in 2006, where the European side expressed its desire to create a national contact point in Russia.

Therefore, in 2009 the Russian Ministry of Culture initiated the Monitoring of the Russia -Europe Cooperation in cultural area, with the Centre on Problems of informatisation in the Sphere of Culture (Centre PIC) having become the coordinator of the project.

It was decided to review the Russia-Europe culture partnership in a comprehensive, rather than isolated, manner, including Russia’s cooperation with the EU, the Council of Europe and UNESCO, because all the three are connected by common cultural goals. Various aspects of international cultural cooperation are based on UNESCO conventions and declarations (e.g. the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions), also there are a number of joint programmes that the EU implements together with the Council of Europe and UNESCO (e.g. the joint programme “Minorities in Russia: Developing Languages, Culture, Media and Civil Society”[[11]](#footnote-12) between the EU, the Council of Europe and the Ministry of Regional Development of the Russian Federation.

The main project goals:

* Collecting, translating and analysing relevant materials on Russia's partnership with the European Union, Council of Europe and UNESCO in cultural area;
* Developing, providing information for, maintaining and providing open access to a Russia-Europe culture cooperation website.

The Russia-Europe culture cooperation website[[12]](#footnote-13) was launched as a result of this project. The site, launched in 2009 is available only in Russian now; it is intended to inform Russian specialists and the general public on the activities of the EU, Council of Europe and UNESCO in the field of culture.

The site publishes news, information on events, competitions and grants as well as key documents and publications related to the Russia-Europe culture partnership that regard cooperation with the European Union, Council of Europe and UNESCO.

The Russia-EU Culture Cooperation section covers the following topics:

* **The European Union’s Culture Strategy** (cultural diversity and cross-cultural dialogue; culture as a way to promote creativity and culture as a vital component in the EU's international cooperation);
* **Supporting EU-Russia Culture Partnership Initiatives** (an institutional development partnership programme designed to support cultural cooperation initiatives);
* **The EU's “Culture 2007-2013” Programme** (programme’s strategic initiatives: to promote **cross-border mobility** of those working in the cultural sector; to encourage the **transnational circulation** of cultural and artistic output; and to foster **intercultural dialogue**.);
* **National Contact Points** (a network of national contact points in countries participating in the EU's Culture Programme 2007-2013);
* **European Cultural Capitals** (two non-EU cities, Kiev and Istanbul, took part in the European Cultural Capital Contest 2010. The final decision for 2010 grants the following three cities the title of European Cultural Capital: Essen (Germany), Pest (Hungary) and Istanbul (Turkey), while Turku (Finland) and Tallinn (Estonia) will carry the title in 2011. Guimaraes (Portugal) and Maribor (Slovenia) will have this distinction in 2012, while 2013 will be the year for Marseilles (France) and Koshitse (Slovakia) to take over;
* **European Prizes** (prizes in cultural heritage, architecture, literature and the Border Breakers modern music prize);
* **Mobility of Artists and Art Works** (research, information, network interaction, calls for project proposals);
* **Linguistic Diversity** (EU policy, Mercator information network and the European web-portal of languages);
* **Media Programme** (Audio-visual industry support; the joint programme of the Directorates-General 'Information Society and Media' and 'Culture and Education');
* **Northern Dimension** (The programme is a part of the Russia-EU Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and includes partnership in culture);
* **Culture and Information Society Technologies** (implemented by the “Cultural Heritage and Technology Enhanced Learning”' Unit[[13]](#footnote-14) of the Directorate-General ''Information Society and Media'' of the European Commission).

The “Cooperation Russia-Europe in the Field of Culture” website could serve as a base for founding a national contact point for the Culture Programme as a Russian link to the network of European country contact points.

This project can be further developed through designing new sections for the website in Russian and preparing its English-language version. The latter will be meant for European users, mainly cultural experts who are going to expand cultural ties with Russia.

## Russia-EU Cooperation in Digital Culture

When issues of Russia-EU cooperation in culture are discussed on a political level, the two parties involved are the “Culture and Education” Directorate-General representing Europe and the Russian Ministry of Culture representing Russia. The activities of the “Cultural Heritage and Technology Enhanced Learning” Unit of the Directorate-General “Information Society and Media” of the European Commission usually are not taken into account here. **Cooperation in digital (electronic) culture,** however, especially relating to information society development in Russia and the rest of the world, is one of the most important facets in Russia-EU cooperation.

The Centre PIC has been a full partner in a number of European projects on information and communication technology in culture. These projects, aimed at “information and communications technology”, were carried out through the European Commission Framework Programmes for research and development.

The MINERVA PLUS (Ministerial Network for Valorising Activities in Digitisation), geared towards the Ministries of Culture cooperation in digitizing and offering access to cultural heritage, was one of these projects. The Russian Ministry of Culture has taken extensive participation in this project, while its representative, Department of Libraries Head Yevgeny Kuzmin, worked as an observer in the European National Representatives Group from 2003 to 2005. The Ministry of Culture still continues to support Russia's cooperation with European countries as part of the MINERVA international network. The Centre PIC maintains the “MINERVA PLUS in Russia”[[14]](#footnote-15) website and participates in work on the MINERVA international network, these activities are financed only by Russia.

The Ministry of Culture’s participation was made possible by the current Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, that gives **Russia the right to take part in Framework Programmes with financing.** The agreement, however, did not provision for the country’s full-fledged participation in other programmes such as eContent, eContentPlus[[15]](#footnote-16) and their successor CIP[[16]](#footnote-17) (Competitiveness and Innovation Programme), which as a result vastly hinders the creation of a united Russia-Europe information space and the use of leading European technology, standards, thesauruses, etc. in Russian cultural area. These are the very programmes that prove to be the most attractive for Russian culture centers, since they focus on issues regarding the creation of information resources on culture, as well as access to them.

From 2009 the Centre PIC is a participant in the European project ATHENA[[17]](#footnote-18) (eContentPlus programme) to assist cultural institutions, museums mostly, in preparing and presenting their digital information resources in the European digital library EUROPEANA[[18]](#footnote-19). The ATHENA project was initiated by the MINERVA network, while the Centre PIC was invited to take part in this new undertaking as a longtime MINERVA partner.

Realising the significance of Russian culture around the world, it is in the ATHENA and EUROPEANA coordinators’ best interests to enrich EUROPEANA content with Russian information resources on culture.

EUROPEANA is seen as strategic to implementing the “i2010: Digital Libraries”[[19]](#footnote-20) European initiative. Many school children, students and young people in general get the impression that should any kind of material not be available online, then it does not exist at all. And this is exactly what the European Commission was driving at when it began work on the European digital library EUROPEANA. The national parliaments of all EU member countries are the authority in digitising their information resources. The European Commission for ten years now has been stimulating the integration and exchange of digital information on culture, as well as supporting numerous culture-oriented research and development projects. Google Books became the trailblazer in digitising and offering free access to over ten million books from U.S. libraries. Therefore the European Commission decided that uniting digitisation projects being done in various European countries was a necessity in order to make the continent's cultural and intellectual heritage available on the Internet alongside with Google's English-language resources.

The European Commission went further than just digitising books: it decided to bring together resources from libraries, museums, archives, sound archives and television within a single information space, since cultural information resources are enriched when available in one place. Users of today want to be able to read a text, to look at images, to hear sound and to watch video on whatever topic they are interested in, all in one information space. All of this can be done in social networks; therefore people of course want the very same services from cultural heritage and education websites.

**EUROPEANA** is presented as the main global-network search engine offering information resources from European museums, libraries and archives. It had a total of five million data entries as of December 2009. The European Digital Library should have up to ten million data entries by summer 2010, followed by further plans to increase data entries at faster rates.

EUROPEANA is already getting a lot of interest from users all over the world. Moreover, when its fully-functioning website, offering millions of digital resources, will be launched, the library will be the equivalent of Google for European culture that users will use for cultural information searches.

Not having Russian cultural content included into EUROPEANA boils down, for many internet users, to not integrating it as a part of European culture. The Russian Minister of Culture Alexander Avdeev, understanding this, stressed in a resolution on a Centre PIC letter the importance of Russian culture institutions active participation in the work that promotes Russian culture abroad through, for example, the **EUROPEANA** and **ATHENA** projects.

As a result of the activities of Centre PIC, five Russian museums and one archive in 2009 expressed their intent to ingest their digital information resources into EUROPEANA; at the moment, the technical details are currently being ironed out and the data-transfer preparation is being worked through. The ATHENA project is being implemented as part of the eContentPlus programme, just as are other projects supporting content gathering for EUROPEANA, meaning that Russian culture organisations cannot be financed by these projects' budgets. This creates significant hurdles to making Russian culture widely represented in the largest cultural-heritage catalogue in Europe.

As members of the Conference of European National Libraries foundation (CENL) and participants in “The European Library”, a project initiated by the CENL, The Russian State Library and The Russian National Library will offer their own digital information resources in EUROPEANA, paying a participation fee out of their own budgets.

### Conclusions

We believe that cooperation in the sphere of culture serves as the basis for mutual understanding and trust between nations and governments that is necessary for cooperation in all other areas. Having robust and fruitful cooperation in the sphere of culture gives us hope for expanding connections in other areas as well.

The European strategy sees culture to be an essential component in international connections. Despite there having been many important and exciting projects implemented over the past years as part of the focused Russia-EU culture partnership, the cultural sphere remains underappreciated. These projects were carried out mainly as part of initiatives focused on Russia, and Russia was not adequately included in the European culture process. And even the Road Map of the common space of science and education, **including cultural aspects,** puts culture on the back burner.

**The following is necessary when discussing a new Russia-EU agreement:**

* **Putting cultural cooperation in a separate article;**
* **Providing for Russia’s full-fledged participation in all EU culture programmes and initiatives;**
* **Including all programmes encompassing digital culture and digital libraries.**
1. http://eur-lex.europa.eu/smartapi/cgi/sga\_doc?smartapi!celexapi!prod!DocNumber&lg=en&type\_doc=COMfinal&an\_doc=2007&nu\_doc=0242&model=guicheti [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL\_ID=35405&URL\_DO=DO\_TOPIC&URL\_SECTION=201.html [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/doc411\_en.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOHtml.do?uri=OJ%3AL%3A2006%3A372%3ASOM%3AEN%3AHTML [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. http://www.delrus.ec.europa.eu/en/p\_243.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. http://www.delrus.ec.europa.eu/en/p\_494.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. http://www.delrus.ec.europa.eu/en/images/pText\_pict/494/road%20maps.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. http://www.delrus.ec.europa.eu/en/p\_634.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. http://www.delrus.ec.europa.eu/en/p\_225.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. http://www.delrus.ec.europa.eu/en/p\_522.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=MA76(2009)&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=DC&BackColorInternet=F5CA75&BackColorIntranet=F5CA75&BackColorLogged=A9BACE [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. www.rus-eu-culture.ru [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ict/telearn-digicult/home\_en.html [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. www.minervaplus.ru [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. http://ec.europa.eu/information\_society/activities/econtentplus/index\_en.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. http://ec.europa.eu/cip/index\_en.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. http://www.athenaeurope.org/ [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. www.europeana.eu [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. http://ec.europa.eu/information\_society/activities/digital\_libraries/index\_en.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-20)