

Iryna Sukhorolska,

PhD, associate professor,

Department of Political Science and International Relations,

Lviv Polytechnic National University,

Lidiia Kasha,

PhD, associate professor,

Department of Electromechatronics and Computerized Electromechanical Systems,

Lviv Polytechnic National University,

Lviv, Ukraine

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ISSUES IN EU CULTURAL DIPLOMACY ¹

Globalization in various spheres, the influence of the latest information and communication technologies, the development of the post-industrial economy, the emergence of new actors in international relations caused the transformation of diplomatic activity in recent decades. Therefore, both the field of diplomatic activity and the range of actors involved in it have expanded significantly. Various forms of influence on the

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international environment and politics, which go beyond traditional diplomacy as relations between states or international organizations mainly through the contacts of their officials, are gaining more and more importance. Cultural diplomacy is one of the most important forms of such non-traditional diplomacy closely related to soft power and is aimed at achieving results in the long term. Its main goal is the establishment and spread of national culture, including values, worldview, and language. It is implemented, usually, through cultural events (exhibitions, presentations, concerts, festivals, visits of prominent figures), programs of cultural exchanges and joint international projects [7].

The soft power of a state is closely related to the attractiveness of its culture and values to others and their compliance with dominant global norms. The leading member states of the European Union are among the world leaders in the field of cultural diplomacy. In particular, according to the Global Soft Power Index 2023, 10 of the 27 member states of the EU are in the top twenty both in the overall ranking and according to the Culture & Heritage criterion (the first place belongs to France, the third to Italy) [4]. This is quite predictable, because a number of European states paid considerable attention to the development and spread of their culture abroad long before it became mainstream.

However, if we consider the cultural diplomacy of the European Union itself as an international organization and an influential actor in international relations, then we will find that it is a rather new and non-standard phenomenon. The motto of the EU is “United in diversity”. So, it is not about a single culture but rather about cultural and linguistic diversity that have common roots and are closely interconnected historically. Therefore, the answer to the question of what EU cultural diplomacy should spread is not obvious. The problem here is that, despite the declarations, there is a lack of common European cultural identity within the EU as opposed to, for example, the USA [6]. Many EU citizens are sceptical of deepening European integration and are primarily attached to their own national culture. With this in mind, EU cultural diplomacy is trying to find its basis in common European values, such as freedom, democracy, tolerance, and human rights. In recent decades, the value of a clean and green environment has also taken an important

place among them. Given the significant environmental and climate challenges and the EU's efforts to become a global leader in solving them, issues of sustainable development and environmental protection have occupied an important niche in the EU's cultural diplomacy.

The implementation of EU cultural diplomacy is coordinated by the European External Action Service (EEAS). The main documents regulating this activity are the Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations (2016) and the Council conclusions on an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations and a framework for action (2019). Although these documents do not explicitly indicate environmental and climate goals within cultural diplomacy, in practice such a combination has been implemented for some time [2]. For example, within the framework of the European Spaces of Culture project, various events that included a green component were implemented in Colombia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mongolia, and Tajikistan. One of them, the conference and exhibition "Green Journey – Art and Ecology" was held in Dushanbe under the slogan "Eco-art as a response to environmental challenges". The project in Kenya "Kibera Fashion Week" tried to connect the fashion industry with the goals of sustainable development [8]. On the other hand, various cultural events have been implemented for years within the framework of the Union's global campaign called EU Green Weeks [3]. In 2020, the European Commission launched The New European Bauhaus initiative, the goal of which is to give the European Green Deal a cultural and human-centred character [5].

In addition, leading European non-governmental organizations in the field of culture are calling for a close integration of the EU's environmental and climate policies with its cultural programmes. In particular, Culture Action Europe, the European Cultural Foundation and Europa Nostra called on the EU "to fully integrate culture and cultural heritage into its actions and policies, making it an overarching strategy in analogy to the Green Deal". They called this initiative the Cultural Deal for Europe and one of its directions is aimed at the maximum realization of the cultural potential for sustainable development and full incorporation of culture into the European Green Deal [1].

Although all this activity is in its infancy, it is filled with great energy and contains considerable potential. Combining green goals with cultural diplomacy is logical and natural as both aim to achieve long-term goals, including changing public consciousness, and exerting influence beyond the EU. Such symbiosis allows not only to jointly search for options for overcoming the current crisis but also makes this process more open, democratic and exciting. And most importantly, it gradually and unobtrusively prepares people in many countries and regions for those significant transformations that await us in the near future and are connected with the urgent need to radically change the paradigm of interaction between man and nature.

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