

ANNEX 3

LATVIA

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Introduction

The report reflects upon the results of interviews conducted with various senior policy makers and practitioners in the fields of foreign relations and cultural policy. In the preparation of this work, additional study of policy documents and results of a discussion group meeting were used. The key aim of the report was to provide a contextualized review of how Latvian key players in the above mentioned field relate to the idea/proposal - to add a cultural component to the EU foreign relations. The study is the second stage of the research programme. The first stage comprised a document survey of all 25 EU Member States.

Methodologically, there were several common issues raised in all seven case studies and three questions to be answered specifically about Latvia. To the extent possible, the report attempts to answer them and adds some country specific considerations. The report begins with describing those changes that have taken place at the level of policy documents since the end of the last year. There are two main developments – the adoption of New Strategic Guidelines of Cultural Policy (entitled National State) and the Strategy of Latvia's Participation in the EU. Since the national level documents have been accepted by the Cabinet of Ministers (on April 18th 2006 and expected June 2006 respectively) and they were developed through a wide range of consultations with social partners (experts, cultural organizations, representatives of other ministries, NGOs), they reflect the current state of the art thinking in this field rather well. The second part of the report portrays various views of the key players in the field of cultural policy, expressed in one to one interviews¹ and one group discussion. The last – third – part of the report summarises the key points in the form of the answers to the main research questions.²

I Changes in the cultural policies and or foreign relations policy documents

M i n i s t r y o f C u l t u r e

Since the completion of the first stage of the document study, a number of quite important changes have happened in the researched fields. Most of them relate to the elaboration and publication of national level development strategies.

First, A *Memorandum, Culture 2010*, was signed in August 2005 by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia and the Minister of Culture on the one hand, and by all heads of the cultural and artistic associations on the other. The Memorandum expresses the commitment to collaborate in the implementation of the strategic aims of cultural policy as formulated in the other strategic document on the state cultural policy for the period 2006 till 2015 (National State). This document was prepared by the Ministry of Culture (MofC) and now, de jure, substitutes the former national programme for 'culture' (analysed during the first stage of this report).

The Strategic Guidelines has, as one of seven key aims, the intention to facilitate dialogue and understanding among cultures and nations and enrich the cultural life of Latvia by actively participating in international cultural processes and co-operation networks.

There is a special section of this document devoted to external cultural policy. This describes the key problems and possible directions for action as well as specific tasks. The main problems identified:

- There is an absence of clearly formulated national interests in developing a cultural component in external relations. External cultural policy refers to ad hoc type activities and is based on bilateral treaties.
- The Ministry of Culture is not co-ordinating activities with cultural organizations efficiently; and the mechanisms to implement foreign cultural policy are weak and fragmented.
- There is a lack of co-operation among all the parties involved (state and municipalities, NGOs, private sector) to develop a co-ordinated external cultural policy. There is also weak co-ordination with the foreign cultural institutions and organizations operating in Latvia.
- In the documents that formulate national interests in the international field, including economic interests and visibility of the 'National Brand', culture is not recognised as an important factor. Therefore cultural products and services (and consequently their recognisability) are not purposefully created, financed and implemented.
- The State does not recognise the interests of the actors of the cultural field who are well recognised internationally.
- Issues of cultural policies are not raised to the level of the EU; willingness to influence EU decisions regarding cultural policy is almost non-existent and there is rather low interest to use the financial instruments of the EU and other Member States to advance cultural processes.
- Adopting international agreements that impact on cultural policies is not done with due care and thought; there is very weak co-ordination among state institutions regarding the ratifications and implementation of international documents touching on cultural policy matters.
- The role of culture in fostering international relations is not recognised in society, the impact of cultural collaboration in regional development is not given due attention.
- Finally, there is a rather simplistic mechanism of financing international cultural projects that slows down mobility. Pre-financing, co-financing and PPP schemes of financing are very embryonic.

D i r e c t i o n s o f a c t i o n

In co-operation with all interested parties to develop a sound, balanced and effective state external cultural policy.

- To foster a long-term cultural co-operation system based on co-production.
- To enable 'producers' of culture to develop their professionalism in the context of international competition.
- To intensify, at a high speed, the involvement of Latvia in the EU and worldwide cultural processes.
- Finally, to educate and inform Latvia's society about external cultural co-operation and opportunities provided. More specific aims are the recognisability of Latvia's cultural products and services, the increase of State financing of external cultural activities, support of the participation in international multiparty projects, the increase of the level of understanding and tolerance of other cultures in Latvia's society.

The Guidelines comprise quite detailed action points and responsibility distribution among state institutions, most notably the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MofFA). From the perspective of the eventual contribution of a cultural dimension to the EU foreign policy or external relations, some of the action points need to be stressed.

The Guidelines imply as priorities:

- The need to evaluate the success and effectiveness of existing bilateral agreements in the field of culture – both within and outside of the EU;
- Offer the expertise of Latvia's cultural practitioners to Third countries;
- Pay special attention to collaboration in the Baltic Sea region and develop a special cultural programme aimed at facilitating regional unity (period 2007-2010);
- Extend and develop cultural ties with the USA;
- On the basis of PPP, create and develop cultural exchange and media democratization mechanisms with the CIS countries, especially Moldova, Georgia, Byelorussia, the Ukraine;
- Increase the use of EU and UNESCO internet projects (MINERVA, AGENORE, MICHAEL) to improve the recognisability of Latvia's culture;
- In co-operation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to develop a separate External Cultural Relations programme and specifically include sections devoted to collaborations with Third countries.

M i n i s t r y o f F o r e i g n A f f a i r s

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on June 1st 2006, released its draft strategic document Latvia's Participation in the EU – key principles, goals, priorities and actions for the period 2007-2013.

The official release of the documents at the Council of State Secretaries means that it should be accepted by the Cabinet of Ministers in the near future. Section 3.6 of this document, entitled Fostering of National Identity and Cultural Values³, contain two subsections – development of cultural policy and the implementation of audiovisual policy. The sections stress that Latvia's cultural policy should be geared towards fostering national identity, maintaining cultural heritage and keeping alive historical memory. The key goal of cultural policy is to strengthen a creative and culturally rich society in Latvia. As to the use of culture in the context of foreign relations, the key direction is creating and managing the State image or 'National Brand', and strengthening of a modern and international competitive audiovisual sector at home. The Section also re-asserts that the sphere of culture is not subject to strict regulations in the EU. Yet, the possibilities to use various financing mechanisms available in the EU are considered to be a positive factor.

C u l t u r a l C a p i t a l E n d o w m e n t

One more significant player in the implementation of external cultural policy (as well as internal) is the Cultural Capital Endowment of Latvia. The new Strategic Guidelines of the Ministry of Culture repeatedly stress the need to develop target programmes under which financing could be increased to support international cultural co-operation and activities. Currently, the Statutes of the Endowment have a vague clause for financing projects – support of participation in international and intercultural projects without any further specification. The review of the expenditures for 2005 show that the Foundation has supported a few international projects⁴ and has spent approximately 5% of its total budget on supporting international travel of Latvia's culture representatives to various fairs, seminars and conferences worldwide.

II Views of the key players in the cultural policy field of Latvia

M i n i s t r y o f F o r e i g n A f f a i r s

The Senior civil servant from the Ministry of Foreign affairs (Head of the European Union Department) stressed the importance of a cultural component in initiating and maintaining external relations, yet immediately admitted that so far there have not been serious attempts to formulate policy in this respect. In fact, recently the Department of External Cultural Policy was eliminated from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Also, the new Strategic Guidelines of Latvia's participation in the EU do not have any explicit formulation of active foreign cultural policy.

In creating such policy, he suggests to use the experience of countries such as Norway and especially concentrate on building and promoting the 'National Image' or 'Brand' of Latvia. This senior servant agreed that a culture export is the cheapest PR for such a small country as Latvia, and that the media and communication coverage of cultural events is the greatest. However, in the majority of the cases, the presence or absence of cultural programmes and events is a result of the activities of enthusiastic individuals, not a planned and co-ordinated work. In fact, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, according to this civil servant, so far have not had any guidance from the Ministry of Culture as to which geographical priorities to work upon when advancing cultural programmes.

Reflecting on the past, this senior civil servant (Head of the European Affairs Department) mentioned that so far it has been the Embassies who organised cultural events and managed programmes. This task is part of the job description of the diplomats. Yet, the events organised have sporadic and ad hoc character due to lack of specially marked financing for this purpose. Therefore, the intensity of cultural programmes in foreign countries, to a large extent, hinges upon the enthusiasm of the Embassy representatives – to establish networks in a host country, generate sponsorship for events and manage the administration.

Ideally, there should be a policy adopted by the Government that would define geographical priorities, the division of labour and tasks among the Ministry of Culture and Foreign Affairs, and the Embassies would be used as the central points in the chain of management. In addition, there is a very urgent task to officially set the principles of promoting the 'National Image' or 'Brand of Latvia' in other countries, thus co-ordinating activities also with the Latvian Agency of Investment and Development. To put it simply, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would see the schema in the following way: the Ministry of Culture defines and Government approves a strategy of foreign cultural policy. Then the Ministry of Foreign Affairs joins together with the Latvian Agency of Investment and Development in preparing the action plans. These action plans are then used by the respective Embassies to organise events. No doubt, certain centrally allocated funds are available for such activities. As the best example, when culture has been used as the central focus for various liaisons in economics, politics, trade, tourism and city co-operation, he cited the Festival Surprising Latvia – that was organised in November 2005 in several French cities, including Paris with multiple cultural events. In fact, this Festival as a best case was mentioned by several of the interviewees.

Reflecting on the most feasible geographical priorities, first and foremost it is the neighbouring countries, then other countries within the EU, then USA and Canada, and finally, former CIS countries, especially the Ukraine, Moldova and Caucasus states. The relations with Russia are at a standstill. No serious government supported cultural policy is coming before the treaty on borders is signed. There was no mention of collaboration with countries where there are exiles or a new diaspora of Latvians.

M i n i s t r y o f C u l t u r e

The State Secretary of the Ministry of Culture openly admitted that so far there has not been any clear position developed in relation to foreign cultural policy. Such strategy does not exist. On the other hand, there have been a series of attempts to work in this direction. Where the Secretary sees the importance of the link between culture and foreign policy is in relation to the promotion

and advancement of national interests and the Brand of Latvia. On the other hand, he noted that in the new strategic policy document National State 2007-2015, there are certain foreign relations priorities set, as well as direction of action. Summer 2006, according to him, is the time when more specific action plans will be prepared.

The issue of foreign cultural policy has been on the agenda of the Ministry for some time already, not least due to the fact all kinds of ad hoc type cultural projects in foreign countries have been going on since regaining independence. The notion of foreign cultural policy is widely accepted yet, according to the Secretary, there is a lack of understanding of the principles of 'cultural diplomacy' among the civil servants in the Ministry of Culture. There is also a strong tendency among civil servants to view, as their key duty, preservation of Latvia's cultural heritage and organisation of cultural life 'inside' the country. In order to formulate a clear stance of the Ministry to this issue, several discussion groups were organised and the issue of the establishment of a new state agency considered (akin to the British Council) that would have as its prime task to co-ordinate and promote Latvia's culture in other countries, as well as organise and manage cultural exchanges⁵. As one of the key problems in energising and activating a cultural component in foreign relations, the Secretary saw the inability of the Ministries concerned (Education, Economic, and Foreign Affairs) to come to a co-ordinated stance with regard to interstate agreements. Also, he would welcome the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to formulate what could be the directions of foreign policy in the light of the national interests of Latvia. Such a position would help the Ministry of Culture to develop a more coherent strategy of foreign cultural policy.

Ideally, the Ministry of Culture sees its task as to support the so called cultural operators in their own endeavours in other countries. The support would be bent towards strategically defined geographical priorities, which outside the EU, according to him, are Russia, CIS countries and China and India.

Equally important, he sees the potential to offer cultural content to the participants of big international gatherings in Latvia, such as NATO summit in autumn 2006.

The Secretary also expressed his dissatisfaction that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has not been active in establishing at least one embassy in Arabic countries. Latvian organizations have already a strong interest in co-operation with, for example, Egypt. There is a research group working on a pyramid site and the National Library has close links of co-operation with the Library in Alexandria. Yet all these activities take place without diplomatic support.

He was quite concerned with the lack of work in developing a positive image of Latvia in the world. Such a positive image could be quite successfully created and promoted via cultural exchange programmes.

Finally, the Secretary was rather convinced that not only is there a great value in co-operative European cultural projects aimed at supplementing EU foreign policy activities, but also that Latvia could play an active part in co-ordination work. As an example he mentioned the New Theatre Institute in Riga that has taken a Pan European function and is now co-ordinating cultural projects with the Balkan states which are not yet EU members. He was mildly sceptical about the future role of the ARS Baltica project and stressed the current need to reorient cultural activities towards Latvia's neighbours in the East. Notwithstanding, close relationships with Latvia's neighbours Estonia and Lithuania, according to the Secretary they are, at the same time, the greatest competitors. Such a competitive setting makes the Pan Baltic co-operation less efficient.

Another senior civil servant – the Head of the European Union Department at the MofC - in a rather similar way described the current state policy with regard to the use of culture in foreign affairs. She pointed to the differences between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' and the Ministry of Culture's views on the matter. MoFA considers the use of culture primarily for building the 'Brand of Latvia', whereas MofC views the issue much wider, including the aspects of cultural diplomacy.

Co-operation between the two ministries, according to her, is that occasionally and quite suddenly, the MofFA demands the activities of the people from the cultural field, e.g. concerts, artists, performances, exhibitions etc. The organisation of such 'exercises' usually is ad hoc. In general, culture, according to her, is not viewed seriously as a component of systematic foreign relations by top-level policy makers in other Ministries. MofC has difficulty convincing the Ministry of Finance to allocate additional finance to run planned activities and programmes as part of the State's foreign policy. There is also nothing said about the need to foster culture as part of building foreign relations in the Governments Declaration⁶.

She, as many others, praised the organisation of the Festival Surprising Latvia, putting it forward as an example of institutional collaboration inside Latvia and with the French side. Yet, as she remarked, the driving force of the co-ordination was the purposeful activities on the part of the President of Latvia. She concluded that without the support of very high standing political figures (e.g. President, Prime Minister) the Ministry of Culture is not able to implement serious steps for intensifying the cultural component of Latvia's external affairs. She looks at the possibility of co-ordinated EU policy initiatives to use culture for the purposes of foreign policy as a good one for two reasons. First, the eventual programmes and financing would support the existing cultural operators to be more active in the international field, thus culturally opening up Latvia itself. Secondly, regulations coming from Brussels would force civil servants in other Ministries to respect culture as part of 'serious policy making'.

In the context, on the one hand, of a widely recognised need to have sound and systematic external cultural policy and, on the other hand, general confusion over how this policy should be formulated, it was enlightening to get acquainted with the views of the civil servants and culture practitioners expressed in a brainstorm type discussion. The discussion theme was 'Foreign cultural policy'. Its aim was to analyse:

- what has been done over the last 15 years in foreign cultural policy;
- what such a policy may mean for Latvia;
- what are the key or most important directions now Latvia has joined the EU;
- How such a foreign cultural policy may work both outside and inside Latvia (dialogue and understanding among various cultural groups in Latvia itself).

The discussion was organised by the Ministry of Culture and the stated purpose was to formulate some common ground or commonly agreed upon principles with regard to the set themes. The results of the discussion are largely incorporated into the new Strategic Guidelines of Culture Policy (see above).

ARS Baltica – a Collaboration Programme of Nordic and Baltic Sea countries. Most recent developments have mainly been in the field of the film industry. In February of 2005 three Baltic States at the level of the Ministries of Culture agreed to co-operate in the production, promotion and distribution of films and established an organisation, Baltic Films. An agreement was also concluded between Baltic Films and Scandinavian Films. The projects included the creation of a Baltic Film and Media School, film co-production, and eventual establishment of a Special Co-production Fund. Yet, as it turns out from the interviews with the Ministry of Culture civil servants, the efficiency and productivity of the whole ARS Baltica programme is under serious consideration. The key consideration is that ARS Baltic should invite a qualitatively new approach since it is no longer the leading mechanism of cultural co-operation and exchange. For the programme to continue, it needs new aims, management and financing mechanism. The Regional co-operation policy should be oriented towards Latvia's neighbours – Byelorussia, the Ukraine and Moldova. If the ARS Baltica programme is continued, its primary focus could be on

strengthening the regional identity of Baltic Sea countries and co-operation in the matters of cultural heritage.⁷

A recent successful example of foreign cultural policy projects.

In the eyes of all involved parties, the most successful international cultural project in recent years has been a festival, Surprising Latvia, that took place in autumn 2005. The Festival comprised a number of events and happenings in four cities of France. The idea and initial concept of the Festival was developed by the President of Latvia, Dr Vike Freiberga, in discussion with the President of France, Mr Chirac. The Festival from the Latvian side was prepared and executed by the Ministries of Culture, Foreign Affairs, Economy, Direction of Concerts, Investment and Development Agency, the Latvian Embassy in France, City Council of Riga and Agency for Tourism Development. From the French side the key counterparts were the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture and Communication, AFAA, French Embassy in Latvia and a few regional and municipal institutions. Amongst several cultural programmes, there were seminars on economic co-operation. In terms of foreign political relations there was an official visit of the President of Latvia to France, the participation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Culture, the Minister of Transport and Communication, the Minister of Economy as well as the Mayor of Riga in various official events. There was also a wide range of publicity events and activities – e.g. an exhibition, Talking Stones, in the centre of Paris, websites, printed materials, and publications. Also, the public in Latvia was kept well informed about the festival. The Cabinet of Ministers evaluated the festival as a whole to be a great success. According to the officials from the Ministries of Culture, Economy and Foreign Affairs, the organisation of the Festival with its multiparty involvement across borders is now being considered and used as a template for planning large scale international events where culture is used to promote the image of Latvia.

M i n i s t r y o f E c o n o m y

The Head of the European Union Department at the Ministry stated that the issue of culture being used to promote Latvia's interests abroad has been high on the Ministry's agenda. She admitted some degree of co-operation with the Ministry of Culture and much more with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The only two fields where she has seen some collaborative interest to somehow join the forces have been the topic of tourism and the amount of cultural tourism in particular. The other issue has been that of Latvia's branding and the activities surrounding its formulation and development. Yet, both issues have been mostly of ad hoc type without even a medium term view on policy formulation.

Her view as to the feasibility of a cultural component to EU foreign policy is that the civil servants at the respective ministries would begin to consider the idea seriously only after they received strong statements or encouragements from Brussels. The key obstacle is that Latvia has not yet formulated its foreign cultural policy in the first place.

T h e P r e s i d e n t ' s C h a n c e l l e r y

The Constitution of Latvia gives rather substantial powers to the President to shape the state's foreign policy and relations (in co-operation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). The current President Ms. Vike-Freiberga has been very active in the international arena. Through personal contacts and official state visits, her activities have, to a great extent, shaped the foreign policy of the state. On her official visits, a great number of the representatives from the field of business, education and culture accompany her with the purpose of creating relations and networks of exchange. Thus the stance of the President's Chancellery – her Bureau – has always been taken seriously when deciding about foreign policy matters.

The Senior Advisor to the President and the Head of the Strategic Analysis Commission – a think tank set up by the President's office - had the most sceptical attitude towards the success of the idea of a cultural component being added to the foreign policy of the EU. Her scepticism arose from the experience of working with the Delegation of the EU prior to Latvia's accession. As she put it, very good ideas result in rather bad policies and even worse practical deeds. She also has some reservations about putting certain strategic principles on paper that would guide actions for years and give less room for flexibility and manoeuvre for such a small country as Latvia.

Reflecting on how prepared Latvia's representatives and cultural operators might be to actively engage in collaborative and foreign oriented projects, she noted a deep seated tendency amongst the Latvians to concentrate most on their own internal matters, stressing the vulnerability of national identity and that they tend to close to the international competitive arena. The defensive (against external threat to national identity) motives in Latvia's cultural policy still dominate. Yet, it is precisely the state institutions, not the cultural operators and/or individuals, which would be able to generate more consistent exploitation of culture for the purposes of external relation building. The state institutions, according to the adviser, should primarily focus on financing and co-ordinating operators in their networks. However, there is no consistent strategy or policy in this respect; such a policy is badly needed for Latvia in the first place. Only after such a policy is adopted, would there be time to consider collaborative projects with other European countries to use culture for EU foreign policy aims. She also expressed concern over the risk that in such co-operative projects Latvia's contribution might go unnoticed and the beneficiaries of the collaborative endeavours might turn out to be the 'bigger states' .

As to geographical priorities, the advisor mentioned the Ukraine and the Caucasus states. China and India would be regions where some presence could be beneficial yet not a priority. This would guarantee that Latvia closely follows the developments in this part of the world and is informed about the opportunities there.⁸

The Chief of the Chancellery who is directly involved in organising the President's visits, programmes, management, and invitation of people expressed his dissatisfaction with the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as to the use of culture in Latvia's foreign policy. He referred to several potential openings of co-operation with other countries outside Latvia that were made possible by the President's efforts involving culture presentations and exchange projects, yet these were not further utilised by the MofFA. He argued that the Chancellery is clearly aware of the importance of culture in foreign relations. Yet, since there is neither a strategy nor formulated policy, there is no way one could plan more optimal use of culture for the purposes of external affairs. The speed with which contacts are established and state visits organised nowadays makes it quite difficult to organise activities involving culture in a strategic way. He also remarked that his lengthy experience of co-operation with the Embassies of Latvia gives him reason not to estimate the marketing capabilities of Embassies very highly.

C u l t u r a l C a p i t a l E n d o w m e n t o f L a t v i a

The Endowment is a state agency that operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture although having substantial independence. The Endowment is the main source of financing of all initiatives and projects of the cultural milieu in Latvia. In other words, financially, it is the Endowment that, together with the Ministry of Culture, maintains cultural life in the country.⁹ Yet, according to the Executive Director of the Endowment, the only two clauses in the statutes that regulate the decision making in relation to international activities, is the statement that the Endowment supports participation of Latvia's artists in international and intercultural projects and that it finances important international and national events. Decisions on financing are made on a case by case basis and depend on a consensus among the experts represented in the Council.

Since the composition of the Council is rather fluid and changes annually, the absence of clear priorities (artistic, geographical) lead to an ad hoc type support policy. The Executive Director points in the direction of the Ministry of Culture as needing to formulate such priorities and then the Endowment would be at ease to support much more intensive international cultural activities.

One of the problems related to increasing financial support was seen as the lack of arguments to ground the case that culture should not be viewed simply as expenditure, but more as contributing to the wellbeing and economy of the country. In this light, the Executive Director saw one clear advantage to Latvia stemming from a common cultural policy of the EU complementing foreign affairs. Namely, it would make Latvia's civil servants in various ministries, especially the Ministry of Finance, more interested in allocating funds to cultural initiatives. In other words, the European wide stance would emphasise the importance of culture in the eyes of local administrators. Yet, the other advantage would be the optimisation of financing mechanisms and administration of funds in the Endowment. The formulated priorities and clear objective of common EU projects should increase the efficiency of support. In short, the Executive Director of the Cultural Capital Endowment was one of the few civil servants who were very supportive of the idea of a common foreign cultural policy. Yet, he was also somewhat concerned with the risk of unification that such policy might bring. As one of the key geographical priorities he mentioned the countries of the former USSR.

R i g a C i t y C o u n c i l

The capital city of Latvia, Riga, has rather a unique position in the context of Latvia's foreign policy. The size of it – more than one-third of the country's population live in the Greater Riga area - as well as a concentration of businesses and administrative offices, gives additional power to its impact upon even the external relations of Latvia.¹⁰ The Head of the Cultural Department of the City Council remarked that Riga indeed has an advantage over the Government in implementing and running cultural programmes with foreign partners, yet on the city level. In fact, there has not been any serious project of inter-city co-operation not involving culture. It is culture and history that promotes the city - business, communication, public goods projects come after, says the Head. The Department is also more flexible in setting aims and targets for its activities in the field. The format that generates the largest foreign co-operation effect, according to her, is the network of metropolis, especially (although not exclusively) around the Baltic Sea. Such networks may circumvent the problems of foreign relations existing at a national level (especially in relation to Russia). The other advantageous feature of the networks is that for a particular purpose only some of the members may get involved and there is no need to always collaborate with all the members. This, as she sees it, could be a format for cultural activities supporting EU foreign policy. Moreover, since the experience of working with foreign partners on collaborative projects is a mundane task for the employees of the Cultural Department, such expertise could be of value and use at a national level. The potential area in which the activities of Riga City Council might also accord with the activities of the State is the use of Riga as the setting for representation purposes (state visits, big international events), as well as Riga's image as part of Latvia's image or brand. Currently, the Riga City Council is preparing a mid-term cultural policy strategy and the aspects of foreign cultural relations will be given due attention and should incorporate all the insights mentioned above.

The geographical priorities, as seen by the Head of the Cultural Department, are still and mostly European cities. Yet, as a heritage from the Soviet times, there are quite active contacts with Kobe City in Japan. In the light of the fact that Latvia until recently did not have an Embassy in this country, Riga-Kobe contacts were instrumental for supporting interstate relations. To a lesser extent this also applies to the contacts with Sudzou in China.

Amongst the key players that influence Latvia's cultural policy, the British Council is viewed as an organisation that provides very substantial aid in the internationalisation of cultural projects. The Council provides knowledge, contacts, the BC network support, and finance; quite often the Ministry of Culture and municipalities turn to the BC for aid in advancing their co-operation with English speaking countries. Given the fact that the British Council has operated in Latvia for 14 years, its views are well grounded. The Director and Chief Officer of Cultural and Arts Programmes stressed a number of features characterising foreign cultural policy? They think that almost nobody in Latvia could clearly answer the question: what could be the gains for Latvia from a common EU foreign cultural policy. This is because Latvia has not found its solid place in a European cultural setting – it is still searching. Secondly, Latvia has not defined its core values, which should be a prerequisite for successful and efficient co-operation. Also, according to the representatives of the BC, Latvia's cultural policy players have been much concerned with internal issues rather than external. The BC has seen much interest and activity to internationalise cultural projects coming from individuals, NGOs, municipalities, businesses, but not from State institutions. Like others interviewed, the BC staff stated that the critical factor of a success of international cultural projects, are highly motivated and stubborn single-minded persons – managers who get things done. State institutions and even the majority of higher education institutions are very reactive and passive.

As to the geographical priorities, in ideal circumstances Latvia would benefit from co-operation with the countries of Central Asia using its advantage as a former USSR republic. Looking further eastwards (i.e. India, China, South East Asia), Latvia would be better off by collaborating with other countries or even using the already established networks in these countries (e.g. British Council).

As a conclusion, the Head and the Chief Officer of Arts and Cultural Programmes at the British Council Latvia observed that there is not much resistance to the idea of a common cultural component complementing EU foreign policy. Yet, this is due to the inability to formulate a clear perspective in principle to this issue. Basically, almost nobody among the key players in cultural policy has seriously considered such matters. Therefore, the expected reaction to such proposals would be reactive from the state institutions, not proactive.

III Consolidated answers to the research questions

The Government has approved the new Strategic Guidelines of Culture Policy entitled National State. The Guidelines, as well as the key representatives of the Ministries of Culture and Foreign Affairs, recognise that a systematic, sound and effective foreign cultural policy currently does not exist. Its development is a primary task and stated both by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On the other hand, individuals and organizations are very active in establishing and maintaining international cultural co-operation. Nevertheless, there is a lack of co-operation among all the parties involved on Latvia's side. Co-operative projects are the result of ad hoc activities and established personal and organisational contacts. The Ministry of Culture is the most active player in the development of foreign cultural policy, whereas the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has taken a rather reserved stance, stressing the importance of culture heritage, national identity and historical memory. The two Ministries have different views on the role of culture in Latvia's foreign policy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs according to documents and civil servants' statements, views culture as part of the national image whereas the Ministry of Culture considers a wider spectrum of activities. The Ministry of Economics, apart from a rather marginal interest in

tourism, has not been giving any serious attention to the use of culture in fostering international relations with other countries. The President's Chancellery is fully aware of the importance of culture in fostering international relations, yet does not possess sufficient policy instruments to substantially influence the Government's views on this matter.

The Ministry of Culture has formulated a number of directions for further action which, as part of the Strategic Guidelines, has been approved by the Government, and according to the highest level civil servants, by summer 2006 the Ministry will have formulated more detailed plans of actions. The key aims are increasing recognisability of Latvia's cultural products and services, the increase of State financing of external cultural activities, support of participation in international multiparty projects, are increasing the level of understanding and tolerance of other cultures in Latvian society.

Co-operation with other EU Member States is still the main emphasis of international cultural policy. Yet geographical priorities outside the EU, as recognised in documents (Guidelines) as well as by the key players, are the USA and CIS countries, most notably the Ukraine, Byelorussia, Moldova and Georgia. Despite very active cultural contacts with Russia that exist at the level of private and business cultural operators, the Government has abstained from deepening such contacts due to politically complicated relations with Russia. There is some recognition that Latvia should also develop cultural connection with the Arabic world and Asian countries – most notably Central Asian countries, China and India due to the growing number of tourists and some organisational initiatives in the field of science and culture. It has been reflected by discussions to open the Embassy in Egypt and signing a treaty of cultural co-operation with India. The key cultural players have either negative or no views on any co-operation with African and Latin American countries, with the exception of the President's Chancellery where some interest was expressed to intensify cultural co-operation with the USA's neighbours – Canada and Mexico. The issue of co-operation with the exile communities - both old and new - was not seriously considered by any of the key players and is not very high either on the level of cultural or foreign relations.

The potential of Riga is recognised to foster and intensify cultural co-operation through the network of Baltic Sea metropolis network, thus involving Latvia in cultural exchanges not only with the neighbours - EU Member States - but also Russia (St Petersburg).

There is a mostly positive, yet not clearly formulated, attitude towards eventual co-operation at the EU level to add a cultural component to EU foreign relations. It seemed that all policy makers and practitioners interviewed confronted the issue for the first time. The key advantages of such a project in the eyes of Latvia's culture policy makers is the pressure on the civil servants at home to consider the value of culture (both domestically and internationally) more seriously than before. Such considerations would force the State institutions to clearly formulate priorities for Latvia's cultural foreign policy, and also might make the allocation and use of available financial and administrative resources more efficient. The eventual programmes and financing would support the existing cultural operators to be more active in the international field, thus culturally opening up Latvia itself. One more advantage mentioned is the possible use of already established networks (by other EU Member States) in the countries and regions where Latvia could not afford to establish its presence on its own. As potential dangers of a common international cultural policy of the EU, policy makers mention the threat of unification, the loss of Latvia's independent recognisability and a danger of bureaucratisation of such policy.

N a m e s a n d d e s i g n a t i o n s o f t h e
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o f e n q u i r y .

Daniels Pavluts, State Secretary of the Ministry of Culture.
Una Sedleniece, Head of the European Union Department, Ministry of Culture.
Diana Civle, Head of the Culture Department, Riga City Council.
Dace Duze, Advisor to the President of Latvia.
Martins Bondars, Director of the Chancellery of the President of Latvia.
Zaneta Ozolina, Head of the President's Strategic Analysis Commission.
Normunds Popens, Head of the European Union Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
Rota Snuka, Head of the European Union Department, Ministry of Economy.
Agita Kalvina, Director of the British Council Latvia.
Daina Ostrovska, Chief Officer of Arts and Culture Programmes, British Council Latvia.
Edgars Verpe, Executive Director of the Cultural Capital Endowment Latvia.
Ojars Kalnins, Director of the Institute of Latvia.

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Notes

- 1 All interviews were conducted in person, note recorded, lasted between 45 minutes (shortest) to 90 minutes (longest). They were pre-arranged and the purposes as well as the questions to be tackled during the interview were communicated in advance. The names of the persons interviewed are listed in the appendices
- 2 The report has not been shown to anyone interviewed.
- 3 This is one of seven key priorities of Latvia's participation in the EU.
- 4 In the context of this report the relevant ones being the participation of Latvia in the St Petersburg Book Fair and the exhibition **Scandinavian design beyond myth**.
- 5 It is still just an idea.
- 6 In Latvia, each government, when it is formed, creates a special declaration that delineates the scope and directions of work the coalition parties have agreed upon.
- 7 Speech of the State Secretary of Latvia's Ministry of Culture Mr. Daniels Pavluts at the 7th conference of the Baltic Sea States' Ministers of Culture, September 26th, 2005.
- 8 At the time of writing the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Latvia has signed the contract with the Minister of Tourism of the Republic of India on closer co-operation – the first such document signed between the two states.
- 9 Private financing and sponsorship is a minor share of all financing.
- 10 In the late 1990s and early 2000s Riga City Council was controlled by the opposition to the national government coalition. The Government's policy towards Russia was quite inactive whereas Riga City Council actively co-operated with the big Russian cities of Moscow and St Petersburg. This was considered by the Government as a certain clash of policies even at a national level. In addition, the Riga City Cultural Affairs Department is the second biggest financing body of culture in the whole country (after Cultural Capital Endowment) and quite often viewed as an alternative source of funding.