

CULTURAL DIPLOMACY AND FOREIGN TRADE CORELLATION – THE CASE OF SLOVAKIA

SÚVŠŤAŽNOSŤ MEDZI KULTÚRNOU DIPLOMACIOU A ZAHRANIČNÝM OBCHODOM – PRÍPAD SLOVENSKA

MICHAELA ČIEFOVÁ

Abstract

In the present contribution we investigate the relationship between Slovak cultural diplomacy and bilateral economic relations with the countries, in which a Slovak institute has been established. We attempt to answer the question whether the locations of Slovak cultural institutes correspond with the most important trade partners of Slovakia. Moreover, we examine whether the interest in spreading language and culture is reciprocal, i.e. whether the countries with a Slovak institute have similar cultural establishments in Slovakia, while not considering embassies and consulates.

Keywords: *cultural diplomacy, cultural institutes, foreign trade, Slovakia, intercultural competence.*

Abstrakt

Cieľom predkladaného príspevku je preskúmanie vzťahu medzi kultúrnou diplomaciou Slovenska a bilaterálnymi hospodárskymi vzťahmi s krajinami, v ktorých sa nachádza slovenský kultúrny inštitút. Naším zámerom je zodpovedať otázku, či lokality slovenských kultúrnych inštitútov korešpondujú s najvýznamnejšími obchodnými partnermi Slovenska. Okrem toho zisťujeme, či je záujem o šírenie kultúry a jazyka krajiny recipročný, teda či krajiny, v ktorých bol založený slovenský inštitút, disponujú podobnými zariadeniami na Slovensku, pričom neberieme do úvahy ambasády a konzuláty.

Kľúčové slová: *kultúrna diplomacia, kultúrne inštitúty, zahraničný obchod, Slovensko, interkultúrna kompetencia.*

Introduction

Cultural diplomacy represents one of the dimensions of the overall diplomacy concept. The term is very often discussed in conjunction with public diplomacy, soft power, and nation branding, as the definitions of these notions frequently overlap (e.g. Čiefová, Goda, 2019). The importance of cultural diplomacy is indubitable, as it is oriented on the broad public (Mattoš, 2013, p. 378).

Due to the concept of cultural diplomacy being complex, there is no generic definition of it. However, we find the definition by Pajtinka rather articulate. According to him, cultural diplomacy is a process of sharing information related to a culture of a country in a host country. Such information can include history, traditions, value systems, and so forth. The objectives of cultural diplomacy are also diverse, involving building of friendly relations, support of political aims, or simply self-presentation (Pajtinka, 2007, p. 82). In our opinion, one of the results of adequately selected means of cultural diplomacy can be enhancing of intercultural relations between respective countries or improving of intercultural competence of the host country's citizens. Familiarizing with a foreign culture can result in an individual adopting the ethnorelativistic approach, meaning they cease to regard their own national culture as a "template" or a "guideline" that should be followed by the others. Needless to say, intercultural dialogue is crucial also with regards to international business negotiations (Helmová, 2018, p.

16). In case a country attracts potential foreign investors (as a result of suitably performed cultural diplomacy), negotiations between representatives of different national cultures are expected to follow. Intercultural competence (as well as emotional competence) indeed is inevitable in many professions (Seresová, 2016; Seresová, 2014).

Applying the generally accepted communication model to cultural diplomacy, we believe one can view cultural diplomacy as the communication process itself, whereby the country performing cultural diplomacy is the sender of the message, and the host country's population represents the receiver. The message can be the sending state's culture as such (or any information related to it), and the medium the form of cultural diplomacy chosen, e.g. a lecture, an exhibition, or a language course. Besides, cultural diplomacy practices may contribute to increased interest of foreign countries in bilateral trade relations with the country conducting cultural diplomacy. This is a noteworthy fact, since diplomacy as the umbrella term incorporates an economic dimension. However, the above mentioned implies cultural diplomacy as one of the dimensions of diplomacy involves its own economic dimension, which is often stressed by various authors (e.g. Pajtinka, 2007, p. 83). As Mattoš points out, cultural diplomacy is an essential component of international relations, next to economy and politics (Mattoš, 2013, p. 378).

There have been several attempts to determine impacts of cultural differences on foreign trade relations, mostly by means of gravity models application. Tadesse and White (2010) examine effects of cultural distance on trade flows and conclude, cultural dissimilarity has a negative impact on trade flows. Similar conclusions draw also Lankhuizen and de Groot (2016). History of countries, conflicts between them, religious factors and perceptions do determine economic exchange. Lower bilateral trust results in less investment and trade, as documented by Guiso, Sapienza and Zingales (2009). Moreover, there is also research on effects of cultural institutes on economic indicators (e.g. Lien, Lo, 2017).

The objective of this study is to analyse cultural diplomacy of Slovakia in relation to foreign trade. We focus on the locations of Slovak cultural institutes, which are consequently confronted with the list of the most important trade partners of Slovakia. Apart from that, we investigate whether countries with a Slovak institute also present their national culture and language to Slovak citizens, mainly through cultural centres or institutes.

Slovak Cultural Diplomacy and Cultural Institutes

The official activities of Slovak cultural diplomacy are overseen by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, and include the following:

- development of bilateral relations in the area of education, culture, science, research;
- coordination of cultural presentation abroad, support of cultural activities abroad;
- coordination of Slovak institutes;
- support of other countries' cultural values in Slovakia;
- cooperation within multilateral cultural organizations (e.g. EUNIC, Platform Culture Central Europe...);
- cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, collaboration in the area of scholarships;
- cooperation with the Office for Slovaks Living Abroad (*Úrad pre Slovákov žijúcich v zahraničí*), and similar activities (MZVaEZ, 2015).

One of the most frequent and perhaps the most efficient ways to promote a country's culture abroad is to do so by means of cultural institutes or similar establishments. Many countries worldwide follow the trend of founding cultural institutes to promote their culture, language, and present their country to both foreign public as well as potential investors. The numbers of cultural institutes differ significantly among countries, which is, among other factors, caused by their financial conditions, or by their priorities in foreign policy. France, United Kingdom, Germany, or China have created a sizeable network of cultural institutes, even though during different time periods. Germany's Goethe Institute and British Council date back to 1951 and 1934, respectively

(GI, 2019; BC, 2019). Operating of China's Confucius Institute was initiated in 2004 as a response to rapid growth of Chinese economy.

Slovakia as a relatively young state has so far managed to establish only eight cultural institutes that are concentrated exclusively in European countries. As Table 1 below demonstrates, four Slovak institutes are located in the capital cities of the neighbouring countries; the only neighbouring country of Slovakia with no such institute is Ukraine. The rest of Slovak institutes are to be found in France (Paris), Germany (Berlin), Italy (Rome), and Russia (Moscow) (MZVaEZ, 2017).

Slovak Institutes locations	The host country's institute presence in Slovakia	Name of the foreign institute in Slovakia
Austria (Vienna)	Yes	Österreichisches Kulturforum
Czech Republic (Prague)	Yes	Czech Centre Bratislava
France (Paris)	Yes	Institut Français Slovaquie
Germany (Berlin)	Yes	Goethe Institut Slowakei
Hungary (Budapest)	Yes	Balassi Institut in Bratislava
Italy (Rome)	Yes	Istituto Italiano di Cultura
Poland (Warsaw)	Yes	Instytut Polski w Bratysławie
Russia (Moscow)	Yes	Russian Centre for Science and Culture in Bratislava

Table 1 Slovak Cultural Institutes Abroad

Let us consider cultural profiles of Slovakia and the countries hosting its cultural institutes. Referring to the 3-dimensional classification of Lewis (2006, p. 27), we conclude, they are relatively "close" to each other, i.e. all of them are located on the scale of linear-active and multi-active cultures. It is therefore recommended that the portfolio of the countries with a Slovak institute will become more diverse in the future. For instance, Asian countries could represent a suitable location, or generally countries with distinct cultural profiles (Čiefová, 2018, p. 10).

Trade Partners of Slovakia

Similarly, as in case of geographical dispersion of Slovak cultural institutes, also trading partners of Slovakia are predominantly European countries, more specifically EU member states. Regarding geographically more distanced countries, China, South Korea, or the United States are to be mentioned.

Based on the statistical data we conclude, all the countries in which Slovakia disposes of a cultural institute at the same time belong to 15 most important import and export partners of the country. The reference year for the data in the Table 2 below is 2017. The countries with a Slovak institute are highlighted in green.

Analysing the data we conclude, there seems to be a relationship between Slovak cultural diplomacy priorities and international business partnerships. However, a debate on expansion of Slovak institute to other countries would be beneficial. Decision about the next location could be made also in respect of foreign trade, taking into account the importance of intercultural competence for international business.

Slovak Export		Slovak Import		Trade Balance	
1.	Germany	1.	Germany	1.	Germany
2.	Czech Republic	2.	Czech Republic	2.	United Kingdom
3.	Poland	3.	China	3.	France
4.	France	4.	South Korea	4.	Austria
5.	Hungary	5.	Vietnam	5.	Italy
6.	United Kingdom	6.	Poland	6.	Poland
7.	Italy	7.	Hungary	7.	United States
8.	Austria	8.	Russian Federation	8.	Spain
9.	Spain	9.	Italy	9.	Hungary
10.	United States	10.	France	10.	Czech Republic
11.	Netherlands	11.	Austria	11.	Romania
12.	Romania	12.	United Kingdom	12.	Netherlands
13.	Russian Federation	13.	Spain	13.	Sweden
14.	China	14.	Netherlands	14.	Switzerland
15.	Switzerland	15.	Romania	15.	Croatia

Table 2 The Most Important Trading Partners of Slovakia

Conclusion

The contribution had two dimensions. Firstly, we examined cultural diplomacy of Slovakia, more precisely the locations of Slovak institutes, and the reciprocity with cultural diplomacy activities of the concerned countries in Slovakia. We can conclude that all countries with a Slovak institute simultaneously attempt to present their cultural values and cultural heritage to Slovak public by means of various events and activities provided by their cultural institutes. The finding can be considered positive, as the level of intercultural competence is therefore expected to rise on both sides, and thus rather symmetrically.

Next, we analysed most important trade partners of Slovakia in conjunction with the locations of Slovak institutes. We showcased that all countries with a Slovak institute branch also hold a significant position in Slovak foreign trade. On the other hand, there is no Slovak institute in countries such as China, Romania, Spain, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, even though bilateral trade relations contribute considerably to overall Slovak foreign trade. Moreover, the United Kingdom or China have already established a cultural institute in Slovakia, namely a British Council and a Confucius Institute. It is therefore reasonable to consider these important business partnerships, as well as the asymmetry of contemporary cultural diplomacy activities. In case of expanding the network of Slovak institutes, countries such as Spain, the United Kingdom or China could be considered as potential locations. Although trade and foreign direct investment and tourism promotion are not primary objectives of cultural institutes (or cultural diplomacy in general), cultural centres of any kind can at least indirectly contribute to their satisfying development. Besides, cultural diplomacy can impact intercultural competence of people as well.

Literature

- BRITISH COUNCIL (BC). 2019. Our history. Retrieved from: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/about-us/history>. Accessed on 27 September 2019.
- CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE HEADQUARTERS (Hanban). 2014. About Confucius Institutes. Retrieved from: http://english.hanban.org/node_7716.htm. Accessed on 27 September 2019.
- CZECH CENTRE. 2019. O nás. Retrieved from: <http://bratislava.czechcentres.cz/o-nas/>. Accessed on 27 September 2019.

ČIEFOVÁ, M. 2018. K vybraným otázkam kultúrnej diplomacie. In: *Almanach, 2018, Vol., 13, Issue 2, pp. 4 – 13.*

ČIEFOVÁ, M., GODA, N. 2019. Význam nation branding pre Slovensko: súčasné trendy a výzvy. In: *Economic, political and legal issues of international relations 2019, 2019, pp. 91-98.*

GOETHE INSTITUT (GI). 2019. Zur Geschichte des Goethe-Instituts. Retrieved from: <https://www.goethe.de/de/uun/org/ges.html>. Accessed on 27 September 2019.

GOETHE INSTITUT SLOWAKEI. 2019. O nás. Retrieved from: <https://www.goethe.de/ins/sk/sk/ueb.html>. Accessed on 27 September 2019.

GUIISO, L., SAPIENZA, P., ZINGALES, L. 2009. Cultural Biases in Economic Exchange? In: *The Quarterly Journal of Economics. Vol. 124, Issue 3, pp. 1095-1131.* <https://doi.org/10.1162/qjec.2009.124.3.1095>.

HELMOVÁ, M. 2018. Kommunikation zwischen Kulturen aus der Perspektive von internationalen Geschäftsverhandlungen. In: *Lingua et Vita. Vol. 7, Issue 2, pp. 16-23.* ISSN 1338-6743.

INSTITUT FRANÇAIS SLOVAQUIE. 2019. Retrieved from: <https://institutfrancais.sk/>. Accessed on 27 September 2019.

INSTITUTO ITALIANO DI CULTURA BRATISLAVA. 2019. Retrieved from: https://iicbratislava.esteri.it/iic_bratislava/sk/. Accessed on 27 September 2019.

LANKHUIZEN, M. B. M., DE GROOT, H. L. F. 2016. Cultural distance and international trade: a non-linear relationship. In: *Letters in Spatial and Resource Sciences. Vol. 9, Issue 1, pp. 19 – 25.* <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12076-014-0129-8>.

LEWIS, R. D. 2006. *When Cultures Collide: Leading Across Cultures.* Boston: Nicholas Brealey International, 2006.

LIEN, D., LO, M. 2017. Economic impacts of cultural institutes. In: *The Quarterly Review of Economics and Finance. Vol. 64, pp. 12-21.* <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.qref.2017.02.002>.

MATTOŠ, B. 2013. Kultúrna dimenzia diplomacie ako nástroj zahraničnej politiky štátu na príklade Rakúskej republiky. In: *Economic, political and legal issues of international relations 2013, 2013, pp. 377-383.* ISBN 978-80-225-3659-2.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC (MZVaEZ) 2015. Kultúrna diplomacia. Retrieved from: https://www.mzv.sk/ministerstvo/kulturna_diplomacia. Accessed on 25 September 2019.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC (MZVaEZ) 2017. Slovenské inštitúty. Retrieved from: https://www.mzv.sk/ministerstvo/kulturna_diplomacia-slovenske_instituty. Accessed on 27 September 2019.

ÖSTERREICHISCHES KULTURFORUM. 2017. Retrieved from: <https://rakuskekulturforum.sk/de/>. Accessed on 27 September 2019.

PAJTINKA, E. 2007. Slovenská diplomacia a jej dimenzie v 21. storočí. In: *Zahraničná politika a diplomacia Slovenskej republiky v kontexte európskej integrácie, 2007, pp. 77-84.*

POLSKÝ INŠTITÚT BRATISLAVA. 2010. Retrieved from: <http://www.polinst.sk/sk/>. Accessed on 27 September 2019.

RUSKÉ CENTRUM VEDY A KULTÚRY V BRATISLAVE. 2019. Retrieved from: <http://rcvkba.sk/sk/>. Accessed on 27 September 2019.

SERESOVÁ, K. 2014. Emotionale Kompetenz des Übersetzers/Dolmetschers als Bedingung für die Erstellung eines quality hochwertigen Zieltexes. In: *Lingua et Vita*, 2014, Vol. 3, Issue 6, pp. 89-92. ISSN 1338-6743.

SERESOVÁ, K. 2016. Die Bedeutung der kulturellen Kompetenz für den Übersetzer. In: *Interkulturelle Kommunikation im Wandel der Zeit: Stellungnahmen zu gegenwärtigen Problemen Europas aus Sicht unterschiedlicher wissenschaftlicher Disziplinen*, 2016, pp. 101-106. ISBN 978-3-8300-9134-9.

TADESSE, B., WHITE, R. 2010. Does Cultural Distance Hinder Trade in Goods? A Comparative Study of Nine OECD Member Nations. In: *Open Economies Review*. Vol. 21, Issue 2, pp. 237-261. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11079-008-9090-8>.

This article is part of the project of young teachers, researchers and PhD students named “Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power in the Context of Countries’ Economic Interests“ (Kultúrna diplomacia a mäkká moc v kontexte ekonomických záujmov štátu) no. I-19-101-00.

Contact

Mgr. Michaela Čiefová, PhD.
University of Economics in Bratislava
Faculty of Applied Languages
Department of English Language
Dolnozemska cesta 1, 852 35 Bratislava
Slovakia
Email: michaela.ciefova@euba.sk