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**EUROPEANIZATION THROUGH CULTURAL
DIPLOMACY**

Exploring the Use of Creative Europe as a Tool for Cultural
diplomacy

Author: Ajlan Sejdić

Supervisor: Anamaria Dutceac Segesten

Abstract:

Europeanization is a complex process that involves adopting common European values, standards, policies, and practices across political, economic, and social aspects. However, the role of culture in this process is often overlooked, although it is crucial in promoting understanding and respect among different cultures and traditions within the EU. Culture also plays a significant role in the EU's external relations, helping to build and maintain relationships with non-EU countries.

In this vein, a variety of the European Union's initiatives and programmes have been implemented by the European Union, including the flagship Creative Europe programme aimed at promoting cultural and linguistic diversity and increasing the economic potential of culture-related sectors. This study investigates how is this programme helping the process of Europeanization in Montenegro, a candidate country.

The findings reveal that the programme effectively acclimatizes cultural workers, equipping them with European cultural work practices and values. However, there are certain obstacles related to Montenegrin internal problems and bureaucratic complications associated with the programme itself, that are slowing down the process. Hence, I believe that improved communication with cultural workers from developing countries could strengthen the efficacy of the process of Europeanization and overcome the aforementioned barriers.

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1. Introduction

The process of Europeanization is characterized by its extensive and complex nature, exerting a pervasive impact upon the entire system of a society, encompassing its political, economic, and social spheres. It is typified by the adoption of shared standards, policies, regulations, and practices, fostering a higher degree of collaboration and coordination among European nations, ultimately resulting in numerous advantages. These benefits may include an enhanced democratic framework, greater mobility for individuals and goods, as well as stimulated trade relations throughout the continent.

The one effect of Europeanization that is frequently overlooked belongs to the role played by culture in the process of Europeanization, it can be also argued that the cultural sphere constitutes the most notable aspect of Europeanization with which European citizens come into contact.

Culture forms an essential dimension of the identity, values, and heritage of the European Union, playing a vital role in molding the identities of European citizens and in fostering mutual appreciation and respect among distinct cultures and traditions within the Union. It can impact the citizens' interpersonal communications, collaborations, and cooperative endeavors.

Moreover, culture plays an instrumental role in shaping the European Union's external relations. Cultural diplomacy helps the EU to build and maintain relationships with countries outside of the Union by furthering intercultural cooperation. This doesn't apply only to non-European countries and cooperation with them, but also to the countries that are not part of the European Union, including candidate countries seeking to join this supranational union. To leverage the role of culture in the process of Europeanization, the European Union has implemented various programmes and initiatives, including the flagship Creative Europe programme, which is intended for the cultural and creative sectors and which started in 2014 but had its roots in earlier initiatives documented in the Union's founding days¹. The primary goal of Creative Europe is to facilitate diversity both within and beyond the Union, with a

¹ Lähdesmäki Tuuli et al., *Europe from below: Notions of Europe and the European among Participants in EU Cultural Initiatives* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 3.

focus on promoting cultural and linguistic diversity, while simultaneously increasing the economic potential of culture-related sectors².

This thesis explores the use of Creative Europe as a tool for cultural diplomacy during the process of Europeanization in a candidate country.

1.1. Research Question and Purpose

The primary purpose of this dissertation is to ascertain the extent to which Europeanization is manifesting itself through the participation of this southeastern European country in the Creative Europe projects from 2014 onwards.

This will be accomplished by means of an analysis of selected projects, drawing upon the theoretical framework of Europeanization, and supplementing it with the theory of Cultural Diplomacy, which will serve to shed light on the cultural dimensions of the former theory. Considering that the Creative Europe programme is a tool that, I argue, enables Montenegro to get Europeanized, the research question is:

“How does Creative Europe help the process of Europeanization in Montenegro?”

To address the aforementioned research question, I will engage in several interviews with Creative Europe beneficiaries in Montenegro. The questions I will pose will delve deeply into cultural agendas common to both of the theories employed in this thesis and explained in more depth within the theoretical framework chapter.

² “Creative Europe 2014-2020,” Culture and Creativity, accessed February 21, 2023, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/resources/creative-europe-previous-programmes/creative-europe-2014-2020>.

2. Literature Review

Europeanization and Cultural diplomacy are the main concepts used in this paper. Both theories have been much-discussed topics for several decades, especially the former, so finding suitable studies about them was not challenging.

Tanja Börzel's study "How the European Union Interacts with its Member States" has been very helpful in understanding and defining Europeanization, especially in the way she reduced this complex phenomenon to a process in which specific changes occur³.

As for cultural diplomacy, although it is not used to such an extent in the sphere of European studies, as is the case with Europeanization, there is still a sufficient number of publications that were immensely helpful in writing this paper. The one publication that will be the central part of the analytical chapter of this paper is the book titled "Europe from Below Notions of Europe and the European among Participants in EU Cultural Initiatives" by Tuuli Lähdesmäki, Katja Mäkinen, Viktorija Linda Aldona Čeginskas, and Sigrid Kaasik-Krogerus. The book's authors focused on two agendas: the identity-building agenda and the participatory agenda which will be the main tools that will aid me analyze the material, but also, it will help me conduct the interviews⁴. This book is also highly significant because it very closely explains EU cultural policies, without which it would have been impossible to conduct my thesis research.

As can be seen, there are more than enough studies that will help me in defining the thesis' theoretical framework, as well as later in analyzing, however, when it comes to the country that I have chosen to analyse as part of the Creative Europe programme, there is a research deficit. Montenegro is an understudied country, not only in studies related to European politics, but in general as well. The reasons behind this might be the fact that it's one of the smallest countries on the continent, or perhaps, it was simply overshadowed by its surrounding countries that are known for their turbulent contemporary histories.

³ Tanja A. Börzel, "How the European Union Interacts with its Member States", Reihe Politikwissenschaft, Political Science Series, (November 2003): pp: 15-17

⁴ Lähdesmäki Tuuli et al., Europe from below: Notions of Europe and the European among Participants in EU Cultural Initiatives (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 45.

Interestingly, it has been reputed that Montenegro is one of the next countries to join the European Union, but even so, there are not enough studies on the process of Europeanization in this country, especially not those related to the cultural aspect. Almost all studies that are available today on this topic are most often related to judicial reform, the fight against corruption, and, of course, regional cooperation, and there is almost no mention of culture. This research deficit is exactly why I decided to look for assistance in publications related to neighbouring countries, in particular, Croatia and that's how I found a doctoral thesis titled "Funds and programmes of the European Union - role and significance in the implementation of cultural projects in the Republic of Croatia" written by Antonia Matić, in which, among other things, she analyzes the role and significance of culture during the process of Europeanization in Croatia, while focusing on the EU funding programmes, including Creative Europe⁵, which I will also try to do in this paper, but for Montenegro.

While Matić focuses on the period after Croatia became a member of the European Union, I will study Montenegro as a candidate state. This current lack of research on Europeanization through the cultural diplomacy of candidate countries can be characterized as a deficit in research regarding Europeanization. That is why I will try to at least somewhat fill that gap in studies about the importance of culture during the Europeanization of the candidate countries.

⁵ Antonia Matić, "Fondovi I Programi Europske Unije – Uloga i Značaj u Provedbi Projekata u Kulturi u Republici Hrvatskoj" (thesis, 2021), pp. 5-6.

3. Theoretical Framework

In the following third chapter, I present two theories that are used in this thesis. The first theory is Europeanization, I explain this complex concept by defining it and focusing on Europeanization in the case of the candidate countries. Additionally, this chapter also offers a concise overview of the Montenegrin relationship with the European Union. Due to Europeanization's complexity and the fact that many scholars do not consider it to be a real theory, but rather a phenomenon with which it is necessary to use another concept⁶, I decided to include cultural diplomacy, which complements Europeanization and most importantly, helps me emphasize the importance of culture in the process of Europeanization. Furthermore, this chapter also contains a summary of the EU cultural policies and finally towards the end of this chapter, the so-called cultural agendas which serve as the connecting force of Europeanization and Cultural diplomacy are introduced and are thus, of immense utility in the analysis.

3.1. Europeanization

Europeanization is one of the most used theories within the research of the European Union, especially in the last few decades. Despite the fact that it is utilized to describe a large number of various processes, phenomena, and contexts, there is still no established definition that all scholars use.

One of the ways that many researchers resort to in order to better explain the complex nature of this theory is to divide it into a top-down or bottom-up perspective, depending on whether the European Union affects national policies or national policies affect the policy of the EU⁷. This paper, since it is about the influence of the European Union on Montenegro, has a top-down approach, that Radaelli defined as:

“Processes of (a) construction (b) diffusion and (c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing things’ and shared

⁶ Paolo Graziano, Maarten Peter Vink, and Simon Bulmer, “Theorizing Europeanization,” in *Europeanization New Research Agendas* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007): pp. 46-47.

⁷ Michelle Cini, Tanja A. Börzel, and Diana Panke, “Europeanization,” in *European Union Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 115-125.

beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU public policy and politics and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies’’⁸.

For the bottom-up perspective, he adds that it is a process where the creation of policies, politics and policies is inspired by the member states⁹.

3.1.1. Degree of change

These definitions and the very division into these two perspectives refer more to the EU and its member states. However, they do not adequately address the candidate countries, which is the aim of this study. If we simplify the definition of Europeanization, we can describe it as a process of change¹⁰, and many scholars, including Tanja A. Börzel, distinguish four outcomes of Europeanization that can happen during that process: inertia, absorption, accommodation and transformation¹¹.

- Inertia

Inertia indicates the complete absence of change. This degree occurs when the countries resist all kinds of influence from the European Union and refuse to fulfill European demands. This resistance can lead to non-compliance with European legislation which can make European Commission open infringement proceedings against the country refusing to fulfill the demands.

- Absorption

Unlike the previous degree, change, in some way, is present here, but in a very low range. It can be stated that these changes are not real because in the end they have no actual impact on the state of the country since the European requirements were only seemingly incorporated into the domestic institutions.

⁸ Sabine Saurugger and Claudio M. Radaelli, “The Europeanization of Public Policies: Introduction,” *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice* 10, no. 3 (September 1, 2008): pp. 213-219,

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Johan P. Olsen, “The Many Faces of Europeanization,” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 40, no. 5 (December 16, 2002): pp. 921-952,

¹¹ Tanja A. Börzel, “How the European Union Interacts with its Member States”, *Reihe Politikwissenschaft, Political Science Series*, (November 2003): pp: 15-17

- Accommodation

This is a very similar process to the previous one, but in this case, the changes are a little more noticeable, or as Bözel calls them, modest. Here the countries, pressured by the European Union, adapt new policies, processes and institutions without changing their core

- Transformation

This is the last degree of change and therefore the most valuable. The change is here noticeably high. The states, either replaced their own policies, processes and institutions with new ones, or at least, amended them enough that their core features were completely changed¹².

3.1.2. Europeanization of the Candidate Countries

For an extended period, the process of Europeanization was a matter for the member countries alone. Only in the lead-up to the 2004 and 2005 EU enlargements, with the prospective accession of formerly communist countries, did scholars begin to study the process of Europeanization specifically in the countries that expressed an intention of joining the Union.

Among the first differences between the Europeanization of the member versus Europeanization of the candidate states, that scholars have noticed, was that the relationship between the candidate countries and the European Union is very asymmetric “which gives the EU more coercive routes of influence in domestic policy making processes”¹³. They also noticed that the candidates do not have the possibility of influencing the Union itself, but the European Union is the one with the complete power here, which proves that only a top-down approach is possible when researching the process of Europeanization in those countries¹⁴. In addition, the researchers stated that candidate countries, due to their inexperience, will always, even when they become members, only be policy takers and never policy makers¹⁵. A critical component of this dynamic was the reality that aspiring member states had few opportunities to express disagreement or object to EU policies, as they had to prove

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Özlem Terzi, “Europeanisation of Foreign Policy and Candidate Countries : A Comparative Study of Greek and Turkish Cases,” *Politique Européenne* n° 17, no. 3 (January 2005): pp. 113-136.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

themselves as worthy potential members¹⁶- a task requiring fulfillment of various conditions encapsulated in what is known as "The Copenhagen criteria." These criteria, which every country must adhere to and which the European Council originally established in Copenhagen in 1993 before officially confirming them in Madrid in 1995 serve to monitor countries along their accession path¹⁷. These criteria, as such, play a central role in the Europeanization of candidate countries and might be considered the primary tool employed in carrying out this function¹⁸.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Michelle Cini, Ana E. Juncos, and Nieves Perez-Solorzano Borragan, "Enlargement," in *European Union Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 230.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Montenegro and European Union

Montenegro, as it was already mentioned in the literature review part, is a largely understudied country, therefore, I found it necessary to provide a brief overview of the European Union's relations with one of the smallest European nations.

In May 2006, after eighty-eight years since it lost its independence, Montenegro again became an internationally recognized independent state, which meant full dedication to the ultimate objective - joining the European Union.

Significant public support was forthcoming when Montenegro sought EU membership less than two years later. A 2009 survey, for instance, demonstrated that over three-quarters of the population - 76.2% - was in favor of EU accession, while only 9.8% was against it¹⁹.

In 2010, the European Commission issued a positive opinion on Montenegro's application, citing strengths such as a functional democracy, stable institutions, and a functional market economy. As a result, Montenegro was granted the status of an EU candidate by the Council. In December 2011, the accession process was officially initiated, and negotiations started in June 2012²⁰.

As of June 2020, all thirty-three chapters were opened and three of them were provisionally closed. At present, this remains the status quo²¹.

3.2. Cultural diplomacy

The concept of cultural diplomacy, much like that of Europeanization, is difficult to define, however, this does not in any way reduce its significance in the contemporary world, where cultural industries have become tools in the hands of governments and international organizations to spread and consolidate their influence across the world.

¹⁹ "Političko javno mnjenje Crne Gore" Archived 22 July 2011 at the Wayback Machine Centar Za Demokratiju i Ljudska Prava, October 2009, https://web.archive.org/web/20110722171733/http://www.cedem.me/fajlovi/editor_fajlovi/istrazivanja/CED_EM_oktobar09.pdf

²⁰ "The European Union and Montenegro," The European Union and Montenegro | EEAS Website, accessed February 20, 2023, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/montenegro/european-union-and-montenegro_en?s=225.

²¹ Ibid.

According to the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy, based in Germany and United States, cultural diplomacy may best be described as actions, which are based on and utilize the exchange of ideas, values, traditions and other aspects of culture or identity, whether to strengthen relationships, enhance socio-cultural cooperation, promote national interests and beyond²² and its main principles are respecting and recognizing cultural differences, diversity and heritage; promoting constant global intercultural communication, justice, equality and promoting global human rights and peace²³.

Probably the most cited definition of cultural diplomacy is the one given by the American political scientist and author, Milton C. Cummings, who states that the concept refers to the exchange of ideas, information, art, and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding. Cultural diplomacy can also be more of a one-way street than a two-way exchange, as when one nation concentrates its efforts on promoting its own national language, explaining its policies and point of view, or “telling its story” to the rest of the world²⁴.

In an effort to refine the concept, Mariano Martín Zamorano proposed two subtypes: culturalist and neo-propagandist cultural diplomacy²⁵. According to him, the culturalist “focuses its actions on the artistic, intellectual, and cultural-pedagogic areas, using diversified organizational schemes such as cultural centers abroad, exchange programmes, and diaspora politics”²⁶, while he sees the neo-propagandist as another form of strategic self-promotion. Cultural diplomacy, in this case, is more of a instrument for self-promotion used by international organisations or governments²⁷.

²² “Institute for cultural diplomacy,” Institute for cultural diplomacy, accessed February 20, 2023, https://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/index.php?en_culturaldiplomacy.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Milton C. Cummings “Cultural diplomacy and the United States Government: A survey”, Center for Arts and Culture (2003): p. 1

²⁵ Mariano Martín Zamorano, “Reframing Cultural diplomacy: The Instrumentalization of Culture under the Soft Power Theory,” *Culture Unbound* 8, no. 2 (August 2016): pp. 165-186.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Mariano Martín Zamorano, “Reframing Cultural diplomacy: The Instrumentalization of Culture under the Soft Power Theory,” *Culture Unbound* 8, no. 2 (August 2016): pp. 165-186, <https://doi.org/10.3384/cu.2000.1525.1608165>, 178.

3.2.1. Cultural Policies and Initiatives in the EU

Regarding cultural diplomacy in the European Union, it could be argued that it takes place through the implementation of cultural policies and initiatives and that's why it's important to present a short history of both.

From today's point of view, we can conclude that the common European culture did not play a big role in the creation of the European Union, at least not officially, which is also proven by the fact that culture, as a field of action, was mentioned for the first time in the Maastricht Treaty, also known as the Treaty on the European Union, by indicating that the European Community will start contributing to the "flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity at the same time, bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore"²⁸.

The Amsterdam Treaty from 1997, which can be seen as the continuation of the Maastricht Treaty, included, in addition to the aforementioned quotation, four more paragraphs²⁹.

In the first one it was stated that the Community will start encouraging cooperation between Member States with the aim of improving the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European peoples, as well as conservation and safeguarding of the cultural heritage³⁰.

In the second additional paragraph, they highlighted the importance of cultural cooperation of Member States with the third countries³¹. In the third added paragraph, the Community stated it will promote the diversity of the member states' cultures, and finally in the last added one, it was noted that the Council should "act in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 251 and after consulting the Committee of the Regions, shall adopt incentive measures, excluding any harmonization of the laws and regulations of the Member States"³².

²⁸ Lähdesmäki Tuuli et al., *Europe from below: Notions of Europe and the European among Participants in EU Cultural Initiatives* (Leiden: Brill, 2021). 47.

²⁹ European Union, "Treaty Establishing the European Community (Amsterdam Consolidated Version)," Article 151 § (1997), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:11997E151&from=EN>.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

Finally, the Lisbon Treaty (2007), in addition to following up on the previous treaty, also emphasized the importance of culture by stating, already in the preface, that the entire treaty is "inspired by the cultural, religious and humanistic heritage of Europe"³³.

The EU cultural programmes debuted in 1983, when the Greek Minister of Culture at the time, Melina Mercouri, proposed the creation of the first major initiative, called the European City of Culture, which would later be renamed the European Capital of Culture, all with the aim of promoting European cultures among the member states³⁴.

However, only in the 1990s, the creation of a larger number of programmes in the sphere of culture occurred, such as: Kaleidoscope (1996-1999) whose aim was supporting artistic and cultural activities with a European dimension³⁵, then Raphael (1997-2000), known as a cultural heritage programme for Europe³⁶ and finally Ariane (1997-1999), a Community programme that was supposed to support the literature field, including translation³⁷.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, all these three programmes merged into one single programme - Culture 2000, which lasted from 2000 to 2006 when it was replaced by the so-called Culture Programme, which will also end up being replaced by the largest cultural programme of the European Union, known as Creative Europe programme³⁸ that is the centre of analysis in this paper.

3.2.2. Cultural Agendas – the Connecting Force of Europeanization and Cultural diplomacy

Before we proceed to the analysis, it is crucial to find out why these two theories, Europeanization and Cultural diplomacy, go so well together, that is, why did we choose cultural diplomacy, alongside Europeanization, to aid in answering the research question “How does Creative Europe help the process of Europeanization in Montenegro?”

³³ “The Treaty of Lisbon: Fact Sheets on the European Union: European Parliament,” Fact Sheets on the European Union | European Parliament, accessed February 21, 2023, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/5/the-treaty-of-lisbon>.

³⁴ Lähdesmäki Tuuli et al., *Europe from below: Notions of Europe and the European among Participants in EU Cultural Initiatives* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 9.

³⁵ Lähdesmäki Tuuli et al., *Europe from below: Notions of Europe and the European among Participants in EU Cultural Initiatives* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 51.

³⁶ *ibid*, 60.

³⁷ *ibid*, 47.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 3.

The answer is actually straightforward - considering how Europeanization is a complex concept, by adding the notion of cultural diplomacy, we reduce that complexity by only focusing on its cultural aspects. The aspects in question can be divided into two agendas that Europeanization and cultural diplomacy have in common: the identity-building agenda and the participatory agenda, which are clearly explained in the book "Europe from Below: Notions of Europe and the European among Participants in EU Cultural Initiatives"³⁹.

3.2.2.1. The Identity-Building Agenda

The main objective of this agenda is to create a sense of belonging so that the citizens of the European Union begin to experience the European Union, not only as an international economic entity, but also as a community to which they belong and to which they are culturally close.⁴⁰

In post-war Europe, the issue of a common and unique identity was not a topic that was often discussed, this was the case until the signing of the Declaration on European Identity, signed in Copenhagen in 1973 by the then nine member states, and this can be taken as the beginning of the official discussion of European identity⁴¹. Through the identity-building agenda, Europeanization and European cultural diplomacy have the opportunity to present the European Union as a bearer of a common culture, that is, a common cultural identity. The existence of a common identity also means the existence of universal ideas that should become part of the candidate countries during the process of Europeanization.

All European cultural programmes, listed in the previous chapter, worked in some way to create a common identity. At the very beginning, cultural programmes, such as Kaleidoscope, insisted on presenting Europe as a cultural community while in today's programmes, Europe is seen as "a cultural area common to the European people "⁴².

As for the programme that interests us the most here, Creative Europe, in the latest guidelines for cooperation projects, one of the priorities that are clearly listed, are related to "raising awareness of common history and values, and reinforcing a sense of belonging to a common European space" while also containing a so-called "European dimension"⁴³.

³⁹ Ibid, 45.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 49.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid, 51.

⁴³ Ibid.

3.2.2.2. The Participatory Agenda

Unlike the identity agenda, the participatory agenda is not given much space in the cultural policy of the European Union, nor in official documents, except in the “European Agenda for Culture in the Globalizing World”, where the need for partnership, that would lead to the achievement of higher goals, is highlighted, just like in the next agenda where it was noted that “there is clear scope to increase cultural participation and bring Europeans together to experience what connects us rather than what divides us”⁴⁴. However, since Creative Europe is used as a tool for Europeanization and the notion of participation is mostly related to European cultural programmes, this agenda is really relevant for this paper.

In “Raphael”, one of the earliest EU cultural programmes, it was stated that the goal is “to improve access to the cultural heritage in its European dimension and encourage the active participation of the general public, in particular children, young people, the underprivileged and those living in the outlying and rural areas of the Community, in the safeguarding and development of the European cultural heritage”⁴⁵, similar aims are present in the Culture 2000 and Culture programmes, while in Creative Europe it is stated that their goal is to “support [...] audience development as a means of stimulating interest in, and improving access to, European cultural and creative works and tangible and intangible cultural heritage”⁴⁶. It can be noted here that participation actually happens through cooperation, but also through consuming cultural goods and services from different countries in Europe.

In Creative Europe, the “audience development” objective is explicitly highlighted, which states that all projects that want to be financed by the Creative Europe programme must “follow an inclusive and participatory approach, putting the audience and the project beneficiaries at the center of activities, and involving them in their design and/or implementation”⁴⁷.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 50.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 60.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Lähdesmäki Tuuli et al., *Europe from below: Notions of Europe and the European among Participants in EU Cultural Initiatives* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 63.

Creative Europe

It has been stated on numerous occasions that the Creative Europe initiative will constitute the focal point of inquiry of my thesis. Hence, it is imperative to provide a comprehensive overview of the entire programme. Creative Europe could be considered the final result of all previous European cultural programmes, such as “Kaleidoscope”, “Ariane”, “Raphael”, “Culture 2000” and “Culture”, all previously mentioned and slightly explained in the Cultural policies and initiatives in the EU part of the paper.

These programmes were briefly delineated in the segment entitled "Cultural policies and initiatives in the EU" in this paper. In 2010, a proposition was introduced to establish an all-encompassing programme that would incorporate all the creative industries. Subsequently, the Commission forwarded its recommendation about the creation of a universal initiative that would merge the programmes "Culture" Media, and Media Mundus to the Parliament and EU Council. This proposal was realized in 2014 when the programme denominated as Creative Europe was granted a budget of € 1.46 billion to fulfil its objectives⁴⁸:

a) to safeguard, develop and promote European cultural and linguistic diversity and to promote Europe's cultural heritage;

b) to strengthen the competitiveness of the European cultural and creative sectors, in particular of the audio-visual sector, with a view to promoting smart, sustainable and inclusive growth⁴⁹.

The programme is divided into three sub-programmes: the MEDIA sub-programme, whose aim was to fund the audio-visual and media sectors; the Culture sub-programme, that supports cooperation projects, literature translations, platforms and networks within the EU and includes different sectors: architecture, cultural heritage, design, literature, music and performing arts, this paper is based on this sub-programme; the Cross-sectoral strand, which promotes transnational policy development⁵⁰.

After the huge success of the first phase, Creative Europe was renewed for its second phase which should last from 2021 to 2027⁵¹.

⁴⁸ Lähdesmäki Tuuli et al., *Europe from below: Notions of Europe and the European among Participants in EU Cultural Initiatives* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 3.

⁴⁹ “Creative Europe 2014-2020,” Culture and Creativity, accessed February 21, 2023, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/resources/creative-europe-previous-programmes/creative-europe-2014-2020>.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

4. Methodological framework

In order to explicate the process of Europeanization in Montenegro via Cultural diplomacy, I used the interview method as the main research method, while thematic analysis had a secondary role. This chapter expound upon the used methodology, in addition to offering an explanation as to why it was chosen. I also describe the Montenegrin Creative Europe projects that are part of the analysis and I introduce the representatives of those projects with whom I conducted interviews. The interview including the questions utilized during these interactions guide, the ethical disclaimer and data processing – specifically, the way I transcribed the interviews, are also explained. I concluded this chapter with limitations and challenges encountered throughout the course of this approach

Prior to delving into the main research method, it is worth noting that alongside the interview approach, thematic analysis was employed to facilitate the examination of qualitative data obtained from the interviews. Specifically, the role of thematic analysis primarily involved organizing the findings into two key categories: identity-building cultural agenda and participatory cultural agenda. Additionally, a third category is utilized to encompass background information about the research participants and their projects.

4.1. Interviews

Conversation is the most fundamental tool for gathering the necessary information, as it assists individuals in acquiring essential data in both their daily lives and academic research. In order to fully understand events, processes and their impact on humanity, it is crucial to engage in discussions with individuals, seeking their perspectives on topics of interest.

The qualitative interviews are defined as “a key venue for exploring the ways in which subjects experience and understand their world, it provides a unique access to the lived world of the subjects, who in their own words describe their activities, experiences and opinions”⁵². In order to answer the research question of this thesis "How does Creative Europe help the process of Europeanization in Montenegro?", I decided to conduct interviews with people

⁵² Steinar Kvale, *Doing Interviews* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2010), 11.

who were directly part of this European programme in the cultural sector. Consequently, through personal interaction, I had the opportunity to meet the interviewees, find out more about their opinions and understandings regarding the topic of the thesis, then, their feelings, and perhaps most importantly, I was able to, through a conversation with them, find out as much as possible about their experience with the Creative Europe programme. Moreover, determining their personal values and beliefs proved to be significant for analyzing their responses to posed questions.

Originally, my plan was to conduct all the interviews in person, which led me to travel to Montenegro and arrange specific dates and locations for each interview. The initial interview took place on March 22, 2023, at the office of the NGO that is a beneficiary of the Creative Europe programme. The following day, the second interview occurred at the National Library Radosav Ljumović in Podgorica. As planned, the remaining interviews were supposed to take place shortly after the first two. However, once again the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the normal way of life. A few days after the second interview, I started experiencing COVID symptoms, necessitating the postponement of the remaining three interviews. After consulting with all the remaining interviewees, we collectively decided to proceed with virtual interviews using Zoom. The third interview, which was the first conducted via Zoom, occurred on April 7, 2023. Subsequently, the next interview took place on April 21, 2023, and the final interview occurred on May 2, 2023.

This may have led to some obstacles, which I will talk about a little later in the chapter, but the most important thing, the dynamic of the interviews did not change, probably because, although the remaining interviews were not in person, but online, I still was able to see their faces, more precisely, their facial expressions because it was still a face-to-face conversation, only virtually.

In both face-to-face and virtual settings, my aim was to establish trust and a positive rapport with the interviewees, as I believe that this can lead to more accurate and detailed responses. I made every effort to ensure that they felt comfortable during the interviews. Prior to each interview, I took the initiative to engage in informal conversations with the interviewees, creating a relaxed atmosphere. We would engage in small talk about their work, my studies abroad, and gradually transition into discussing the project. Only after approximately twenty minutes, when a comfortable environment was established, would I ask if they were ready to begin recording. This approach proved to be highly beneficial, particularly because I opted

for semi-structured interviews and wanted the interviewees to feel at ease expressing themselves openly. Throughout the interviews, I made a conscious effort to demonstrate active listening and convey genuine interest in the topic under discussion.

4.1.1. Selection of the Creative Europe Projects and the Interviewees

In order to ascertain as well as possible whether Europeanization was carried out in Montenegro through cultural diplomacy, it was very important to select the right Creative Europe projects in which this southeastern European country was involved, because these projects are the main tools of cultural diplomacy.

The first project I decided on was the "European Artizen Initiative" which is a European cooperation project whose objective is "reinforcing cultural and creative player abilities to adapt to the growing needs of co-building the city, with the aim to favor citizens' engagement and empowerment"⁵³. In all the countries that were part of the project, transnational laboratories were organized as on-site abilities accelerators, where European artists in residence collaborated with the local citizens in the creation of an artistic project. In Montenegro, it was a documentary theater play called "Kotor in Kotor", in which ordinary citizens of Kotor acted, and at the same time wrote the script and directed the entire play⁵⁴. The lady who played a huge role in this is also the person with whom I conducted the interview, Tatjana Rajić, architect, executive director and one of the founders of the organization she represents, and at the same time coordinator of the European Artizen Initiative project.

The organization's name is "Expediatio", a NGO based in the Montenegrin coastal town of Kotor. The primary objective of this organization is the encouragement of sustainable spatial development in Montenegro and southeastern Europe that mainly concerns cultural heritage and landscape, then, urban and rural planning, as well as sustainable cities and public spaces and of course energy-efficient architecture⁵⁵.

The other four „Artizen“ partners were the french agency „Dédale“, they are also the leaders of the project, then the NGO „Fundatia AltArt pentru Arta Alternativa“ from Romania, then

⁵³ "EUROPEAN ARTIZEN INITIATIVE," Search | Culture and Creativity, accessed May 8, 2023, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/projects/search/details/552289-CREA-1-2014-1-FR-CULT-COOP1>.

⁵⁴ Appendix 2 – Translated interviews p.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

„Idensitat Associació d'Art Contemporani“, a cultural organization from Spain and finally „Prostoroz“, a Slovenian non-profit urban design studio⁵⁶.

The next project that I analyzed in this thesis is "The Balkan Translation Collider", which aims to bring together Balkan NGOs, associations, publishing and literary agencies and agents, as well as literary fairs and festivals to work together to improve the state of literary scene in the Western Balkans. More precisely, the main goal is to "overcome the barriers to literary cooperation within the Western Balkans and between the region and the EU member states"⁵⁷, one of the principal beneficiaries here will be writers who are a direct part of the project and whose selected literary works will be promoted throughout the region, but also the rest of Europe. Literary agents also play a big role in this project because they will collaborate with each other and exchange knowledge and experiences during various activities happening while implementing "The Balkan Translation Collider" project in all participating countries⁵⁸. The person who gave me the necessary information regarding this project is its coordinator Sanja Vojinović, who holds a master's degree in the literary sciences and is currently in the position of the director of the city library Radosav Ljumović⁵⁹. This project is interesting due to the fact that the municipality of Podgorica participated in it, which is a rare case that a government body participates in Creative Europe projects. The rest of the consortium consisted of: "Next Page" a literature and translation association from Bulgaria, also the leader of the project; "Goten Grup" – a publishing house from Macedonia;; Albanian cultural organization "Poeteka"; "Sandorf", a literary and publishing agency based in Croatia and literary agency "ARGH" also from Croatia⁶⁰.

The third project, also the third interview I conducted, is called "#synergy: Sharpening the capacities of the classical music industry in the Western Balkans". The main goal of this project is "to overcome the obstacles which at present threaten the art music sector in the Western Balkans, which are the consequences of small and fragmented art markets, of

⁵⁶ "EUROPEAN ARTIZEN INITIATIVE," Search | Culture and Creativity, accessed May 8, 2023,

⁵⁷ "Balkan Translation Collider," Search | Culture and Creativity, accessed May 8, 2023, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/projects/search/details/623171-CREA-1-2020-1-BG-CULT-COOP-WB>.

⁵⁸ Appendix 2 – Translated interviews

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ "Balkan Translation Collider," Search | Culture and Creativity, accessed May 8, 2023, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/projects/search/details/623171-CREA-1-2020-1-BG-CULT-COOP-WB>.

unequal economic development, and of recent conflicts in the region"⁶¹. The leader and the partners of this project promote interregional cooperation between the countries of the Western Balkans in the field of classical music, which will also eventually lead to the recognition of Balkan classical music in Europe⁶². Some of the activities of this project are the engagement of composers from each country who will write one composition that will address a social topic relevant to the country from which that composer originally comes, then during the residential part of the project, classical music performers, one from each country, will perform those compositions throughout the region⁶³.

Viktor Varoši, manager and producer in culture, the executive producer of the KotorArt International Festival is the coordinator of this project and he was the one I interviewed for this thesis.

This project is also the only project in which Montenegro is a leader and not just a partner. More precisely, "KotorArt", a Montenegrin NGO, that is known for its eponymous international interdisciplinary festival is the leader of the project. In addition to KotorArt, the consortium consisted of five other partners: "Chopin Piano Fest Prishtina", a festival from Kosovo, "Belgrade Festivals Center" which is a Serbian cultural organization, "Festival Ljubljana" from Slovenia, "The Dubrovnik Summer Festival" and finally the "International Festival Vox Baroque" from Albania⁶⁴.

The next Creative Europe project in which Montenegro participated was "Opera: Past, Present, Perfect". This project aimed "to connect and educate young professionals with a view to establish a cross-sectoral, cross-national and intergenerational dialogue (between young professionals - mentors), collaboration and expertise exchange to (re)position opera as an interdisciplinary and authentic European art form"⁶⁵. Apart from this, the objective of this project is to, through regional and European cooperation, make opera more accessible

⁶¹ "#synergy: Sharpening the Capacities of the Classical Music Industry in the Western Balkans," Search | Culture and Creativity, accessed May 8, 2023, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/projects/search/details/623246-CREA-1-2020-1-ME-CULT-COOP-WB>.

⁶² Appendix 2 – Translated interviews

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ "#synergy: Sharpening the Capacities of the Classical Music Industry in the Western Balkans," Search | Culture and Creativity, accessed May 8, 2023, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/projects/search/details/623246-CREA-1-2020-1-ME-CULT-COOP-WB>.

⁶⁵ "Opera: Past, Present, Perfect," Search | Culture and Creativity, accessed May 8, 2023, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/projects/search/details/616745-CREA-1-2020-1-RS-CULT-COOP1>.

to everyone, not just the elite, as is the case today. The plan is to organize opera performances in every participating country both in large and smaller, rural cities⁶⁶.

I conducted the interview with Bojana Mališić, a university assistant and a coordinator of international university projects, including this one.

What makes this project interesting is that the Montenegrin representative in it is a higher education institution, the “University of Donja Gorica.” Apart from this university, part of the consortium were: the leader of the project “MOTO - Music opera theater organization”, a non-profit organization based in “Serbia, Little Theater Dusko Radović” also from Serbia, then, “Nieuw Geneco” a Dutch professional association for composers and finally, “MISA Young Musicians International Association of Georgia”⁶⁷.

Finally, the last interview was conducted in connection with the project "Redesigning playscapes with children in the Western Balkans". The center of this project is landscape playgrounds and what is fascinating about this project is the fact that children are one of the collaborators on this project, more precisely, experts from the partner organizations will work with children in each participating country on designing children's playgrounds⁶⁸. The reason for the creation of this project was dissatisfaction with contemporary children's playgrounds since their appearance is determined by the urban design, as well as the enormous use of motor vehicles, so today children have at their disposal sterile playgrounds that are socially divided and separated from nature. In order to solve this problem in the Western Balkans, in all country engaging in this project will be, among other things, organized study trips, seminars, trainings and pilot projects; the main outcome will be the handbooks on co-creative design, videos, blogs and other publications that will enable problem-solving⁶⁹.

The interviewee who answered my questions related to this project is Goran Janković, the founder of “Gradionica” and the main Montenegrin collaborator on this project.

One of the partners of this project is the Montenegrin non-governmental organization "Gradionica", which, with the help of architecture, urban planning and fine arts, takes care of tangible and intangible heritage, as well as the environment. Other partners in this project of Creative Europe are: project leaders Slovenian cultural organization "PaziPark",

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Appendix 2 – Translated interviews

⁶⁹ Ibid.

“Kreativni Krajobrazi” from Croatia, “Qendra Tsavje” a nonprofit urban research and action group from Albania and cultural organization based in Serbia “Skograd”⁷⁰.

4.1.2. Interview Guide

Questions are a central part of the interview method, in semi-structured interviews, the questions serve as a kind of guideline to help the interviewer to lead the interview. The respondents were given all the questions a few days before the interview so that they had time to prepare.

I considered the importance of using predominantly open-ended questions during the interviews to avoid simple "yes" or "no" answers. However, there were certain questions that required closed responses, and in those cases, I would always follow up by asking the interviewees to elaborate on their answers. This approach made the interviews more engaging and, at times, created a conversational atmosphere resembling discussions between acquaintances. This dynamic proved to be highly valuable for gathering insightful information.

I structured the interviews into three parts⁷¹. In the first part, my aim was to gather information about the interviewees, their organizations, and their projects. This was particularly crucial to me since, apart from the usual small talk before the interview, I sought to make the experience as pleasant as possible for the interviewees. To achieve this, I asked them questions related to their work outside of the Creative Europe project and the history of their organization, and then redirected the conversation to the project. At this point, I requested them to describe the project, which they often interpreted as an opportunity to speak more about their activities during the project than the project itself. I also inquired about the entire process, from the writing to the implementation of the project. Additionally, this was where I probed into the funding system in Montenegro⁷².

⁷⁰ “Redesigning Playscapes with Children in Western Balkans,” Search | Culture and Creativity, accessed May 8, 2023, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/projects/search/details/623358-CREA-1-2020-1-SI-CULT-COOP-WB>.

⁷¹ Appendix 1 – Interview guide p.

⁷² Ibid.

The rest of the questions were divided based on the participatory cultural agenda and the identity-building cultural agenda that Europeanization and Cultural diplomacy both have in common.

In the participatory agenda, my primary focus was on examining the cooperation between Montenegro and other European countries and how it influenced Montenegrin Europeanization. I sought to gather extensive information about their collaborations, encompassing both member states of the European Union and neighboring non-EU countries. A significant aspect of this investigation was understanding the dynamics of communication with their partners. I was particularly interested in learning about their experiences and interactions during project implementation, including any travels that took place as part of the collaborative efforts⁷³.

The identity-building agenda seeks to foster a shared cultural identity and portrays the European Union as a cultural community with universal ideals that candidate countries should adopt throughout the process of Europeanization.

I consider the identity-building agenda to be of great significance since not only did it allow the interviewees to share insights as representatives of their organizations, but it also provided them with an opportunity to express their personal perspectives on European identity and identity in Montenegro as a whole. Moreover, they could discuss the benefits they experienced during project implementation. Additionally, the interviewees had the chance to voice their opinions about EU values⁷⁴.

4.1.3. Ethical Disclaimer

Prior to conducting the interviews, all participants were provided with comprehensive information about the study's purpose. They were also required to sign a consent form, which served to address ethical considerations and outline their rights as respondents. Obtaining their consent was a crucial prerequisite for beginning the interviews⁷⁵.

The explanation of the study's purpose commenced with a brief introduction to the thesis topic. I emphasized the importance of trust in academic research and assured the participants

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Appendix 3 - Consent for master's thesis

that the information they shared would be used solely for this thesis. Additionally, I informed them that only my supervisor, whose name was mentioned in the consent form, would have access to the audio recordings⁷⁶.

Furthermore, I offered the participants the option to withdraw from the study at any time before the thesis was published, ensuring that their responses would be promptly removed⁷⁷. I also inquired whether they were comfortable with their names and the names of their respective organizations being mentioned in the thesis. All interviewees approved of this. It is also very important to convey the information that the informant gave you as faithfully as possible, so a transcribed text should always be loyal to the interviewee's oral statement. I finished the consent form with my contact information and told them that they can contact me about the interviews and the thesis at any time⁷⁸.

4.1.4. Transcription

All interviews were carried out in the Montenegrin language. Initially, they were transcribed and subsequently translated into English. During the translation process, I took great care to ensure that the original meaning of the responses was preserved and not altered in any way.

Given that the interviews were often lengthy, both myself and the interviewees occasionally used filler words such as "um" and "hmm" that hold no significant meaning. To streamline the transcription, I employed the technique known as intelligent verbatim transcription, which helped filter out these unnecessary words.

4.1.5. Limitations

Although I hold the belief that interviews are among the most effective methods for gathering information on a specific topic of interest, it is important to acknowledge the existence of certain limitations and challenges associated with this method. Steinar Kvale has identified several obstacles frequently encountered by interviewers, and I have also noticed them during my research.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

One of those is the obstacle that Kvale calls "meaning"⁷⁹ and it concerns the interviewer's ability to immediately understand the answer. This often occurs during the semi-structured interviews where the interviewer should be ready to join the conversation at any moment, but it isn't always easy. This happened to me, even though before the interviews I learned everything that I could about the projects and the organizations that are in charge of those projects, I still didn't immediately understand some answers because those projects are part of the spheres where I don't have experience or enough knowledge about. This occurred during the interviews with organizations that deal with architecture, theater and opera where it is simply necessary to know the subject as deeply as possible in order to extract as much useful information from the given answer.

But, for example, I did not encounter such problems while I was interviewing the coordinators of the projects related to literature and translation because it is a subject that I know well both because of my educational, but also professional background.

Of course, sometimes it came to the point that the interviewees did not understand the questions well, but one of the main advantages of semi-structured interviews is that I was able to explain to them as closely as possible what I really meant by my question.

Another obstacle that I expected to encounter was the one that concerns the interpretation of facial expressions and bodily gestures, this occurred to me during the interviews that had to be held on Zoom, but still not in the amount that I expected because in the last few years, we have all been forced to meet virtually and interpreting human behavior over the screen is a skill that we have acquired over time.

One of the frequent obstacles that occur is related to focus. In interviews, especially semi-structured ones, it is very difficult to stick to the topic we are there for. After some time, the interviewees feel as relaxed as possible and sometimes the focus shifts to a completely different topic⁸⁰. This happened to me in almost every interview, but it is very important to handle this properly because if we interrupt the informant one risks the destruction of the interview dynamics, that's why I, although at one point the conversation had nothing to do with my thesis, would join the conversation since I noticed that it made the interviewees feel more relaxed, therefore, more ready for further conversation.

⁷⁹ Steinar Kvale, *Doing Interviews* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2010), 11.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

Ambiguity is also another obstacle that Kvale mentioned that can arise during the interviews⁸¹. Interlocutors can often give ambiguous answers to some obviously simple questions, but this is resolved during the analysis of their answers, where the interviewer must clearly find out what the interlocutor really meant.

Power dynamics can also present a problem. Interviews are conducted with people who are well acquainted with the topic we are discussing, more precisely, they are experts in it⁸². Thus, the interviewer risks losing the lead in the interview at one point, but this is solved by active listening and asking additional questions during the conversation. This can also happen if the interviewer abuses their power and leads the interlocutors to give you answers that you might want to hear, if this happens, it is very important to be aware of it and not to ask questions that could lead to that.

Another specific limitation that I personally encountered was the one related to trust. Namely, at the very beginning of the communication with them, I noticed that they have some kind of mistrust towards me as someone who comes from abroad, but after I explained to them that I have only been in Sweden for a few years, I noticed that their attitude towards me changes. Also, there were questions that directly concern the cultural funding system in Montenegro and I noticed that they hesitated whether to answer or not, but after I pointed out to them that they are not obliged to answer it if they don't want to, they would immediately start responding anyway.

I would like to conclude by expressing my deep satisfaction with the role of a researcher, particularly during the process of conducting interviews.

These interviews have afforded me the invaluable opportunity to expand my knowledge base concerning culture, particularly within niche sectors that are not readily accessible. Through the research conducted for this thesis, I have had the privilege of engaging with a significant number of experts, especially those who have not been afforded public visibility, as is often the case with cultural workers, but what has made this research process particularly gratifying is that all the individuals I interviewed expressed satisfaction in having the chance to discuss both the positive and negative aspects of their work.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² ibid

5. Results and Discussion

The following chapter presents an analysis and findings of the collected material. In order to answer the research question “How does Creative Europe help the process of Europeanization in Montenegro?” I analyze the material that I received from interviewing the Creative Europe beneficiaries in Montenegro using aspects, in other words, the so-called cultural agendas presented in the book "Europe from Below: Notions of Europe and the European among Participants in EU Cultural Initiatives" that also helped me conducting the interviews.

I started the interviews with introductory questions where I tried to find out as much background information as possible, and I start the analytical chapter with the analysis of the data obtained in that part of the interviews, and then the data obtained from the questions related to the aforementioned cultural agendas.

But prior to that, I clearly present information about my informants and their organizations and projects of which they are representatives:

The interviewees	The organizations	The projects
Tatjana Rajić	Expedio	European Artizen Initiative
Sanja Vojinović	Municipality of Podgorica	The Balkan Translation Collider
Viktor Varoši	KotorArt	"#synergy: Sharpening the capacities of the classical music industry in the Western Balkans"
Bojana Mališić	University Donja Gorica	Opera: Past, Present, Perfect
Goran Janković	Gradionica	"Redesigning playscapes with children in the Western Balkans".

5.1. Background Data

As I already mentioned, I start by analyzing all the information I collected at the very beginning of the interviews. This part primarily served to get to know the informants and their organizations and the projects, but also to find more about their views on Creative Europe, as well as on the state funding of the cultural sector in Montenegro.

5.1.1. Public Funding for the Cultural Sector

When asked about their opinion on the adequacy of the current system of financing culture in Montenegro and whether improvements are needed, the interviewees, who were mostly representatives of non-governmental organizations in the cultural sector, highlighted the challenges they encounter.

Viktor, an informant from the KotorArt organization, stated that the main issue is that the Montenegrin Ministry of Culture simply does not have enough money for this sector⁸³.

Sanja, who works in the public sector, agreed with Viktor's statement by highlighting the difference in the funding systems between Montenegro and their partners in the Creative Europe project. She mentioned that their partners have larger state budgets for culture, which gives them a better position than Montenegro⁸⁴.

And the statement made by Tatjana Rajić from Expeditio also proves that this is true *“Last year, we made a cross-sectional analysis of support and found out that only 6% [of the projects] was supported by the state or municipality and everything else was financed by foreign financial sources, among others the European Union and other foundations, embassies... basically, we would not survive without it. So we bring much more to the state than the state gives us, because 60% of all projects go directly to the state by supporting the economy and returning it to the state budget through taxes* ⁸⁵.

⁸³ Viktor Varoši – Appendix 2, p. 69-74,

⁸⁴ Sanja Vojinović – Appendix 2, p. 61-68

⁸⁵ Tatjana Rajić – Appendix 2, p. 52-60, original text: Prosle godine smo napravili neki presek podrške i saznali smo da nas je samo 6% podržala država ili opština i sve ostalo je bilo finansiranje od stranih finansijskih izvora, između ostalih i Evropske unije i drugih stranih fondacija, ambasada, praktično ne bi opstali bez toga. Tako da mi puno više donosimo državi nego što država u nas ulaze, jer od svih projekata ide 60% ide direktno državi tako što podržavamo privredu i vraćamo kroz porez u budžet države

From this part of the interview, I also concluded that there are laws that prevent all non-governmental organizations, not only cultural ones, from receiving funding directly from the state, so they are forced to use grants, both state and international ones, including European funds, which is their main source of funding: *“Also what’s problematic is the law because of which NGOs cannot be financed directly from the budget, but only through grants, that is, they have to wait for a call and that’s the only way to get money”*⁸⁶.

Today, the situation has changed for the better since more grants have been created, as stated by Bojana, the informant from the University of Donja Gorica: *“Well, in recent years there have been some changes because a lot of funds and tenders have appeared where you can apply”*⁸⁷.

But a greater number of opportunities led to some other problems, which, according to my interviewee, are unique not only to Montenegro, but also to the entire region: *“My opinion is that, not only in Montenegro, but also in the region, the basic instrument for funding culture are grants, both state and European... the problem with Montenegrin’s, I mean, the state grants, is that there are no clearly explained evaluation criteria, which the EU has, but Montenegro doesn’t and it is not at all clear to me how exactly it works in Montenegro or in other countries of the region”*⁸⁸.

Viktor also added that he does not agree with the distribution of money allocated for culture, according to him, the issue is that states attempt to back numerous initiatives to ensure everyone receives a portion, yet these allocations often turn out to be minuscule and practically insignificant for most of the organizations⁸⁹.

According to Sanja Vojinović, the problem is not only the money itself, but also the actions and unwillingness of the government, which is not aware of the importance of culture in promoting Montenegro throughout Europe: *“Cultural workers should be good representatives of the country, but the Ministry of Culture seems not to be aware of that, but when we get the opportunity to present Montenegrin culture, we do everything ad hoc,*

⁸⁶ Viktor Varoši – Appendix 2, p. 69-74, original text:: Takodje je problematikan zakon zbog koje NGO ne mogu da se finansiraju direktno iz budzeta, vec samo preko grantova, odnosno moraju da sacekaju pozive i jedino tako da dobiju novac.

⁸⁷ Bojana Mališić – Appendix 2, p.75-78, original text: Pa posljednjih godina je doslo do nekih promjena jer se pojavilo dosta fondova i tenders gdje se mozete prijavljati.

⁸⁸ Viktor Varoši – Appendix 2, p. 69-74, original text:Moje misljenje je da, ne samo u Crnoj Gori, vec i u regionu je da je osnovni instrument finansiranja kulture grantovi, kako drzavni, tako i evropski.. problem sa crnogorskim grantovima je sto ne postoje jasno objasnjeni kriterijumi za evaulaciju, sto EU ima, ali Crnoj Gori to fali i uopste mi nije jasno kako to tacno kod nas funkcionise, kao ni u ostalim drzavama regiona.

⁸⁹ Viktor Varoši – Appendix 2, p. 69-74

because we do not have a prearranged model that we use when Montenegrin culture needs to be presented”⁹⁰.

However, it is also very important to note that some cultural organizations have a better experience with funding from the state budget, one of them is Gradionica, whose Creative Europe project, according to Goran the founder of that NGO, was co-financed by the Ministry of Public Administration: *“The project is supported by the Ministry of Public Administration, I must tell you that, which means that in addition to Creative Europe, we are co-financed by them”*.⁹¹

5.1.2. Underperforming European Union’s Bureaucracy

I got the impression that the informants are dissatisfied with the existing bureaucracy related to the Creative Europe programme during every interview. Interestingly, the topic of bureaucracy was not initially part of the interview questions but emerged spontaneously during the course of our conversations.

For example, during the first interview, already at the very beginning, my informant Tatjana mentioned: *“It is important to note that all European programmes have exhausting administration to say the least, and that is the reason why we, for example, have stopped applying for many of them, because that exhausting administration takes away a lot of our capacity and we cannot often dedicate ourselves to the projects... It is extremely bureaucratized”⁹².*

In Tatjana's case, the bureaucracy played such a huge role that she, more precisely, her organization, decided not to be part of Creative Europe anymore because it’s simply too exhausting”⁹³.

⁹⁰ Sanja Vojinović – Appendix 2 p. 61-68, original text : ... kulturni radnici bi trebalo da budu dobri predstavnici jedne drzave, ali ministarstvo kulture kao da nije svjesno toga, vec kada dodje do neke prilike da predstavimo crnogorsku kulturu mi sve radi ad hoc, jer nemamo unaprijed uredjen model koji cemo koristiti kada treba da se predstavi crnogorska kulture.

⁹¹ Goran Janković – Appendix 2 p.79-80, original text : Projekat je podrzan od Ministarstva Javne Uprave, to ti moram reci, znaci pored Kreativne Evrope, ko-finansirani smo od strane njih.

⁹² Tatjana Rajić – Appendix 2, p. 52-60, original text: vazno je napomenuti da svi evropski programi imaju iscrpljujuci administraciju u najmanju ruku i to je razlog sto smo mi, recimo, prestali da apliciramo za mnoge konkurse zato sto nam ta iscrpljujuca administracija mnogo kapaciteta odvlaci i ne mozemo da se cesto posvetimo projektima. Takodje imamo kasnjenje sa placanjem. Ekstremno je birokratizovan.

⁹³ Tatjana Rajić – Appendix 2, p. 52-60

When I asked her to explain in more detail what was exactly exhausting, she gave the following example: *“The EU administration is such that if they set a deadline for you, you must not exceed it even one day, and if they set a deadline for themselves, then there can be multiple delays and then all of a sudden they’ll ask for some new documents again”*⁹⁴.

Sanja Vojinović also agreed that it was difficult to meet the administrative requirements of the Creative Europe programme: *“We had to hire an external person to help us write all those huge forms.”*⁹⁵ And she also added *“Well, it is, it is very complicated. There are boards that look at every detail, especially when it comes to finances because they ask for precision, and when it comes to culture it’s very difficult to be precise, but it was easy for us because we have a lot of experience in managing projects. We cultural workers are used to working when the budget is limited”*⁹⁶.

During the project in which Sanja participated, they were forced to use their own money several times so they could finish the study related to the project that, according to her is most important part of the entire project⁹⁷.

Sanja and the municipality of Podgorica are not the only ones that had to hire experts from their budget to help them with the complicated bureaucracy, Tatjana testified that they hired an expert to help them with financial reporting⁹⁸.

Viktor from NGO KotorArt also agreed with the opinion of Tatjana and Sanja: *“It is known that the EU bureaucracy is very complicated. They are highly bureaucratized, but many things do not work”*⁹⁹.

⁹⁴ Tatjana Rajić – Appendix 2, p. 52-60, original text: EU administracija je takva da ako su postavili neki rok za vas vi ne smete da ga prekoracite ni jednog dana, a ako su postavili rok za sebe onda tu moze da dodje do nekoliko kasnjenja i odjednom nekako opet traze nove dokumente.

⁹⁵ Sanja Vojinović – Appendix 2 p. 61-68, original text : mi smo morali da angazujemo eksterno osobu koja nam je pomogla u pisanju svih tih silnih formulara.

⁹⁶ Sanja Vojinović – Appendix 2 p. 61-68, original text : Pa jeste, vrlo je komplikovan. Postoje komisije koja gleda svaki detalj, posebno kada su finansije u pitanju jer traze preciznost, a kada je kultura u pitanju veoma je tesko biti precizan, ali nama je bilo lako jer imamo puno iskustva u tome i vodjenju projekata. Mi kulturno radnici smo navikli da radimo kada je ogranicen budzet.

⁹⁷ Sanja Vojinović – Appendix 2 p. 61-68, original text :.

⁹⁸ Tatjana Rajić – Appendix 2, p. 52-60.

⁹⁹ Viktor Varoši – Appendix 2, p.69-74, original text: Poznato je da je EU birokratija veoma komplikovana. Jako su birokratizovani, ali puno stvari ne funkcionise.

5.1.3. Lack of Interest in Participating in the Creative Europe Programme

One of the most important questions in the initial part of the interview was definitely related to the awareness of Montenegrin cultural organizations about the existence of the European programmes for financing cultural activities, including Creative Europe.

From the answers, it could be concluded that many organizations are aware of the existence of such programmes: *“Yes. They [the Ministry of Culture] had a team back then. They always have good individuals within the ministry. As for example, this one girl, Ana Šavijak, who constantly made various promotions for all EU funds”*¹⁰⁰. One of the informants also stated *“They are probably aware that it exists, but I'm not sure why they don't use it, I don't really have an answer to that”*¹⁰¹.

Perhaps we could look for the answer to that precisely in the complexity of the bureaucracy, which contributed to the bad image of this programme among Montenegrin cultural organizations, with which Sanja agrees: *“I'm not sure, I don't know how informed they are...But I know there are obstacles in terms of administrative matters”*¹⁰².

An issue closely tied to administration and likely contributing to the negative perception of this European programme is the low level of co-financing. While it is now possible to apply for 100% financing, during the time my interviewees applied, this option was not available as it was the case with the “European Artizen Initiative project”¹⁰³, and apart from low co-financing, Tatjana believes that the amount of money they received as partners in this project was not enough, but due to the importance of the project for their city, they decided to invest in the same project from their own funds¹⁰⁴.

Tatjana added another obstacle related to financing: *“Also, we had another problem with financing, we had to have the same amount of money that they are supposed to give us, on*

¹⁰⁰ Tatjana Rajić – Appendix 2, p. 52-60, original text: Da. Imali su oni tada tim. Oni uvijek imaju dobre pojedince unutar ministarstva. Kao npr. Ova jedna devojka Ana Savijak koja je stalno pravila razne promocije za sve EU fondove.

¹⁰¹ Viktor Varoši – Appendix 2, p. 69-74, original text: Upoznate su da postoji vjerovatno, ali nisam sigurna zasto ga ne koriste, na to bas nemam odgovor.

¹⁰² Sanja Vojinović – Appendix 2 p. 61-68, original text : Nisam sigurna, ne znam koliko su informisane... Ali znam da postoje prepreke sto se ticu administrativnih stvari.

¹⁰³ Tatjana Rajić – Appendix 2, p. 52-60

¹⁰⁴ Tatjana Rajić – Appendix 2, p. 52-60

our bank account and they would reimburse us at the end of the project, and for an NGO, that was very difficult“¹⁰⁵.

5.2. Participatory Cultural Agenda

The first cultural agenda that I use to analyze the material I obtained through the interviews is the participatory cultural agenda, which, I repeat, emphasizes the necessity of cooperation and partnership between European countries and beyond in addition to participation in joint cultural programmes and initiatives.

5.2.1. International Cooperation - A Doubtful Advantage

During each interview, I started the set of questions related to the participatory cultural agenda with questions about communication with partners, and the answers were mostly positive. *“Those associations are good and there was solid communication because we already knew each other from earlier projects. And the communication was very diplomatic. We met at meetings in different countries and just shared what we did in our home countries”*¹⁰⁶

.Viktor and KotorArt had an even more positive experience with their partners: *“We are a very easy-going group of people, who are interested in what we do and everyone is very involved and we had no problems at all. Every country is involved in the implementation of the project as a whole, but we from Montenegro are like class elders”*¹⁰⁷. Goran was also satisfied with the communication¹⁰⁸.

After the question about communication, there was also a question about the concrete things they acquired during the cooperation with the project partners, and all the answers, as expected, were about the exchange of ideas and knowledge obtained during the

¹⁰⁵ Tatjana Rajić – Appendix 2, p. 52-60, original text: Problem je nama bilo i prefinansiranje jer smo na racunu morali da imamo isti onaj iznos koji oni nama treba da uplate, pa kao refundirali bi nam to na kraju projekta, a za jednu NVO organizaciju je to veoma tesko.

¹⁰⁶ Tatjana Rajić – Appendix 2, p. 52-60, original text: Dobra su ta udruzenja i solidna je komunikacija bila jer smo se vec znali sa ranijih projekata. I u komunikaciji je sve teklo diplomatski. Sretali smo se na sastancima u razlicitim zemljama, podelimo sta smo sve radili u matricnim zemljama.

¹⁰⁷ Viktor Varoši – Appendix 2, p.69-74, original text: Veoma smo jedna opustena grupa ljudi, koji su zainteresovani za ovo cim se bavimo i svi su veoma involved i nismo uopste imali problema. Svaka zemlja je ukljucena u realizaciju projekta as whole, ali mi iz Crne Gore smo kao razredne starjesine

¹⁰⁸ Goran Janković – Appendix 2 p.79-80

cooperation”: *“The most useful side of those partnerships were ideas and new approaches and confirmation of something you're already thinking about or a new argument for something, trips were very useful for this”*¹⁰⁹.

Bojana also agreed with that, she admitted that the various activities of the university were brought to the European level because of their “Opera: Past, Present, Perfect” project, but beside that, the students themselves directly benefited from the project as well since they, along with the professors and the teaching assistants, participated in various masterclasses, workshops, training and the university itself had the opportunity to promote itself¹¹⁰.

Goran also expressed his satisfaction with the obtained advantages during the cooperation with his partners: *“It’s definitely knowledge and capacity in the field of writing and project organization, we made a lot of progress with this project, and the fact that much more experienced partners trusted us means a lot”*¹¹¹.

However, not all partnerships were ideal; Sanja the coordinator of the "Balkan Translation Collider was not satisfied with many aspects of the cooperation, including the relationship and communication with their partners. I first noticed this after I asked her if she had the opportunity to travel during the project, to which she replied: *“It is very important to emphasize that this leading organization did not take Montenegro into account, so we only received, just yesterday, the tranche for the second and third year, that is, for this year and the previous one. Well, since they did not pay us the funds for the previous year, we could not participate in none of the two academies, one was in Macedonia, the other in Belgrade, one was at the beginning of the year, and the other was in October, so we were absent, but we hope that they will be with us this year here in Podgorica and I hope that we will be able to participate directly in the project with that money, because until now we could not travel without it. And the original plan was for me to travel, as someone who leads the project in Montenegro and a representative of a publishing house and a writer, but the capital city could not finance that”*¹¹².

¹⁰⁹Tatjana Rajić – Appendix 2, p. 52-60, original text: Najkorisnija strana tih partnerstva su bile ideje i novi pristupi i potvdu necega o cemu vec razmisljas ili novi argument za nesto putovanja su bila veoma korisna za ovo.

¹¹⁰ Bojana Mališić – Appendix 2, p.75-78

¹¹¹ Goran Janković – Appendix 2 p.79-80, original text to je definitivno znanje i kapacitet u domenu pisanja i organizacije projekata, mi smo tu ovim projektom veoma napredovali i plus cinjenica da su dosta iskusniji partneri nama dali povjerenje znaci dosta.

¹¹²Sanja Vojinović – Appendix 2 p. 61-68, original text : To je takodje veoma vazno naglasiti, da ova vodeca organizacija nije vodila racuna o Crnoj Gori, tako da smo mi tek bas juce dobili transu za drugu i trecu godinu, to jest za ovu godinu i prethodnu. Pa kako nam oni nisu uplatili sredstva za prethodnu godinu mi nismo mogli ucestvovati ni u jednoj ni u drugoj akademiji, jedna je bila u Makedoniji, druga u Beogradu,

When I asked what they did about it, and whether they tried to file an appeal, Sanja answered that they contacted Next Page several times, but without success, they only accused them of not being able to find the money, although Sanja claims that it was not case¹¹³.

Not only she and the municipality of Podgorica are dissatisfied with the project, but also the writers, who were supposed to be the main beneficiaries of this project, ended up dissatisfied since they expected that their books would have already been translated by now¹¹⁴.

She continued: *"The goal was to make wider contacts, to make the network of publishers bigger, to promote writers, it was my idea to make contacts with publishers because they all have their festivals, their magazines, and so we can be a part of it, like they would be part of ours. But the problem is that so far we have not received any invitation to come to them, while we constantly invite them to our festivals and book fairs. Apart from Bosnia and Herzegovina, we have an excellent relationship with them"*¹¹⁵.

5.2.2. The Disadvantages of a Small Country

The reason why cooperation with all partners was not successful can be found in Sanja's answer to my question where we could find the culprit for such poor cooperation that she faced: *"Unfortunately, there is an ingrained opinion about Montenegro, as a small and insignificant country"*¹¹⁶.

According to Sanja, the bad relationship with their partners, more precisely, with the project leader, was present from the very beginning as she noticed that they treated Montenegrin literature with mockery: *"They humiliated, for example during the presentation of our study, Jana mockingly talked to us, literally asking us questions about whether Montenegrin*

jedna je bila početkom godine, a druga nedje u Oktobru, tako da je naso ucesce tu izostalo, ali se nadamo da ce oni ove godine biti kod nas

gosti i da cemo moci sa tim novcem da direktno ucestvujemo u projektu jer do sada bez tog novca mi nijesmo mogli da putujemo. A prvobitni plan je da otputujem ja kao neko ko vodi projekat u Crnoj Gori, predstavnik izdavacke kuće i pisac, ali to glavni grad nije mogao da isfinansira.

¹¹³ Sanja Vojinović – Appendix 2 p. 61-68.

¹¹⁴ Sanja Vojinović – Appendix 2 p. 61-68.

¹¹⁵ Sanja Vojinović – Appendix 2 p. 61-68, original text : Cilj je bio da se ostvare siri kontakti, da ta mreza izdavastav bude veka, da promovisemo pisce, to je nedje bila moj zamisao da ostvarimo kontakte sa izdavicima jer svi oni imaju svoje festivale, svoje casopise i tako budemo dio toga, kao sto bi oni bili dio ovoga. Ali problem je sto mi do sada nismo dobili nijedan poziv da dodjemo kod njih, dok mi njih neprestano zovemo na nase festivale i sajmove knjiga. Osim Bosne i Hercegovine, sa njima dtvarno imamo odlican odnos.

¹¹⁶ Sanja Vojinović – Appendix 2 p. 61-68, original text : To To je nazalost neko uvrijezeno misljenje o Crnoj Gori, kao o nekoj maloj i beznacajnoj zemlji.

*literature exists, but I don't know, I'm disappointed, I expected more from a European project”*¹¹⁷.

After the breakup of Yugoslavia, all former communist countries encountered the denial of the existence of their national literature, among other things, and there is often the appropriation of the writers of one country by other countries, however, the strange notion here is that the denial happened by a non - Yugoslavian country and when I asked Sanja to explain how it came about, she briefly told me that there is a background story behind it¹¹⁸, and she soon added that some other countries of the former common state are going through the same thing, particularly, the writers from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia are often appropriated by some neighboring countries”¹¹⁹.

5.3. The Identity-Building Agenda

The last agenda that is aiding me in the analysis is the identity-building agenda, which serves to create a sense of belonging to a community that shares common values and ideas. The presence of this agenda in the programmes of the European Union is very important when it comes to cooperation with candidate countries.

5.3.1. (Ir)relevance of Identity

In the course of this set of questions, it was my intention to reveal the personal opinion of my informants about the existence of European identity, both in themselves and in their organization, but also for the entire state.

As for their personal opinion, there were mostly similar answers, so for some, identifying as a European is more natural than identifying as a Balkan: *“As for me personally, I have never considered myself a Balkan, not even by blood, since I am half Italian, half Hungarian and German, so I have never had a national identity, so it is easiest for me to identify as a European. I have never identified with the country where I was born, nor with the country*

¹¹⁷ Sanja Vojinović – Appendix 2 p. 61-68, original text : To ali oni su nas na taj nacin ponizavali, npr. U toku predstavljanja nase studije Jana je podrugljivo pricala sa nama, doslovno nam je postavljala pitanja da li crnogorska knjizevnost postoji, ali ne znam, razocarana sam, ocekivala sam vise od jednog evropskog projekta.

¹¹⁸ Sanja Vojinović – Appendix 2 p. 61-68

¹¹⁹ Sanja Vojinović – Appendix 2 p. 61-68

where I work, that is, neither with Serbia nor with Montenegro”¹²⁰, but some never paid much attention to identity at all, including Tatjana from Expeditio who claimed that never felt the need to identify herself in any way¹²¹. According to Goran, the participation in the European project did not lead to major changes when it comes to identity: “No, because maybe Europe doesn't work enough on the brand, maybe that's good, maybe not”¹²².

While Bojana's European identity is present precisely because of the numerous international projects she works on¹²³.

We received similar answers for their organizations as well: *“And as for the organization, I already mentioned that the whole team “lives” the values of the European Union and we all live in this bubble where we believe we don't belong to the Balkan, and I think that it affects our organization. But the impact of the project is definitely visible because one of our goals was to prove that local topics are actually European and we managed to do so... this was also an additional affirmation for us that we are a leading organization in the field of culture in Montenegro. The fact that we are the first Montenegrin organization that is the leader of a European project in the cultural sector sounds, although it is true, as impossible, so it is a definite affirmation for us that everything we do is recognized and supported”¹²⁴.*

Sanja appreciates that they are recognized as part of Europe due to their participation in this programme and it made them feel more European, but soon they felt that they were one of many: *“The fact that we are part of that project made us happy and satisfied that we, a small country, were recognized as part of a huge project, it is a confirmation that Europe*

¹²⁰ Viktor Varoši – Appendix 2, p.69-74, original text: Sto se tice mene licno, ja se nikada nisam smatrao Balkancem, pa ni po krvi, posto sam polu italijan, a polu madjar i njemac, pa tako nikada nisam imao nacionalni identitet, tako da mi je najlaksi identifikovati se kao Evropljanin. Nikada se nisam identifikovao sa zemljom u kojoj sam rođen, ni sa zemljom u kojoj radim, odnosno, ni sa Srbijom, ni sa Crnom Gorom, tako da u tom smislu ovaj projekat nije nista promijenio licno kod mene.

¹²¹ Tatjana Rajić – Appendix 2, p. 52-60

¹²² Goran Janković – Appendix 2 p.79-80, original text Ne, jer mozda evropa ne radi dovoljno na brendu, mozda je to dobro, mozda nije.

¹²³ Bojana Mališić – Appendix 2, p.75-78

¹²⁴ Viktor Varoši – Appendix 2, p.69-74, original text: A sto se tice organizacije, vec samo pomenuo, da citav nas tim koji i cini ovu organizaciju zivi te vrijednosti evropske unije i mi svi zivimo u tom nekom bubblu u kojem mi identitetskin e pripadamo tom nekom balklanskom idnetittu i mislim da to utice na nasu organizaciju jer je mi stvaramo takvom. Ali impact projekta se definitivno vidi jer nam je cilj bio da dokazemo da su lokalne teme zapravo evropske i uspjeli smo u tome... ovo nam je bila dodatna afirmacija da smo vodeca organizacija u kulturu u Crnoj Gori. Cinjenica da smo mi prva crnogorska organizacija koja je lider jednog evropskog projekta u sektoru kulture zvuci, iako je istinit, kao nemoguc, tako da nam je to definitivno afirmacija da sve ovo sto radimo je prepoznato i podrzano.

recognizes you as its part in that way. But I think we realized how it actually works, we now realize that we are only one of many"¹²⁵.

5.3.2. The Issue of National Identity

Although the issue of national identity is one of the significant challenges Montenegro has encountered in its recent history, it was not initially intended to be included in this thesis. I must confess that I purposely left this topic out, anticipating that it would naturally emerge once the discussion shifted towards European identity. And indeed, during the very first interview, my informant explicitly expressed her belief that national identity holds little significance to her, particularly when compared to her preference for identifying with the European identity¹²⁶.

In contrast, my second informant, representing the municipality of Podgorica, openly discussed the challenges Montenegro confronts regarding its identity. When I posed the question of whether national or European identity held greater importance in her perspective, she provided a long, but comprehensive response.: *"If we were a country that has a built-up national identity where you don't have to constantly say that you are Montenegrin, then I'd say that the European identity is very important. But firstly, it is important that people, especially young people, know where they are from, because this is a country with a long history, which has lasted for more than 1000 years and various civilizations have passed and left their roots and outlines, and that it is known that we are not only Montenegrins and that it is an interwoven multicultural society and that we have inherited many traditions, and that is why I do not want our country to be squeezed and backed into a corner. I will say it again, if we had built that national identity, I would tell you right now that we are moving towards Europe and European identity, but since that is not the case, then it is important to work especially by focusing on young people. But that's because they didn't teach us properly, nor did Montenegrin historians put more effort into it, here's an example, there is*

¹²⁵ Sanja Vojinović – Appendix 2 p. 61-68, original text : Samom cinjenicom da smo mi usli u taj projekat nedje smo bili srećni i zadovoljni da smo mi kao mali prepoznati kao dio tog ogromnog projekta, to vam je potvrda da vas evropa prepoznaje kao svoj dio na taj nacin. Ali kako mi imamo u vidu kako to funkcionise trenutno, mi sad shvatamo da smo samo jedni od mnogih.

¹²⁶ Tatjana Rajić – Appendix 2, p. 52-60,.

an archive in Kotor that Montenegrin historians never go into, but the Serbs did it first and appropriated it all”¹²⁷.

Viktor from KotorArt also mentioned the identity issues and the impact the neighboring countries have on Montenegrin identity, along with the religion”¹²⁸.

5.4.Discussion

In the opening of this chapter, a comprehensive overview and analysis of the findings derived from the interviews conducted is provided. Subsequently, drawing upon these findings, I identify the degree of change present in Montenegro. Additionally, I utilize the definition of Cultural Diplomacy provided by the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy to ascertain whether Creative Europe can be regarded as a tool for Cultural diplomacy.

I commenced the analysis chapter by presenting the findings that I discovered during the introductory part of each interview, where the emphasis was on gathering information concerning the organizations, the difficulties that cultural workers face in Montenegro, but also rudimentary data on their individual Creative Europe projects, as well as their feedback on the entire programme of Creative Europe. In that part, we learned that public funding of the cultural sector is in a bad state, despite certain measures taken by the Ministry of Culture. From this, it can be concluded that Montenegrin cultural workers and their organizations rely on European programmes and initiatives to sustain their operations within a country where culture is not prioritized by the authorities.

However, despite the fact that Montenegrin cultural organizations are in dire need of funding, there is unsatisfactory interest in this European programme, while some believe that the European Union and the Ministry of Culture are not doing enough to promote their

¹²⁷ Sanja Vojinović – Appendix 2 p. 61-68, original text : Da smo mi država koja ima izgradjen nacionalni identitet, da vi to ne morate stalno da govorite onda je veoma vazan evropski, jer je veoma vazno da ljudi, posebno, mladi, znaju odakle su, jer ovo je država sa dugom istorijom, koja traje više od 1000 godina i da su razne civilizacije prole i ostavile svoje korijene i svoje obrise, i da se zna da mi nismo samo crnogorci i da je to jedan preplet multikulturalno društvo i da batinimo mnoge tradicije i bas zato ne zelim da se nasa država sabija u cosak.

Opet kazem, da mi imamo izgradjen taj identitet, ja bih vam sada rekla super idemo ka evropi, ali sa obzirom da nemamo, onda je vazno raditi na tome i na mladim ljudima. Ali tako je to jer nas nisu ucili kako treba, niti su crnogorski istoricari vise potrudili oko toga, evo primjera, postoji arhiv u kotoru u koji crnogorski istoricari nisu ulazili, vec su to prvo uradili srbi i sve su to prisvojili.

¹²⁸ Viktor Varoši – Appendix 2, p.69-74

cultural initiatives, we could argue that the main the reason for that may be the negative image that Creative Europe has among cultural workers. The negative perception is likely attributed to the complex bureaucracy, as evidenced by the previously discussed interviews. Additionally, the requirement for co-financing in certain Creative Europe projects poses a challenge since cultural organizations in developing countries very often struggle to meet financial obligations.

I derived the next group of findings from the participatory cultural agenda, where the main topic was cooperations and partnerships realized through the projects of Creative Europe. The first crucial observation, as the title of that chapter says, is that international cooperation is a doubtful advantage for the Balkan countries, which means that it appeared to be a questionable benefit for Montenegro and other Balkan countries. On the positive side, all the participants of Creative Europe whom I had the privilege to converse with, reported acquiring fresh knowledge and ideas. The programme facilitated their networking with diverse organizations across Europe. While some participants had the chance to travel to their partners' countries during the project, others were unable to do so due to the COVID-19 pandemic coinciding with their project timeline. Nevertheless, the majority expressed gratitude for the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the functioning of their sector in countries where the cultural domain receives greater recognition from authorities.

However, despite its aim to promote international cooperation among European Union member states and non-member European countries, the Creative Europe programme often results in exclusive collaborations between Montenegro and other regional countries. Unfortunately, most of these countries have limited functioning capacities within their cultural sectors. Of the seventeen Creative Europe projects Montenegro is involved in, ten are direct collaborations with other Balkan countries, including those formerly part of Yugoslavia, as well as Bulgaria and Albania, among others. On one hand, this presents an excellent opportunity to improve regional relations, which have been unstable for the past three decades, to say the least. However, it also diminishes the chances for Montenegrin and other Balkan cultural workers to align themselves even more with the standards upheld by countries where the cultural sector receives greater respect. The limitations of exclusively cooperating with Balkan countries are evident in the case of Montenegro, particularly in the "Balkan Translation Collider" project. One of the project's objectives was to promote Balkan writers by translating their literary works. However, as mentioned in the previous chapter,

disagreements arose between the project leaders and the Montenegrin representatives. The Montenegrin literature, in particular, was undermined, reflecting the consequences of several decades of events experienced by the entire region during its post-communist era.

Lastly, the analysis delved into the identity-building agenda that sought to examine the impact of culture on European identity presence in Montenegro.

First of all, based on the interviews conducted, some of the participants expressed minimal concern regarding identity, leading to the conclusion that cultural workers do not perceive the need for identity categorization. However, when faced with the choice between national and European identity, most workers leaned towards the latter. As one informant stated, the European Union and its esteemed values resonate more strongly with them compared to the local context of Montenegro and the wider region.

This sentiment extends to the organizations they represent as well. Participating in a prominent European programme is seen as a validation of their efforts over the years, providing a sense of recognition within the European cultural sector by their peers.

Nevertheless, one very important point that I came across during the interviews is that the biggest obstacle to the creation, that is, the development, of a European identity in Montenegro is the fact that for a long time, more precisely, since the restoration of its independence, the country has been facing the denial of its national identity by neighboring nations, but also by a significant proportion of the population. We can argue that this ongoing struggle with national identity has a direct impact on the limited presence of a European identity in this small Balkan Mediterranean country. One interviewee emphasized the current importance of national identity, primarily due to Montenegro's internal and external challenges. External regional influences have long appropriated Montenegrin culture, leading some residents of Montenegro to reject identifying themselves as Montenegrins, she claimed.¹²⁹

Therefore, it becomes apparent that Montenegro needs to address its national identity concerns before placing greater focus on developing a European one.

Within the theoretical framework, I discussed the potential outcomes that can arise during the Europeanization process, commonly referred to as degrees of change. These degrees include inertia, absorption, accommodation, and transformation.

¹²⁹ Sanja Vojinović – Appendix 2 p. 61-68

As for inertia, which refers to a state characterized by a total lack of alteration or modification that occurs when countries actively reject all forms of influence exerted by the European Union and decline to meet the demands put forth by the European Union¹³⁰.

Based on the interviews conducted, none of the participants exhibited a negative attitude towards the changes initiated by the European Union. On the contrary, they displayed openness to collaboration with European institutions and project partners from member countries.

The next degree is absorption, which Tanja Börzel, among others, describes as a situation where change is present, but very minimal because these changes hold limited significance as they do not substantially impact the state of the country¹³¹. The absorption type of change consists in superficial modifications since the incorporation of European requirements into domestic affairs appears to have taken place, but without producing substantial effects. Unlike inertia, I noticed absorption throughout my interviews with all participants. The acquisition of new experiences was evident, as each engagement in a new project and collaboration with foreign cultural organizations held great significance for Montenegrin cultural workers. Through these opportunities, they felt recognized as integral components of a larger collective. Sanja explicitly confirmed during the interview that this was one of the most positive outcomes of the Creative Europe programme for her and her organization¹³², and I gathered a similar impression from the majority of my interviewees.

Next is accommodation – a degree of change that bears resemblances to the previous one, but the changes observed are slightly more apparent, as termed by Börzel, “modest”¹³³. Here, countries experience pressure from the European Union and consequently adopt new policies, processes, and institutions. However, these adaptations are made without fundamentally altering their core features, and there may be a limited understanding of the full implications and significance of these changes. Like absorption, this type of change is indeed evident, but to a lesser extent. I observed this degree of change among specific

¹³⁰ Tanja A. Börzel, “How the European Union Interacts with its Member States”, Reihe Politikwissenschaft, Political Science Series, (November 2003): pp: 15-17

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Sanja Vojinović – Appendix 2 p. 61-68

¹³³ Tanja A. Börzel, “How the European Union Interacts with its Member States”, Reihe Politikwissenschaft, Political Science Series, (November 2003): pp: 15-17

interviewees who, when asked about the impact of Creative Europe on their work or the level of their organizations' functioning compared to their Western or EU counterparts, provided superficial responses. Despite my attempts to delve deeper into the topic, they simply reiterated their initial answers without providing further insights.

And finally, transformation represents the final degree of change and thus holds the greatest significance. The level of change observed is remarkably high in this context¹³⁴. The institutions and organizations involved either completely replaced their existing policies, processes, and structures with new ones, or at the very least, made substantial amendments to the extent that the core features were completely transformed. This was not the case with Montenegro, or, at least, the Montenegrin cultural organizations giving input to my project. During the interviews, I asked questions related to the public financing of culture during the interview, and it appears that there have been no significant changes in Montenegro's public financing of culture since the country started participating in the Creative Europe programme. The only notable change is that there are now more grants available¹³⁵, but the state of support for the cultural sector remains the same.

In the end, we can conclude that the scope of Europeanization in Montenegro is between the second and third degrees, that is, between absorption and accommodation. However, it predominantly leans towards absorption, as visible changes are welcomed in this neglected sector. Nevertheless, it is evident that these changes did not have a profound impact on my interviewees and their organizations, thus limiting the overall influence of the Europeanization process in Montenegro.

Another key theory of this thesis is cultural diplomacy, and I included it in this study to help me focus on the cultural aspects of Europeanization. According to one of the definitions, cultural diplomacy involves a set of actions that rely on exchanging ideas, values, traditions, and other cultural aspects. Its purpose is to build stronger relationships, foster socio-cultural cooperation, promote national interests, as well as showing respect and recognizing cultural differences, diversity, and heritage and it also emphasizes the promotion of ongoing global intercultural communication, justice, equality, the advancement of global human rights, and

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Bojana Mališić – Appendix 2, p.75-78

the pursuit of peace.¹³⁶ We can observe instances where ties between European countries, including a candidate country and member countries, as well as other candidate countries, have strengthened. The findings indicate that most interviewees expressed satisfaction with their cooperation with partner organizations. For example, the collaboration between KotorArt and other organizations putting together classical music festivals contributed to a stronger connection within this specific cultural sector¹³⁷.

However, it is important to note that not all interviewees shared the same level of satisfaction with their partners. This was evident in the case of Sanja and her project "The Balkan Translation Collider" which aimed to promote national writers but did not achieve the desired outcome and this brings us to another objective of promoting national interests, as the project aimed to promote Montenegrin writers beyond the country's borders. However, as observed, the project did not succeed in achieving this goal¹³⁸.

On the other hand, cultural diplomacy played a significant role in promoting justice, equality, human rights advancement, and the pursuit of peace. During the project "#synergy: Sharpening the capacities of the classical music industry in the Western Balkans," inspired by events in Ukraine, the Montenegrin team, led by informant Viktor, showcased a message of solidarity and unity which according to Viktor was their way of providing support to Ukraine. This same organization sought to involve individuals from diverse backgrounds and promote multiconfessionalism, which is recognized as a source of conflicts in the region. They aimed to familiarize all the participating artists with the diversity that Montenegro embodies despite its small territorial size¹³⁹.

The literature review highlighted the lack of research on Europeanization through cultural diplomacy, and this thesis serves as a valuable contribution to filling that research gap. It becomes evident that Creative Europe, despite some shortcomings, serves as an effective tool for cultural diplomacy. It is particularly beneficial in pointing out the various diversity within the countries aspiring to join the European Union, and to a certain extent, it is a solid tool for fostering cultural cooperation.

¹³⁶ "Institute for Cultural diplomacy," Institute for Cultural diplomacy, accessed May 14, 2023

¹³⁷ Viktor Varoši – Appendix 2, p.69-74

¹³⁸ Sanja Vojinović – Appendix 2 p. 61-68

¹³⁹ Viktor Varoši – Appendix 2, p. 69-74

In the literature review, the scarcity of research on Europeanization in Montenegro was addressed, particularly the limited focus on culture compared to other areas such as corruption and regional cooperation. This research gap motivated me to explore publications pertaining to neighboring countries, leading me to discover a relevant doctoral thesis on Croatia titled "Funds and Programs of the European Union - role and Significance in the Implementation of cultural projects in the Republic of Croatia" by Antonia Matić. Within this thesis, one notable finding highlighted that the lack of knowledge and experience within cultural organizations does not affect the number of project proposals, but it does impact the likelihood of achieving favorable outcomes¹⁴⁰. However, this finding did not align with my own research. The Montenegrin organizations I interviewed demonstrated substantial experience and knowledge in the cultural sector, and their project partners were consistently supportive when facing challenges. Another crucial insight from the Croatian study emphasized the significance of being informed about EU programmes responsible for promoting culture¹⁴¹. This finding resonated with the situation in Montenegro, where the number of organizations applying for EU tenders is relatively limited in both countries.

In concluding this chapter, it is essential to conduct a critical evaluation of the research objectives, chosen approach, and methods. The research objectives and research question of this study have proven to be relevant, especially because, as mentioned earlier, there is a research deficit concerning studies on Montenegro, particularly in relation to culture and its role in the process of Europeanization and a study of this nature was necessary. The theories employed in this thesis, especially cultural diplomacy, have also proved to be suitable choices as they allowed me to focus on the cultural aspect of Europeanization. Lastly, the interviews, as the primary research method employed in this study, have confirmed that direct discussions with the beneficiaries of Creative Europe are the most effective means of gathering their experiences with the programme and understanding its impact on their organizations. However, there are still areas that could benefit from improvement, particularly regarding the questions posed during the interviews. I initially did not plan to delve into the topic of national identity, but throughout each interview, I realized that my

¹⁴⁰ Antonia Matić, "Fondovi I Programi Europske Unije – Uloga i Značaj u Provedbi Projekata u Kulturi u Republici Hrvatskoj" (thesis, 2021), pp. 5-6.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

informants were more willing to discuss it than any other topic I advocated for, but, I am partially satisfied that the focus was not solely on national identity, as it could potentially jeopardize my intention to centralize culture and its influence in this thesis.

6. Conclusion

The primary objective of this investigation has been to examine the mechanisms through which Europeanization is facilitated via Cultural diplomacy utilizing the Creative Europe programme, a European initiative designed for the cultural sector.

Within this chapter, I provided a comprehensive response to the research question: "How does Creative Europe help the process of Europeanization in Montenegro?"

The most straightforward response indicates that the Creative Europe programme does help the process of Europeanization in Montenegro by allowing cultural workers to acquire a profound comprehension of European values and particularly the European approach to working in the cultural sector and furthermore, it empowers them to implement all the knowledge and skills, acquired during these projects, in Montenegro.

Nevertheless, there are aspects that could be enhanced. One of these concerns Montenegro's internal challenges, specifically the issues surrounding national identity, which are prevalent throughout the region and serve as a significant obstacle to progress in that part of the continent. Moreover, as indicated by several interviewees, Montenegrin cultural workers would benefit from engaging in collaborations with more organizations coming beyond the Balkan region. Such partnerships could assist in overcoming identity issues that are frequently exacerbated by regional factors. Additionally, a key conclusion drawn with the assistance of my informants is that the complicated bureaucracy associated with this programme poses significant challenges for cultural workers in Montenegro. Even without this programme, they already face numerous daily obstacles due to the imperfect working conditions prevalent in their country's cultural sector, and, as one of my informants said, it is not the administration that makes us better people, but the communication.

Lastly, I can assert that establishing more attentive communication channels with cultural workers from less developed countries would expedite and enhance the process of Europeanization, particularly in the cultural realm.

Regarding future research, firstly, I believe that Montenegro, despite its small size, holds significant potential for further studies. This thesis could serve as a foundation, marking the beginning of research not only on culture but also on other areas, particularly the issue of

national identity, which we have identified as a major challenge for the country. Additionally, exploring Montenegro's relations with neighboring countries in the region would be an intriguing area of investigation.

Furthermore, this thesis has the potential to inspire researchers to shift their focus toward other candidate countries and explore the cultural aspects of their journey toward European Union membership. I also believe that the findings of this study can provide valuable assistance to cultural organizations, both from candidate countries and member states, in the process of applying for and executing their cultural projects.

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8. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Interview Questions

The main topic	The questions
Background information about the interviewees, the CE beneficiary organizations and their projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can you tell me something about yourself? - Can you tell me something about your organization and your role in it? - Can you describe your project shortly? - How did you find out about the Creative Europe programme? - Are you familiar with other EU programmes in the cultural sector? - Do you think that Montenegrin cultural organizations are sufficiently informed about the EU funding system? - Have you cooperated with the Montenegrin Desk for Creative Europe? If yes, describe your communication with them. - What was the role of your organization in writing the application form? - Do you think that applying for Creative Europe is complicated? Please elaborate. - In your opinion, is the current system of culture financing in Montenegro adequate or does it need improvement? Please elaborate.
The participatory agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who were the partners on your project? - Do you think that cooperation with other European countries helped your organization to become familiar with Western European standards and values? Please elaborate. - Can you explain to me how the communication with the partners on your project went? - Has cooperation with your project partners led to changes in your work? Please elaborate. - Did you have the opportunity to travel to the EU countries during your project?
The identity agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you, as an individual, but also your organization, feel more "European" because of the participation in the Creative Europe programme. Please elaborate. - Do you think that by participating in a European programme, the activities of your organization have been raised to the level of Western, that is, European standards? Please elaborate. - What specific advantages, apart from financial ones, did your organization obtain by participating in this European project? Please elaborate.

Appendix 2 – Translated Interviews

Informant	Organization	Project
Tatjana Rajić	Expeditio	European Artizen Initiative

T: Maybe something has changed, but I remember that back then we liked that programme, but it was very unfavorable to us, because, the percentage of co-financing was low, it was 50% or 60% at that moment, I can't remember exactly how much and it's understandable since they expected that the difference would be covered by state funds because culture should be in the interest of the state or the individual, however, this did not happen in our case, because, especially because at the time, the Ministry of Culture had a law according to which they were not able to support non-governmental organizations in public tenders, so we couldn't get anything from public budget and that's why those programmes were very unpopular.

A: What year was that again?

T: I think it was 2016

As an NGO, we did not have guaranteed co-financing, we had to seek it from other sources, it was expected that we would be supported by the state or municipality, but the municipal ones were modest, the state's [funding] practically did not even exist at that moment, there was a tender from the Ministry of Culture which were closed to NGOs, then in the end, we juggled from donor to donor and in the end we were financed by a Balkan fund.

A: We have a question later on related to the state and its relations to culture, but I can assume that the state often does not take care of that sector.

T: Definitely not, especially when it comes to the independent scene.

A: It is interesting that it's the case with Sweden as well, despite the fact that it has an amazing funding system for culture, but for the independent or alternative scene there are special rules that directly affect its independence.

T: Yes, the state as an institution is strong and often wants to prevent manipulation, but that way you lose the chance to be creative for artistic branches that need more freedom and creativity, perhaps in some creation of ideas.

A: That is why I think it is important that individuals and organizations often ask the EU for help because in some respects there will be fewer rules for some more creative branches.

T: Yes, I agree

A: And now, if you want, we can start with the questions.

T: Sure, sure

A: You can start by introducing yourself once again.

Tatjana Rajić, an architect, I have been a part of this organization since its foundation, as a student, we were students at the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade and we worked on projects in Perast several times, we researched some rural communities, its cultural heritage, etc. It's a long story, we've been active for 25 years, but the point is that from our student days we started to deal with architecture that concerns the public interest, which means we didn't orientate ourselves architecturally, but we started working with the community and the issues that concern public interest and architecture of space and cultural heritage, and after several projects we became known as an NGO in that area. Some three fundamental fields that we cover are: cultural heritage, energy efficiency in architecture, i.e. sustainable architecture and spatial planning, urban planning topics, public space and things like that. When it comes to culture, culture was an area that intertwines with all of this, for a long time we did not characterize ourselves as an organization that deals with culture, but through projects we tried to find common points between culture and architecture, , but somehow we ended up being involved with the cultural field than it was the original plan.

A: Can you tell us something else about your organization?

T: Well, we have been around for 25, almost 26 years, we have probably hundreds of projects, we survive thanks to foreign foundations and donations. Last year, we made a cross-sectional analysis of support and found out that only 6% [of the projects] was supported by the state or municipality and everything else was financed by foreign financial sources, among others the European Union and other foundations, embassies... basically we would not survive without it. So we bring much more to the state than the state gives us, since we support through our projects and of course through taxes.

A: You mentioned that the European Union helps you a lot, if Montenegro's relations with the European Union were to end, how much would you as an organization suffer because of that?

T: The EU is the main donor for organizations that exist longer and work more seriously, so in that case those organizations could be shut down, and that applies to us as well. However, it is important to note that all European programmes have exhausting administration to say the least, and that is the reason why we, for example, have stopped applying for many of them, because that exhausting administration takes away a lot of our capacity and we cannot

often dedicate ourselves to projects. We also have the issue of late payments. It is extremely bureaucratized.

A: Is this also the case with Creative Europe?

T: Yes, they did tire us out, sometimes they were maybe flexible, but, it was tiring for sure.

A: Can you briefly describe your project?

T: When I first received your email, I realized that it might be my favorite project we've ever done. More precisely, the activities that we carried out in Montenegro, and I am very happy to be able to talk about it.

So, it is a project that in terms of programme was phenomenal for us, we had only two conditions, one condition was that we do something related to the involvement of the public, but also to make the public aware of some of the topics that are important for the public interest through some art projects. As the name itself shows, ARTIZEN = Art and Citizen means the inclusion of citizens through an artistic activity, so that their voice is heard. And the second condition was to hire two artists from the region or the EU who would be on residency with us, meaning that they would help us realize the course of the art project.

There were 5 or 6 partners, we can check on the website exactly how many they were and they were excellent, they came from Slovenia, France, Spain... We were also invited by partners from France with whom we already had worked on other projects, and we recommended Slovenians to them because we have also already cooperated with them. But in that partnership sense, we didn't do much together, everyone did their own thing and we exchanged experiences, so that partnership was useful, even though it wasn't close.

As for our activities, the backbone of all our activities was the realization of a play that we called Kotor in Kotor, it was a documentary play, made by the citizens, and the topic was the town of Kotor with all the challenges that it faces.

I was in charge of the project and I know how it came about, one year we found ourselves in Georgia because we cooperated with the Soviet and Baltic countries and there we met a guy, who, if I remember correctly, was from Ukraine and we talked during the break and he told me that he is a sociologist and that he makes documentary plays and that through those plays he includes citizens and makes them activists, and since we were just then going to work on ARTIZEN, I thought that we could do something similar in Kotor. We have a director from Kotor, Petar Pejakovic, you've probably heard of him, who is very connected to Kotor and is the organizer and supporter of the children's festival, and he has already worked in that form of documentary theater and after I told him about the idea he liked it and said he'd be interested in applying that form to the ordinary citizens. We agreed that we

[the organisation] would work on the mobilization of citizens, and Petar would be the director and adviser.

We thought it would last about 3 months, but I think we ended up working on that for 9 months because the process took a long time and we started in a direction that we liked and that delighted us and we liked it very much and we all enjoyed that process.

We started by informing the citizens through the media and some posters and inviting them to come to the workshop to make a play. The Culture Center gave us the space to hold those workshops, so we organized the first workshop and some people came to that first workshop. At the beginning, we discussed what the performances should cover, what topics, what the town means to us, and during each workshop, we discovered new topics, and those workshops turned into a kind of psychotherapy, and at one point there were forty of us because people heard we were having a good time. For a long time, that process was open to citizens, while Petar collected those stories and he had a role of a moderator who listens to us talking. And that lasted a long time. The premiere was in June, and we started in October. At one point we had to stop the workshops and there were about twenty of us who kept coming and that was our main priority at one point. Petar suggested a choreographer, who came from Belgrade and taught us movements. Then Petar made a rough concept and we worked on the play for the last two or three months. 90% of the play was done by us as citizens, and 10% by Petar. It is interesting that we decided on the ending before the premiere, because we were constantly debating whether the ending should be positive, what the message should be...etc.. The process was enlightening and hit the target of this project even though we were not sure whether it will happen, but it definitely answered the goal of this project. Citizens became aware of civic activism.

The premiere took place and 300 people came and the hall was full for several evenings in a row. It was such chaotic, it was incredible. And it was mentioned in the newspapers and the critics reviewed it, "The town that rebelled while playing the game" was one of the articles. It was touching because of the number of citizens. In June, several performances took place, and in the end, we performed fifteen times in the country, but also in the region, in Zadar and Dubrovnik. This was excellent for a show made by the citizens.

That's the summary.

A: That was really great and detailed, thank you, we just forgot to mention your role in the organization.

T: I am now the executive director, but then I was the project coordinator, and the main coordinator of this very project, and I also acted in the play and was the producer of the play, I dealt with the organization as well, and I repeat, this is my favorite project.

I think that this project had its full and true effect and a much greater effect than we expected. It is very important to note that it was the year of the elections in Kotor and later some information came out according to which our play impacted the results. People came out woke because we were talking about local government and the treatment of the town and resources and the mafia and all those topics. So people were awakened, some of them sang the local songs. They were able to relate and it's not surprising since the people on stage and the people from the audience are actually the same.

The important thing that we got out of this is an appeal about the improvement of life in the town. It was an appeal that we made to the city administration, it was publicly published, and it was understood as a kind of political appeal. There was also a so-called wall newspaper in front of the cultural center where the citizens could inform themselves about the process of the whole thing.

A: You mentioned the topics that pervade the play, can you tell me some very specific topics?

T: Yes, yes, I remember it well. We talked about the emigration of people from the old town, about the problem of noise in the town, the noise from cafes that makes the lives of the local population hard, about the impact of tourism, especially cruise tourism, we talked about planned, but natural, construction, not illegal, but legal, because it is also very bad, then we of course mentioned corruption, nepotism, employment of inadequate people in institutions, bad town development strategy, drug addiction, fake shine, neglect of children, family problems, discriminating people who think differently and speak openly about the problems of the town and of course the mafia and all topics that are important for the town are covered.

A: You mentioned the problems caused by tourism...

T: The thing is that the entire town is now aimed at tourists, nothing is intended for the local population, especially in the old city, from where people leave en masse. Then cruise tourism where people just come and don't know if they are in Croatia, Montenegro or somewhere else. It's a very lost group of tourists who take over the city, we don't blame them though, but the organization of the town.

A: Can we go back to the impact on the election that you mentioned?

T: Yes, the local elections were definitely affected, although it was not our intention, but the play coincidentally happened when the elections took place. We also heard that the director of the cultural center had problems because he was a member of the ruling party and he was called after the premiere to explain why he allowed us to use that space for the play. We did not even expect that the play itself would have such a critical attitude towards the ruling party, but if the same premonition were to happen today, they would have a critical attitude towards this current ruling party and government as well. We did not plan to criticize that party because there were supporters of that party among the participants, but all the people there were free thinkers.. In the end, he [the director], because he couldn't ban us from performing, he started charging us around 250-300 euros for the use of the space, and at that moment we didn't have the money to allocate for it, especially because the show was non-commercial, that is , we did not charge an entrance fee. He might have tried to limit us in some way by the number of performances with that payment. Plus, we paid for the sound equipment, so each performance cost us a minimum of 400 euros or even more, and at that moment it was not a tiny amount. Then we started charging an entrance fee, the ticket was 1 euro or half a euro, then that cost us too because we had to print the tickets. So they made money from us even though the agreement was to give us the space for free. At the same time, it was a performance, let me point out, made by ordinary people, amateurs who did it all on a voluntary basis.

A: Did he state the reason why he is charging?

T: Well, he said something like that's their policy.

A: How did you find out about the Creative Europe programme?

T: Through the Ministry of Culture.

A: And how familiar are you with other programmes of the European Union?

T: Yes, we are well familiar, from the very beginning we followed all sources of funding, because we always needed it, we can say that we were among the first to use European funds in Montenegro, such as European fund for reconstruction and projects for cross-border cooperation. In the last fifteen years, we have had a lot of projects and we are currently applying for the women's entrepreneurship programmes.

A: Now you mentioned that you found out about CE through the Ministry of Culture. Does this mean that they sufficiently inform cultural organizations in Montenegro about EU programmes?

T: Yes, well, sometimes. They had a team then. They always have good individuals within the ministry. As for example, this one girl, Ana Savijak, who constantly made various promotions for all EU funds.

The problem is that their umbrella policy has always been disastrous for the independent scene. I don't think it's much better now.

A: What is the difference before and after 2020 after the change of government?

T: Generally or?

A: In the cultural sense.

T: The period with Minister Bratic was a disaster. She was, at that moment, the worst thing they could have chosen. But in general, we didn't really see the difference. But I can only talk about the independent scene, as far as the cultural heritage is concerned, that situation has not changed, and neither has the independent cultural scene. One gets the impression that there are some different people who might have the potential to understand that topic. But that topic is not on their agenda. Although we are trying, through meetings and research, but to no avail.

But we can say that we were not affected by the change of government, since only 6% of our funding comes from the state.

And I forgot to add that all projects tire us, especially the EU ones, for example. From CE, we received 15000 euros, but for various trips and all activities, we had to add money from our organization. We might have finished it with those 15000 euros, but we saw that this project was important for us and the town, and therefore we decided to invest as much as possible in it, and I think it paid off because we worked with our hearts, but of course, it was all us. it was exhausting, both physically and financially. Even after that, some organizations invited us to participate in CE projects, but we refused because it is exhausting, especially administrative.

A: I think it has changed a lot since 2016.

T: Yes, I think so too, and I think that almost 100% financing is now possible. I think that at that time Montenegro did not even have a defined relationship with the CE. We now have so much knowledge and experience with EU projects and we know how to write and lead them, but we really don't have the strength for that anymore and I think we will very rarely apply.

A: Was filling out the form complicated and tiring as well?

T: Yes, it was. But problems arise when you get it. There is a huge amount of reporting during the implementation of the programme, and finally, financial reporting, which is why

we had to hire a third person from our budget to do it for us. And they were very strict. It's a bunch of details and little things. Also we had another problem with financing, we had to have the same amount of money that they are supposed to give us, on our bank account, so they would reimburse us at the end of the project, and for an NGO, that was very difficult. The EU administration is such that if they set a deadline for you, you must not exceed it even one day, and if they set a deadline for themselves, then there can be multiple delays and then all of a sudden they'll ask for some new documents again. It's also a very long wait for a refund and that's not really okay.

A: What was your role in writing the project?

T: We only wrote our part of the project, the rest was written by the French leaders. They were okay, but we didn't cooperate much with them.

A: How was the communication with the rest of your partners?

T: Those associations are good and there was solid communication because we already knew each other from earlier projects, especially because they didn't cause us any problems with administration. And the communication was very diplomatic. We met at meetings in different countries and just shared what we did in our home countries.

A: Could you say that during your cooperation with them, the work of your organization was raised to a certain western level?

T: Well, it certainly had an effect. The most useful side of those partnerships were ideas and new approaches and confirmation of something you're already thinking about or a new argument for something, trips were very useful for this.

A: And do you as an individual feel more European now after the end of the project?

T: Well, I've never thought about it, but I think I've always felt like a European. But those geographical divisions have always been strange to me, because I'm not even from Montenegro. I was not born here, I was born in Vojvodina in Serbia. I lived in Scandinavia, but even if I hadn't, I never felt the need to define myself nationally. Well, maybe I've never even felt the need to identify myself as a European.

A: Is national or European identity more important?

T: National identity is banal, but even the European one is not that important. Because I have the feeling that if I am proud of being European, it is as if I want to say that I am better than someone from, I don't know, Africa. I don't like that European arrogance. But in any case, it's more pleasant to identify as a European because of those values that are close to me, but I don't feel the need to identify myself in any way.

I think that with that big bureaucracy they teach us to adapt ourselves to their administration, the content is not important. It is not the administration that makes us better people. I think that these programmes should be set up differently and that they should trust us and communicate more with us.

I think that the EU could learn something from American projects. We had excellent contact with them, they were interested in the projects and in the goals of those projects and in all the content and of course, the administration was much easier and they trust us more than the EU and the quality is generally better. The EU was not interested in the content. We made an excellent show, but none of them asked us to say what we managed to achieve with it, all we had to do was to justify to them how many tickets we sold and insert various information into an Excel sheet.

A: Speaking of which, have you been in direct contact with Creative Europe?

T: We almost had no contact with them, they contacted us in connection with the administration and that's it, maybe they did it with the French. Sometimes we communicated with our desk here, but that's it.

A: Do you think that your organization has progressed in the fields of inclusivity and tolerance?

Well, it certainly is in the sense not only because of this programme. We are simply shaped by the work environment because by working in civil and cultural sector we encounter various topics. We have met people who deal with women's rights and human rights in general, ecology, and environmental protection. Of course, we learn something new from all those people. American projects also took this into account.

I very much respect that European framework, but there is something in that system that needs to be reviewed.

Informant	Organization	Project
Sanja Vojinović	Municipality of Podgorica (National Library Radosav Ljumović)	Balkan Translation Collider

S: I'm Sanja Vojinovic, Master of literary sciences, currently in the position of the assistant director of the city library Radosav Ljumovic

A: Can you say something about the institution where you work?

S: The institution where I have been working for two and a half years is the oldest institution in the city of Podgorica, it was founded 142 years ago, so in its long duration this institution has built itself and positioned itself as one of the most important and recognizable when it comes to the culture of the capital, but also of the whole of Montenegro.

As for numbers, we have 160,000 library units; that after the national library it is the largest in terms of the number of funds, we also nurture publishing, numerous authors, both Montenegrin and foreign, published under the auspices of our Radosav Ljumovic library. There are two magazines, one for culture and cultural issues, and "Latica", which is intended for children and the affirmation of young artists. We have some new segments in the work, of course, apart from those that concern the library itself, three bookstores have been opened, we also have a new comic book programme, and a mobile library is also in operation.

A: The library is part of the municipality of Podgorica and the municipality is taken as the coordinator of the project, is that right?

S: When we talk about projects, the capital Podgorica is always the applicant, but there are others that can apply, namely the Secretariat for Culture and Sports of the capital city and when it comes to foreign projects, it almost always goes through the Secretariat. And for example the library is often the bearer of projects.

A: Can you briefly describe your project?

S: It is a project that has been going on for three years. We are partners in that project, which is managed by Next Page from Bulgaria. It is an organization that deals with literary problems, ie. problems concerning the literary problems of Europe and the world, of course, the region. As far as this project is concerned, the focus was on the literary translation of the artists from the countries that are part of the project, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, Montenegro, Albania and Kosovo. Thus, all important and relevant publishing houses are participants in this project, and we, as the capital, are the only ones that are institutionally financed from another budget, and that is, we are not a publishing house that depends on its profit or on

financing by certain programmes. The most important segment of this project was the creation of a study on translation, that concerned the period of the last five years, in this case from 2015 to 2020, so a list of writers, let me put it that way, it was a list of writers who were translated to one of the European languages. We issued a public invitation to writers to apply themselves. What was considered mandatory is that the book had to be published by a foreign publisher, which means that these are not "illegal" translations, also they had to be complete books, the project did not include book segments, individual poems or stories, but only complete books.

A: We could say that your aim was to promote national writers and national literature.

S: That's right, that's right, the aim was promoting national writers, but with an emphasis on the importance of translation, because the frames of Montenegro are sometimes not enough to present the literature and the writers themselves outside the borders and to reach some other markets, such as European, or even some world book fairs and world associations. We point out how important it is for the book to be translated, no matter how much it loses its meaning or quality when it is translated, but it is important for the writers to be translated into languages that are in use in the European Union and the world.

A: This is a very rare case that a state institution is part of the Creative Europe project, so how did it come about?

S: Well, yes, it is very important to have people who are ready to collaborate, back then, all of that happened in the Secretariat for Culture and Sports, we also started the book fair, which has been organized for nine years now. The artistic director at the time, Vladimir Vojinovic, who is also a writer and a professor at the university, invited regional publishers and achieved the cooperation with Arijan Leka, whose publishing house is one of the most important in Albania and then we discussed the writing of the project, agreements, percentages of participation, what could be done and in what way, we talked about various academies that took place and will take place in the future, and of course what is most important and crucial, and it should be noted that the city does not earn money from this project, the money that we received from this project was used and will be used for the organization of academies, for printing publications and for promotion, and our participation and work on the project is within our salaries, regardless of the fact that it also means working outside working hours, but we are happy to do that because it is a higher goal, which is the approximation of European culture.

Regarding the fact that we are a state institution, the only "obstacle" was that all partners and the project leader had to approve our participation.

A: Are you familiar with any other EU projects in the cultural sector?

S: The call for the CE was just opened, I think, but we were not interested in it because the library has a lot of responsibilities in relation to the already existing projects, but I am not sure if the Secretariat or the capital has initiated something, but we must note that this is the first project that the Secretariat, Podgorica and the Library worked together on.

A: Do you think that other cultural organizations are sufficiently informed about the CE programme?

S: I'm not sure, I don't know how informed they are. I know that Danilovgrad was often part of such projects. But I know there are obstacles in terms of administrative matters. It was also aggravating for us because COVID happened to us in that period, but we hope we will be a good example for others to get involved in such projects as much as possible.

A: Did you cooperate with the Desk for Creative Europe in Montenegro

S: The cooperation with them was only administrative and informative, they gave us the necessary information and they educated us about the evaluation of the project, and then we continued to work with our office, which is responsible for writing foreign projects. Therefore, the infrastructure exists in the capital.

A: And as for the writing of the project itself, what was your role there?

S: Our role was to make proposal for our country and to create our own academy and to organize it in our country. That's what we and all the partners did. We also made a report where we clearly stated what part of the project is financed by CE and what part we cover from our budget, but we can say that it was not a burden on the budget of the capital city.

A: Do you think the whole process of writing the project and applying in general is complicated?

S: Well, it is, it is very complicated. There are boards that look at every detail, especially when it comes to finances because they ask for precision, and when it comes to culture it's very difficult to be precise, but it was easy for us because we have a lot of experience in managing projects. We cultural workers are used to working when the budget is limited.

A: Everyone here complains about the complexity of the administration of Creative Europe..

S: That's right, we had to hire an external person to help us write all those huge forms. I will be completely honest and say that I am very sorry that the communication between the project leader and us did not go exactly as we expected. Believe it or not they even denied our national literature, that is, the existence of Montenegrin national literature, we had to show and prove that we exist.

A : Who was the leader of the project again?

S: Next Page.

S: If you don't want to, you don't have to use this part, but I want you to know that there is this maliciousness by some and all of that was because of the politics, which certainly should not be part of the culture, but it definitely impacted many things during this project

A: Is it perhaps in some way a denial of the Montenegrin national identity?

S: That's right and therefore the denial of the existence of Montenegrin literature that began, not only with Njegos, but also much earlier. They asked us how to translate Montenegrin literature. Exactly the same as Serbian, Croatian, Albanian, any.

A : Next Page is from?

S: Bulgaria

A: That's so interesting. Why would Bulgaria deny Montenegrin literature, I would understand if you said that it was done by some countries that are closer to us.

S: Yes, that's right, but well, there is always a background story. The bottom line is that cultural workers, who go to present themselves, never got the chance to present themselves in the right way. Either we don't make a good choice or they don't present it properly. No one says that you should wave either with phonemes or with anything, but Montenegrin literature exists and it is not a literature of disunity, but of continuity, so we should always talk about it. Wikipedia is an evil thing with thousands of errors. Njegos is not a Serbian writer, but a Montenegrin one, Risto Ratkovic is not a Serbian but a Montenegrin writer, etc. Bosnia and Herzegovina also had that problem, but the difference is that they have a built identity and have much greater literature than Montenegro. Croats have that problem and their writers are appropriated. It is simply best to use the word Yugoslavian for those old writers, not to put them in any national framework, and the place of birth should be a parameter for determining nationality, if he was born in Montenegro, then he is a Montenegrin writer. That's where we argued.

A: And which writers from Montenegro did you promote, are they older writers or younger ones?

S: Mostly it is the young generation of writers. And these are writers who don't have their own agents or opportunities, and on the other hand, the state doesn't have any instrument to promote them, and they do it all independently.

A: You have already mentioned communication with partners, can you tell us something else about that? Not only with the next page, but also with the rest.

S: Yes, yes. You see, communication with everyone... we are still in a position to invite and build various bridges, so we did not have any problems neither on the project nor in general,

because the municipality and the library as part of the municipality are used to cooperating with a lot of cultural workers because we are cultural workers ourselves, so the communication from both sides was solid.

A: Did you have the opportunity to travel during the project?

S: In the course of the project.. eh. It is also very important to emphasize that this leading organization did not take Montenegro into account, so we only received, just yesterday, the tranche for the second and third year, that is, for this year and the previous one. Well, since they did not pay us the funds for the previous year, we could not participate in either academy, one was in Macedonia, the other in Belgrade, one was at the beginning of the year, and the other was in October, so our participation is there absent, but we hope that they will be with us this year here in Podgorica and I hope that we will be able to participate directly in the project with that money, because until now we could not travel without it. And the original plan was for me to travel as someone who leads a project in Montenegro, a representative of a publishing house and a writer, but the capital city could not finance that.

A: And originally those trips were part of the project?

S: Yes, those trips were supposed to be covered by the money we received from the grant, because each participant received a certain part of the money that was supposed to be used, among other things, for trips. But as for the study and the work, we did it from our budget, because we thought it was very important that the study be done and that it be marketed, and it is perhaps the most important segment of this project, and it was done, and I repeat, from our own funds.

A: And originally those trips were part of the project?

S: Yes, those trips were supposed to be covered by the money we received from the grant, because each participant received a certain part of the money that was supposed to be used, among other things, for trips. But as for the study and the work itself, we did it from our budget, because we thought it was very important for that study to be done and marketed since it is perhaps the most important segment of this project, and it was done, and I repeat, from our own funds.

A: Have you tried complaining?

S: You know how it is... It's simply impossible to communicate with people who have been arrogant toward you from the very beginning.

A: If not to them, maybe you could have tried to talk directly with Creative Europe or at least the Montenegrin desk.

S: Well, not really. The only thing we did in that matter was to contact Next Page and ask them several times where the money was, and they began to convince us that they had paid, and Jana from Next Page accused us of not being able to find that money in the account, and then she started to ignore us, then yesterday, after more than a year, the money was deposited into our account. And this creates problems for us because it is very difficult to retroactively justify those funds in front of Creative Europe. But we will succeed in that because we are experts, but they humiliated us in that way, for example, during the presentation of our study, Jana mockingly talked to us, literally asking us questions about whether Montenegrin literature exists, but I don't know, I'm disappointed, I expected more from a European project.

A: Since your project was done in collaboration with other Balkan countries, do you think you would be more satisfied if your partners were perhaps from Western Europe?

S: Yes, that's a great point, but maybe I expected that the Balkan countries would have more understanding for our writers since they all went through this at one point, but that was not the case. I expected that Next Page would help us to network our domestic writers with their publishing houses. We wanted to learn from this project how to promote writers, more precisely, to create a model that we would later give to the Ministry of Culture so that it would continue to work according to that model and improve the state of the Montenegrin literary scene.

A: Are the writers satisfied with the project?

S: Of course not, and they expected that by now their books would already be translated and they expected that everything would be on a higher level. All of us together had high expectations, especially since Croatia and Bulgaria are members of the EU.

A: Did other countries have a better experience?

S: We have similar experiences, but they have much larger state budgets for culture, so they are in a slightly better position than Montenegro.

A: In your opinion, what is the state of the culture financing system in Montenegro?

S: You see, this year the Ministry of Culture fought to get a slightly larger budget from the state, but there are two sides, on the one hand, cultural workers should be good representatives of a state, but the Ministry of Culture seems not to be aware of that, but when we get the opportunity to present Montenegrin culture, we do everything ad hoc, because we do not have a prearranged model that we use when Montenegrin culture needs to be presented. I think it's because we don't have an established Montenegrin identity and we simply don't know what our roots are. We have forgotten that this is the country that had the

first printing house in the Balkans, and that should be the starting point for everything going forward, and I think that no one in the Balkans has the right to be better represented than us. But we did not nurture that, but you, who are of the new generation and who have a product, so to speak, and there is no need to worry too much about it, you have a product and you work on it, you promote it, but that is not the case only with literature, but also with music and film and theater.

A: What are artists like in terms of identity? Is it important for them to be presented as Montenegrin artists?

S: Look, someone will say that it doesn't matter when it comes to art, but look, you know who is a Serbian actor, who is a Croatian actor, why is it terrible to be a Montenegrin actor, writer or poet, there is a feeling of inferiority in our country because our identity is not built, there is always that feeling of inferiority when we find ourselves next to some larger cultures.

A: Speaking of identity, does this project make you feel like a part of Europe, that is, a European?

S: The fact that we are part of that project made us happy and satisfied that we, a small country, were recognized as part of a huge project, it is a confirmation that Europe recognizes you as its part in that way. But I think we realized how it actually works, we now realize that we are only one of many.

A: And has the work of the library been raised to perhaps a higher level, that is, to the level of those Western institutions?

S: Yes, and I'm not the only one who thinks that, but the users themselves agree with that. The essence of every institution is to be the center of events where quality things happen.

A: And what are the concrete advantages that you got by participating in the KE programme?

S: The goal was to make wider contacts, to make the network of publishers bigger, to promote writers, it was my idea to make contacts with publishers because they all have their festivals, their magazines, and so we can be a part of it, like they would be part of ours. But the problem is that so far we have not received any invitation to come to them, while we constantly invite them to our festivals and book fairs. Apart from Bosnia and Herzegovina, we have an excellent relationship with them.

A: Where could we look for the main "culprit" for that?

S: Unfortunately, that is an ingrained opinion about Montenegro, as a small and insignificant country. Only Bosnia and Herzegovina understands us because they are also going through the same thing. If you start to insist that some artist, writer in this case, is Montenegrin, then problems arise.

A: Is European or national, that is, Montenegrin, identity more important to you?

S: If we were a country that has a built-up national identity where you don't have to constantly say that you are Montenegrin, then I'd say that the European identity is very important. But firstly, it is important that people, especially young people, know where they are from, because this is a country with a long history, which has lasted for more than 1000 years and various civilizations have passed and left their roots and outlines, and that it is known that we are not only Montenegrins and that it is an interwoven multicultural society and that we inherit many traditions, and that is why I do not want our country to be squeezed and backed into a corner

I will say again, if we had built that national identity, I would tell you right now that we are moving towards Europe and European identity, but since that is not the case, then it is important to work especially by focusing on young people. But that's because they didn't teach us properly, nor did Montenegrin historians put more effort into it, here's an example, there is an archive in Kotor that Montenegrin historians never go into, but the Serbs did it first and appropriated it all.

A: Given that the EU stands for equality, tolerance, inclusiveness... Do you think that your institution has made progress in these fields?

S: Yes, but not only through projects, we are aware that culture must not be exclusive, no matter how important I claim that Montenegrin identity is, we are open for everything, for all citizens and their suggestions. We simply as cultural workers have to be like that.

Informant	Organization	Project
Viktor Varoši	KotorArt	#synergy: Sharpening the capacities of the classical music industry in the Western Balkans

V: Viktor Varoši, manager and producer in culture, and the executive producer of the KotorArt International Festival, which means that I do everything and am responsible for everything, but among other things I was very involved in the creation of the idea and the writing and realization of this project which we did as part of Creative Europe, so in that sense I hope to be able to give you as many information as possible.

A: Tell us something more about the institution, that is, the organization where you work?

V: I can briefly explain KotorArt to you, although I know you already know all of it because you have prepared for it, but yes, it is a very specific system. As a festival, we are very important for the culture of Montenegro and can be characterized as a state festival, that's what people say, but we are not a public institution. Around thirteen or fourteen years ago, a list of six festivals important for the culture of Montenegro was published, today there are only Ratković's poetry evenings and KotorArt, the others have all been extinguished, which has enabled us, KotorArt, to have a special budget line in the Ministry of Culture and in the municipality of Kotor, which means that we do not apply for tenders because the municipality of Kotor and the Ministry are our patrons, but we are also an NGO. In the operational sense, we are very flexible. We are also specific in that KotorArt is a multidisciplinary festival, it started twenty-two years ago as a music festival, as a local initiative, which later became recognizable, and in 2009, when we received the status of a festival of "special importance", some local festivals joined us, and so this the festival becomes much bigger than it was because at that time there was only a music segment, later some other segments were added, where the Ministry of Culture also added a theater part, but this led to some scandals... Anyway, after the changes, the change of management, the parts that remained are the musical part, which is also an autochthonous part of the festival and the children's theatre festival, and the series called Philosopher's square which is a debate series during which we organize debates and conferences on various topics. So that way, KotorArt functions well as a kind of association of festivals, and what unites us is quality, so KotorArt is a small European Union.

And as for my role, I am the executive producer of the music part of the festival, which is both the most visible and the largest, but also the most important for the KotorArt brand, and what makes that segment unique and our festival unique as whole is that that classical music is usually somehow, we here use the word autistic, you know like, you have a concert by Bach, Beethoven and that's it, but we are very careful not to be like that, that is, to, to tie our programmes for some non-musical, that is, for some non-artistic topic that is important for the local community, e.g. ecology in the broadest sense, the protection of the environment, especially in Boka Kotorska. And simply, constantly, the festival in that way serves as a platform to discuss some important topics, whether they are talked about in silence or whether they are debated and we analyze the topic in depth . Before we started recording, we mentioned the lack of a sense of European identity, just last year, which was our reaction to the Ukrainian events and the topic was the music of unity, where, although we did not explicitly write it, we declared that we are a European festival and that we stand for European values, I think for the reason that all of us from the team feel that way, and because we believe that Montenegro should continue on that path, and that it should not go further east. And for example the opening programme, which is the most visible in both political and media terms, is a theatrical event in front of the cathedral of St. Tryphon and is always on the national day of July 13. And it's always one of the cultural highlights of the year.

Last year's theme was the Music of Unity, and we actually broadcast two operas that are forgotten, one by a French and one by a Czech author, which were written in inspired by Montenegro, and in this way we wanted to show that Montenegro is part of Europe and part of the European culture. And the topics we deal with are often, let's call them European, that is, present in the EU, such as green agenda, which is widely present in Europe, and we do such things thanks to EU programmes, we had several programmes, in addition to CE, one of them is the Western Balkan Fund, so we also had some UNESCO grants. But let's stop here, you should have interrupted me.

A: No, no, thank you for the detailed answer. But, you mentioned that you are financed from the state budget, does that bring any restrictions? Is the state holding you back creatively in some way?

V: I don't think so, as I said, there is a kind of autonomy that we have, it's only up to us to prove to the state that we help the promotion of Kotor and that we use money responsibly, that is, that we are responsible when it comes to spending public money.

A: Can you briefly describe the project?

V: Of course I can, just to mention that in addition to this project that I will talk about, we recently received funding for another one, where we are partners and it is a large-scale project, which means a lot to us.

But as for this primary project, it's called #Sinergy, the name has the sign sharp and it looks like a hashtag, but in fact it means tone increases and it's actually a word play where we want to explain that we want to increase the capacity of classical music in the Western Balkans, like sharpening the capacity hence the sharp sign in the title. We had three work packages, one is behind the stage, on the stage and I can't remember the name of the third one, but mainly we had three aspects. In this first one, we from the organization and the partners all have the main role here since this is the part where we exchange experiences and consult. During this part of the project, we identified six topics that are crucial for classical music, including financing and production in the Balkans and we analyzed each of them and it was really useful for all of us including the partners. As far as partners are concerned, we had two from Dubrovnik and Slovenia, which are EU partners, and they are two huge festivals, with big budgets and even more experience. We also have partners from Serbia, Kosovo and Albania. And the result of this entire project will be a guidebook, which means that for the first time we will have something like that for our region. And it will be a bible for everyone from the Balkans who wants to deal with classical music festivals.

As for the on-stage part, we all engaged two composers from our countries, unestablished or medium-established, and we engaged a total of twelve composers who had music residencies in partner countries and all of them wrote new compositions that are important for their countries. but also connected with European values. Let's say, one of the topics we in Montenegro chose is environmental protection, and the other is multiconfessionalism, which is Kotor known for, and is also a frequent reason for conflicts in the region, and all the artists who were at our residency were introduced to it. After creating the compositions, we announced a tender for artists who will perform those compositions. Soon, everyone who participated in the project, partners, composers, musicians, will gather in Kotor, where we will prepare these compositions and get ready for the summer tour, which is the crown of this project, because we will perform all these musical pieces throughout the region, i.e. in partner countries, and the point is affirmation and support for all classical music artists, which is very rare in our area, and precisely because of this, we have a plan to write an additional project based on this project, which will directly rely on this project, because we are aware of how much it means to our composers and musicians of classical music. Let's say that this is our project in a nutshell.

A: And how did you find out about the programme?

V: I don't know exactly, but we have known about it for a long time since it is the main programme of the European Union for culture.

A: Are other cultural organizations familiar with this programme?

V: They are probably aware that it exists, but I'm not sure why they don't use it, I don't really have an answer to that.

A: What is the role of the ministries of culture in this?

V: At the Ministry of Culture, there is this Desk of Creative Europe, which serves to provide support to organizations before and after applying, I wouldn't say that it is really active, the thing is that the people who are in charge of the desk are part of the ministry, that is, they work in the ministry and have a million other duties, CE is only a small part of it.

A: And what was your role in writing the application form?

V: We wrote the entire application, with the help of a colleague from Belgrade, but we also hired another person who assisted us with that, but each of the partners contributed with their ideas to the writing, and I can say that it is the best project we could write at that moment.

A: Was it a complex process?

V: Yes very much, from the very beginning you have to completely dedicate yourself to just that. The budgetary part of the application is particularly difficult, the smallest details must be taken into account, because the moment your project is approved, that budgetary part is the basis of everything and you have to stick to it, no changes can be made. For example, we wrote the budget long before inflation and now we have the problem of how to fit it all in with today's prices, the prices of traveling, fuel, accommodation, hotels, food and all that has increased drastically.

A: Do you think that the whole process, from the application to the realization of the project, is administratively difficult?

V: It is known that the EU bureaucracy is very complicated. They are highly bureaucratized, but many things do not work. Let's say since we are the leader of the project, everything goes through is and it's a terrible experience because you have every responsibility towards the EU and you are responsible to them for yourself and for all partners.

A: What is your opinion about the existing culture financing system in Montenegro?

V: Hhahahaha well...

A: If you don't want to answer, you don't have to, but at least try to answer it roughly.

V: I'll try at least roughly. My opinion is that, not only in Montenegro, but also in the region, the basic instrument for funding culture are grants, both the state and European ones... the problem with Montenegrin, I mean, the state grants is that there are no clearly explained evaluation criteria, which the EU has, but Montenegro doesn't and it is not at all clear to me how exactly it works in Montenegro or in other countries of the region. The thing is that states try to support as many initiatives as possible, so everyone gets their share of the pie, but that share ends up being very small, almost useless for some of us. Also what's problematic is the law because of which NGOs cannot be financed directly from the budget, but only through grants, that is, they have to wait for a call and that's the only way to get money. But let's conclude that the problem is that states do not allocate enough money to finance culture.

A: Do you notice any changes after the change of government after the 2020 election?

V: Hmm, let's put it this way, we had one and the same system for about thirty years that somehow worked, not perfectly, but it worked, and then suddenly new people arrived, people without any experience, and it was very noticeable. Literally, people who just came to power did not know what to do and how to do it. The problem is operability, in order for something to work, you have to know that system, but they didn't know that, although I hope that it will slowly start to work.

A: We didn't talk enough about the partners and your cooperation, how was the communication with them?

V: We are a very easy-going group of people, who are interested in what we do and everyone is very involved and we had no problems at all. Every country is involved in the implementation of the project as a whole, but we from Montenegro are like class elders.

A: Given that you are cooperating with two EU countries on the project, did cooperation with them help you raise the level of your work?

V: Yes, those two organizations are really on a higher level, but we must not forget that these are still Balkan countries and that the differences, although present, are not that huge. The plans for the future will be to expand our consortium with some EU countries that are not so close to us, for example Denmark or Belgium, and I think that then I could better answer this question, because our new partners will hopefully be quite more developed countries that have a larger sum of money at their disposal and I think that they could bring us closer to that level of functioning that you are asking me about.

A: Did you have the opportunity to travel during the project?

V: Yes, we had workshops with all partners, so we travelled to all of their countries. The mobility of cultural workers was one of our goals, as well as the mobility of the artists.

A: We still have the identity agenda, which we have already talked about a little. Do you, you and your organization, feel more European because of this project?

V: As for me personally, I have never considered myself a Balkan, not even by blood, since I am half Italian, half Hungarian and German, so I have never had a national identity, so it is easiest for me to identify as a European. I have never identified with the country where I was born, nor with the country where I work, that is, neither with Serbia nor with Montenegro, so in that sense, this project has not changed anything for me personally.

And as for the organization, I just mentioned that the whole team “lives” the values of the European Union and we all live in that bubble where we believe we don’t belong to the Balkan, and I think that it affects our organization. But the impact of the project is definitely visible because one of our goals was to prove that local topics are actually European and we managed to do so.

A: Speaking of identity, do you think that Montenegro has a problem with its national identity?

V: Of course it does, it's a normal thing in the Balkans, I won't get into politics, but you can see that there is a division between Serbian Montenegro and Montenegrin Montenegro, and this is greatly fuelled by politics. I think that Montenegro will build its national identity when it stops basing it on religion and the Balkans. I think, although I am not an expert in this matter, that the EU is waiting for the Western Balkans to solve such problems and only then will we enter the EU.

A: We have two more questions left, what concrete advantages did you feel by participating in this project?

V: Apart from financial, this was an additional affirmation for us that we are a leading organization in the field of culture in Montenegro. The fact that we are the first Montenegrin organization that is the leader of a European project in the cultural sector sounds, although it is true, as impossible, so it is a definite affirmation for us that everything we do is recognized and supported.

A: Given that the EU stands for inclusiveness, tolerance, etc. do you think you have progressed in that field?

V: No, no! Because it cannot advance further than it already is, because we have always been an inclusive organization.

A: Thank you very much, this is a great conclusion to this interview

Informant	Organization	Project
Bojana Mališić	University Donja Gorica	Opera: Past, Present, Perfect

B: My name is Bojana Mališić, I am an associate at the University of Donja Gorica and I work primarily in the office for International Cooperation. I started working at UDG about ten years ago, I am mainly responsible for various projects, research projects, and in addition I am a doctoral student at the Faculty of International Economics, Finance and Business.

I was involved in the Opera project, although not from the very beginning, maybe not for the first few months, but after that, I became part of the project and I am well versed in all that, especially when it comes to the dissemination and promotion of the project, but also the administration itself.

This is also our first Creative Europe project, and this year we even got another project, it hasn't started yet, but I think it will in about a month and it is related to the valorisation of cultural heritage.

A: How did you find out about Creative Europe programmes?

B: Through a partner. We have the Faculty of Design and Multimedia, the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Culture and Tourism, and they are all focused on the study of culture, art history, and contemporary art, and that's why we were contacted by this project coordinator, which is a theatre and music organization.

A: Can you briefly describe the project?

B: The project is related to music and opera, in fact, the opera, but also artistic organizations are involved in how to promote and how to modernize and how to raise awareness of opera itself among young people, more precisely, among students. Specifically, the university's activities were to participate in the project through graphic design, to bring the theater-opera part of the activity closer to the students and to include modern technologies that can be used in the presentation of the opera itself. That is what we did with our partners, those are three institutions from Belgrade, most of them were theater artists, us from Montenegro as the only university unit and one institution from the Netherlands and one from Georgia.

Our activities were mainly related to the dissemination, promotion of project activities, this included monitoring social networks, promoting all activities on them, preparing video materials related to the project itself, and we also had the task of attending certain masterclasses where our students would be educated about the use of graphic design in the promotion of opera. In addition to the students, there were also assistants who were teaching in those courses related to the connection between graphic design and modern technologies,

and together with the experts, we did twenty pieces and created a kind of exhibition, first at the university, and then the works were sent to Belgrade to be exhibited

A: You are one of the few educational institutions that are part of Creative Europe, have you encountered any kind of obstacles?

B: I don't think we have, I can tell you from my perspective, I have been engaged at the university for ten years and we deal with various cultural affairs, although we are not formally a cultural organization and we are very aware that culture is an important aspect that should be developed.

A: Did you cooperate with the desk for Creative Europe during the project?

B: I don't think we did, at least I didn't, but maybe my colleagues did

A: And what was your role in writing the application for Creative Europe?

B: Specifically, that research part was ours, do you mean me or the whole university?

A: Yes, the university.

B: The University of Donja Gorica was involved in the part where we had to find out what could be done at the institutional level, but also at the national level, that is, we researched and presented what could be done to promote the cultural aspect of opera, and I already mentioned that we were in charge of dissemination, that is, we had to find out what is the best way to promote opera

A: Do you find the application process complicated?

B: Well it definitely takes a lot of time, maybe, the biggest problem is communication and creating a team that will be in charge of each part of the application.

A: The others I interviewed often complained about the complexity of the EU bureaucracy.

B: We expected this kind of bureaucracy because it is about financing and there is always a lot of bureaucratization, but I think that dealing with that bureaucratization is the role of the project leader, so we didn't encounter that much.

A: And what is your opinion about the culture financing system in Montenegro? That is, is it adequate?

B: Well, in recent years there have been some changes, because a lot of funds and tenders have appeared where you can apply.

A: Are you satisfied with the communication with your partners?

B: We are, we mostly communicated with the coordinators who coordinated everything perfectly, maybe in the beginning we had some obstacles because we were part of this European programme for the first time.

A: Could you say that during your cooperation with them, the work of your organization was raised to a certain Western level?

B: Yes, it definitely is, especially in the part of exchanging knowledge that you can later apply to the work of your institution. Especially when it comes to modernization and inclusion, and the creation of contacts is a very important result of all such projects

A: Did you have the opportunity to travel to EU countries during this project?

B: No, unfortunately not, because it began in 2020 when the pandemic also started, so all trips to Europe were cancelled, including the trips to Belgrade.

A: Do you think that Montenegrin cultural organizations are sufficiently familiar with the programmes of the European Union?

B: I don't think they are, maybe we should work on promoting it. Perhaps the Ministry of Culture should devote itself a little to this.

A: We still have questions related to identity, whether because of this programme, you as an individual and your institution feel more European?

B: Well, maybe yes, but I think I've always felt that way because we have a lot of international projects.

A: What concrete advantages did your institution get by participating in this programme?

B: Well, we developed a network with diverse partners, there is also the capacity building, our teaching staff was also involved, so a certain number of professors and assistants who were involved in masterclasses, workshops, and training, but also the students themselves. were trained in this way. And we also got a chance to promote our institution.

A: In your opinion, is there a sufficiently developed European identity in Montenegro?

B: Well, I think that there is, we definitely still need to work on it, but that base certainly exists.

A: Perhaps the Montenegrin problems with national identity are an obstacle on that path, what do you think?

B: In general, I think that there is a problem with national identity everywhere, not only in Montenegro, but in the entire Western Balkans. I even think that the meaning of national identity is not sufficiently understood and that is why we don't know what to do concretely, that is, what to develop concretely in this respect, but perhaps it is not a big

A: Then perhaps we should first solve the problem of national identity and then focus on building a European identity?

B: Maybe, I don't know, I'm speaking from my perspective, certainly yes, there should be a clear boundary somewhere.

A: Do you think that your organization has progressed in the fields of inclusivity and tolerance?

B: Definitely, we are making a lot of progress in that field over time. We have a different, i.e. innovative study model, where one important item is the building of that being and character, where the cultural part is very important.

Informant	Organization	Project
Goran Janković	Gradionica	Redesigning playscapes with children in Western Balkans

G: As for our organization, it is mostly one person who does everything, although my brother is also part of the team because he is an interior designer and he is one of the founders, but he has not yet into this like I am, so I am now the executive director.

A: Can you tell me more about the project?

G: When we founded the organization, we thought that we would first start with local projects, the ones funded by Ministry of Culture and so on because we were told so, but we heard that partners, architects, from Croatia were looking for partners from Montenegro for this project. They explained to us that they work with partners from Slovenia, who are the project leader, and we joined them, and from then on the story of Replay began. I honestly did not believe that we would get the funding, but I joined because I wanted to learn a little more about projects, how to apply, how to write a projec, I really did not believe that we will get it and in July we received confirmation that we got it and then I changed all my plans.

The project is supported by the Ministry of Public Administration, I must tell you that, which means that in addition to Creative Europe, we are co-financed by them.

Our project is really related to cooperation and the exchange of knowledge and experience. Regarding the project directly, Playscapes, I don't know if we have translated it, but it is a kind of landscape playground and it is about that we wanted to bring back the natural elements because the playgrounds have become standardized and because of that they are very monotonous and riskless due to those prefabricated, plastic ones that we see everywhere, and that's how we came to the realization that risk to children is one of the most important factors of development... the development of mental capacities, not only motor ones. Exposure to risk teaches children to develop mentally. We are trying to actualize the topic of returning the element of the risk and of course, the presence of nature on the playgrounds. The main point was cooperation and exchange, and we succeeded in that already in the first year of the project. Slovenians and Croats shared with us everything they know.

A: Are you familiar with other EU programmes?

G: As for other programmes, I know about ERASMUS+ although they are not specifically related to culture. I must also mention that Creative Europe is great because it covers

everything, especially because it is important for the independent cultural scene, but I would like architecture to be a little more involved in this.

A: Do you think that Montenegrin cultural organizations are sufficiently informed about EU programmes?

G: I think we are not informed enough and I think the European Union should deal with it. But also the Ministry of Culture, for example, it took us almost four months to find out whether or not we were exempt from VAT because communication was so slow.

A: What was the role of your organization in writing the project?

G: I already mentioned that the cooperation was completely partner-based and we all had equal roles.

A: Is it complicated to apply for Creative Europe?

G: Yes, but since the Slovenians are the lead partner, we left it all to them and Creative Europe is really much more complicated than other programmes.

A: Did you travel during the project?

G: Yes, of course we went to Croatia and Slovenia, but also to the Netherlands, we visited The Hague, Amsterdam and Rotterdam

A: How was the communication with the project partners?

G: The communication was open, excellent, just as it should be and I am very satisfied

A: Did the cooperation with your partners lead to changes in your work?

G: Definitely, it's definitely knowledge and capacity in the field of writing and project organization, we made a lot of progress with this project, and the fact that much more experienced partners trusted us means a lot.

And yes, to return to the co-creation with children, the project is called Redesigning Playscapes WITH children, not FOR children, because the goal of the project is to work with children through workshops because they are the end users.

A: Do you feel more European because of this project?

G: No, because maybe Europe doesn't work enough on the brand, maybe that's good, maybe not. But according to various research.

Appendix 3 - Consent for Master's Thesis

The aim of this paper is to find out how the European Union used the Creative Europe programme as a diplomatic instrument in cooperation with Montenegro.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right to cancel at any time during the interview and thereby choose not to participate. This right is valid until the thesis is published in early June 2023. The handling of the collected data will be done only by the author of the essay and the supervisor Anamaria Dutceac Segesten. All information and data are handled confidentially. The answers you give during the interview will be used for research purposes only.

Interviews will be recorded, if you approve, and additional notes will be taken during the interview. If you would like to approve a full transcription, please complete the field below. If you have any questions or concerns about the study or data handling, please do not hesitate to contact me at ajlansejdic@gmail.com

I have read and understand the work information provided in the document above.

- ☐ I agree to participate in the development of a master's thesis on Europeanization through Cultural diplomacy
- ☐ I agree that my personal data and information are processed in the manner described in the document
- ☐ I agree to the recording of the interview
- ☐ I agree that my name and the name of my organization are mentioned and quoted in the paper

Place and date

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The informant's signature

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Place and date

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The student's signature

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