

ECCO NEWS-Special Edition

Issue #10 - November 2013 - Cultural diplomacy versus Economic diplomacy - Minister DARCOS Key Notes - ECCO Symposium#7

Firstly I would like to thank the organizers of this symposium for inviting me. As a member of the "Académie française" and despite I am speaking to you in English today, I cannot resist quoting the study of "Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie", which clearly shows that the intensity of trade in goods and capital between countries that share French as an official language can hypothesize a "language preference" as a favorable component to economic relations between the territories. As a former French Development Minister, Education Minister and Labour Minister and now Executive President of The French Institute - an organisation which coordinates French cultural representations abroad, I am unaccustomed to speak to an audience of business men, except to try to convince them to join the club of patrons of the French Institute. But today it is quite another thing.

I would try to explain to you this morning what is France's cultural policy abroad and what are the benefits you can expect for your business. So that you can find reasons to use our expertise to achieve indirect offsets that you could offer to your state co-contractors. France has long pursued active cultural and scientific diplomacy, historically aiming to both ensure and celebrate the international presence of France in language, culture, communication, higher education, and research. At the end of the Cooperation and Cultural Action Network meetings, last summer, Laurent Fabius, French Minister of Foreign Affairs, presented France's new cultural diplomacy. Mister Fabius notably reaffirmed the need, in the context of increased international competition, to ensure that the diplomacy of influence conducted by our cooperation and cultural action network is consistent with all of our diplomatic efforts. This is now contributing to our country's economic recovery by supporting the international expansion of companies, by promoting our country's attractiveness, by encouraging the teaching of our language and the spread of our culture. The methods used to exercise influence must be coordinated based on the need for economic recovery and must support the sectors that are of strategic importance to France. As such of yours. In order to address this challenge, France has many advantages that can be even more widely promoted: the cultural and creative industries which already represent five per cent (5%) of our exports, the audiovisual sector which must have strategies that are tailored to every region of the world, the digital revolution which is providing new opportunities for investment and the academic and scientific exchanges supporting the international development of our universities. France also has the largest cultural network in the world, the boundaries of which will be redefined, notably in order to allow us to have a greater presence in the emerging countries. Lastly, our language is a major asset, notably in Africa. Laurent Fabius confirmed our attachment to an ambitious policy to promote the French language.

The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs operates a vast network of French cultural departments and establishments abroad, working together to forge close links with local partners in pursuit of clearly defined objectives: bringing French culture and the work of French artists to a wider audience around the world. France's cultural network abroad organises some fifty thousand (50 000) cultural events a year. France's artistic policy at the international level is governed by three priorities:

- **First priority** - Disseminating contemporary creation in all its forms

Outside France, through initiatives such as Baltic Sounds French (contemporary music), France Danse (contemporary dance) or Paris Calling, a season of French contemporary art staged in London. Other initiatives include gallery pairings such as Berlin-Paris or multidisciplinary festivals like the Croisements festival in China; In France, via the Focus platform launched in two thousand and eight (2008) and encompassing the fields of dance, theatre, circus and street arts, the Focus operation gives overseas programmers a chance to see the latest creations by artists living in France through the medium of a renowned international festival.

- **Second priority** - Promoting French culture and implementing cultural diversity

What moves us is to welcoming the cultural richness of other countries to France and promoting French culture beyond our borders: As for example: During the Year of France in China (in two thousand four (2004) and two thousand five (2005) and during next year as well for the fiftieth diplomatic anniversary between French and China, in two thousand nine (2009) the Year of France in Brazil or the Year of France in South Africa in two thousand twelve (2012), hundreds of events – in the fields of the arts, sciences, education and business - were co-organised with the authorities and local partners, throughout the partner countries.

The cross-cultural Seasons in France operations showcase the creativity of the guest country in every field of endeavour. Since the programme began in nineteen eighty five (1985), with the Year of India, events in Paris and around the country have focused in turn on the many different facets of some thirty countries, including Hungary, Algeria, Armenia, Russia and, most recently, Croatia in this year the cross-cultural Seasons in France operations showcase the creativity of the guest country in every field of endeavour South Africa. The cross-cultural Seasons are a widely recognised and much sought-after reference around the world. Many countries are keen to take part in such exchanges and are also keen to learn from France, which leads the field in this particular area. The Years and Seasons are the result of bilateral diplomatic commitments at the highest level and are an important part of France's policy of promoting cultural diversity. They represent very high profile tools of soft diplomacy. They provide an opportunity to stage events, in conjunction with overseas governments and agencies, designed to:

- Showcase and enhance the image of both France and the partner countries; ☐ promote better mutual knowledge and understanding; ☐ highlight the vitality of exchanges in the fields of culture, education and academic research, but also in technology, science, industry and trading;

- Encourage new encounters and new initiatives intended to expand the scope of dialogue and cooperation.

Because of their ability to revitalise cooperation in every sector, the crossed-cultural Seasons also have a political dimension by virtue of the closer links they forge between two countries. For many French agencies, local and regional authorities and regional institutions, they also result in a higher profile at national level and even on the international stage.

- **Third priority** - Building the professional capacity of different artistic sectors

France also pursues a policy of cooperation and development targeting countries in the Priority Solidarity Zone (what we call in our jargon (pronounced Zed ESS PI). This programme, under the title Afrique et Caraïbes en Création (in French), is managed by the Institut français and focuses on:

Supporting access to the national and international market; ☐ developing the cultural economy, enabling the countries concerned to benefit from the richness of their cultural output.

The programme centres around major themed events in Africa and the Caribbean designed as professional platforms: the Danse l'Afrique Danse dance triennial, the Bamako Encounters photography biennial, L'Afrique est à la Mode young fashion designers' contest, etc.

France's involvement in cultural exchanges could take many forms:

- Reciprocal cultural exchanges between France and other countries;

- Exchanges at European level;

- Expressing solidarity with other cultures around the world by contributing to their development.

As well as disseminating ideas and works, the French cultural network is keen to develop long-term partnerships such as co-productions, artist and curator residencies, intellectual debate, twinning of institutions in France and abroad and the transfer of knowhow. Our goal is clear: We are an organization in the service of French cultural diplomacy and we want to find new ways of conducting it. This ambition implies strengthening our channels of influence with civil society, giving new impetus to dialogue with our partners; developing our ability to react to events and building a network that is present everywhere and constantly alert to the world around it.

Conclusion

I know many among you are not french or not working for French companies. You can legitimately ask yourself where is your interest to make use of indirect offset such as those just described.

I simply would answer: "Why not?" Because I know that many of you are looking for new ways to access to international markets and raise the question of the use of direct OFFSETS.

Because the rules are changing, the world is on the move and we must move with it, that is why I accept to talk to you today. We need to adapt to this new global paradigm and offer services enabling our cultural network abroad to respond to this exacting and multiform global demand. And may be yours ?

To put it another way, Culture creates value and therefore promotes the economy and thus, we cannot take action to promote the language and culture without making economic diplomacy.