

# "We present Europe through our cultures"

Doing Europe in (international) cultural relations

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## **"We present Europe through our cultures"**

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The aim of this dissertation is to examine how Europe is done in practice within the area of (international) cultural relations. Since EUNIC (the European Union National Institutes for Culture) is, to date, the only actor of its kind and size within the area, the examination is based on the promotion of a better understanding of European culture in its diversity conducted by three EUNIC clusters: EUNIC Berlin, EUNIC Ukraine and EUNIC Vietnam. This promotion takes place during cluster events and therefore both the clusters' internal work (the planning and organization of cluster events) and external work (the realization of events) have been of interest to the analysis.

The examination comprises an empirical basis formed by interviews with EUNIC cluster member representatives, observations of cluster meetings and events as well as official EUNIC documents to which Stuart Hall's theory on meaning and representation and theory about international cultural relations is applied. It reveals that cluster members prioritize individual benefits instead of taking into account EUNIC's European purpose during the organization of events in which meaning related to the promotion of a better understanding of European culture is produced. By looking at the clusters' external work, it becomes apparent that most cluster events are additive, i.e. they do not exceed the bringing together of different individual contributions. In addition, although active audience inclusion and mutuality are among the most important aspects for successful international cultural relations, in the events hosted by the three clusters, a merely presentational style which did not include audience involvement prevailed.

Furthermore, the examination shows that, as a result of the way in which the three EUNIC clusters promote a better understanding of European culture in its diversity, Europe is presented as fragmented, inapproachable and, especially in Ukraine and Vietnam, as a positive role model which has the potential to spark innovative impulses in the host country.

This dissertation concludes that the EUNIC clusters do not provide (international) cultural relations with a European added value and that this will not change until the individual national approaches to (international) cultural relations are articulated in a different way, that is to say, until the national discourses in the area include a European dimension.

**Keywords:** EUNIC, international cultural relations, cultural relations, European culture(s), meaning, representation, Europe, EU, networks

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