

icd - institute for cultural diplomacy

The Institute for Cultural Diplomacy



Dr. Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga
ICD Advisory Board Member
Former President of Latvia (1999-2007)

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Founded in 1999, The Institute for Cultural Diplomacy (ICD) is an international, not-for-profit, non-governmental organization with headquarters in Berlin, Germany. Over the past decade the ICD has grown to become one of Europe's largest independent cultural exchange organizations. Our programs facilitate interaction between individuals of all cultural, academic, and professional backgrounds, from across the world.

The ICD's Goal

The ICD was established to promote global peace and stability through strengthening and supporting intercultural relations at all levels.

The ICD's Philosophy

The ICD understands that in an increasingly globalized world in which people are able to travel and exchange information faster than ever before, there is a growing interdependency between nations. As a result, constructive intercultural interaction is the fundamental requirement for global peace and stability in the 21st century.

"This philosophy is the foundation of our activity and we take as our motivation the countless examples throughout the world of peaceful and constructive interaction between different cultures"

The ICD's Activity

The ICD conducts activity to facilitate intercultural exchange, undertakes research into the theory and practice of the field of cultural diplomacy, and works to support the existing organizations and institutions active in the area - both governmental and non-governmental.

The facilitation of cultural exchange helps to create constructive, sustainable relationships based on dialogue, understanding, and trust and therefore reduces the likelihood of socio-cultural, political, and military conflicts.

The ICD conducts and supports interdisciplinary research into the field of cultural diplomacy and promotes this to a diverse international audience. This research raises awareness and understanding of the history and development of the field, and also highlights the range of different actors conducting cultural diplomacy and their various approaches.

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Cassam Uteem
Former President of the Republic of Mauritius (1992 - 2002)
International Symposium on Cultural Diplomacy (America House Berlin, July 2009)

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By working together with individuals and organizations at the local, regional, national, and international levels, the ICD has created a supporting network for cultural diplomacy that strengthens existing programs and initiatives.

Research

The ICD conducts research on a range of topics related to cultural diplomacy. The aim of this research is to further develop the field, and to build on the academic literature that has already been produced.

There are two main types of research conducted by the ICD:

External Research Projects - As a pioneer in the field of cultural diplomacy, and with many years of practical and academic experience in this area, the ICD works on behalf of a number of companies and institutions to provide independent research on a range of different topics. Previous partners we have worked with include universities, embassies, private companies, think-tanks, and government institutions. Our research methods combine both empirical evidence and theoretical knowledge.

Ongoing Internal Research - In addition to the research projects outlined above, the ICD also conducts ongoing research in different areas of cultural diplomacy. This research supports our programs and ensures that we are at the forefront of development in the field. Given the potential for cultural diplomacy in sport, music and art, there are a number of research topics that benefit not only the field of cultural diplomacy as a whole, but our work at the ICD in particular.

Programs

The ICD has developed a number of programs that aim to promote cultural diplomacy and facilitate cultural exchange.

These programs can be divided into the following categories:

The ICD Academy for Cultural Diplomacy (The Academy) - The Academy has three main fields of activity. Firstly, the research conducted by the ICD (both internal and external) is conducted by the Academy. This research is then published by the ICD online and in various other forms. Secondly, the Academy organizes weeklong Academy Sessions for individuals of all backgrounds to learn about the theory and practice of the field of cultural diplomacy through seminars and workshops with experts in the field. Thirdly, the Academy organizes large, international conferences on specific themes relating to cultural diplomacy that bring together leading figures from politics, academia, civil society and the private sector, from across the world. These conferences include the ICD's annual "International Symposium on Cultural Diplomacy".

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Young Leaders Forums - The ICD has developed a range of bi- and multi-lateral Young Leaders Forums. Each Forum is an active network of individuals from across the world with an interest in strengthening and supporting the relation(s) in question. Members join a Forum by taking part in a Weeklong Seminar in Berlin, which take place every 3-6 months. Each Weeklong Seminar will introduce the participants to key experts in the field, facilitate group discussions on salient issues, and allow the participants to experience Berlin's social and cultural landscapes together. Once they have completed the Weeklong Seminar the participants become a Forum member and are able to communicate with the other ICD Young Leaders through the ICD Online Network

Event Series/Exhibitions - In addition to the programs outlined above the ICD also organizes a number of events in cooperation with local and international actors to raise awareness of a particular culture, or a salient issue with intercultural and international relations. These events include panel discussions and lectures, musical and artistic performances and exhibitions, interactive workshops, and film screenings. Previous events include "How Will America Vote?" (an event series on the 2008 US elections), "Black History Month in Berlin 2009", "German-Turkish Week 2009", "French-German Day 2009" and "The European-American Relationship: Berlin's Unique Role".

Global Community - The ICD believes that one must think both globally and locally - and act accordingly. The ICD has therefore created community outreach programs allowing the local Berlin community to engage in diplomacy that has a global impact. ICD's global community provides an arena where people can become a part of the diplomatic process in their own backyard. The ICD hosts regular roundtable discussions where regional leaders and cultural diplomats lead groups through discussion on specific issues that influence local and international communities.

The ICD's monthly "Stammtisch" meetings in local cafes and bars are thematically informal and open gatherings, focusing on intercultural exchange. In addition, the ICD runs a German-English Tandem Program, and hosts periodic guest lecturers where exceptional individuals such as leaders, writers, artists, and cultural diplomats discuss their work with the local community.

The ICD's "town hall" discussions and its public conferences develop informal relationships with individuals out in the communities in which we operate, making it possible to empower those individuals to solve the challenges that they face locally, and yet have global impact.

All of this is possible through our strong network of partnerships with governments, foundations, non-profits, corporations, and individuals.





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What is Cultural Diplomacy?

Cultural diplomacy has existed as a practice for centuries. Explorers, travelers, teachers, and artists can be all considered examples of informal ambassadors or early cultural diplomats. The establishment of regular trade routes enables a frequent exchange of information and cultural gifts between traders and government representatives.

Such deliberate efforts of cultural exchange can be identified as early examples of cultural diplomacy. Indeed, any person interacting with different cultures, in the past as today, facilitates an important form of cultural exchange.

A starting definition of culture is offered by the American political scientist and author, **Milton C. Cummings**, in his description of cultural diplomacy as:

“the exchange of ideas, information, values, systems, traditions, beliefs, and other aspects of culture, with the intention of fostering mutual understanding”.

This cultural exchange can take place in fields including art, sport, literature, music, science and the economy. Such exchange implies communication and respect between the cultures involved, based on an understanding of their respective values. The goal of this improved understanding is to strengthen interaction and cooperation.

Cultural diplomacy is the initiation or facilitation of such exchanges with the aim of yielding long-term benefits, whether they promote national interests, build relationships or enhance socio-cultural understanding.

The Unique Role of Cultural Diplomacy in International Relations

Two broad approaches to conducting international relations can be distinguished; that of ‘hard power’ and ‘soft power’.

The political scientist **Joseph S. Nye** has famously made the distinction between the two, describing ‘soft power’ as:

“the ability to persuade through culture, values and ideas, as opposed to ‘hard power’, which conquers or coerces through military might”

Similarly, the British political think-tank **Demos** has qualified ‘hard power’ as the ‘ability to coerce’, and ‘soft power’ as ‘the means to attract and persuade’.

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Dr. Erkki Tuomioja
ICD Advisory Board Member
Member of Finnish Parliament, Former Finnish Foreign Minister (2000 - 2007)

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Whilst this 'hard power' approach has historically been a favored policy of Governments in conducting international and regional relations, the increasingly interconnected world stage highlights the need for co-operation on a new level. This is where cultural diplomacy as a form of 'soft power' becomes significant. According to Demos:

"cultural exchange gives us the chance to appreciate points of commonality and, where there are differences, to understand the motivations and humanity that underlie them"

On this basis, cultural diplomacy, as the initiation of this cultural exchange, is not secondary to political diplomacy, but rather functions as an intrinsic aspect of it. Cultural diplomacy can therefore be seen as a vital foundation of all political activity.

The Uses of Cultural Diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy can be employed in many ways and for various purposes:

The Public Sector - Governments and their related organizations may practice cultural diplomacy for the promotion of national or regional interests - for economic benefit, to improve bi- and multi-lateral cooperation with international partners, to make a political statement, to promote their values and beliefs abroad, and/or as an alternative to traditional diplomacy where official negotiation is not possible.

Civil Society - Non-governmental organizations and other actors and institutions operating underneath the governmental level may practice cultural diplomacy to support the interests of their nation/region, to raise awareness of a particular cultural issue, and/or for philanthropic reasons to support and strengthen intercultural relations.

The Private Sector - Private companies and other actors in the for-profit sector may conduct cultural diplomacy to ensure they recruit and retain the best workforce, to raise awareness of their activity internationally, to improve their Corporate Social Responsibility profile, and to ensure their success in investing and operating in new international markets.





President Jorge Sampaio
Former President of Portugal (1996 – 2006)
International Symposium on Cultural Diplomacy 2009 (The German Foreign Ministry)

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Examples of Cultural Diplomacy

Whereas in the past state-sponsored cultural diplomacy has been associated with the intention of imposing one way of life onto another, in recent times the focus has shifted dramatically. Within the context of state-sponsored cultural diplomacy, the common focus has moved from aggressive and imposing practices to a transparent and unselfish offering of culture. This can be seen for example in the so called 'Ping-Pong Diplomacy'; the exchange of ping-pong players between the US and China during the 1970s. Whilst there may have been economic and political advantages for the USA, the initiative was conducted in a transparent manner and was beneficial to both countries.

Nevertheless, in examples of state-sponsored cultural diplomacy programs there is a relatively clear intention. Each source nation is interested in the relaying of information regarding its values and way of life, with a view to fostering sympathy or acceptance thereof. The result is better economic or political connections with other countries. National culture is thus utilized for the ultimate intention of promoting that nation's standing on an international stage.

The practices of independent or semi-independent institutions of cultural diplomacy, such as the British Council and the Goethe Institute, offer prime examples of the modern informative and exchange-based approach to national cultural diplomacy strategies. This type of exchange is on a considerably larger scale than individual exchange programs, and facilitates the mobility of individuals from both the cultural and academic sectors. Prime examples of this are the Erasmus/Socrates program or bilateral artist-exchange programs.

The initiatives of independent organizations such as those by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra travelling to North Korea have further demonstrated the potential of cultural diplomacy to transcend national borders and enable mutually beneficial cross-cultural exchanges.

For the individual artists, academics or professionals involved in these direct exchanges of culture, their motivation is the opportunity to show their work and abilities and to learn about the other. The motivation is purely personal, without necessarily any political or economic goal.

Corporations and businesses, through the constantly evolving field of Corporate Social Responsibility and Socially Responsible Investment, are developing many initiatives that assist in strengthening the dialogue, understanding and trust between nations and cultures. Indeed, companies are increasingly important as a channel of cultural exchange.



Castigo Langa
ICD Advisory Board Member
Former Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources of Mozambique

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On any occasion that an individual is sent abroad to work in a foreign office, they have the potential to act as an unofficial cultural diplomat, and in the context of international conferences can even be accepted as 'official' representatives of their country of origin, especially with regards to corporate culture and standard working practices.

Private sector foundations operate in an ever increasing number of countries and regions around the globe. In many cases they are funded and owned by private sector firms, but, at least officially, work independently of them for non-commercial purposes. By supporting projects and events in local communities in both domestic and international contexts, they offer another means of contact between different cultures, and by definition therefore are important agents of cultural exchange.

Cultural diplomacy can be used by different groups for different purposes. As demonstrated above, this can be by governments for a distinct political purpose, by academic institutions for the purpose of developing a greater knowledge base through academic exchange, or by independent organizations for the sole benefit of demonstrating their work and ideas to a new audience.

In addition, in an increasingly globalized international environment, companies and foundations are becoming ever more central as forums of international dialogue and cooperation. Although by diverse methods and with different motivations, all of these examples ensure that cultural diplomacy, as defined by M. C. Cummings, takes place.

Cultural diplomacy has acted as a peace keeping force in a number of situations throughout history. With increased social exchange and the platforms in place to promote it, the future potential for cultural diplomacy to improve mutual understanding on all levels is highly significant.



