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French cultural policy towards Russia today

Introduction

Since the 1950s the central premise of French foreign policy – is to integrate Europe into a single economic and political force. This model would allow Paris to sustain its dominant position in the Old Continent that is already strained yet still coveted. France has always believed in its unique role in the world and this has never let any weakness in its foreign policy. The notion of *exception française* is still nurtured despite shifts in political options among the ruling elites. It must be emphasized that France being in favor of realization of pan-European and global values, still strives to preserve its own tradition and cultural heritage.

It is worth to remind that France is one of the cradles of European civilization. After the fall of the Roman Empire, it was the Karolings that became one of the most powerful rulers in Europe. Over the centuries, French culture has invariably inspired other cultures by indicating new trends and proposing innovative solutions. And has been the case until now. It is in this culture that we find the best carrier of widely accepted, integrating human values, means for understanding others. France skillfully promotes its values, language and art while still maintaining its integrity. Without doubt, this is due to its cultural richness and it is rare for a country to have such an exceptional benefits.

The collapse of the bipolar system had a significant impact on changes in France's foreign policy. Paris had to face new challenges as well, which included not only redefinition of the relation with United States and Russia¹. In addition, taking a position on the idea of expanding to East the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union, revision of traditional African politics, redefinition of Arab policy, managing the expectations of the francophone countries and using the opportunities offered by cooperation with the growing powers in Asia and Latin America.

¹ J.M. Fiszer et al., *System euroatlantycki w wielobiegunowym świecie. Próba prognozy*, Warszawa 2014, p. 21.

The condition of French foreign policy after the Cold War was correctly diagnosed by the researcher from Université de France-Comté Daniel Colard, writing that: „at the beginning of the new millennium and the 21st century, the Gaullist message is not completely obsolete (...). You just have to avoid two dangers (...): total abandonment of national ambitions and, on the other hand, talking constantly about country's size and superpower and giving the lessons to others”².

The rich scope and complexity of French foreign and cultural policy has been a source of academic interest and research all over the world for decades. Indeed it's a gratifying subject to study as France has been talked about, since the Middle Ages, as the center of European and world culture. This position was strengthened in the Napoleonic era, when French became the language of diplomacy while cultural and spiritual richness were an important part of domestic and foreign policies. Louis XIV himself and later Napoleon have called for promotion of these values in the world, and in the time of the V Republic, Charles de Gaulle spoke out loud about the joint responsibility of the French in this field.

The aim of the article will be to show France's external activity towards countries of „near abroad”, in this case on the example of the Russian Federation, and to present the cultural policy as an essential component of state's activity on the international area. The author uses the concept of *soft power*, indicating how, as a result of the evolution of the international environment, the transformations began to undergo the state itself – elements of its power, strategies, perception of its position on the international area. It will also be explained how, in the era of globalization and universal access to cultural achievements of other civilizations, the way of formulating and implementing foreign policy goals has changed. It must be emphasized that in the world of complex connections and mutual relations between public and non-public entities, countries are forced to expand their means and methods, where *hard power* successively gives way to *soft power*³. Bearing in mind that culture, like any other area of social life, is subject to internationalization, we cannot overlook the fact that contemporary international cultural relations are the result of deliberate diplomatic activity⁴.

In order to choose the examples of French activity in the field of cultural diplomacy, the author focused on initiatives that create a real chance to reach the widest possible audience in Russia, especially the young people.

² Polityka zagraniczna Francji po zimnej wojnie. 25 lat w służbie wielobiegowości, https://www.wydawnictwodialog.pl/index.php?route=product/product&product_id=622 (12 II 2018).

³ P. Pack, *Soft power jako środek realizacji celów polityki zagranicznej państwa w systemie postwestfalskim*, <http://ptsm.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/publikacje/poziomy-analazy-stosunkow-miedzynarodowych/Pacak.pdf> (21 II 2018).

⁴ R. Szczepaniak, *Soft power („Miękką siłą”) w relacjach międzynarodowych. Dyplomacja kulturalna – redefinicja pojęcia (z doświadczeń kulturoznawcy)*, „Horyzonty Polityki” 2011, nr 2, p. 197.

The below text has been written in a problematic composition, for which the substantive base are cohesive texts as well as electronic publications taken from the Internet.

Public diplomacy

Diplomacy is a form of maintaining relations between states through peaceful resolution of problems. It's the art of compromise on the one hand, and the art of persuasion on the other. Cultural diplomacy however is the soft tool to attain goals set in the field of international relations. Cultural diplomacy itself is a relatively new concept, created after the Second World War as a continuation of traditional diplomacy, but it has already many followers. By definition, it is an element of public diplomacy which aims to promote the exchange of information, art and other aspects of civilization between different nations. Its supporters believe that thanks to promotion of culture and certain values and ideas that it brings with it, we can better understand other people and the world around us⁵.

It is important to explain here the traditional definition of diplomatic activity. The term „diplomacy” itself comes from the Greek word *diploma*, meaning two plaques covered with wax, which had instruction and powers of attorney on it for deputies sent with special missions. However, the concept became widely used in the second half of the 18th century⁶. Classical term of diplomacy is defined as „the official activity of the state directed to the outside, implemented by state authorities and aimed at achieving the assumptions of its foreign policy in the way of conducting negotiations and concluding international agreements”⁷.

The concept defined in this way is narrower than the foreign policy category, and diplomacy is the main instrument for implementing this policy. If we can consider foreign policy as strategy, diplomacy can be described as its tactics. The aim of diplomacy is to establish and maintain peaceful relations with other states, to protect the interests and security of the country, as well as to seek cooperation opportunities.

One of the forms of diplomatic activity is a public diplomacy, worth to be mentioned here. What makes it stand out from other ideas, it's the fact that is addressed to a wider group of foreign recipients than a classical diplomacy⁸. The term „public diplomacy” was first used in 1965 by Edmund Guillon, dean of the

⁵ *Dyplomacja kulturalna – co się pod nią kryje?*, <http://www.twoj.europa.pl/3376/dyplomacja-kulturalna-co-sie-pod-nia-kryje> (16 VII 2012).

⁶ R. Szczepaniak, *op.cit.*, p. 199.

⁷ *Międzynarodowe stosunki polityczne*, M. Pietraś (ed.), Lublin 2007, p. 170.

⁸ See: B. Ociepka, *Dyplomacja publiczna jako forma komunikowania międzynarodowego*, [in:] *Dyplomacja publiczna*, B. Ociepka (ed.), Wrocław 2008, p. 11.

Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy in the American University of Tufts. He defined it as:

The influence which social attitudes have on the formation and implementation of foreign policy. (...) [Public diplomacy] includes aspects of international relations that go beyond a traditional diplomacy; government formation of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with those in the other; coverage of international events and their impact on politics; communication between those whose work is communication, between foreign diplomats and correspondents; and the process of intercultural communication⁹.

The organized activities that involves the promotion of national culture – as part of the official foreign policy – were already discussed at the beginning of the 19th century. This led to the emergence of a new form of diplomacy – the cultural diplomacy. When thinking about cultural diplomacy, we talk about such factors as promoting national culture abroad, international cultural cooperation and the global promotion of language and traditions.

The concept of „cultural diplomacy” – as the official diplomatic activity – appeared after the Second World War. In 1955, Anthony Haigh, an American scholar, author of, among others, the book *Cultural Diplomacy in Europe*, distinguished the concept of „cultural relations” from the concept of „cultural diplomacy”. The concept of cultural diplomacy had, according to Haigh, its source in the understanding of cultural relations as contacts between people living in different countries. Their meaning was „getting to know what a person thinks in another country and why he thinks so”¹⁰. The cultural diplomacy was thus defined by Haigh as „actions of governments in the area of international cultural relations, which traditionally remained the domain of a private initiative”¹¹.

Cultural diplomacy is currently one of the most important tools of soft state policy. The concept of *soft power* was propagated in international relations studies by an American scholar and Bill Clinton’s administration employee S. Nye. He laid out the validity to use soft politics in his book *Soft Power. Means to Success in World Politics* (2007)¹². According to Nye’s definition, *soft power* is the ability to persuade to your own solutions not by force and intimidation but by exhibiting your own attractiveness. It goes beyond poetry evenings and indigenous music concerts, it is primarily the promotion of the entire country’s wealth.

⁹ J. Mikułowski Pomorski, *Międzynarodowość jako płaszczyzna komunikacji*, „Euro Lines” 2005, nr 1, p. 6.

¹⁰ A. Haigh, *Co to jest dyplomacja kulturalna?*, [w:] *Międzynarodowe stosunki kulturalne. Wybór dokumentów i literatury*, C. Lewandowski (ed.), Wrocław 2001, p. 94-95.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² J.S. Nye jr, *Soft Power. Jak osiągnąć sukces w polityce światowej*, Warszawa 2007, p. 20-25.

German thinker Christoph Bertram, once said that „French politics expresses the essence of France: it is a method of voicing French identity”¹³. It’s hard to disagree. In addition to such elements of its foreign policy as universalism of values, state centralism, authority of law, religious freedom, culture, and language – the notion of *grand nation* is of equal importance. The idea of *grand nation* in the period before World War Second certainly was not abusive, but the failure to defend against German aggression in 1940 caused not only the collapse of the state in economic and military terms, but also, and probably above all, it brought a significant decline in France’s real status in the International arena as well as in the consciousness of the French themselves. It was only de Gaulle’s and his successors’ actions that allowed to regain full sovereignty and rebuilt the domain of political culture. The conviction of France’s magnitude re-entered the national mentality of the French and the aforementioned *exception française*, or French exceptionalism if you will, was amplified and disseminated.

It is worth noting that the V Republic endeavors to spread its ideals solely by peaceful means. This is certainly one of the most important elements influencing French foreign policy. Today about 180-200 million people in the world speak French which has the status of the official language in about thirty countries¹⁴. There are also more cultural centers in the world that promote the culture and language of the country, including more and more schools and institutes, including centers such as the Alliance Française and Organization Internationale de la Francophonie. Paris is actively engaged in the promotion of its national language, which is reflected in the active work of the above-mentioned associations. On the other hand, France is also willing to take such initiatives domestically. The Russian Science and Culture Center in France is a vibrant organization of people interested in Russian culture and language. In this context, Hubert Vedrine, a French Socialist politician wrote that such a huge influence of culture on foreign policy is an exclusive phenomenon of France¹⁵.

France as a country shows an example of exceptional care for the promotion of its own culture. There have been more and more cultural establishments put into action whose goal is to maintain a positive image of the country in the international arena whereas a well-managed cultural policy also enables France to influence the political and economic environment. Consequently *hard power* could not be executed efficiently without *soft power*.

¹³ Interview with C. Bertram, [in:] C. Cogan, *Le style diplomatique française*, „Annuaire Français de Relations Internationales” 2006, vol. VII, p. 3.

¹⁴ *Francophonie: 274 million de locuteurs français dans le monde (rapport)*, <http://www.seneweb.com> (2 XI 2014).

¹⁵ H. Vedrine, D. Moisi, E. Fayard, *Les cartes de la France à l’heure de la mondialisation*, Paris 2000, p. 33.

French cultural diplomacy towards Russia

French-Russian relations are extremely important for both countries. France, alongside Germany, occupies a significant place in Russian politics while Russia being a superpower cannot certainly be ignored by the French. In 1892, an agreement was signed between France and Russia establishing a Franco-Russian alliance that was held until 1917, when the Russian Empire was overthrown by the Bolshevik Revolution. During the First World War both states were active in their alliance against Germany, Austria and Italy. In 1935 the USSR and France signed a treaty on mutual assistance. During World War Second, French forces fought in the Soviet ranks on the Eastern Front. During the Cold War however relations between France and the USSR became quite constrained, especially after the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Red Army. USSR also actively supported Viet Minh against the French Army during the Indochina War. In 1985 relations warmed with the takeover of power by Mikhail Gorbachev. On 7 II 1992, three months after the collapse of the USSR, France recognized Russia as the successor state of the USSR. Shortly before being elected president Nicolas Sarkozy was not hesitant to express his distrust towards Russia in a somewhat hostile manner. In November 2006 in an interview for „Le Meilleur des mondes”, he said he would not shake hands „stained with Chechens blood”¹⁶. Then in October 2007, a few days before his official visit to Moscow, he described Russia as a country that complicates rather than solves world problems.

According to many analysts, Nicolas Sarkozy „led French international policy largely in line with Moscow’s priorities. Despite many misconceptions, Sarkozy and Putin have finally managed to build mutually beneficial relations”¹⁷. What indeed can be seen, despite many misunderstandings and harsh words, France has seemingly supported their stand to include Russia in resolving all important international affairs. This was clearly manifested by France endorsing their support for Moscow’s participation in the G-7 proceedings, and during his official visit to Moscow in May 1994, French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe recognized the need for Russia’s special status within the Partnership for Peace¹⁸.

It can be assumed that the initial period of proper and stable relations between both powers mostly stemmed from their common geopolitical interests¹⁹. As both states aspired to the status of a superpower playing a greater role in international

¹⁶ D. Vernet, *Nicolas Sarkozy et François Hollande face à Poutine: deux styles, un même résultat*, <https://www.slate.fr/story/126149/presidents-francais-poutine> (17 X 2016).

¹⁷ C. Bret, F. Parmentier, *La visite de Nicolas Sarkozy à Moscou annonce-t-elle un futur axe franco-russe?*, <http://www.slate.fr/story/109507/sarkozy-moscou-axe-franco-russe> (21 II 2018).

¹⁸ K. Gołaś, *Francja w polityce zagranicznej Federacji Rosyjskiej*, <http://geopolityka.net/kamil-golas-francja-polityce-zagranicznej-federacji-rosyjskiej/> (27 V 2014).

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

affairs. Both, however, shared a common concern – namely the restrictions imposed by the American presence on the Old Continent. Both countries more or less consciously together sought to „europeanize” politics on our continent and to limit „American expansion”. Another important aspect was their common attitude towards the growing power of Germany. In 1997, France supported the Russian vision of building a multi-polar order governing a strong and integrated Europe that ought to include Russia. Cold relations between the states that followed the events of Chechnya were warmed up after the tragic attacks of 11 IX. Both countries at the time have committed to developing a joint cooperation in the field of counter-terrorism. Going further, in 2002-2003 relations between Russia and France tightened in the context of US intervention in Iraq²⁰. In the opinion by shared many, the key change in relations between France and Russia was signing the agreement on easing the visa regime between the two countries, which certainly facilitated mutual relations in the field of cultural policy.

What is also worth noting, France, in order to maintain good grounds with Russia, has been distancing itself from Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova, being well aware that The European Neighborhood Policy towards these countries has never been in the area Russia’s interest. This was a somewhat specific political nod to Paris from its eastern ally. So it seemed that the statement by President Putin in Munich in February 2007 would cool Russian relations with the states of Western Europe, but in relations with Paris itself there was no greater anxieties. Cooperation for security continued, as exemplified by the Russian-French maneuvers in April 2007 under the name Normandy-Niemen 2007²¹. What deserves the highest attention is the cultural cooperation that went in hand, focusing on the promotion of culture and language of both countries.

While learning foreign languages in Russia has long been associated with various forms of foreign domination, French language has been greatly appreciated. It was taught at home, at universities, people learned while traveling. This regularity has disappeared over time however. Learning English has become a dominant trend while French, due to its complex grammar and challenging pronunciation became obsolete and had to give its way to e.g. German. France, which has always been sensitive towards its own capabilities, has put a strong emphasis on popularizing not only the language but also the Francophone culture in all European countries, including Russia.

French cultural policy in Russia covers several areas. The first and most significant is supporting the mobility of students and young researchers through academic exchanges (France ranks third among countries selected by the Russians

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

²¹ *Rosyjsko – francuskie ćwiczenia sił pokojowych*, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/news/04/070416.htm> (21 II 2018).

for scholarship travels). The scholarship policy and grants are highly developed and practically accessible to everyone, while various partnerships between research institutes encourage for more research in their local centers. There are also many initiatives spurred in the field of partnership and cultural dialogue. At the same time, a bilateral agreement for teaching partner's language was signed in 2004 that in September 2009 triggered the opening of international sections profiled for teaching Russian in secondary schools in Strasbourg, Saint Germain en Laye and Bordeaux²². Another area of activity initiated by Alliance Française is to promote the attractiveness of France by introducing the so-called „double diploma” and general recognition of foreign diplomas as well as the development of training programs combined with professional practice. The year 2010 was a significant one in the cultural relations between Russia and France. In the following years, about 350 initiatives promoting mutual relations have been implemented – theater plays, art exhibitions, cinema productions – are just a few of the initiatives that have enjoyed enormous popularity.

Various centers for promotion of French culture are spread all over the globe. In Russia, we find as many as 13 Alliance Française centers. This organization, founded in 1883 by Louis Pasteur, Ferdinand de Lesseps, Jules Verne Ernest Renan and Armand Colin, aims to promote French culture and language around the world. The first Russian-based Alliance Française was opened in 2001, in Samara by the President of the French Republic Jacques Chirac. Afterwards, this network of institutes spread further on the grounds of initiatives taken by local authorities and the public. Today, these centers are located in Ekaterinburg, Irkutsk, Kazan, Nizhny-Novgorod, Novosibirsk, Rostov-on-Don, Rybinsk, Saratov, Perm, Togliatti, Vladivostok and Ufa. They operate alongside the French Embassy in Russia, according to the their original foundations formulated in 1883.

The Alliance Française in Russia focuses on three main functions: studies of the French language, exploring the culture of France and Francophone countries, and promoting cultural diversity in all aspects. In the field of language studies, these centers offer:

- 1) linguistic presentations, where participants discover the intricacies and peculiarities of French;
- 2) programs for learners willing to take language exams granting internationally accepted certificates such as Dalf and Delphi;
- 3) cultural and artistic sessions, debate circles;
- 4) access to libraries and media collections;
- 5) guidance for people willing to study in France and available scholarships²³.

²² *Nos activités en Russie*, <http://www.afrus.ru/fr/nos-activites> (20 I 2018).

²³ *Séjours linguistiques franco-russes dans toute la Russie*, <http://www.afrus.ru> (20 I 2018).

One of the more interesting initiatives are carried out in Perm, where, for example, the Agenda for April 2017 was filled to the brim. Every Friday at 6:30 pm, they held meetings titled „3 ID” from the French: *Dialoguer, Développer l'argumentation et Délibérer*, which stands for Dialogue, Developing Argument and Deliberating – a great action that not only encourages participants to speak French, but also allows them to enjoy themselves and be entertained as each meeting took a different format, conducted either in the form of conferences, film circles, political debates, French cuisine tasting or games. Public holidays calendar also provides a great opportunity to get familiar with French culture and how the French way of celebrating holidays compares to their cultural representations in other parts of the world²⁴.

Language learning courses carried out over Skype are just another attractive initiative run by Alliance Française. They are adapted to the students' level of language proficiency and, for decent prices, provide an accessible platform to communicate with native speakers in the comfort of one's home – all what makes this program increasingly popular.

To strengthen cultural bonds further, Alliance Française organizes language learning summer camps during the holiday season. They are mostly intended for adults but the youth below the age of 18 are also included, provided they are supervised. These courses can offer a true immersion into French culture – participants can dive into the practical use of language and the customs of the French and Russians, taste their national cuisines, tour the sites, take part in intriguing debates while being surrounded by marvelous landscapes²⁵.

As a counterpart to Alliance Française the Russian Center for Science and Culture in Paris is another institution designed for culture promotion. In this case it is the Russian culture that's being fostered. It was founded in 1995 under the agreement between the Government of the French Republic and the Government of the Russian Federation. Its main objective is to promote, support and develop relations between Russia and France in the field of culture and science²⁶. The Center organizes over 100 major events annually: exhibitions, concerts, performances, film screenings, presentations of Russian regions, seminars, etc. Language courses are conducted by professionals certified with double diplomas in Russian and French. Their courses take an absorbing form with the use the communicative method – it is conventional yet very much combined with multimedia-based approach. Their offer expands to: 10 basic, beginner and advanced levels as well as specialized courses (Russian for Business, Russian Media, Russia Today, etc.)- making the program quite substantial. The center hosts a modern hall

²⁴ *Le réseau des Alliances françaises en Russie*, <http://www.afrus.ru> (30 XII 2017).

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ *Russian Centre for Science and Culture in Paris*, <http://rs.gov.ru> (30 XII 2017).

with 195 seats, which can be utilized for theater performances and film screenings while three additional rooms are dedicated only to exhibitions, concerts and cocktail parties. The library and the video library offer a wide selection of books (about 20 000) and Russian films (about 3000) in their original language or their translations.

The Russian Center for Science and Culture plays a significant role in teaching Russian in France. More than 1000 students with different backgrounds attend courses each year. Throughout the year, the Center organizes language courses at prestigious universities in Moscow and St. Petersburg, moreover, they coordinate summer language courses for French learners of Russian organized by the Ministry of Higher Education. Since 2009, the Center has been coordinating proceedings of the French-Russian forum of representatives of the SHS University created on the initiative of the Russian Humanist University, with the support of the Russian rectors' union and other representatives of French universities. In collaboration with the group „L'Etudiant”, the Center published two guidebooks for the youngest audience: „Why learn Russian?” (2007) and „Studying in Russia” (2010). In the beautiful rooms of the Alexander Scriabin Conservatory the center hosts associates representing the France-Russie-C.E.I Philately Circle, the Stella Art Gallery and the *Les voiles écarlates* bilingual art school. The Russian Center is also a member of Forum *des Instituts Culturels Etrangers à Paris* (FICEP).

Journée Internationale de la Francophonie – the annual Days of French and Francophone Culture is the most conspicuous and widespread initiative of promoting French culture in Russia²⁷. This venture has become an important element in Russian cultural life. Operated by embassies, consulates and French cultural centers in Moscow and St. Petersburg, they spread throughout the country, mainly through the activities of the Alliance Française.

The year 2017 has been so far an undoubtedly exceptional one in terms of culture: the 2017 Grand Tour, titled „Travels of the Francophonie”, is about to reveal and illustrate the richness, diversity and vitality of Francophone culture²⁸. Participation of Algeria, Belgium, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Congo (Brazzaville), Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, France, Gabon, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Equatorial Guinea, Madagascar, Morocco, Mauritius, Mauritius, Rwanda, Senegal, Switzerland, Chad and Tunisia make these days a part of a great journey, not only through France but across the world.

In 2017, Francophone days were held in March. Francophone Week was inaugurated on 20th March by the Ambassador of France to Russia, Jean-Maurice Ripert and the Minister of Culture of the Russian Federation, Mr. Vladimir

²⁷ *Journée Internationale de la Francophonie*, <https://www.francophonie.org> (29 XII 2017).

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

Medinsky at the Foreign Language Library in Moscow. The evening ended with a concert by the Russian group „Belleville Orchestra”.

In Abidjan in the summer of 2017, was the 8th edition of „Jeux de la Francophonie”. On this occasion, Francophone embassies organized „Francophone Games” for students. General tests of knowledge, language, artistic expression and discussion allowed teams to compete for numerous awards funded by the embassies of Belgium, Canada, France and Switzerland and by other cultural centers of these countries. 125 young people between the ages of 14 and 18, divided into 14 teams representing 11 schools in Moscow, as well as a dozen young Francophones representing French-speaking secondary schools in Moscow took part in the preparations that were held on 17 and 18 March at the Higher School of Language Studies of Moscow State University²⁹. The catalog of these events and their detailed program could be found on the website of the French Institute in Russia <http://www.institutfrancais.ru>, in the tab „Francophone Days”. The site is designed to be very straightforward in use, and the program is listed with specific dates, times and places of the scheduled events. Among them, one can find a Francophone song contest, a program for chocolate connoisseurs, children’s games, fairy tales readings, „African evenings” etc. Such verity of programs gives a great opportunity for everyone to find something interesting for themselves.

Conclusions

To wrap up, we note that France fights for the propagation of its ideals mainly, if not only, by peaceful means. Paris cultural policy is one of the pillars that makes France attractive and decides about its influence, and *soft power* has become the basic tool that influence France’s foreign policy in Russia. French cooperation policy in Russia was implemented in the following areas: student mobility (with close to 4000 students in 2015, France is the third most popular destination for Russians), promoting France’s attractiveness, support for reforms in Russia. In the cultural field, the French-Russian Year of Cultural Tourism, which was closed in the end of 2017, gave rise to a number of cultural events marked by the big success in both countries. After 2000, the growth of cultural units involved in promoting the culture and language of France increased significantly in comparison to previous years. Organizations like Organization Internationale de la Francophonie are great examples of promoting French culture in Russia. Alliance Française centers annually invite people to new language courses, as well as organize meetings and author’s evenings. Universities willingly gather students who are fascinated by the culture and language of France.

²⁹ *Ibidem.*

The French language itself is undoubtedly one of the languages most used in official contacts, especially in the European Union. Despite the importance that is attached to the necessity of its thorough study, in Russia is still not very popular. Without a doubt, after 2000, there was an increase in the number of people interested in the culture and history of France, but still in some regions of Russia, the number of schools with French is negligible. One of the main priorities of foreign cultural policy in Russia is therefore the dissemination of French language skills, so to this end, networks of educational and cultural institutions are consistently developed.

Another important thing is the interest and education chances given to Russian students and researchers, including the possibility to study at French universities. Those students, very often, after returning to the country become, for example, ambassadors of French culture. Diplomatic representations are thus entrusted with the mission to take a special care of those graduates from both universities. The text also emphasizes the extremely important place that culture, tourism, art and, more broadly, the whole concept of the French way of life, as well as the role of new tools in promotion of culture in times of digital revolution. In conclusion, France's cultural policy towards Russia is extremely resilient. There should be more initiatives like this. They not only make us happy, but above all they sensitize us to the cultural achievements of other countries, help to develop, acquire new knowledge and thus enrich our personality.

Abstract

Karolina Użałowicz

French cultural policy towards Russia today

The aim of the article is to show France as a strong and respected country in the international arena, which owes this position to its values, heritage and creativity. The legacy of the past is one of the most important assets in building the country's policy, and cultural policy is one of the pillars that make it attractive. With regard to France's foreign policy towards Russia, the author used the concept of *soft power* as a tool for gaining influence thanks to the attractiveness of its own culture. There is also an extremely important place marked by the entire concept of the French lifestyle in Russian culture.

Keywords: cultural policy, cultural diplomacy, France, Russia, soft power, diplomatic policy

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