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CULTURAL TRANSFER IN THE UNITED EUROPE: DIFFERENCES, CHALLENGES, AND PERSPECTIVES¹

Jana Pecníková – Anita Hut'ková*

Culture is one of the most effective means and tools for crossing personal and national borders. Mental, political, and social barriers that have existed for centuries among European citizens are being passed on from generation to generation. The reasons should be sought in the historical development and political order. At the beginning of the 20th Century, there were many separate geopolitical units in Europe (Austro-Hungarian monarchy, Germany, France, Italy, etc.). The inhabitants of these countries developed in different political, social, and cultural conditions and impacts. During the Cold War in the second half of the 20th Century, two blocks - the Eastern and the Western ones- were formed, resulting in the total isolation of their inhabitants. The year 2019 marks the 30th Anniversary of the Velvet Revolution and the connection of a divided Europe. In 2019, we took the historical, social and cultural background into consideration while preparing the project proposal, because we assume that 30 years is enough to recognize history and strive to balance the differences in thinking, feeling and acting. At the same time, however, little is needed to overcome the mental barriers lasting for decades. In overcoming these differences, it is necessary to re-recognize the impact of culture. Our project intention is associated with culture that should be understood as an excellent mechanism for the transfer and

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understanding of the different people in the Europe.

Our project has been supported by the European Commission and it has been realized at the Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia since October 2019. The main goal of the project entitled *Jean Monnet Module: Cultural Transfer in the United Europe: differences, challenges and perspectives* (CULTURÉ) is to research the forms of cultural transfer in the era of a highly globalized and digitally advanced society that raises many questions related to forms of digital communication, media, but also ways of creating literary and other written texts, translation, popular culture, etc. Cultural transfer consists not only of products, but also by those involved in their transfer. Every time you try to map such a 'cultural landscape of transfer', it should be taken into account that this is a very unstable, nonlinear and often imaginary process that is constantly on the move. We certainly do not know the beginning of the cultural process in it, and often the end of it. Cultural mobility today can take many forms of cultural contact, e. g., it can be placed in a virtual space, in the video game space or on social networks.

From this point of view, it is important to take into consideration that cultural transfer, as a subject of research, begins to appear around 1980. It refers to various cultural areas in (and between) which people – the bearers of cultures, and cultural products – are exchanged, circulated, and transformed. Cultural transfer is therefore explored interdisciplinary in several areas of research, e.g., literary science, philology, art history, cultural geography, anthropology, sociology, migration studies, etc. The aim of our research is to depict how we can perceive cultural transfer in humanities and to spread interdisciplinary awareness of the cultural heterogeneity that arises from this exchange.

Within the partial objectives, the project team focuses on the following: to **research the topic in connection to the European Union issues**; to foster the publication and dissemination of the results of academic research; to create and deliver tailor-made courses focused on the specific EU issues that are relevant for graduates in their professional life; to promote research among public, and in local press; to strengthen cooperation with experts; bring together scholars, policymakers, stakeholders, students and to share different views in the united Europe. And to provide consultations on the issue of cultural identity, cultural policy, and cultural transfer in Europe.

The project team is composed of university teachers from Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Comenius University in Bratislava and Jagiellonian University in Cracow (Poland), what we consider as one of the most important

factors that helps to improve the European dimension of the project.

The project activity focuses primarily on organizing new courses to help strengthen general and specific knowledge of students about the role of cultural transfer, diplomacy and economic practice in the European integration process. Jean Monnet module “Cultural Transfer in the United Europe” is offered to students at Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica at the Bachelor and Master level of studies as a new elective module including three courses. It is predesigned as the EU-tailored course that focuses on the culture as a potential tool for unifying and mobilising Europe, for integration and inclusiveness as pillars of European identity, for overcoming political and identity crises currently shaking the European Union and for strengthening of the social and territorial cohesion. It aspires to place culture and cultural policies at the heart of the policy’s agenda. We offer an innovative way of learning based on knowledge and skills in the area of social sciences and humanities; on substance and characteristic features of international system and culture; on vital social and economic phenomena, determining the evolution of cultures; on actors of the international relations and culture; understanding of the substance of basic processes of contemporary cultural production; the meaning and complexity of social phenomena that shape international relations and culture. Students can follow current events in the field of culture and cultural production and discuss them publicly; and to present their views on culture and the industry of culture.

The Jean Monnet Module is composed of these core courses: *Cultural Identity and Diplomacy of the EU* (lecturers: PhDr. **Jana Pecníková**, PhD., and Mgr. **Eva Höhn**, PhD.), *Culture and Regional Development* (lecturers: doc. Ing. **Anna Vaňová**, PhD. and dr. Hab **Monika Banaš**), and *Intercultural Studies* (doc. PaedDr. **Jana Javorčíková**, PhD., and doc. PhDr. **Ľudmila Mešková**, PhD.). Course objectives aim to achieve the following: to provide for practical studies, management of domestic and foreign cultural institutions, diplomatic (representative) offices of the Slovak Republic; to motivate listeners for autonomy and critical thinking, and to raise the European awareness, understanding the needs of globalized world and managing intercultural dialogue; to teach the cultural diplomacy in the context of political, economic and cultural pillars on which sustainable international relations are based; to interconnect the EU states through science and education; to reduce communication barriers among nations. The textbook entitled *Mestá a ich príbehy (Cities and their Stories)* has been created as a result of the teaching activities. The aim of the textbook is to provide study materials in Slovak and partially in German, English, French for

students of the courses, as well as to provide additional study material for secondary and elementary school teachers, or for a wider audience, which helps to improve the European awareness through stories of selected cities.

In addition to implementation of research and teaching, many activities are realized for students and public, as previewed in the project proposal. On February 10, 2022, the international scientific conference *Cultural Transfer in the United Europe* was held in the virtual space, organized by the Department of Romance Studies of the Faculty of Arts of the Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica as part of the project. The conference was attended by lecturers from the Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, as well as colleagues from five Slovak and five foreign universities. The contributions were interdisciplinary in nature, as the event brought together experts from fields such as linguistics, translation, cultural studies, economics, aesthetics, communication, media and international relations. The conference thus became a meeting place for experts, scientists and university teachers from several countries, as well as a place to exchange experiences and opportunities to establish new contacts in the field of science and research.

The result of the conference is the publication entitled *Cultural Transfer in the United Europe*. The anthology is designed monothematically and bilingually - in Slovak and English. Colleagues from six Slovak and three foreign universities participated as authors. The first two papers present the introduction to the topic of the project, the terminology and the concept of cultural transfer. The contributions are divided into four parts / chapters: I. Cultural Transfer in Museums, Fashion and Convergence, II. Cultural Transfer in Comics, Literature and Translation Criticism, III. Culture as Transfer in Literature and Translation and IV. Culture as Transfer in Language and Communication. We have managed to bring together authors across the fields of research in the humanities and economics. This international anthology is an example of the interdisciplinarity that the topic of cultural transfer itself presupposes.

Many scientific publications have been published during the project realization as project outputs, such as the above-mentioned scientific anthology *Cultural Transfer in the United Europe* (eds. Pecníková-Bohušová, 2022), that includes research papers: *Cultural Transfer and its Catchwords* (Bohušová, 2022), *Translation as a Transcultural Category* (Huťková, 2022), *Cultural Transfer or Culture as Transfer* (Pecníková, 2022), *Italian Literature after 1989 in the Slovak Reception. Forms of Cultural Transfer* (Šuša, 2022). In journals and conference proceedings we have already published papers: *Vienna's Cultural*

Identity and its Literary Tradition (Höhn, 2021), *Cultural Identity of Naples in the Novels of Elena Ferrante with Focus on the Translation Aspects* (Huťková, Prando Šušová, 2021), *Cities and their Stories in Foreign Language Teaching* (Pecníková – Höhn, 2021), *Urban Culture in Pandemic Era: Opportunities for Using Virtual Marketing Tools in Local Tourism* (Pecníková et al, 2021), *Ideology and/versus Cultural Transfer* (Šuša, 2021).

We also realize a series of workshops for a wider academic community (6 workshops and lectures by experts from the project team to teachers and learners of primary and secondary education have been organized to spread knowledge and invite discussion), we have become a part of Jean Monnet network with other coordinators. On 15 – 16 October 2020 **Jana Pecnikova** and **Eva Höhn** attended a Research Seminar Europe in interculturality in Lyon, organized by **Sylvie Allouche** from Lyon Catholic University, France, where we presented our project and discussed with other Jean Monnet Coordinators. We also organized a roundtable that was held in Banská Bystrica 16 September 2021, and united university and secondary – schoolteachers from the Banská Bystrica region. The roundtable provided an opportunity for a collective discussion of the issue of cultural transfer awareness and its position in the education. The most important part of event was a brainstorming on forms of cultural transfer in the Banská Bystrica city. On 23.-24.6.2022 **Jana Pecnikova** and **Eva Höhn** participated at the international scientific conference FORLANG in Kosice, Slovakia. They presented the results gained from the project Jean Monnet Modules and discussed about the importance of such project for Slovak universities.

To disseminate the project information, we have been using press articles. In the university journal *Spravodajca UMB* we published a paper on launching the project Cultural transfer in the United Europe (Höhn 2019) In the academic journal *Nova filologicka revue* we published an article about the project activities with expected results (Höhn 2021). In the university journal *Spravodajca UMB* we published an article on the conference *Cultural transfer in the United Europe* that was held on 11 February 2022. (Pecníková, 2022). A very important tool to communicate the project activities is the official project webpage that provides an overview of specific project results (*CulturaltransferJM*) connected with the *Padlet* online platform that serves as a community building tool for sharing educational materials for both direct and indirect participants.

The project is getting to the final stage, and after three years of experience and sharing knowledge, we confirm that the Jean Monnet project have allowed us to implement innovations and improve our local academic environment;

lecturers have been able to provide attractive e-courses for modules; we observe an increased language competence (part of courses is taught in a foreign language) and multicultural competence, so we confirm that students' potential employability has improved as a side effect. The research activities have been realized as previewed and led to creation of networks. We hope that the project will be positively evaluated by the European Commission.

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