



TELLING THE EU REGION STORY

A SYMPHONY TO CELEBRATE THE POWER OF THE ARTS

WE BROUGHT 33 MEMBERS OF THE PHILHARMONIA VOICES CHOIR TO PERFORM IN THE CLOSING CEREMONY OF PAFOS'S EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE YEAR.

The singers performed Beethoven's *Ode to Joy* alongside the Cyprus Philharmonic Orchestra as the city handed its title to Valletta and Leeuwarden for 2018. Both Pafos 2017 Chairman, Dr Christos Patsalides, and Cypriot Minister of Education and Culture, Costas Kadis, thanked us for our contribution to the year.

We worked closely with both Pafos and its parallel Capital of Culture, Aarhus in Denmark. Projects are already underway in Valletta to raise the profile of UK artists and secure them new audiences and contracts. We also take a lead role in the policy formation that takes place at Capitals of Culture, ensuring the UK contributes to the development of structures that support arts and education in Europe.

'The performance was particularly important to the choir. It sends a strong message around the importance of continued cultural collaboration and exchange between the UK and the EU.'

Aidan Oliver, Director, Philharmonia Voices



EU EUROPE

BELGIUM

ARE WE LISTENING TO THE NEXT GENERATION?

POLITICAL LEADERS AND HEADS OF CULTURAL AND RESEARCH INSTITUTES MET MEMBERS OF YOUTH ORGANISATIONS AT OUR CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF THE UK-EU RELATIONSHIP.

Held in Brussels at LaVallée, one centre in the network of Creative Hubs that we support, the event brought together 70 individuals who have the power to build young people's voices into discussions around UK-EU negotiations. There was extensive media coverage of an interview by our Chief Executive Sir Ciarán Devane on the continued importance of cultural relations in a so-called 'post-Brexit world'.

The event kick-started a programme of debates and UK-EU policy dialogues on science and research, education and mobility, external aid and youth engagement. It was an occasion to demonstrate how we as the British Council are in a unique position to support the collaborative development of a framework to face European and global challenges together in the future.

'It is clear that our organisations have common ground to build on when it comes to cooperating towards societal change.'

European Development Partner

Image credit: Lode Saidane / British Council

SONGS TO BEAT THE BULLIES

STUDENTS FROM THE BRITISH COUNCIL SCHOOL IN MADRID LED A FAR-REACHING MEDIA CAMPAIGN TO STOP BULLYING WITH SONGS THEY COMPOSED AND RECORDED IN A 'MUSICATHON'.

Almost 100 primary and secondary students were mentored by renowned Spanish producer, musician and DJ Carlos Jean and teachers from the school's music department, working in groups to create different sections of a piece about respect and child rights. A compilation of their songs was uploaded to Spotify and YouTube with a call for donations to Cruz Roja Española (Spanish Red Cross).

TV appearances about the Musicathon were seen by 1.76m people and our hashtag reached nearly 422,500 unique users in five days. This campaign, alongside the school's other innovative outreach projects such as our award-winning Stop Bullying Hackathon in 2016 (see Telling our Story 2 and 5), showed a wide audience in Spain how the UK education model teaches children the importance of mutual respect and peer support.

'Our duty as educators is helping our students and their families understand they must respect their peers and report those situations which undermine their rights.'
Gillian Flaxman, Head of British Council School Madrid



EU EUROPE

BULGARIA

ENGLISH EXAMS IN PRISON

WE ADMINISTERED A SESSION OF CAMBRIDGE EXAMS ON SITE AT SOFIA CENTRAL PRISON AFTER A VOLUNTEER TEACHER CONTACTED US ON BEHALF OF THREE OF HER STUDENTS – YOUNG MEN SERVING OUT SENTENCES THERE.

Exams Services Coordinator Dimitar Karadimitrov (pictured) and his team spent over a year planning and carrying out the exam. It took time to work out details such as finding a slot during visiting hours and the logistics of the speaking test. Eventually, with special permission, the exam was held in a visitors' room.

All three of the candidates did well in the exam and received their Cambridge certificates. In a letter to the British Council, they told us how the experience had given them hope and inspired them to improve their futures. It was a moving demonstration of the widespread recognition that English opens doors, and of how inclusivity can build stable societies.

'Without your acceptance and support we wouldn't have had the chance to test our level of English. We are convinced that the Cambridge English Certificate will broaden our opportunities once we are released from prison and will add value to our future professional realisation.'

Letter from Sofia Central Prison exam candidates

EU EUROPE

TEN EU COUNTRIES TO DATE

DEBATING GLOBAL ISSUES

FROM THE MIGRATION CRISIS IN GREECE TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN ELECTIONS, WHAT STARTED AS AN EU PILOT HAS DEVELOPED INTO A GLOBAL PROGRAMME. WE'VE JOINED BBC WORLD SERVICE TO TAKE THEIR WORLD QUESTIONS BROADCAST TO 16 COUNTRIES SO FAR WORLDWIDE.

Live studio audiences put questions to panels of those shaping local and international politics. Chairs have included Jonathan Dimbleby, Nancy Kacungira and other BBC interviewers. In addition to European cities such as Amsterdam, Budapest and Paris, we have taken the debate to Beirut, Nairobi and Mexico City. Panellists have included Leo Varadkar, now Ireland's prime minister; Lebanon's deputy prime minister Ghassan Hasbani; and Polish film director Agnieszka Holland.

More than 3,500 people have attended the debates, and the show is broadcast three times on BBC World Service, reaching a weekly global audience of 75m.

'We couldn't do this without our partnership with you. Working together on the quality of the panels, securing great venues, bringing in strong audiences – these are all essential ingredients to making these important programmes.'

Mary Hockaday, BBC World Service Controller

SOUNDTRACK TO YOUR CITY

WE HELD A MINI MUSIC FESTIVAL TO LAUNCH THE FIRST POLISH EDITION OF THE POPULAR INTERACTIVE MUSIC PLATFORM, MIX THE CITY, IN KATOWICE, A UNESCO CREATIVE CITY OF MUSIC.

Twelve concerts were headlined by our project curator, Ghostpoet, who played a DJ set to a packed auditorium. Guests could walk between the concerts and create their own tracks on the Mix the City platform via interactive screens. A live story from the launch ran on the British Council's Europe-wide Instagram page, attracting over 2,500 users.

This project secured an important contract for a UK digital company. We were able to showcase British innovation by helping Polish people promote their own cultural heritage and arts, and in doing so established a strategic link with an emerging hub for creative industries in Poland. The project will receive further promotion in June when Katowice hosts a global meeting of UNESCO Creative Cities of Music.

'Being part of the Mix the City platform is an important step for Katowice in implementing the UNESCO Creative City of Music strategy. It shows the diversity of the music scene and urban landscape of Katowice, promotes its artists and has big potential to educate.'
Jan Oslislo, Katowice City of Gardens

EU EUROPE
NETHERLANDS

CREATING A REACTION WITH BRITISH SCIENCE

ONE OUTSTANDING UK SCIENTIST CREATES THE CHEMISTRY TO INSPIRE A ROOM FULL OF STUDENTS AND PROFESSIONALS AT OUR HOBOKEN LECTURE IN ROTTERDAM.

The lecture is organised in partnership with the Natural History Museum of Rotterdam, the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, and Codarts University in Rotterdam. The chosen UK scientist sets out to explain current issues such as climate change and the declining bee population. This year we welcomed Professor Dame Jane Francis, Director of the British Antarctic Survey, introduced by both a Dutch researcher and the British Ambassador.

The Hoboken Lecture highlights the importance of research connections between our two countries. It shows young people how relevant science is to their daily lives and encourages them to follow the UK's example in science communication to inspire future generations of scientists.

'It's a fine series of lectures that I enjoy every year. I am no scientist and appreciate that the lectures are highly understandable for me as well.'

Hoboken Lecture participant

A BREATHTAKING FINALE

BRITISH AND PORTUGUESE MUSICIANS BROUGHT AN END TO CASA DA MÚSICA'S YEAR OF BRITISH MUSIC. BUT THE ARTISTIC COLLABORATIONS FORGED DURING THIS GROUNDBREAKING YEAR WILL CONTINUE LONG AFTER THE FINAL BARS.

British choir the Tallis Scholars performed alongside resident Orquestra Barroca, conducted by principal conductor Laurence Cummings, who is from the UK. The concert, celebrating great British Baroque and Renaissance composers William Byrd and Frederick Handel, was attended by VIPs including the then UK Secretary of State for Culture, Karen Bradley.

More than 24,300 people attended Year of British Music concerts. We deepened our relationship with Portugal's premier music venue and raised the cultural profile of the UK, helping UK musicians build their international profile and access commercial opportunities. Several British musicians have been commissioned to perform at Casa da Música in 2018, including Philip Venables, one of four composers who received British Council support.

'With the support of GREAT and British Council funding, the Casa da Música has produced a fabulous 12-month programme.'

Karen Bradley, former Secretary of State for Culture

EU EUROPE

BULGARIA, CYPRUS, ITALY, POLAND, SPAIN

STEPPING INTO THE WORLD OF UK EDUCATION

OVER 4,800 STUDENTS SO FAR HAVE ATTENDED OUR 2017-18 SEASON OF STUDY UK FAIRS IN EU COUNTRIES. OUR PARALLEL PROGRAMMES WITH UNIVERSITIES AIM TO ENSURE YOUNG PEOPLE CONTINUE TO ACCESS UK EDUCATION.

In Romania, we hosted two transnational education events for visiting UK representatives and heads of two of Bucharest's most prominent universities; several joint research and exchange initiatives are now being pursued as a result. In Italy, exhibitions were the backdrop to education summits during the UK-Italy Partners in Culture Season.

The chance to engage directly with universities is highly valued by students and parents in these and other European countries. In Spain, for example, over 95 per cent of visitors said they would recommend or highly recommend the event, while 93 per cent of exhibitors rated student interest as high or very high. In Cyprus, we held events on both sides of divided Nicosia to widen access to UK study opportunities.

'This event gets better and better every year! Thank you very much for providing this wonderful opportunity to our students.'

Teacher, Madrid

Image credit: David Suárez / British Council



EU EUROPE

SWEDEN

TEA WITH TWO WINNERS OF THE NOBEL PRIZE

WITH THE BRITISH EMBASSY IN STOCKHOLM, WE HELD A RECEPTION FOR THE UK WINNERS OF THE 2017 NOBEL PRIZES FOR LITERATURE AND CHEMISTRY, KAZUO ISHIGURO AND RICHARD HENDERSON.

The laureates joined around 50 publishers, scientists and academics including our contacts from the Karolinska, the BBC and AstraZeneca. A highlight was a Q&A session between the Nobel winners and early years researchers from the University of Stockholm, led by Sir Mark Walport, Government Chief Scientific Adviser in the UK from 2013 to 2017.

This was a powerful demonstration of the scientific and artistic strengths of the UK, and an inspiration for young Swedish scientists. The way we worked with the embassy was a clear indication of our continued role as the UK's expert agency for arts and culture.

'The well attended event celebrated Richard Henderson and Kazuo Ishiguro, as well as highlighting the success of UK research and literature. It provided an opportunity to inspire the next generation.'

Robert Cooklin, Deputy Head of Science and Innovation Network Nordics, British Embassy

Image credit: Sal Idriss



EU EUROPE

GREECE

BUILDING STRUCTURES TO SUPPORT PROSPERITY

WE BRIEFED THE GREEK PRIME MINISTER ALEXIS TSIPRAS ON THE SUPPORT WE ARE PROVIDING TO GREEK AUTHORITIES AS THEY DEVELOP A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR SOCIAL ECONOMY.

We coordinated with Social Enterprise UK to run a mapping and needs analysis that will provide Greek policymakers with the information they need to implement the strategy. Following this, we will hold policy dialogues and roundtable discussions with more than 500 social entrepreneurs and officials, and provide technical assistance on the creation of new frameworks and tools for implementation.

Social economy is a priority for the EU; the benefits of effective implementation can endure even times of crisis. This project bolsters our reputation and that of the UK for supporting countries' efforts to build economic resilience and make the best use of their creative talent and international connections.

'As the UK's departure from the EU unfolds, it will become increasingly important to seek ways to strengthen and expand our relationship with Greece. Technical assistance, including this British Council project, is a practical and powerful way to do this.'
Deputy Head of Mission, British Embassy Athens



EU EUROPE
CYPRUS

AWARDS TO HONOUR OUR EXAMS CHAMPIONS

WE ROLLED OUT THE RED CARPET FOR PARTNER SCHOOLS IN CYPRUS AT A PRIZE-GIVING CEREMONY FOR COMMITTED MEMBERS OF OUR EXAMINATIONS LOYALTY SCHEMES.

With 54 members in total, our exams networks in Cyprus include the Addvantage Member Scheme for schools with Cambridge English and IELTS candidates and the Partner Schools Global Network Scheme for schools running IGCSEs, GCSEs, A Levels and IALs. Benefits for participating schools include online modules for teachers and exam fee discounts, as well as membership of a supportive network.

Schools with the highest numbers of candidates took away trophies and prizes including tickets to NT Live and Royal Ballet Live screenings. The awards were held at the British High Commission, a fitting demonstration of the quality of the British Council's examinations and teacher networks, and the significant role they play in UK cultural diplomacy.

'We feel enormously proud to have received our Addvantage Prize from the British Council and the British High Commissioner at the Exams Loyalty Schemes award ceremony!'
Representative for ESL Creative Learning

Image credit: Ivailo Milanov



EU EUROPE

BULGARIA

THE END OF THE MEDIA AS WE KNOW IT?

WE PARTNERED WITH BULGARIA'S LARGEST TELECOMS COMPANY AT THE MAJOR JOURNALISM AWARD CEREMONY THEY RUN AND ARRANGED FOR THE CONTROLLER OF BBC WORLD SERVICE ENGLISH TO DELIVER THE KEYNOTE SPEECH.

Mtel Media Masters is one of the most reputable journalism prizes in Bulgaria, established seven years ago to recognise the best reportage on innovations, new technology and science. Mary Hockaday, who also took part in the British Council's Future News Worldwide programme for student journalists in 2017, delivered a talk on how digital media is reshaping access and attitudes to news and facts.

The event led to new connections between media institutions, for example during the meeting and dinner which we arranged for Mary and the newly appointed Director General of Bulgarian National Television. With the British Embassy also attending, the event emphasised the role that a free and open press plays in UK society.

'Mary was a great choice for speaker... she gave motivating words to Bulgarian journalists.'

Tom Hines, Head of Political Section, British Embassy Sofia

Image credit: Gradi Gradev

BRINGING INCLUSION FROM SCHOOL TO SOCIETY

STUDENTS FROM PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN BUCHAREST WORKED SIDE BY SIDE WITH STUDENTS THEIR OWN AGE WHO HAVE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS, DISABILITIES AND WHO COME FROM MINORITY COMMUNITIES DURING OUR DIVERSITY WEEK.

Discussion of the benefits of inclusive education and employment is still in its early stages in Romania. Our programme of events encouraged children from all backgrounds to question social norms. Pupils from mainstream schools joined peers from schools for disabled children and from Roma communities. Mentored by actor Andrei Aradatis and singer and model Andreea Verde, they devised performances, did arts and crafts and learned Braille together.

The week exemplified our efforts to spread understanding of the social model of disability, which is well developed in the UK. We aim to remove barriers that restrict individual choice and support equal opportunities for all.

'Working with a diverse group of students for my Diversity Week acting workshop turned out to be a great learning experience and a lot of fun for everyone, myself included.'

Andrei Aradatis, actor



EU EUROPE

SLOVAKIA

FORGING NEW RELATIONSHIPS WITH OLD FRIENDS

OUR 70TH ANNIVERSARY WAS AN OCCASION TO RECONNECT WITH EASTERN SLOVAKIA AS WE HELD AN EXHIBITION OF OUR HISTORY AND ANNOUNCED A NEW EXAMS PARTNERSHIP IN AN IMPORTANT CENTRE FOR EDUCATION.

Last year we delivered over 4,000 exams across the country, many of them in Slovakia's second city Košice. With growing interest in IELTS and ACCA exams, we established a new partnership with a school in the city. We held an opening ceremony to mark the new partnership, bringing our 70 Years in Slovakia exhibition, which celebrates the history and future importance of cultural relations between the UK and Slovakia.

The new partner centre will expand our capacity to meet growing demand for exams beyond our centre in Bratislava. As with all our exams work, it will enhance the reputation of British qualifications and increase business for UK exam boards.

'It was great to attend a British Council event here in the east of the country after a number of years and we hope that more of our students will become interested in taking the IELTS test.'

Teacher, Košice



EU EUROPE

ITALY

STRENGTHENING LEADERSHIP THROUGH CULTURAL TIES

OUR UK-ITALY PARTNERS FOR CULTURE SEASON CLOSED WITH A VISIT FROM THE THEN SECRETARY OF STATE FOR CULTURE KAREN BRADLEY, BEGINNING A SERIES OF INITIATIVES THAT WILL STRENGTHEN CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR COUNTRIES.

Karen Bradley and our Chief Executive, Sir Ciarán Devane, joined senior Italian and UK speakers on a panel discussing women in leadership. The visit also included meetings with Italian Culture Minister, Dario Franceschini, and with leaders of creative industries, education institutions, and Italian municipalities; and a tour of exhibitions by British artists in Rome and at the Venice Biennale.

The visit concluded our 2017 UK-Italy season, but bilateral discussions continue around institutional partnerships and university-city internationalisation strategies. Such interventions place us as mediator between influencers shaping future UK-EU relations.

'Italy and the UK are world leaders in international cultural protection. The ongoing cooperation between our two nations in this area is a perfect example of the depth of our ties.'

Karen Bradley, former UK Secretary of State for Culture



EU EUROPE

SPAIN

THE IMPACT OF ENGLISH

TWENTY YEARS AGO WE STARTED A NATIONAL BILINGUAL PROGRAMME IN SPANISH SCHOOLS. NOW OUR STUDY PROVES HOW THIS APPROACH HAS IMPROVED STUDENTS' LANGUAGE CAPABILITY AND BROADENED THEIR WORLD VIEW.

Our English Impact report, produced in partnership with the Community of Madrid, received responses from more than 1,900 students in Madrid schools. More than 72.5 per cent of 15-year-olds were found to have high levels of English, at B1 to C level. Students in bilingual schools performed better and showed greater levels of international orientation than those in non-bilingual schools.

Media coverage reached over 15.9m people. A policy dialogue on student motivation will run in March based on the data and we are sharing the study with UK English language providers to inform their business planning. The exercise strengthened our relationships with Spanish authorities and opened discussions on how to expand bilingual education.

'It has been a privilege to see the level of excellence and quality invested in the testing process... [We look] forward to working with British Council in the future.'
Jorge Berné, Advisor on International Evaluation Studies, Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport

RAP SHAKESPEARE STYLE

THE UK'S FOREMOST PLAYWRIGHT HAD A MAKEOVER IN THE HANDS OF TEENAGERS FROM PARISIAN SUBURBS WHO TACKLED 'LA LANGUE DE SHAKESPEARE' IN THEIR OWN WAY, HELPED BY OUR WORKSHOPS WITH SHAKESPEARE'S GLOBE.

Globe actor Tas Emiabata worked theatre magic with 150 students from six state schools, using drama techniques to unlock hidden teenage talents – all in English. He helped them overcome shyness and understand rhyme and verse, plunging into the eternal themes of love, power and human relationships that make Shakespeare so relevant today. Around 75 teachers also benefitted from a professional development session that explored ways of bringing literature to life in the classroom.

The workshops were part of our Art in Schools scheme, which we have developed with the French Ministry of Education as an extension to our Science in Schools programme. Through these, we use UK talent and interactive teaching practices to get students excited about learning.

'Thanks to role play and mime, my pupils really got inside the meaning of Shakespeare's words and they empathised with the characters.'

Patrice Meunier, Teacher from Créteil



EU EUROPE

CYPRUS AND THE NETHERLANDS

GIVING TEACHERS A CHANCE TO LEARN

WE RAN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS FOR TEACHERS IN CYPRUS AND THE NETHERLANDS, GIVING THEM THE TOOLS THEY NEED TO HELP THEIR STUDENTS SUCCEED IN ENGLISH EXAMS.

The sessions were a response to high demand from English teachers in both countries. In Cyprus, where we ran our first training workshop, more than 700 schools and individuals teach English, yet there are few professional development opportunities for the teachers themselves. Within two days of applications opening to this pilot session, demand was so high that we had to open up more places, enabling 75 teachers to attend. In the Netherlands, our Utrecht workshop also hosted the launch of our Addvantage exams membership scheme.

As well as promoting British qualifications, such initiatives highlight the UK's focus on continuous professional development and allow us to build our own networks of student influencers.

'It is really great that the British Council took the initiative for such an event. It brings teachers and the people of the British Council together.'
Cyprus conference participant

Image credit: British Council / Mat Wright