

# Norway's Public and Cultural Diplomacy

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## Abstract

The Scandinavian strategy is to focus on a limited number of international relationships. This doesn't mean that Norway is an isolated country. Norway is one of the strongest international actors when it comes to the promoting peace. The 74 agreements with the EU, led to a third modification in Norwegian law. A Nordic Council was created in order to solve questions related to cooperation among the Nordic countries in all fields. Furthermore, the Scandinavian country is seen as a country without a particular profile, strengths or weaknesses and that few people think about or are linked to. Norway can be seen as a model in matters of public and cultural diplomacy.

**Key words:** Norway, public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, NORAD, peacekeeping

A NATION'S CULTURE SHOULD aid in achieving international recognition. Norway however, is rarely associated with the concept of „culture”. In a report realised by the Norwegian Ministry of International Affairs, culture represents one of the main fields in which major improvements are required. The research shows that very few things are known about Norwegian culture on an international level. (Kavli; Thorkildsen 2009).

According to Ljuben Tevdovski, Norway is a major cultural actor and a role model in peace and dialogue work, being one of the countries that has the most projects and initiatives in this sense (Tevdovski 2009: 68). Norway is a militant for peace, but when it comes to culture, it is legitimate to ask whether it really is as important an actor, as Ljuben Tevdovski thinks?

In the past, the Norwegians were happy and satisfied to live in „beautiful isolation”, in a particular geographical area, where they could organize and live their lives as they wished. In the current context of globalization, it has become impossible to live in isolation, without integrating or belonging to a particular group. Thus, after the Second World War and especially in the past few years, Norway has begun to work harder in matters of collaboration and international cooperation.

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Mainly, the Scandinavian strategy is to focus on a limited number of international relationships, which they want to develop. However, in the past few years, Norway has sought to expand its partnerships with countries that had not previously represented a major interest in international relations.

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### Norway's international relations

Norway is often called a “different country”. This is largely due to the fact that it is not an EU member, or because it is one of the few countries that has not been affected by the financial crisis of recent years like other western countries. Of course, its geographical position, history, culture are special features and thus, Norway doesn't follow the same patterns as other nations.

This doesn't mean that Norway is an isolated country, especially if we take into consideration its connections with other countries and organizations. Europe, USA, Asia and even Africa are continents that have great influence on the Norwegians, politically, economically and culturally. Even if Norway is a small state, this influence goes both ways.

Norway is one of the strongest international actors when it comes to the promoting peace, one of the countries that offer strong financial support to impoverished countries (the most recent example is Ukraine), one of the most important actors in the fight against pollution and the destruction of natural resources. Considering political power, it has to be mentioned that Norway is a NATO member and as such, being part of an international decisional system implies assuming some obligations. As a UN member, Norway supports the objectives of this organization regarding peace strategy, human rights and fighting poverty, as much as possible. When the UN requested the help of NATO for establishing peace in Afghanistan, Norway assumed the responsibility to send troops, even if such action implied the possibility of death for Norwegian soldiers in a war that had nothing to do with their country.

A 2012 report on Norway's relations with Europe showed that Norway has a total of 74 agreements with the EU. This led to a third modification in Norwegian law. The decisive influence of the EU on Norwegian policy is obvious. The report also concludes that Norway is associated with three-quarters of the work of EU countries, more than Finland or Germany, for example. Compared to other countries that present exceptions to EU rules (single currency, security policy, etc.) such as Britain, Sweden or Denmark, the figure is clearly larger for Norway. The Scandinavian country is nearly as integrated as them, but it stands outside the decision-making bodies of the EU ([Norway's agreements with the European Union 2012](#)).

Since the 1960s, there have been ongoing debates in Norway regarding the country's relations with the European community. Opinions are divided almost equally, both among experts and citizens. It still cannot be said for sure whether or not Norway will one day become an EU member.

In the Norwegian political environment, the European integration process didn't arouse much interest at first. The Norwegians praised the initiatives to reduce animosities between old rivals, but they also believed that the process of bringing the countries together interested the northern country only to a small extent. The lack of interest may also be seen from the following perspective: after the Second World War, Norway turned its attention to the West. The orientation towards security policy, foreign economy and political ideology led to this. Internal affairs were guided in the same direction. Because the main goal regarding the country's foreign affairs was NATO accession, Norway wanted to maintain its political neutrality and was careful not to violate the principles of NATO ([Norway's agreements with the European Union 2012](#)).

Through the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement, Norway is guaranteed and guarantees "the four freedoms": free movement of people, goods, services and capital. At the same time, it benefits from the same rules and conditions regarding market competition. The agreement also includes collaboration in other areas of social life, such as environmental protection, insurance, education, culture etc.

On the other hand, Norway is not obliged to introduce the EU currency (the Euro), it doesn't share the same politics when it comes to justice, security, natural resources (petroleum and fishing industry), relations with countries outside the ERA, and it doesn't have the chance to be represented in the decision-making bodies of the EU, such as the European Parliament, the European Council, the European Commission ([Tøtlandsmo; Rudi; Tønnessen 2009](#)).

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## Norwegian Culture

The Norwegian culture is a very particular subject, and we would not be wrong if we say that it is an ideology, a guiding principle in the Norwegian life. The following is the title of an article in a successful Norwegian newspaper: „The Norwegians have an almost erotic patriotic connection with their country” ([Skjeggstad 2013](#)). This title suggests the strength and depth of the bond between the Norwegian people and their country, as well as the importance of their national identity.

The concept of 'culture' is slightly different in Norway, from what it means for other nations. In the context of establishing Norway's international relations with other sta-

tes and especially from a cultural point of view, it is important to understand what this concept means to them. As a country that has always been under the domination of one of the other Scandinavian countries (Denmark and Sweden), Norway has always had a strong desire to assert the Norwegian spirit, to get out of the suppression imposed by unfavourable contexts. After 1905, when they gained their definitive independence, the Norwegians were finally free to come forward. After so many centuries of domination it was hard to rediscover the Norwegian essence and it became one of the main national ideals. On the other hand, in the recent years, in the context of globalization, Norway was forced to confront another issue that seems to threaten its barely regained national identity. The issue of immigration caught them off guard and therefore generated much debate and disagreement. In a way, Norway did not (and it still doesn't yet) know how to react in such a situation. On the one hand, Norway is a strong supporter of human rights and peace and therefore feels that it is a moral duty to accept and help immigrants. On the other hand, the fear that immigration will once again lead to the loss of national identity, Norwegian culture and traditions is omnipresent and puts Norway in difficulty.

In January 2013, there was a strong debate concerning the values that are important to Norwegian culture and the ways in which they must be preserved. Kindness is the axis around which all the other values revolve. Social-democratic values, such as equality or human rights and Christian values are deeply embedded in the Nordic citizens' sense of identity. In the eyes of Norwegians, nature is a symbol of strength and continuity, patience and simplicity. Civilizations can break down, and man, as a social being can be malevolent, complicated and can follow the wrong path, but nature always prevails, pure and firm.

The debate began at the end of 2012, when a representative of the Progress Party officially asked Hadia Tajik, the Minister of culture at that time, how she saw Norwegian culture and if it was important for the state to defend its culture and traditions. The answer Tajik gave caused a disturbance because they were not traditionalist and nationalist enough ([Stortinget 2012](#)).

The simple fact that an evasive answer regarding the Norwegian culture created such an issue among Norwegians (even disputes on social networking sites) clearly shows the attitude they have towards the importance and significance of their culture. It is obviously a sensitive matter, and it must be studied carefully if we want to understand the Norwegian way of promoting themselves abroad.

Joseph S. Nye claims that "some countries accomplish almost all of their public diplomacy through actions rather than broadcasting. Norway is a good example. It has only 5 million people, lacks an international language or transnational culture, is not a central location or hub of organizations or multinational corporate brands, and is not a

member of the European Union. Nonetheless, it has developed a voice and a presence out of proportions to its modest size and resources through a ruthless prioritisation of its target audiences and its concentration on a single message – Norway as a force for peace in the world. The relevant activities include conflict mediation in the Middle East, Sri Lanka, and Colombia, as well as its large aid budget, and its frequent participation in peacekeeping forces. Of course, not all Norwegian actions are on message. The domestic politics of whaling sometimes strike a discordant note among environmentalists, but overall, Norway shows how a small country can exploit a diplomatic niche that enhances its image and role.” (Nye 2002: 141-142).

### Norwegian Cultural Diplomacy

In the past few years, the technological development and democratization of the media have made Norway's external politics much more focused on the image that Norwegians have abroad. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs defines public diplomacy as one that „improves mutual understanding, establishes long-term contacts, and strengthens the connections in various areas” (Store 2009).

The state engaged itself in promoting the Norwegian culture especially after the Second World War. Concurrently, the Norwegian cultural diplomacy was formalized for the first time. Around 1950 bilateral agreements were signed both with allied states and states that were formerly part of the enemy camp.

In the last few years, Norway has invested very much in international promotion. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the main player in coordinating the activities of cultural diplomacy. At the same time, other organizations, such as *Visit Norway*, *Innovation Norway* or *NORAD (development agency)* play a crucial role in promoting the country by the means of culture. Such as in any other field, Norway carries itself in a serious, strategic and efficient manner. Considering the website [www.norway.org.uk](http://www.norway.org.uk), for instance, we can see that it is built in a professional manner. We are introduced to the most beautiful Norwegian characteristics, wilderness, clean environment, brave explorers, and so forth (Holden 2007: 89).

One of the problems Norway has to deal with regarding international cultural recognition is that it is often seen as part of a whole, alongside the other Scandinavian countries. One of the conclusions of the report mentioned above is exactly this. Most of the interviewees associate Norway with the North, the cold, handball, or blonde hair. However, it is only normal that Norway belongs to a group different from the other European countries. Moreover, by analysing this, we get a better understanding of the way

Norwegian cultural diplomacy has evolved.

After the Second World War, the three Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Norway and Sweden), together with Finland and Iceland form The North (the Scandinavian word is *Noreen*) signed the European Cultural Convention, and played an important role in the collective cooperation between the 21 member states in the Cultural Cooperation Council of the European Council.

The Nordic countries represent a special group, homogeneous, but at the same time different. They are all welfare states, with highly developed social services, a high level of education, similar political constitutions and a common adherence to Lutheran Protestantism. However, the five governments pursue incompatible policies in matters of foreign relations, defence and economics. We also cannot forget that the Second World War led the five Nordic countries into three different camps, two of which were on opposite sides of the war.

The Nordic cultural heritage has been regarded as common property. This was both because it belonged to a time before national boundaries had been fixed and because it had served as a common basis for all the national culture.

Shortly before the start of the Second World War, representatives of the Nordic countries met in Copenhagen in order to establish some agreements regarding exchanges between students, teachers as well as the teaching of Nordic languages in all of the Nordic countries. Unfortunately, because of the war, the meetings did not continue.

However, in 1946, a second meeting between the ministers of education took place, in Sweden. They concluded, among other things, that each country should appoint 2 members to a Nordic Cultural Commission. One year later, the first meeting of this commission was held in Oslo. Thus, without any written agreement, the cultural collaboration among the Nordic countries came into being. In its initial form, the Commission did not have any direct contact with the governments or parliaments of the involved countries. University professors were dominants in the meetings (Haigh 1974: 149).

The Nordic Council was formed in 1952 to add vigour to the Nordic Cultural Commission. The Nordic Council was created in order to solve questions related to cooperation among the Nordic countries in all fields. By 1954, the Nordic Cultural Commission had been reorganised: each national delegation included one senior official, besides the two parliament members. Also, the commission divided its work into three sections: one for higher education, one for general education and one for adult education and arts. The national delegations and the three sectors now had a permanent secretariat each.

In 1962, the Helsinki Agreement was signed. The Helsinki Agreement was a Nordic cooperation treaty and it wasn't meant to change the status of the Nordic Council as an inter-parliamentary organ of consultation. The treaty dealt with collaboration in judicial,

cultural, social, economic matters, communications and other fields. Regarding cultural collaboration, the clauses read as follows:

„Article 8. In every Nordic country, education and training given at school shall include, in a suitable degree, instruction in the language, culture and general social conditions of the other Nordic countries.

Article 9. Each Contracting Party should maintain and extend the opportunities for a student from another Nordic country to pursue studies and graduate in its educational establishments. It should also be possible, to the greatest possible extent, to count a part examination passed in any Nordic country towards a final examination taken in another Nordic country. It should be possible to receive economic assistance from the country of domicile, irrespective of the country where the studies are pursued.

Article 10. The Contracting Parties should co-ordinate public education qualifying for a given profession or trade. Such education should, as far as possible, have the same qualifying value in all the Nordic countries. Additional studies necessary for reasons connected with national conditions can, however, be required.

Article 11. In the fields where co-operation is expedient, the development of educational establishments should be made uniform through continuous co-operation over development plans and their implementation.

Article 12. Co-operation in the field of research should be so organised that research funds and other resources available will be co-ordinated and exploited in the best possible way, among other things by establishing joint institutions.

Article 13. In order to support and strengthen cultural development the Contracting Parties shall promote free Nordic popular education in the fields of literature, art, music, theatre, film and other fields of culture; among other things, the possibilities provided by radio and television should be borne in mind.” (Haigh 1974: 140-141).

These articles were important mostly because they conventionalised the already existent practices. The treaty did not represent a strict regulation, it rather had a more general character.

In its first years of existence, the Nordic Cultural Commission did not significantly influence the Nordic cultural relations, which continued to be carried out by NGOs.

Most of the Nordic non-governmental organizations have branches in all of the important cities and even in small ones. Plus, the local branches have close contacts with the local authorities and other voluntary organisations. This led to the concept of „sister-towns”.

After the Second World War, the Swedish and Danish associations organized visits for thousands of Norwegian and Finnish children to Swedish or Danish families, as the latter had better food supplies. To support these exchanges, along with activities in other fields



connected to culture, the decision to create a Nordic Cultural Fund was made. Instituted through a small grant, it had risen to 5 million Danish crowns by 1972 (Haigh 1974: 149).

The Nordic Council, through the Cultural Committee, initiated certain actions meant to strengthen the cooperation in the cultural field. Since 1962, the Council has awarded a writer from the Nordic countries every year. Besides literature, they also offer a similar award every two years in the musical field. This pattern of cultural diplomacy in the Nordic countries continued to operate until 1971, when it was replaced by a new structure, created by the Nordic Cultural Agreement, signed in the same year (Haigh 1974: 149).

Basically, this new structure was a revised version of the Nordic Cooperation Treaty and strengthened the position of the Nordic Council. Moreover, it became the parliamentary equivalent of a Nordic Council of Ministers. This aided in formalizing the contacts between governments, represented by the Council of Ministers, and between the members of the Committee. The new Nordic Cultural Agreement succeeded to create a more powerful instrument of cultural collaboration than any that had existed before. One of the new features of it was the disappearance of the Nordic Cultural Commission, which had itself played an important part in working out the plans for the said new instrument which was expressed in the new agreement.

The revisions basically had the same goals as before. The treaty was aiming at strengthening and intensifying cultural cooperation in a wide sense between the Contracting Parties in order to further develop the Nordic cultural community and to increase the combined effect of the countries' investments in education, research and other cultural activities. At the same time, the treaty had the aim of creating a basis for a coordinated contribution in international cultural cooperation.

The period which followed the Second World War represented a collective experience which was of significant importance for the Nordic countries and by default, for Norway. By creating all those treaties and agreements, a powerful collaboration was developed between the countries belonging to a special group. Moreover, this led to the integration of isolated countries in an international system meant to develop the cultural diplomatic relations between states.

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### Actors and actions

While, during the Cold War, Norway was a strategic priority for USA and other NATO members because of its geographical position (border with Russia in the north), after the end of the said war, the Nordic country was somewhat overshadowed. This invisibility is one of the issues that challenge the Norwegian public diplomacy. Leonard and Small



showed that „there are a number of factors that perpetuate Norway's invisibility: it is small – in population, economy and culturally; it lacks linguistic attraction – many Norwegians speak English but not vice versa; it lacks brands or icons - there are no emissaries for the Norwegian identity; it is similar to Scandinavia – its shared culture does not help to distinguish it from the rest” (Leonard and Small 2003: 2).

In order to change this view, Norway has to present itself to the world as a country which is: a superpower in the humanitarian field/peace maker, a society which lives together with the nature, an egalitarian and an international society with a spirit of adventure. Establishing objectives like these may seem more formal nowadays, but the Norwegian government has been involved for a long time in helping impoverished countries, fighting for human rights and peace keeping (since 1950).

Dobinson and Dale used a metaphor, the *Norwegian backpack*, to describe how the Norwegian actors (both governmental and non-governmental) conduct in the above mentioned processes. This method is used when conflicting parties in a war are invited in Norway to negotiate a solution. The ritual is that the participants are invited to walk in the woods north of Oslo (Israeli and Palestinian negotiations that led to the Oslo peace agreement in 1993) or to spend time in the private cottage of a Norwegian NGO-representative (Guatemalan guerrilla-representatives in mid-1990s) (Dobinson and Dale 2000: 51-53).

The Norwegian Foreign Ministry establishes various collaboration forms, information exchange and it coordinates itself with a select number of civil society actors, but at the same time it is reluctant to engage in public debates regarding the priorities and values of its foreign policy. Other ministries rely on a broad array of mechanisms to engage the public in discussions about political initiatives and priorities. Rather, the only mechanism the Foreign Ministry has relied upon is consulting the public through conferences and lectures where only select groups of societal actors have been invited to participate. Because of the problematic relationship with the domestic society, the Ministry has always had to share information with the public in order to get support and approval of foreign policy activities (Batora 2005: 16-21).

The internet has become a very effective tool for public outreach activities. Ever since the Norwegian government has established their official websites, the Foreign Ministry has been the most active one in terms of the amount of documents uploaded and the most visited as well. All the embassies' websites have a standardized design and they are connected to the Norway Portal, introduced at the end of 2003 ([www.norway.info](http://www.norway.info)). This portal is now the official face that Norway shows to the world and in 2004 it received the Norwegian Design Council award.

Norway relies on the coordination of public diplomacy in a centralized and corporat-

ist manner. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the actor which coordinates the way Norway is presented abroad. Therefore, a set of images and values that capture the essence of Norway have been decided upon, in order to represent the Nordic country abroad. These images and values (peace, nature, equality) represent values which any society in the world would find attractive. Norwegian actors (both state and non-state) involve themselves in international activities to promote one or several of these values, especially in the virtual space. The Norwegian state has managed to position itself on a multi-directional platform, which the majority of the Norwegian society can identify with, and which at the same time is attractive to the outside world (most political regimes, religions and cultures around the world) ([www.norway.info](http://www.norway.info)). This is a great ability that the Norwegian Foreign Ministry can capitalize on, so as to attract societal actors into identifying themselves with their state. Furthermore, the special focus on peace enables Norway to attract worldwide attention.

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### „Oppbrudd og fornyelse“

In order to talk about how foreign policy uses the concept of culture, it's important to take a look at the support it has received from the Norwegian state throughout the years. The cultural policy led by Norway is based on the grounds that “culture has value, culture brings development and culture must be protected from commercialization” (Schackt 2009: 40).

In 1985, the relation between culture and foreign policy was clarified by the Norwegian parliament. New visions were replacing the traditionalist policy with a new one. In this case, it was clearly underlined that the Norwegian goals regarding foreign policy were focused on human rights and security policy. This new vision was perfectly aligned with the new capitalist way of looking at cultural cooperation (Matlary 2002).

During the 1990s, the discussions and attempts to establish ways to promote a united image of Norway continued, especially in the context of the Winter Olympic Games, hosted in Lillehammer, in 1994. The project *Oppbrudd og fornyelse* (Beginning and renewal) took place between 1980 and 1990 as an activity of the Foreign Ministry and paid more attention to culture and its promotion. The media, culture and information sector was now divided into two separate sections of the Ministry, the Department for Culture and Norway presentation, and the Department for Information and Press (Lending 2000).

In this project, the main idea was to portray the role of culture in foreign policy and to emphasise the development and importance of international collaboration in the cultural field and public diplomacy. This indicates the major role that communication has begun to have in the state's foreign policy matters. Moreover, in *Oppbrudd og fornyelse*, it was

proposed for the third time that the administration of international cooperation in the cultural field should not belong to ministerial structures. It should be an independent structure evolving around the NORAD program for cultural development.

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## NORAD

NORAD or The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation is an agency under the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that deals with the development of international collaboration. In matters regarding Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative, NORAD reports to the Norwegian Ministry of Climate and Environment.

NORAD came into being in 1968 as the Directorate for Development Aid. The reason why it was necessary to create such an instrument was the public commitment that Norway took in matters of cooperation for the development of life standards, institutions, infrastructure, agriculture and other economic aspects. This commitment started with a subvention Norway offered to the Fund for Underdeveloped Countries and with an agreement between Norway and India regarding fishing (Norad 2015).

In the 1970s and 1980s, NORAD played a central role both in planning and implementation of bilateral agreements for development aid. Also, this mechanism had a big role in helping people better understand the development of aid-projects. When the projects began to be regularly implemented, NORAD focused more on the planning and management of bilateral assistance. In its first years of activity, NORAD had worked intensively in Asia and Africa. After 1990, the agency's offices were integrated in the Norwegian embassies, initially through a trial project that took place in Namibia in 1990. NORAD had stand-alone branches in several countries: India, Ethiopia, Portugal, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and so on. Nowadays, NORAD is still one of the main mechanisms that make Norway one of the most important actors on the international scene of supporting underdeveloped countries, human rights and environment protection (Johannessen and Leraand 2015).

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## Peace keeping

The work Norway does in peace keeping is an impressive one and impossible to ignore. Many of its present practices in peace keeping have deep roots in history, since the Lutheran missionaries' expeditions around the world. The Norwegian missionaries were returning back home with new visions and social, global knowledge. This mentality

served as the background for the Nobel Prize for Peace project, which takes part in Oslo since 1901.

The mediation of the conflict between Israel and Palestine (1993, resolved in the same year) is an example of the efforts Norway makes in peace keeping. Partially, the solution to this conflict was developed outside the official sphere. Norwegian politicians, members of the Labour Party and religious circles, have always maintained close relations with their Israeli counterparts. Moreover, academic research led to new Norwegian-Israeli connections. Altogether, they led to the opening of a secret channel, called „the Oslo Back Channel”. The confidentiality was somehow naturally assured by the geographical position of Norway, up in the north of Europe. The Oslo Accord went public in August 1993 and it contained ideas for a step-by-step reconciliation between Realisations and Palestinians.

In 2002, Frank Bruni argued that „over the last decade, Norwegians have had a hand in peace talks between Communist rebels and the Philippine government; Croatia and Yugoslavia, and Colombia’s government and the FARC rebel movement. Norwegians have ventured into Cyprus and Somalia and Sudan” (Bruni 2002). This continuous work in peace keeping has become the most important element of national pride. The midnight sun, the fjords, the amazing nature or the oil discovery are overshadowed by the Norwegians altruistic spirit, by the desire to solve conflicts around the world. Basically, Norway has become “the international capital of peace” (Bruni 2002).

Considering the fact that it is a small country, with no major role on the international scene, Norway should promote itself as a humanitarian superpower. In order to gain influence, the Norwegians have to be visible, to be noticed. The best way to do that is through partnerships. Partnerships are based on dialogue, which is a more effective method compared to branding and manipulation. The partnerships do not necessarily have to be established just with governments, but also with organizations, associations, companies or civil society. Norway is a country that has a lot to offer, and it has the capacity of acting quickly and in significant quantity. Also, it is capable of easily coordinating with other countries. “Utstein Group” partnership, for example, is a project developed by Norway in cooperation with Great Britain, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. Together, these countries fight against poverty, corruption, and for peace-building and peacekeeping (Henrikson 2005: 80-83).

Through these various partnerships, Norway gains access. Whether considering its role as a mediator, peace militant, support for Third World countries or as a fish and seafood exporter, Norway is seen as a stable, reliable partner.

We can say that Norway is a role model for both small and medium-sized countries, but also for the superpowers. The effectiveness of its public diplomacy makes Norway a global player in the field of soft power.

## Omdømmeutvalg

In 2004, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established a commission in order to build a profile of Norway and improve its reputation abroad, called Omdømmeutvalg. This committee was composed of representatives of authority, industry and cultural life. The committee's job was to analyse the country's situation and develop good, effective proposals in order to extend Norway's importance (Vea 2006).

The establishment of this body is the result of a long process based on the fact that Norway is little known abroad and what is known about it, is not the result of a certain strategy. Until then, the Scandinavian country had been rarely canalized, with few resources and with no work in advance (Vea 2006).

In a world of globalization, more and more countries develop their importance by presenting an attractive profile; clear, accessible and desirable for those abroad. Many states have sufficient resources to create an effective collaboration between different actors that can assure the development of that attractive profile (authorities, representatives of cultural life, organizations, associations, etc.).

The events of recent years, such as fish export boycott or conflicts with certain groups of Muslims after Muhammad cartoons episode, show that Norway is still a vulnerable country in some respects. Therefore, the profile of Norway has to be extremely well thought out and it has to have a clear and positive position.

The primary purpose of this committee is to build a strong plan in order to promote a clear, attractive image of Norway in the international arena and to strengthen the cultural life, industry, tourism and influence that Norway may have internationally.

Since the mid-1980s various surveys and research were carried out to see how Norway is seen abroad. The majority of these studies have concluded that people don't know very much about the Scandinavian country, but the overall picture they have is positive. Furthermore, the Scandinavian country is seen as a country without a particular profile, strengths or weaknesses and that few people think about or are linked to (Vea 2006).

Nowadays, a nation can gain a lot by having a suitable strategy for increasing its prestige. As long as the states are central units in the international system, national identity is of great importance. An appropriate strategy for building a successful image of this country is not only about the desire to be perceived in a certain way by others. It is also about identifying core values underpinning the Norwegian society and the way Norwegians see themselves. *Omdømmeutvalg* is a complex project that wants to develop this idea and put it into practice. The Commission's main objectives are to increase the attractiveness of Norway as a tourist destination, as a country in which to invest, to

strengthen the capacities of labour in strategic areas, to promote technological innovation and research, to promote art and culture (Vea 2006).

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## Ibsen year

“Ibsen Year” represented a unique opportunity for Norway to show the world the best of Norwegian culture and to engage in direct dialogue with foreign audiences. „Ibsen Year” wanted to show the world the greatness of Ibsen works and to portray him as an inspiration for contemporary art, while simultaneously increasing international interest in Norway.

Henri Ibsen is a famous Norwegian writer, considered the „father of modern drama”. In 2006 was the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ibsen’s death and the Norwegian government took advantage of the moment. Several highly publicized cultural activities were organized and spread around the world.

„Ibsen Year” involved 8059 different events around the world, in 83 countries, on all continents. These events ranged from theatre to concerts, TV programs, conferences and seminars about the life and works of the famous writer, held in national libraries or cultural spaces. Ibsen Year also included a superb gala opening in Oslo, attended by the royal family and guests from abroad, and an international gala held in the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt, chaired by the first lady. The committee in charge of „Ibsen Year” had a budget of about 70 million NOK, and the preparations for these events began in 1997 (Henrikson 2005: 80-83).

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## A conclusion

Norway can be seen as a model in matters of public and cultural diplomacy. Even if it is a small country, somewhat isolated and with a different history, the Scandinavian country has managed throughout the years to become a strong, reliable partner for countries that have a much bigger role on the international scene. However, there is still a struggle for Norway to become more visible, better known by people around the world. In this respect, the state has developed several programs and projects, especially in the field of cultural and public diplomacy. The Norwegians have realised the importance of soft power and they continuously try to develop and use it as a powerful political instrument.

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