

CONSIDERATIONS ON PUBLIC DIPLOMACY'S ROLE IN PROMOTING COUNTRY BRAND

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Abstract. *The study addresses the issue of the country brand from a new perspective, aiming to identify and analyse the ways in which public diplomacy can support the branding process. An important part of this study presents a comparative analysis on public diplomacy activities undertaken in order to support the brand of economically developed countries and some countries from Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the elements that define each country's public diplomacy. The most important contribution of the current paper represent the identification of 8 fundamental aspects (the allocation of financial resources, defining factors for the goals of the foreign policy and public diplomacy, the features that are promoted, the involvement of stakeholders in the image branding / promotion, the use of new technologies, the study on the perceptions of foreigners, social and environmental issues, the transfer of responsibilities) against which we can assess the relationship between the country brand strategy and public diplomacy, as well as their manifestation in several countries. Thus obtaining resources of possible good practices for developing Romanian's country brand.*

Keywords: *country brand, country image, public diplomacy, competitive advantages.*

1. THE COUNTRY BRAND AND THE PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

”The country brand is a relatively recent concept. It began to be used in the mid of the 90s in order to support countries in their fierce competition in the competitive environment. In this era of "super-brands" there is nothing unusual to consider a country to be a successful brand. Today we are facing the most communicative society of all time. Countries are competing to attract tourists, investment, talent and credibility. Customers benefit from a very wide range of places to choose from, each with its own attractive messages and highly credible promises” (Popescu & Corboș, 2013: 10).

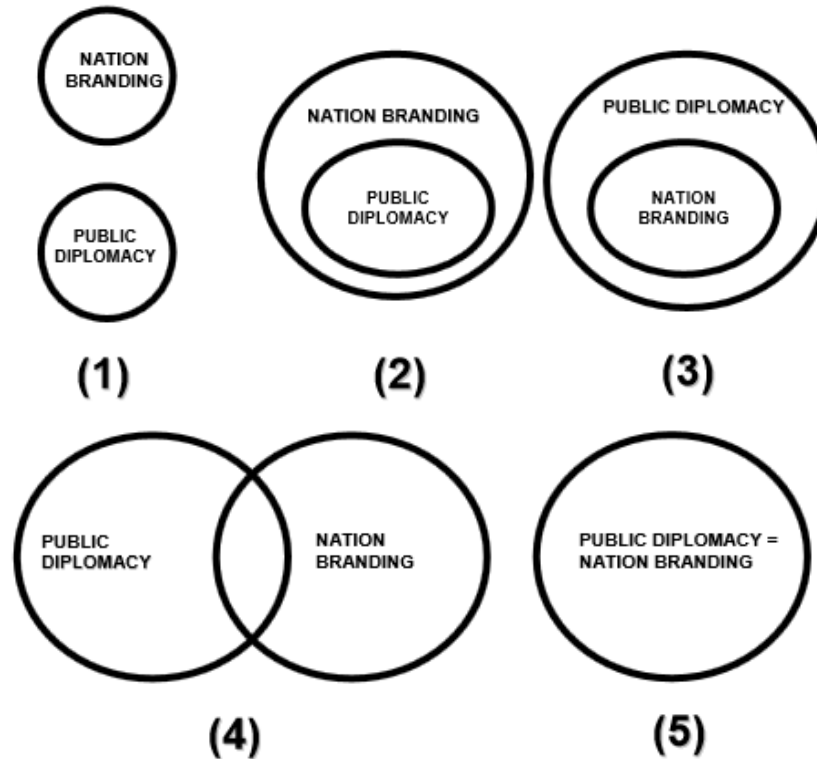
According to Anholt (2005), the current process of globalization has highlighted the need for countries to create a strong image, a brand focused on 4 dimensions (tourism, exports, foreign investment, foreign policy / public diplomacy). Public diplomacy aims to promote a positive image of the country internationally and within interest groups. The branding process involves the construction of this image.

Nistorescu and Barbu (2008: 12) believe that "building a brand image is a difficult, complex and sensitive to process". Vicente (2004: 33) believes that the country image is the result of a cumulative effort in the long term, which requires consistent and stable marketing strategies. The effectiveness of such a strategy is a source of competitive advantage, promoting a positive image of tourism, exports, foreign direct investment and foreign policy of the country. The increasing competition in international markets requires the creation of a country image on each of the four dimensions listed above, but at the same time building an integrated image. In practice, the focus of each country in each campaign for promoting its own image, in the four dimensions vary according to its competitive advantages, as well as the essence of its existing image.

The concept of public diplomacy precedes the country brand, and has become popular since the early '60s. The similarities and differences between the 2 concepts and their practical convergence or divergence have drawn the attention of specialists (Kanev, 2011). Thus, authors such as Zaharna (2004), admit that there is no clear consensus on the relationship between public diplomacy and country brand. In any case, it is clear that certain ideas that are present in the techno-economic approach are also supported by authors from the political category. Szondi (2008: 14-15) has identified 5 different approaches in literature regarding the relationship between the country brand and the public diplomacy (figure 1):

- [1] public diplomacy and country brand are 2 distinct spheres: have different objectives, strategies and actors;
- [2] public diplomacy is part of the country brand, playing the role of branding technique used by politicians;
- [3] the country brand is part of the public diplomacy, it is its instrument;
- [4] the public diplomacy and country brand are 2 distinct concepts that still intersect due to the interest that both give to culture, identity, image and value. Wang (2008) argues that countries operate in a competitive global context, and therefore, can support their interests in the international arena through a strategic management of reputation. In other words, the country brand and the public diplomacy are tools used to gain competitive advantage, regardless of whether the processes are defined in economic or political terms (Kanev, 2011);
- [5] the country brand and public diplomacy coincide and have the same object of activity: promoting the country with the ultimate goal of building a positive image. The disadvantage of this model is that it ignores important differences, so that none of the concepts cannot be used to its full potential.

Fig. 1. The relationships between nation branding and public diplomacy



Source: Szondi, 2008: 14-15

2. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD

Next, there will be presented some of the public diplomacy initiatives undertaken in order to support the country brand in different states of the world, as well as the elements that define each country's public diplomacy. For this study we have chosen 3 countries characterized by a high level of economic, political and social development (U.S., UK and Germany), and 3 countries from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) countries (Poland, Czech Republic and Serbia).

2.1. United States of America (USA)

The activities of foreign policy of USA are based primarily on defining and supporting basic democratic values, such as: peace, prosperity and justice. The objective of these actions is to ensure conditions of stability and progress for the benefit of citizens (Department of State - USA, 2012: 2).

The U.S. foreign policy has as priorities combating terrorism, assuring the energy supply and increasing the competitiveness of the USA companies. The American public diplomacy is focused on the security need, so about 1% of the federal budget is directed towards reducing the threat of nuclear weapons, stabilizing conflict areas, strengthening borders, combating international crime and extremist manifestations and providing

support for building prosperous and stable democracies (Department of State - USA, 2012).

In this regard, the USAID financing system that supports the development of the poorest and most unstable areas of the world represents a strategic investment that allows the initiation of beneficial partnerships in the future. For the year 2013, the USAID budget is \$ 51.6 billion and will be assigned to diplomatic priorities. The budget for the of U.S. diplomatic and consular actions for 2013 is \$ 11.3 billion, up from \$ 10.9 billion allocated for the year 2012 (Department of State - USA, 2012: 22).

The strategic objectives of the USA diplomacy consider the following (Department of State – USA, 2012: 17):

- Sustaining peace and security;
- Fair and democratic governance;
- Investing in people;
- Promoting economic growth and prosperity;
- Strengthening consular and management capabilities.

One of the priority directions of activity is the implementation of educational and cultural exchange programs, for which have been allocated \$ 586 million in 2013. These communicate the USA values and develop future leaders by acquiring a global perspective and create links with the international network of professionals. By aligning with other public diplomacy efforts, these strategic programs build confidence bases and prepare the next generation of leaders to work together to overcome the challenges of the XXI century (Department of State – USA, 2012: 42).

For the United States, involving the non-state actors (NGOs, religious groups, multinational corporations) in defining the priorities of foreign policy is becoming increasingly important. The American diplomacy seeks to expand beyond the traditional limits involving other actors, with a focus on civil society (Department of State – USA, 2010: 8).

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the interest in an effective public diplomacy of the United States has increased significantly, as the fight against extremist ideologies has become crucial in the counter-terrorism policy (Nakamura and Weed, 2009).

Regarding U.S. diplomatic activity in Romania, it is clear that their actions are consistent with the general priorities set for diplomatic relations with all countries. For example, in 2012, the United States Embassy in Romania was a partner, participant or organizer at events such as (Embassy of the United States in Romania, 2011):

- World Economic Diplomacy day;
- The project Migratory Birds in the Danube Delta;
- U.S. Visa Campaign 2012;
- The project ReStart Romania - Lost Money;
- The gala restart Education;
- The essay contest "What is the Meaning of Tolerance in the Modern World?";
- The grant awarded to Romania for modernizing the air control system.

2.2. United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom (UK), the authority responsible for promoting the image and national interests and supporting the British citizens and businesses abroad is the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). Taking into account the current economic climate, the UK is aware that international relations are more important than ever. Democracy and new technologies momentum offer governments and individuals the possibility to contribute to decisions that affect them (FCO, 2013a).

UK aims to position itself effectively on an international scale in order to benefit from existing opportunities. Given the fact that is an influential member of powerful international organizations (such as the UN, NATO, EU and Commonwealth) and the strengthened links with many parts of the world, the UK is building increasingly intense the image as a global centre for ideas and primary force in a search of answers to the main problems of the world (FCO, 2013a).

The main purpose of the British public diplomacy diplomatic is using the diplomatic network in order to protect and promote the state's interests internationally. As in the case of the United States, one of the objectives of foreign policy is to protect national security by countering terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as contributing to the reduction of conflict situations (FCO, 2013b).

Increasing investments and exports, opening markets, ensuring access to resources and promoting sustainable development are also approaches of British diplomacy (FCO, 2013c).

FCO addresses consistently the challenge to engage in an effort to achieve foreign policy objectives, exacerbated by the fact that the information environment is continuously changing. In addition to traditional channels of communication between governments, the officials in charge with the objectives of diplomacy also work with non-governmental organizations, think tanks, opinion formers, youth, businessmen and individual citizens (FCO, 2013d).

UK is aware that public diplomacy is not only delivering messages for promoting the state interests, but also in order to establish and maintain a dialogue, listen and learn from audiences around the world to better understand how the perception of the country and its policies changes. Also, the British public diplomacy has concentrated its efforts in organizing successful events, such as the Shanghai Expo 2010, London Olympics, World Cup 2018, Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012 etc. The main partners in the projects of public diplomacy are: British Council, BBC World Service and Wilton Park (FCO, 2013d).

On the occasion of the Olympic Games in London, in 2012, was launched *The Great Campaign*, studies showing that this tournament is a unique opportunity to promote the UK abroad, defining international perceptions and delivering long-term tourism benefits (FCO, 2012). Thus, the *GREAT* campaign was conducted to demonstrate the capabilities of the United Kingdom to promote and improve the external reputation and maximize the economic potential of the Olympic Games. The campaign focused on areas of excellence (Technology and Innovation, Entrepreneurship, Creativity,

Knowledge, Environment, Heritage, Sports, Shopping, Music and rural areas), and also on the reasons to visit, invest, work and study in UK (FCO, 2012).

Regarding the UK diplomatic activity in Romania, in 2012 it was focused on the promotion of the following events (British Embassy in Romania, 2012):

- Olympic and Paralympic Games, London 2012;
- Queen's Diamond Jubilee;
- The *GREAT* campaign in the United Kingdom;
- Celebration of 130 years of diplomatic relations Romania - United Kingdom;
- 10:10 campaign to reduce emissions;
- Project offering UK bilateral assistance;
- The campaign *Focus on diversity* for promoting the rights of minorities and disadvantaged people

2.3. Germany

In Germany, the Federal Foreign Office¹ (FFO) represents the interests of the state in the world, promoting international trade and ensuring protection for German citizens abroad. The institution maintains Germany's relationships with other countries, as well as international and supranational organizations. However, the activity of the federal office is not only focused on political and security relations, but also on promoting an intensive interaction and exchange with the countries of the world in areas such as business, culture, science and technology, environment, human rights and development issues (FFO, 2013a).

One of the most important tasks of the German diplomacy is to control globalization by maintaining an ongoing relationship with civil society partners, including business organizations and humanitarian and human rights organizations and unions. Germany has realized that the current challenges cannot be tackled by individual countries, but an international cooperation is needed, and therefore it has assumed the responsibility to contribute to the global peace and security (FFO, 2013).

Through public diplomacy, the German government promotes its image internationally. The FFO website includes an extensive section called *Information about Germany*. In this section, there are presented more resources with the help of which foreigners can get familiar with the specific of the country: the portal *Discover Germany*, *Deutschland Magazine - Innovation and Excellence*, the brochure *Facts about Germany* and the *Deutschland Portal* (FFO, 2013b).

Economic, political and cultural (including education) relations are the 3 pillars of Germany's foreign policy activity. The cultural and educational programs that are tailored according to the needs and interests of the citizens from the partner states can create a stable basis for international relations and strengthen the confidence in Germany (FFO, 2013c).

Germany's objectives in terms of cultural relations and educational policies are the following:

¹ Federal Bureau of Foreign Affairs.

- Presenting Germany as a country with a lively, multidimensional and internationally acclaimed cultural scene;
- Strengthen Germany's position as a desirable location for higher education by providing scholarships for young researchers from all over the world;
- Promoting the interest in the study of German language internationally;
- Preserving cultural diversity while promoting European integration.

The Federal Bureau of Foreign Affairs carries out projects in collaboration with public organizations and agencies, such as the Goethe Institute, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the Institute for Foreign Relations and the German Central Agency for Schools Abroad.

Germany's diplomatic activity in Romania (Embassy of Germany in Romania, 2012), conducted with the purpose to support the promotion of the country's image, in 2012 had the following results:

- Scholarships for international practice in the German Parliament;
- DAAD scholarships for students, graduates and young researchers;
- Exchange programs offered by Inwent (Society for Training and International Professional Development);
- Euraxess internships for scientists;
- *Luther 2017 - The 500th Anniversary of the Reformation*;
- The *Deutsch – Sprache der Ideen* campaign for promoting the German language;
- The project *On the Move-Federal Foreign Office Sports Promotion* for promoting sports;
- The initiative *Schools – Partners for the Future*.

2.4. Poland

Recent years have been a period of development for Poland, with the increasing involvement in European and Euro-Atlantic structures. During this period there have been improvements that led to GDP growth up to 60% of the European average (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, 2012: 5).

The actions undertaken by Poland in the international arena is a reflection of the values underpinning the society: democracy, the rule of law, solidarity and respect for human rights. Through diplomatic actions, Poland aims to ensure national security, heritage and natural environment protection, increasing prosperity, level of civilization and economic development through the development of friendly relationship with other countries and by facilitating cultural contacts (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, 2012: 6).

The effective promotion of Poland's image abroad is one of the main tasks of the Polish diplomacy. The stated goal is to create both a national brand and strong sectorial brands. It is wanted for the country to be associated with a destination of rich culture and traditions, which deserves to be visited and in which it's beneficial to invest. Thus, Poland would be perceived as a partner that guarantees the best quality of goods and services (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, 2012: 25). It is assumed that this

objective will be achieved through a sustained promotion activity of the country in academic conferences, cultural festivals, international economic exchanges etc. In order to reach a vast audience, Poland will focus on the relationships already established with various entrepreneurs, students, academics, journalists, cultural and political. The campaign will be promoted through various media: TV channels, radio stations, Internet (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, 2012).

Increasing the intellectual and creative capital can be considered a pillar of support for the country brand, an utmost importance having the promotion of culture and tourist destinations, as well as education. Therefore, the initiatives involving the development of academic exchanges and Polish language courses will continue to receive an important support in order to encourage foreigners to study in Poland.

Over time, the Polish diplomatic activity in Romania has resulted in the following events (Embassy of Poland in Romania, 2012):

- Visits from the Polish officials;
- The Exhibition "In the pace of the era - Kazimir Illakowiczowna" (June-July 2012, Sibiu);
- Days of Poland in Bucovina, in 2009;
- Organizing Polish language courses.

2.5. Czech Republic

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic represents the central government authority in foreign policy, and is therefore responsible for the development of cooperation and coordination of foreign economic relations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, 2013).

The activity of the ministry is currently focused on the following areas: EU, security policy, developing cooperation, humanitarian aid, human rights and transitional policies, export assistance, public diplomacy, multilateral policies (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, 2013b).

With regard to culture and promoting the country brand, the Public Diplomacy Department of the Ministry cooperates with the majority of the country's diplomatic missions abroad in order to set up various cultural events. To this end, annual plans are developed for each diplomatic mission that includes cultural program tailored to the needs of the state in which it is established. Also, the Department helps diplomatic missions to organize events in collaboration with local organizations. This department has also other responsibilities, such as: cultural partnership agenda, bilateral agreements on culture, education and science (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, 2013c).

These centres are funded in part by the Czech Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and are present in 21 countries on 3 continents, having the mission to promote culture, education, tourism and trade (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, 2013c).

The promotion of the Czech culture in Romania is the responsibility of the Czech Centre in Bucharest, which has organized 67 events in 2010, the most important being the

festival of documentaries on human rights, *One World Romania*. 2010 was named the Academic Year for the Department of Slavic Languages and Literature at the University of Bucharest. Also, the Honorary Consulate of the Czech Republic, opened on October 14, 2010 in Timișoara, contributes to the development of educational, cultural, economic and business cooperation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, 2010).

Regarding the activity of the Czech Embassy in Bucharest, in 2013 has taken place the following significant events (Embassy of Czech Republic in Romania, 2013):

- The premiere in Romania of the movie *Burning Stake* (organized by the Czech Centre in collaboration with HBO Romania) (February 2013);
- The inauguration of the sixth edition of the festival of documentary films dedicated to human rights issues *One World Romania*, inspired by the Czech festival *One world* (11 March 2013).

2.6. Serbia

The Serbian Institute for Public Diplomacy is a non-profit organization that focuses actively on the relations between Serbia and the EU. The Institute is one of the most active promoters of Serbia's image at European level. Among its objectives there are (Serbian Institute for Public Diplomacy, 2013):

- Accelerate Serbia's EU accession;
- Increasing the visibility of positive democratic change, the unprecedented economic transformation, and other processes of social evolution that occurred in Serbia since 2000;
- Promoting the economic interests of Serbia in the EU;
- Increasing the ability to attract foreign investment;
- Promoting the Serbian culture and tourism in the EU.

As a promotion centre, the Institute aims to increase the interest of foreigners for national products, economy, culture and tourism in order to preserve and celebrate Serbia's cultural diversity and integrity (Serbian Institute for Public Diplomacy, 2013b).

Important projects that promote the values and the image of Serbia in Romania are the following (Serbian Institute for Public Diplomacy, 2013c):

- Seminars on the Serbian language and cultural heritage;
- The program *Make the most of your internship* for young professionals;
- Charity actions;
- The program *Serbian BREnd* for promoting unique and quality products from Serbia.

3. THE PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN ROMANIA

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania (MFA) is a public institution specialized on central public administration. According to Government Decision no.

8/2013², MFA "it ensures the foreign policy of Romania, by performing the tasks within its competence area that are to be accomplished by Romania as a Member State of the EU and NATO, and participates in promoting Romania's economic interests".

Among the main tasks of the Ministry are the following:

- "Defending and promoting Romania's national abroad;
- Initiating and supporting international activities aimed at developing peaceful and cooperation relations with all the countries based on fundamental principles and applicable rules of the international law; promoting internationally the democratic values, rule of law, and respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, peaceful cooperation and human solidarity;
- Promoting Romania's national interests in international organizations and other structures;
- Organizing, directing and controlling the activities of the diplomatic missions and consular offices of Romania "(GD. 8/2013: 1-2).

The Government Decision no. 8/2013 stipulates that the Ministry "contributes to promoting Romania's image in the world by organizing and funding at national and international level the public communication actions, public diplomacy³ and cultural diplomacy⁴ [...] in accordance with the priorities and objectives of Romania's foreign policy".

The Foreign Service of the Ministry includes diplomatic missions⁵, consulates and cultural institutes. Also, under the "MFA activates the Romanian Cultural Institute (RCI)⁶

² With regard to the organization and functioning of MFA.

³ Examples of such activities are: congresses, conferences, forums and international meetings, campaigns and internal communication events, events for promoting the country's image abroad, campaigns and events for promoting the culture, celebration of important events, participation in international festivals etc. According to Government Decision no. 8/2013, "these actions are financed within the limits of the annual budget approved by the ministry, by the laws of the annual budget act".

⁴ MFA contributes to strengthening Romania's image through the involvement in the cultural diplomacy plan, which has closed 114 active agreements and 30 programs concerning culture, education, science and media. Externally, the involvement of the Ministry is reflected through the cultural departments of diplomatic missions, as well as through a network of Romanian cultural institutes and lectorates of Romanian language and civilization within foreign universities [in 2010 37 lectures were operating in 21 countries, from which 18 European countries (mostly in France and Italy)] (MFA, 2013b).

⁵ The 146 diplomatic missions of Romania organize each year public diplomacy activities which aim to promote our country abroad during certain holidays: National Day, Remembrance Day, and Europe Day. The purpose of these actions is, on one hand, is to assert Romanian's membership to the EU community and to promote Romania's contribution to the cultural and historical heritage of Europe.

⁶ RCI has branches in 18 cities (mostly capitals): Berlin, Brussels, Budapest (with a branch in Szeged), Chisinau, Istanbul, Lisbon, London, Madrid, New York, Paris, Prague, Rome, Szeged, Stockholm, Tel Aviv, Warsaw, Venice, Vienna (MFA, 2013b). The regulation regarding the organization and functioning of RCI says that this institution has the mission "to promote national culture and civilization in the country and abroad. Increasing the visibility of Romania's cultural values in the world represents the primary aim of the activities that are carried out by ICR" (ICR, 2013). "According to the strategy for 2009-2012, RCI has as a goal to become an interface between the Romanian culture and abroad" (RCI, 2013b). Thus, in 2011, "The Romanian cultural institutes abroad have organized a total of 869 events attended by 2.6 million foreigners and 2,670 local artists and cultural figures" (RCI, 2013c).

and the "Eudoxiu Hurmuzachi" institute for the Romanians around the world, and under the coordination of MFA operates the Fulbright Commission and the European Institute of Romania" (Government Decision 8/2013: 8; MFA, 2013a).

For achieving the public diplomacy objectives, MFA collaborates with (MFA, 2013c):

- Institutional partners: The Romanian Cultural Institute (ICR), The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, The Institute of the Romanian Language, The Romanian Academy, The National Authority for Scientific Research, The National Authority for Sport and Youth, The Agency For Loans and Study Scholarships, The National Centre of Cinematography.

- Civil society partners: Policy Centre for Roma and Minorities, Romanian-Swiss Multimedia Institute, Black Sea NGO Forum, Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation Foundation.

The projects regarding the public diplomacy and the cultural projects that have been organized by the MFA over time took into consideration the following:

- [1] The campaign "*Visa for the U.S.A*" had as a target group the citizens interested to obtain a temporary visa to the U.S. A in 2011. The message that was promoted was the following: *If you want to see America, show us how much you love Romania!*. The campaign was promoted in the online environment, by displaying web banners, and by displaying billboards on public transport. In order to increase the success rate of this initiative, MFA has partnered with 23 news organizations and five institutions (the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism, the National Association of Travel Agencies, TAROM, METROREX), which promoted the message pro bono. The campaign was carried out in collaboration with the U.S. Embassy in Romania" (MFA, 2013d);
- [2] *RO20*: launched in December 2009, the program marked the 20th anniversary of the 1989 revolution by underlining the transformations undergone by the Romanian society during the transition period. The program consisted of publishing testimonials of personalities from different fields, launching a blog, organizing events of public diplomacy and cultural events, conferences and debates, photography exhibitions and using the social networks as a promotion tool" (MFA, 2013e);
- [3] "*NATO - the first 60 years, Romania – the first 5 years in NATO*: the communication and public diplomacy campaign was launched in 2009 in order to commemorate five years from joining NATO and the 60th anniversary of the organization" (MFA, 2013f);
- [4] "The campaign *Piazza di Romania* was launched in 2008 in cooperation with the Ministry for Small and Medium Enterprises, Commerce, Tourism and Liberal Professions. The purpose of this campaign, conducted in three Italian cities (Rome, Milan, Turin), was to strengthen the link between Romanian and Italian citizens in the context of a series of unpleasant events, which have affected the image of Romania in that period. The slogan of the campaign was: *Romania, un mondo da scoprire (Romania, a world to discover)*. The events organized during the campaign were: concerts, exhibitions of handicrafts and crafts, puppet

theatre, presenting Romanian films awarded at international festivals, debates and round table discussions” (MFA, 2013g).

4. A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE DIPLOMATIC ACTIONS OF THE PRESENTED STATES

The criteria for comparison of the 7 analysed countries have been the following:

- *The allocation of financial resources.* The first difference can be observed in terms of allocating the financial resources for public diplomacy activities. The developed countries are allocating significantly more resources, highlighting the fact that the promotion of the country and the objectives of the foreign policy are a priority to be addressed through a well-planned strategy.

The CEE states lack the resources to achieve maximum efficiency in promoting their objectives, therefore their initiatives involve lower costs and use of resources from other sources than the state budget (for example: the Romania's tourism branding strategy is financed by European funds).

- *The defining factors for the objectives of foreign policy and public diplomacy.* It is obvious that the goals of foreign policy and public diplomacy depend to a significant extent by the level of development of the country, social characteristics, as well as recent events from the history of the state that has these goals. Major events, such as the global financial and economic crisis, or terrorist attacks can radically change the principles that guide the diplomatic actions and the promotion of the country. In this context, the need to defend the national security is becoming increasingly important for all states, regardless of the level of development.

- *Promoted characteristics.* The analysis of public diplomacy actions of the states presented shows that by using this tool, the states with a higher level of development are focused on promoting their culture and educational performances. In the case of Romania, it can be noticed an intense activity in terms of promoting its culture, however in the educational area there are a number of deficiencies that currently generate difficulties in promotion. The challenges in this field, constant conflicts and lack of sustainable strategies underline a low efficiency in the educational process. An intensive promotion of educational opportunities will be possible only with the successful implementation of policies aimed at developing the educational system.

Similar to Romania, Serbia, which is in the context of a future EU membership, focuses its foreign policy and public diplomacy efforts to promote its image inside the European supranational structure, in order to facilitate obtaining the membership status. The campaign *Serbian BREnd* has similar characteristics as the campaign *Made in Romania*, implemented in the same context of pre-accession in order to promote local products.

An important peculiarity of public diplomacy of the CEEC states is that they aim to promote the image of a country favourable for studies and investments, although economic results prove the contrary.

Regarding Romania, the legal framework provides rich opportunities to support the country brand. The diplomatic missions and the Romanian Cultural Institutes from

abroad have the possibility to conduct projects in order to promote a positive image of Romania and also have the legal status to do so.

MFA has been involved in the last 20 years in increasing Romania's visibility internationally. These initiatives were welcomed, despite the fact that the implemented projects and campaigns (*Fabulospirit, Piazza di Romania, RO20*, etc..) have not achieved the expected results. Also, RCI can contribute to promoting the elements of the Romanian's culture abroad.

However, attention should be paid to the promotion methods used, and the aim should be to avoid unpleasant situations, as those in which the institution has been involved in recent years.

- *The degree of involvement of stakeholders in the branding / image promotion.* Globalization transforms the relations between states, market and society. One aspect of this transformation is the shift in role of the state in international relations: national governments share power with other stakeholders (Wang, 2006). Thus, the state no longer has a monopoly on foreign policy because the country's image is influenced by many stakeholders, while the information technology provides them with the necessary communication tools in order to disseminate the information (Guceac & Porcescu, 2010).

Countries like USA, UK and Germany are increasingly aware that traditional diplomacy has lost power; therefore it is necessary to involve all stakeholders in the promotion of the country image. Currently, a state doesn't only communicate with the authorities of the states with which it maintains diplomatic relations, but also tries to create a direct connection with their citizens, by using various channels of communication: written press and audio-visual, Internet, conferences, debates, cultural events, festivals, exhibitions etc.

The current financial and economic crisis has led to a reformulation of the goals of the foreign policy, which now relies on the cooperation of nations in order to achieve common aspirations. Thus, powerful states seek to promote creativity and innovation in areas, such as technology, environment, research and business opportunities. Therefore, these states are willing to ensure an effective involvement of stakeholders in decisions that affect the country's image: non-governmental organizations, think tanks, businessmen, students.

- *The use of new technologies.* A notable difference between the developed states and the CEE countries represents the interest in the opportunities offered by the modern technological and communication tools⁷. It's essential to use these communication tools for promotional purposes, given the fact that we live in an age of information abundance. Managing this information is essential to improve the perception that foreigners have on a country.

- *The study on the perceptions of foreigners.* Both developed countries and the CEE states understand the importance of the study on the fluctuating perceptions of foreigners

⁷ Currently, most of the perceptions about a country that are assimilated by a foreign audience come from backgrounds that cannot be placed under the strict supervision of the state institutions - books, TV, movies, products etc. In this case, governments can only identify and take advantage of the positive ways in which messages can reach target groups (Guceac & Porcescu, 2010).

and take more or less effective actions in order to influence these perceptions in a positive direction.

Both categories of states are facing some issues in terms of promoting a positive image abroad, but economically developed countries are aware that they need to implement measures to address the causes that generate the problems and not their effects. Implementing superficial actions that don't address directly the causes that generate the issues is a typical situation for Romania, the period 1990-2010 being characterized by short-range projects, which led to controversy and met little goals.

As in the case of the United Kingdom, Romania can improve its image by organizing major international events. This is a great opportunity for promotion, as it was demonstrated by the implementation of the campaign *This is Great Britain* at the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

A weakness of the Romanian brand is the insufficient attention that is given to human rights and minority protection issues. In the context of world states that are increasingly adhering to the principle of respecting the minorities, the unpleasant events in Romania, which involved Romanian immigrants, are extremely harmful to the image of the country.

- *Social and environmental issues.* Environmental issues are currently at the heart of the developed countries, where programs to reduce pollution and to introduce clean production technologies have begun to be successfully implemented. An increased attention to this area and expressing interest at an international level can enhance the reputation of a state. Romania's tourism brand promotes environmental concerns, but the reality is different - in the post-revolutionary period, our country has greatly neglected environmental policies and conservation of natural resources.

- *The transfer of responsibilities.* With regard to the organizations responsible for implementing the concept of country brand, internationally there is a tendency to transfer these responsibilities towards advertisers that have come up with the concept. From our point of view, there should be a close cooperation between agencies and the authorities responsible for promoting a positive image of the country, in order to identify the best messages and channels to promote and develop a brand that takes into account all the unique elements of the country.

CONCLUSIONS

Romania is in a position to build the brand of the country in an environment that is unstable from many points of view. Therefore, we consider the following reflections to be the most appropriate:

- To ensure success in this area is necessary to be rethought how resources are allocated. So far, the authorities responsible for promoting the country's image felt that it is enough to print and distribute materials that emphasize the landscapes and the cultural aspects through images and stereotype formulas. However, by using this approach can't be achieved the best results. Institutions must first address the causes that generate the image problems: economic performance, tourism infrastructure, the behaviour of the Romanian immigrants. A sustainable change can be achieved, only if it is implemented in

a bottom-up approach, trying to change the initial conditions that led to the decline of Romania's reputation on the international stage.

- A particular importance should be given to controlling the abundance of information, because the perception towards a country can be changed very quickly in a positive or a negative one, only through the appearance of an interesting piece of information in various environments, which can then be spread and generate unpredictable effects. In this context, identifying the differentiation and uniqueness aspects of a country and maintaining them on a long-term is particularly important. To ensure continuity and avoid the situations that took place so far (campaigns and projects have been abandoned due to political changes in the leadership of the responsible institutions), it would be useful that the accountability for elaborating and promoting the country brand to be managed by an organization that is independent of the political changes.

- In order to implement a long-term branding strategy, it is recommended to avoid general approaches, which lack originality. Also, a particular importance should be given to clarifying the situations that could damage the country's image, through the diplomatic communication channels.

- The Romanian brand could benefit from the opportunities offered by the new technologies, by being involved actively in the online promotion activities. The public diplomacy, thanks to the opportunities it offers, has the potential to greatly influence the perception of foreigners, by giving them specific information about our country. Studies have shown that the reality is better than the general perception about our country. Therefore, it is essential that this reality is presented outdoors by creating contexts for promoting the country during the diplomatic and economic events, as well as the ones related to tourism, that are held internationally.

- It is important to involve of all stakeholders in the process of creating the branding.

- A very important aspect of Romania's branding process is the need for continuous monitoring of the perception of foreigners about our country, and to identify the reasons that led to the emergence and spread of these perceptions. Implementing an *inside-out* approach can lead to a noticeable improvement of the country's image.

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