

ifa ECP Monitor Country Report

South Africa

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1. External cultural policy objectives in geopolitical context

Since the formal end of Apartheid in 1990, and South Africa's subsequent progressive democratization, the country has established itself as an economic middle power and a regional leader in southern Africa. Aside from its economic influence, this status also pertains to fields such as education, science and technology. Claiming the spirit of pan-Africanism, South Africa holds great interest in and substantial influence over the African continent (Kanyane et al., 2017). Due to this trajectory, South Africa receives support and development aid from other nations, while simultaneously being a benefactor in its own right to several countries in its neighborhood (Pandor, 2012). Nevertheless, while the country's socioeconomic distribution has shifted since its democratization, South Africa remains one of the countries with the highest levels of inequality in the world, with race often still an indicator of socio-economic status (Fisher, 2014).

In 2010, South Africa reached an important geostrategic milestone when it was named along with Brazil, Russia, India, China as one of the BRICS, a group of five emerging economies (Department of International Relations and Cooperation, 2020). As South Africa is less economically strong than the other states in this group¹, the country's usage of soft power assets is a valuable factor to distinguish itself within this group. The association also offers a valuable platform for South Africa to execute the South-South solidarity that it emphasizes (Georghiou, 2015).

Table 1: Economy of South Africa

	2019	% change since 2015
Population (millions) / ranking	58.6 / 24 th	55.4 / 5%
GDP / ranking	€313.97 billion / 37 th	€286,44 billion / 37 th / 9.6%
GDP per capita	€5,361.65	€5,172.07 / 3.7%
R&D economy (%GDP)	0.832% (2017)	0.798% / 4.2%

Sources: The World Bank, 2019; The World Bank, 2019

South Africa's population ranks 24th worldwide, with a slight population growth since 2015 to 58.6 million in 2019. Compared to this ranking, its GDP only ranks 37th worldwide, stable from 2015 to 2019. Of this, the country spends a modest 0.83% on research and development.

¹ For instance, consider their 2019 GDP ranks: Brazil (9th), Russia (11th), India (5th) and China (2nd) compared with South Africa (37th) (The World Bank, 2020).

Table 2: South Africa's geopolitical and geo-economic position

	2019	2015	
Hard power rank	32 nd (2021)	-	
World trade indicators / ranking	38 th	39 th	↑
Soft power rank	-	-	-
Diplomacy rank	25 th	24 th (2016)	↓

Geopolitically, South Africa is a middle power. In terms of hard power, the country takes the 32nd position worldwide (first included in the measurement in 2021) and places 38th in total world trade volume. Although the necessity to invest in soft power resources to compensate for South Africa's comparatively low economic performance has been highlighted (Kanyane et al., 2017), the country did not make the "Soft Power 30" in 2015 or 2019. South Africa performs better in terms of its diplomatic performance, where it ranks 25th worldwide.

Table 3: Government spending on ECP fields as a % of total outlays

	2019	% change since 2015
Culture	0.27%	0.3%
Education	6.87%	5.04%
R & D ²	0.49%	0.59%

Source: National Treasury, 2019

2. External cultural policy: an overview

In the previous decades, South Africa has returned from a state of international isolation in the 1990s, when large parts of the international community had imposed sanctions against the Apartheid regime. In addition to an extremely segregated domestic cultural sector, the country was left out of many bilateral and multilateral agreements agreed upon during this time (Kanyane et al., 2017). International engagement has thus been scaled up significantly in recent years, although the country's image suffers from a variety of negative narratives, "such as an antagonistic racial history, unemployment, poverty, xenophobia, high levels of crime and poor education and health care", highlighting the lasting impact of Apartheid regime (Georghiou, 2015). Domestically, the country has attempted to counter these narratives with the image of a colourful post-Apartheid "rainbow nation" that celebrated the diversity of its people – a branding that has managed to stick despite the country's persistent socioeconomic inequalities among ethnic lines (Vahed & Desai, 2017).

In South Africa, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) does not include cultural diplomacy as part of its diplomatic toolkit (Gouws & Verster, 2019). Instead, the departments corresponding with the subfields of ECP (such as culture, science and higher education) manage their own international relations and sponsor exchanges and mis-

² Expressed as GBARD - Government budget appropriations or outlays on R&D.

sions abroad, while the DIRCO maintains a public diplomacy division and South Africa's diplomatic representation in 109 countries (Department of International Relations and Cooperation, 2020). Therefore, there is no single cultural diplomacy strategy, but South African ECP is defined by the individual objectives present in each of the departments. Several of these possess divisions concerned with "International Relations", equipped with their own budget lines. However, this fragmented approach means that there is no single entity overseeing South African ECP or tracking its overall impact. Especially in countries with limited spending on ECP, it is not rare for the ministries to engage without the support of an arms-length institution like the Goethe Institute in Germany or the British Council in the UK. Further, South Africa's "brick-and-mortar" presence abroad is limited to its consulates, embassies and delegated missions to international organizations, with no designated institutes of arts, science, education or language (although there are three scientific liaison offices in embassies abroad).

The DIRCO has established several geographic priority regions for international cooperation. The most important partnering region is the rest of Africa, supported by the mission to strengthen nations across the continent in line with the African Union's 'Charter for African Cultural Renaissance' (Georghiou, 2015). As a BRICS country, South African ECP also is directed at the other members of this group. Although North-South cooperation and interaction with the EU also play a role in South Africa's international relations, it is a lesser strategic priority (Department of Arts and Culture, 2015; Department of Science and Innovation, 2020).

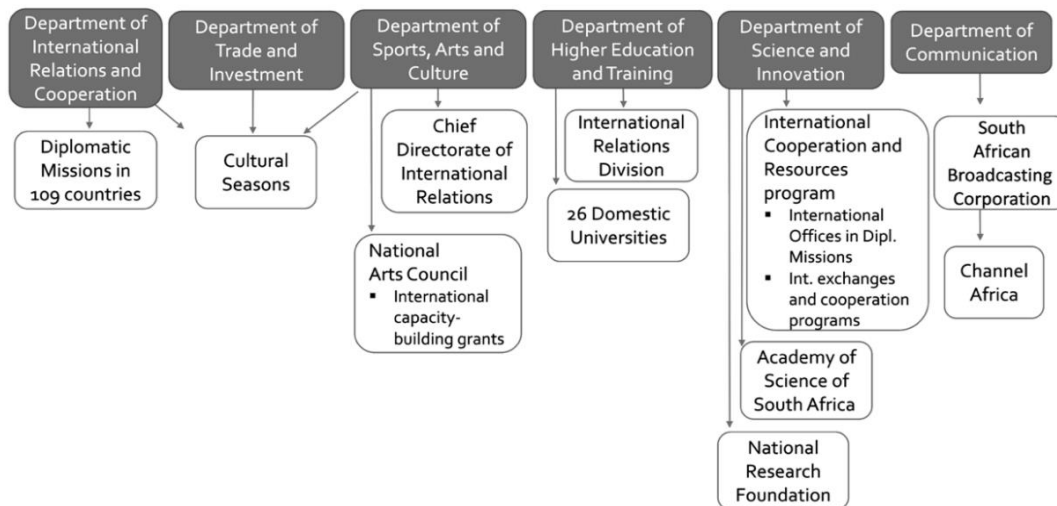
Table 4: Key ECP Statistics for South Africa

	2019
Number of countries with ECP activities	> 5
Total number of institutions abroad	0 ³
Total number of FTE staff engaged in ECP activities	> 53
Government financial support (€ million)	~ €14.9 million
Total expenditure of all ECP operators (€ million)	~ €15.3 million
Comparative ECP ranking	minor

³ While there are no separate institutions abroad, South Africa does possess a wide network of diplomatic missions, which are involved in enhancing the country's cultural and scientific relations.

Figure 1: Institutional map of South Africa's ECP

South Africa



3. Fields of ECP

3.1. Culture and the arts

The coordination of South Africa's external policy relating to arts and culture lies within the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DAC). In 2019, South Africa's previous Department of Arts and Culture was merged with Department of Sport and Recreation to form the new DAC. Although the diplomacy of these two fields has so far existed in separate spheres, the merger could lead to stronger integration of sports and cultural diplomacy. Indeed, hosting the FIFA World Cup in 2010 was an important milestone for South Africa's image abroad that effectively placed the country at the center of international attention. Even before notions of culture and sports were formally connected, the world-scale event allowed the government to promote ideas of both South African unity and pan-Africanism (Ndlovu, 2010). Correspondingly, the merged department's new performance plan highlights the aim to "Strengthen Sport and Cultural Diplomacy" (Department of Sport, Arts and Culture, 2020, p. 34). The FIFA World Cup functions as a starting point for this, which is considered to have laid a foundation for further cultural diplomacy (Fisher, 2014).

Cultural diplomacy is listed as one of ten strategic objectives of the DAC (Department of Arts and Culture, 2015). Despite formally emphasizing its importance in several policy documents, the number of actual programs corresponding to cultural diplomacy is limited. What is more, the deployment of cultural attachés to selected South African embassies abroad has been suspended for over a decade due to budget cuts (Kanyane et al., 2017). Instead, South Africa employs Cultural Seasons, organized by the DAC, as the primary vehicle of its cultural diplomacy abroad. They are prolonged multidisciplinary arts and culture festivals that result from bilateral cultural partnerships. In their course, South African artists and groups are included in cultural missions to the host country. Cultural Seasons intend to strengthen bilateral partnerships through people-to-people exchanges, create mutual cultural awareness and support the internationalization of South African artists (Department of Arts and Culture, 2017).

The first Cultural Season abroad occurred in France in 2013. Since then, as part of the DAC's strategic plan 2015-2019, a focus was put on African integration. Correspondingly, new Cultural Seasons took place in Algeria (2017), Gabon (2017), Kenya (2019) and Angola (2019) (Gouws & Verster, 2019). However, the narrow focus of these mechanisms (on only one country at a time) also has its downsides. Although it allows the DAC to invest time in preparations and wrap-up activities, Gouws & Verster's (2019) analysis of the outcomes of South Africa's Cultural Seasons suggests that they are awarded too much responsibility considering their limited means. A consequent study investigating their economic impact, examining the fields of trade, tourism and investment, has found that they have not yet led to any sustainable economic benefits – all the while acknowledging that social and diplomatic gains are more difficult to measure (*ibid.*). The DAC has similarly faced accusations from the South African cultural sector for being removed from the South African society, including specific criticism of uninformed civil servants both in embassies and in the department (Fisher, 2014; Georghiou, 2015). These points of criticism point towards both a lack of a strategy on the part of South Africa's DAC, as well as a lack of exchanges with the people it seeks to represent. They also demonstrate that while cultural diplomacy is framed as an important objective, its implementation is still fragmented (Gouws & Verster, 2019; Kanyane et al., 2017).

In addition to the DAC, South Africa's National Arts Council (NAC) also fulfils a vital function as a funding organization of individuals and groups seeking to enhance their international profile. Ten individual artists and 23 groups were supported with a total of €320,415 in 2018 (National Arts Council, 2019). The NAC is also an important organization for the internationalization of South Africa's creative industries, as it supports the export of South African patents (Kanyane et al., 2017). By offering an additional point of contact for South Africa's cultural sector, NAC can help compensate for the more narrow cultural diplomacy focus of the DAC.

Table 5: Key statistics on culture and the arts

	2019	2015
Number of countries present	Cultural Seasons: 2 (Angola, Kenya)	Cultural Seasons: 2 (UK, China)
Number of institutes	0	0
Number of artists in exchange programs	10 Individuals 23 Groups	-
Number of cultural agreements	90 (2015)	-
Government financial support (€ million)	DAC: €2,197,329 National Arts Council: €320,415 (2018)	€2,217,854 ⁴

Sources: Department of Arts and Culture, 2020; Department of Arts and Culture, 2016; National Arts Council, 2019, Kanyane, et al., 2017

⁴ The perceived budgetary decrease from 2015 to 2019 is due to a depreciation of the Rand. Expressed in Rand, the budget actual ly increased by 13% over this period.

3.2. Language

South Africa's 1996 constitution designated 11 official languages. This occurred after the previous centuries were shaped by the domination of European languages promoted by former colonizers. isiZulu and isiXhosa are the most widely-spoken languages, while English is often learned as a second language and used in public life (South Africa Gateway, 2018). Because of this diversity and the history of oppression, the promotion of languages is a cultural policy priority for the South African government, which celebrates holidays such as "International Mother Language Day". Nevertheless, the international promotion of the country's languages does not play a substantial role in South Africa's cultural diplomacy (Department of Arts and Culture, 2020).

3.3. Primary and secondary education

On the level of primary and secondary schooling, the South African Ministry for Basic Education engages in bilateral cooperation with several countries in the form of preliminary planning or already signed Memoranda of Understanding (namely China, Cuba, South Korea, France, Kenya, UAE and Tanzania). Areas of cooperation include cross-learning through official visits and agreements on teacher mobility. However, although South Africa is home to several international schools from other sending countries, the country does not possess any own primary or secondary schools abroad (Department of Basic Education, 2020).

Table 6: Key figures on primary and secondary education

	2019	2015
Number of countries	7	-

Source: Department of Basic Education, 2020

3.4. Tertiary education and science

South Africa's 26 higher education institutions across its nine provinces with almost exclusively English-language degree programs make the country a popular destination for international students (Universities South Africa, n.d.). While only 9,130 South African students studied abroad in 2019, 42,267 came to the country for their higher education (UNESCO, n.d.). The most commonly chosen destinations for outbound students primarily comprise globally renowned anglophone hubs of higher education: the top five destinations are the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia and Canada (ibid.). Inbound students, however, overwhelmingly come from other African countries. The International Education Association of South Africa found that in 2017, 78% of all international students studying in the country came from fellow African countries (IEASA, 2019). The most common countries of origin (by order of frequency) were Zimbabwe, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho and Namibia (UNESCO, n.d.). South Africa is also home to the internationally highest-ranked African university – the University of Cape Town (THE, 2019). These numbers demonstrate how the attractiveness of South Africa's higher education institutions support the country's status as a regional leader.

Table 7: Key figures on tertiary education

	2019	2015
Number of domestic universities/ colleges	26	26
Number of foreign students	Outbound Students: 9,130 Inbound Students: 42,267	-
Government financial support	€890,598	€797,732

Sources: UNESCO, n.d.; Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019; Department of Higher Education and Training, 2016; IEASA, 2019

Beyond the appeal of the country's universities, South Africa's science and research sector are instrumentalized to promote an image of a progressive economy abroad. The first human-to-human heart transplant, accomplished at the Groote Schuur Hospital in Cape Town, is a matter of pride for South Africa and is used to position the country's scientific community as "pioneers in medicine" internationally (Georghiou, 2015, p. 504). Although the science and technology sector is no doubt still in undergoing developmental challenges, its advancing capacities are considered "a powerful vehicle for developing, attracting, and retaining human capital" (Pandor, 2012). Accordingly, it is one of the strategic goals encompassed in the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) to expand the South African contribution to global scientific output (Department of Science and Innovation, 2020, p. 59). This includes the aspiration to turn South Africa into a knowledge-based economy and change the country's role globally from consumers of knowledge to producers of knowledge (Masters, 2016).

This target is supported by three international science liaison offices located in South Africa's embassies in Brussels, Moscow and Tokyo (Masters, 2016). The DSI additionally supports the country's researchers by funding 30 technical exchanges and co-funding 144 research and innovation projects in 2019, amounting to a total expenditure of €8.4 million on international relations (Department of Science and Innovation, 2020). Despite these investments, there are still capacity constraints pertaining to external science policy (Masters, 2016). Most importantly, the DSI's very own former minister Naledi Pandor (now Minister of International Relations and Cooperation) criticized that the approach to science and research internationally was still lacking "an agenda that is sufficiently focused in order to ensure an optimal investment of resources, but sufficiently flexible in order to respond to the rapidly changing dynamics of international relations in the twenty-first century" (Pandor, 2012).

In the field of science, too, South Africa's self-conception as a regional leader is emphasized. Pursuing this role has also drawn attention to the function of the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf). As a subsidiary of the DSI, ASSAf is a key player in the South African objective to internationalize science and research output. The Academy has been a keen participant of conferences on science diplomacy and represents South Africa internationally in the community of national science academies (Maphosa, 2019). ASSAf's comparatively strong endowment (with a government transfer of €2.5 million and total expenditure of €3.6 million in 2019) and global connections allow the academy to assume an important role for the African neighborhood. In consideration of this favorable position, the ASSAf has assisted other African states in the creation of their own science academies, while seeking to strengthen the ties to the 22 African academies of science that are already present (ASSAf, 2019).

These activities are part of what the DSI explicitly labels “Science Diplomacy” (Department of Science and Innovation, 2020). They are correspondingly anchored in legal texts: As of 2015, South Africa has signed bilateral agreements on scientific cooperation with 19 states across Africa (Masters, 2016). In addition to bilateral efforts, South Africa has entered several multilateral agreements, for instance through the association with the BRIC nations and through partnerships with the European Union (Department of Science and Innovation, 2020). Notably, South Africa was selected as one of only two locations for the multilateral Square Kilometer Array (SKA) project (the other location being in Australia), in which a global radio telescope will be constructed in the country’s Karoo region (The SKA Project, n.d.). This selection is considered a great achievement for the science diplomacy conducted by South Africa’s DSI and marks a milestone for the country’s involvement in international science co-operation (Pandor, 2012).

Table 8: Key figures on science and research

	2019	2015
Number of countries	3	3
Number of researchers / staff	Staff: 53	-
Number of projects	144	144
Number scientists in exchange programs	> 30	> 63
Government financial support (€ million)	€8,414,630	€8,158,129

Sources: Pandor, 2012; Department of Science and Innovation, 2020; Department of Science and Technology, 2016

3.5. Foreign Media

To represent South Africa’s media landscape internationally, the country was home to two international TV channels with a regional reach (in Southern Africa), administered under the helm of the local public broadcaster, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). After merging both channels and continually cutting the program’s budget, its services were eventually suspended in 2010 (Pampalone, 2010). South Africa now no longer has an international TV broadcaster.

The functions originally fulfilled by the TV channel are now carried out by Channel Africa, South Africa’s international radio station, which is financed by the Department of Communications and delivered through the SABC (SABC, 2020). The station’s mandate is to “support South Africa’s national interests through the production and broadcast of innovative, dynamic and stimulating content and contribute to the development of Africa” (Channel Africa, n.d.). It is available via satellite in all countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, with even wider reach through its internet broadcasting. By offering an African perspective on the continent’s political, cultural and socio-economic developments – notably in Chinyanja, Silozi, Kiswahili, English, French and Portuguese in alternating time slots – the station pursues the mission to be “The Voice of the African Renaissance” (Channel Africa, n.d.). In the name of Channel

Africa, the SABC has also entered a strategic cooperation with the German international public broadcaster Deutsche Welle, which aims at fostering staff exchange and training opportunities (SABC, 2020).

Table 10: Key figures on foreign broadcasting

	2019	2015
Radio		
Number of countries broadcasted to	> 46 Wider availability online.	> 46
Number of languages	6	6
Number of channels	1	1
Digital & social media audience (million)	Internet-based broadcasting available. Social Media Following: Twitter: 49,671 (2021) Instagram: 652 (2021) Facebook: 10.566 (2021)	-
Budget (€ million)	€3,395,186	€3,996,751
Government contribution (€ million)	€3,123,558	€3,364,426

Sources: SABC, 2016; SABC, 2020; Twitter; Instagram; Facebook

4. Challenges and future outlook

An overall look at South Africa's role in ECP reveals a gap between stated ambitions and actual capacities. On the one hand, several of the country's departments engage in what they label "International Relations" and cultural diplomacy is acknowledged to be a beneficial addition to the South African foreign policy portfolio. On the other hand, the number of actual opportunities for the country's civil society, as well as the eventual reach of the programs South Africa authorizes, is limited. Especially as the DIRCO remains largely uninvolved in the country's ECP subfields, the lack of a central coordinating mechanism – or, indeed, overarching national objectives – makes its cultural diplomacy fragmented (Gouws & Verster, 2019). With limited financial resources, especially for flexible, far-reaching projects (Kanyane et al., 2017) and the absence of a sustainable presence abroad, for example through culture and education attachés, South Africa's ECP remains a work in progress.

This is mirrored in South Africa's science diplomacy. Despite its status as an important component of the country's international engagement and vital channel of communication with the rest of Africa, the coordination of scientific activities abroad is still largely done in a piecemeal fashion. Even the DST professes that "[a] holistic plan to profile South African science internationally is still required" (2020, p. 18). Although enhancing these relations to gain from access to the international science community is one of the DST's strategic aims for the next years, the specific implementation of this objective remains vague (ibid.).

The country's higher education institutions have already demonstrated a strong pull in Africa's neighborhood. However, South Africa has yet to strategically invest in steady cultural diplomacy initiatives as well as formulate clear, overarching objectives for the country's international engagement. While its "Cultural Seasons" program puts an intensive focus on a small number of countries per year, South Africa has not yet succeeded in offering a solid set of well-known programs to create a sustainable ECP footprint abroad. Although its role as a regional leader and progress in South-South solidarity is supported by a variety of economic, developmental, and diplomatic initiatives, South Africa's government is, as of yet, not efficiently using its portfolio of tools. This is a missed chance: leveraging South Africa's soft power assets remains an important tool to strengthen its position in the BRICS – especially as the economic "underdog" of the association (Tella, 2017).

At the same time, international media coverage of the country has repeatedly been dominated by facets detrimental to its reputation. For instance, several of the country's high-ranking politicians, both from former President Jacob Zuma's as well as current President Cyril Ramaphosa's governments, have faced allegations of corruption (Freedom House, 2021). Not only this issue, which has accompanied the country's policymaking for decades, but also the contrary reality of South Africa's "rainbow nation" promise, necessitate prudent relationship-building to strengthen a positive image abroad.

Building on the country's successful positioning in the context of the FIFA world cup in 2010, perhaps the combination of the South Africa's cultural diplomacy portfolio with international sports engagement, which is in the early stages right now, may provide the necessary overarching framework for South Africa's ECP. Already, the relative importance attributed to the soft power of sports puts the field in close conjunction with the country's cultural assets (Ogunnubi, 2019). It is not yet clear what role the more traditionally "cultural" fields of ECP, that this monitor foregrounds, will find in this new combination. Indeed, whether the merger will be able to leverage the fields to enhance visibility for both or see one gaining at the expense of the other – both financially, as well as in terms of attention – will certainly be an intriguing development to monitor over the next years.

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