



Building synergies between education and culture

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Culture and education are closely intertwined all along our citizens' life. The cultural sector represents a world of thousands of opportunities to learn, be they formal, non-formal or informal. The outcomes of these practices are more and more acknowledged in the educational systems and ought to be better exploited. The education and training sector has been increasingly concerned with building closer links with cultural actors as essential learning providers; while the cultural sector aims more and more to mainstream culture in other EU fields of action and especially in education. The recent Communication from the European Commission on "*Rethinking education: investing in skills for better economic and social outcomes*"¹ impulses an important momentum for policy-makers and stakeholders to reflect upon what EU action in the field of education and training is about and what direction it should take up to 2020. The two sectors seize here the opportunity to emphasise the crucial role of culture in broadening the access to lifelong learning, especially for the most disadvantaged groups.

This paper calls the EU to bridge education and culture strategies and policies at EU level to upgrade our people's transversal skills, increase their employability but also and especially make them socially included, fulfilled individuals and active citizens.

Key messages

- Synergies and consistency between the education, training, youth, sport and culture sectors shall be enhanced in future EU strategies and policies.
- A partnership approach could be developed involving stakeholders from all sectors covered by the Commission's Directorate General on Education, Training, Youth, Culture and Sport in order to achieve a genuine lifelong and lifewide approach to learning.
- A better cooperation is also needed among the relevant departments within EU institutions to reinforce those sectors' complementarities.
- Cultural engagement is a key contribution to the acquisition of transversal skills and should be recognised as such at EU level.
- Cultural engagement is also crucial for a broader access to education for vulnerable target groups at risk of educational disadvantage.
- Quality learning in the field of culture and the arts is essential as those sectors have a central role in national curricula from a very young age.
- Recent policy reforms at EU level on validation should pave the way for a greater involvement of cultural actors in validation mechanisms.

¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions: "[Rethinking Education: investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes](#)", Strasbourg, 20.11.2012, COM (2012) 669 final

What do we mean by the education and culture sectors?

The **education sector** is considered here in a holistic approach as it encompasses formal education but also non-formal and informal learning in a lifelong and lifewide perspective, from cradle to grave. EUCIS-LLL itself gathers 31 European networks from all sectors of education and training (networks for secondary and higher education, vocational education and training, adult education and popular education; networks for students, school heads, parents, HRD professionals, teachers and trainers, etc.). It comes to a vision of lifelong learning that promotes equity, social cohesion, active citizenship and personal fulfilment.

The **culture sector** is here considered broadly consisting of what is normally grouped under the label “arts & culture” therefore including but not limited to: performing and visual arts, arts schools, museums and archives, galleries, cultural heritage, multi-disciplinary urban cultural centres, musician, writers and librarians, etc. The signing organisations here representing culture are umbrella organisations for a wide range of European and national organisations and institutions. The Access to Culture Platform (ACP) represents 41 participating networks and Culture Action Europe (CAE) has 110 member organisations and networks across Europe, they give voice to over 80,000 cultural organisations across Europe. Both CAE and ACP are dedicated to advocate for arts & culture as a pillar of the European project and the main asset to ensure the human rights to cultural justice and to creativity.

The need for a partnership approach

The European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL), the Access to Culture Platform and Culture Action Europe share concerns such as widening **access to culture and education, fostering social inclusion or bridging formal, non-formal and informal learning**. Besides, many of their members have a multiple education and cultural identity. The two sectors seize here the opportunity to emphasise the **crucial role of culture in broadening the access to lifelong learning**, especially for the most disadvantaged groups. Bridging education and culture strategies and policies at EU level to upgrade our people’s transversal skills, increase their employability but also and especially make them socially included, fulfilled individuals and active citizens.

Today the decision to release this common position paper concretises both sectors’ strong will to work in closer cooperation in the future; it is the **expression of a strong political will from civil society to endorse part of the responsibility to raise awareness of the benefits of education and culture synergies and to call all actors to foster cross-sectorial cooperation and partnership**. Yet civil society cannot achieve this goal alone and needs strong policy support for public authorities at all levels and a learning outcome approach needs a strong stakeholders’ involvement to be made a reality.

Recommendation 1: on the basis of the Staff Working Document “[Partnership and flexible pathways for lifelong skills development](#)” accompanying the new “Rethinking Education” Communication, a **partnership approach** between EU institutions and organised civil society should be further developed for better multi-level governance. **Common consultation mechanisms** involving civil society representatives from all sectors covered by the Commission’s Directorate General on Education, Training, Youth, Culture and Sport should be foreseen.

New learning opportunities for new skills: the potential of cultural engagement

While today the learning outcome approach is privileged to tackle the skills challenge that we are facing, **EUCIS-LLL, Access to Culture and Culture Action Europe feel the necessity to revalue a broad spectrum of transversal skills and the role that cultural engagement can play in their acquisition**. Of course, “cultural awareness and expression” is the most obvious one (Key Competences Framework, 2006²) as this transversal

² European Parliament and Council, “[Key competences for lifelong learning. European Reference Framework](#)”, annex of the [Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning](#), 30.12.2006

key competence is crucial to foster one's creativity, sense of appreciation of cultural diversity, intercultural, etc. Cultural and educational stakeholders are therefore entitled with the key challenge to enhance cultural awareness and expression among their target audience.

Yet cultural engagement is much more than cultural awareness: as research led by Access to Culture shows³, the cultural sector provides learning opportunities for all ages within formal and non-formal and informal settings, in a genuine lifelong and lifewide approach. This is partly due to the fact that the cultural sector can involve in the learning process many untraditional partners to create original pedagogical settings - several empirical examples show the efficiency of this **cross-sectorial partnership approach**⁴, also valued by the Commission in its latest Communication. **At the individual level**, cultural engagement fosters a sense of ownership towards the arts and develops one's creative potential. It also leads to more motivation to learn via original and innovative vectors and increases well-being and self-confidence. Cultural engagement is **also beneficial to the whole community** as it strengthens social cohesion, societal engagement and active European citizenship through awareness-raising on our cultural diversity. All those elements are part of the transversal key competences set up in 2006 that need to be enhanced in future years to give new directions to EU strategies in education and training. Narrowing transversal skills to entrepreneurial skills comes to **deny the majority of their purposes and ignore the essential role played by cultural engagement in their acquisition.**

Recommendation 2: leading to major benefits for individuals and society as a whole, the key contribution of cultural engagement to the acquisition of transversal skills (especially social and civic competences and the "learning to learn" competence) should be recognised and adequately promoted at EU level.

Culture as a learning pathway: broadening access to lifelong learning

Integrating cultural activities within a lifewide approach to learning enables to realise that the education and culture sectors have a lot in common in terms of target groups. The most obvious overlapping takes place **within formal education through the introduction of culture and the arts at school**⁵. Initiation to culture and the arts start from early childhood education and care (i.e. psychomotivity via circus activities, creativity enhancement) and is acknowledged across the EU as an essential part of the curricula (media literacy, heritage education) via art classes, specialised degrees, etc. As an illustration, a Eurydice study from 2009 showed that music and visual arts were taught in all European countries at one point during compulsory education. Yet the study also showed the challenge of a low level of taught time, especially at lower secondary education⁶. This is why **EU action shall incite Member States to revalue culture and the arts in school to develop a whole set of key competences**, from basic skills (i.e. language skills through acting) to transversal ones (i.e. logic through juggling). This goes notably through the **improvement of school teachers' training** by sensitizing them to the importance of culture and favouring their collaboration with artists. Beyond school, it is also necessary to invest in high quality initial (VET, higher education) and continuous education for the professionals of culture (i.e. performing artists, therapists through the arts), as recommended by the 2010 UNESCO's Seoul Agenda⁷. It is indeed essential that graduates from educational institutions in the cultural and artistic sector acquire the necessary skills they need to adapt labour market demands and constant changes⁸. **More cooperation and peer learning** are to be fostered among educational institutions offering specialised degrees across Europe (notably by broadening access to EU mobility programmes for staff, teachers, trainers and students),

³ Access to Culture, "[We are more! The overlooked potential of learning through cultural engagement](#)" by Henrik Zipsane, 17.01.2011

⁴ Access to Culture, Education and Learning working group commissioning "[Untraditional Creative Partnerships – seven wonders of arts and culture in education](#)" by Henrik Zipsane, Nordic Centre of Heritage Learning

⁵ European Commission, Final Report: "[European Agenda for culture, Working group on developing synergies with education, especially arts education](#)", June 2010

⁶ Eurydice, Report Summary, "[Arts and Cultural Education at School in Europe](#)". October 2009

⁷ "[Seoul Agenda: Goals for the Development of Arts Education](#)", UNESCO's 2nd World Conference on Arts Education in Seoul, Republic of Korea, 25-28 May 2010

⁸ See Recommendations of the 2011 [Workshop on education, skills and professional training](#), Platform on the Potential of Cultural and Creative Industries

Recommendation 3: Culture and the arts have a central role in curricula from a very young age and should be recognised as such at national level. Providing **quality learning notably comes to the proper training of professionals and teachers** and the necessity to constantly update them on labour market needs.

Many common grounds are also to be found within the scope of **non-formal education opportunities** in terms of target groups: adult learning, popular education, youth work (where for instance intercultural learning has always held a central role), volunteering activities are as many ways to engage into culture and learn from it. **The intrinsic definition of non-formal education actually values learning through cultural activities** as learning is taking place in a diverse range of settings, not necessarily for educational purposes only. **Informal learning** also encompasses many opportunities to learn via cultural engagement as any participation in cultural activities during leisure time can be regarded as a new occasion to learn.

This puts light on a particular transversal target group that both the education and cultural sectors address: **people at risk of educational disadvantage** such as socially marginalized groups and minorities (including Roma people), women, youth, LGTB communities or economically deprived citizens. Cross-sectorial cooperation between education and culture is beneficial for a broad variety of learners and culture should not be reduced to a playful learning method or a pedagogical facilitator. Yet engagement with arts and culture does have potential to vitalize learning and to make educational situations more effective. By providing original and unusual learning opportunities inside school walls (i.e. original pedagogical methods for pupils at risk of drop-out) and outside (i.e. intercultural learning experiences for migrants), culture helps marginalised populations to engage into creativity and learning, gain skills, increase their ownership to culture and their self-esteem. Two crucial EU2020 targets are **reducing school drop-out rates below 10% and at least by 20 million the number of people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion**⁹. Culture has therefore a valuable contribution to make to European high-ranked objectives in the fields of **educational attainment, skills upgrade and social inclusion** and should be acknowledged as such.

Recommendation 4: the EU institutions and Member States shall acknowledge **the important contribution of cultural engagement in widening access to education to vulnerable target groups** at risk of educational disadvantage, and consequently playing a key role in achieving the related EU2020 objectives.

Acknowledging and recognising learning outcomes

Those considerations cannot go without a state of play of the current policy-making in terms of validation of non-formal and informal learning, that is an important element of the Education and Training 2020 Strategic Framework¹⁰; **recognition of the skills acquired in those settings is indeed the only way to acknowledge properly the educational role of cultural engagement** – and not only the recognition of the learners' skills but also of the sector's professionals involved into pedagogical activities. In the line of the learning outcome approach of its new Communication "Rethinking Education", the Commission pleads for better recognition of skills and particularly the transversal ones: *"Outside school, individuals should also be able to have their skills assessed, validated and recognised (...). Efforts should continue to develop tools for individual assessment of skills, particularly in the areas of problem solving, critical thinking, collaboration and entrepreneurial initiative."*¹¹, In that sense, the Council just adopted a Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning¹² urging the implementation of validation systems by 2018 in all Member States. Validation is indeed on the top of the EU political agenda for contributing to equip citizens with the right skills and increase their employability.

⁹ See EUCIS-LLL publication on "[Social Inclusion in Education and Training](#)", October 2011

¹⁰ See EUCIS-LLL Public Hearing General Report on "[Recognition and validation of learning in Europe: from rhetoric to reality](#)", 12 December 2011, Brussels; see also EUCIS-LLL [LLL Magazine on Validation](#), June 2012

¹¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions: "[Rethinking Education: investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes](#)", Strasbourg, 20.11.2012, COM (2012) 669 final

¹² [Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, 20 December 2012](#)

Recommendation 5: to foster a lifelong and lifewide approach to learning across EU Member States and contribute to the EU skills strategy, a prompt implementation of the recent Council Recommendation on Validation is needed; this decision shall lead the way to a **greater involvement of educational and cultural actors in validation mechanisms** with the support of national public authorities.

Formalising synergies between education and culture within a single policy framework

The impact of culture on education has been acknowledged by Member States and the EU institutions in several key documents¹³. The 2007 Commission **Communication “on a European agenda for culture in a globalizing world”**¹⁴ recommends to “*promote creativity in education by involving the cultural sector in building on the potential of culture as a concrete input/tool for life-long learning and promoting culture and arts in informal and formal education*” and the following **2007 Council Resolutions on a European Agenda for Culture** to promote “*better use of synergies between culture and education, in particular by encouraging art education and active participation in cultural activities with a view to developing creativity and innovation*”. Creativity and innovation were for that matter the theme of **the 2009 European Year**¹⁵ and **one of the four strategic objectives of the Education and Training 2020 Strategic Framework**, promoting the acquisition by all citizens of transversal key competences. Yet those complementarities need to be made a reality and mainstreamed in all EU actions. The mutual benefits for both sectors need to be recognised in current and future EU strategies and relevant actors should engage to mainstream them also in the new funding programmes 2014-2020.

Recommendation 6: Synergies between education and culture in future EU strategies and funding programmes should be enhanced base on the traditional principle of consistency and complementarity between EU policies.

To ensure that education and culture are comprehended together at EU policy level, further cooperation mechanisms should be fostered within the Commission’s Directorate General for Education and Culture. Like in many Member States (,e.g Finland or the Netherlands), both sectors have been reunited within the same policy unit; yet despite this **symbolical recognition** of the strong links between education and culture, we need to make sure that the internal organisation of the European Commission allows regular exchanges of views between the services concerned.

Recommendation 7: We therefore recommend that at institutional level, the different services in charge of education and culture at EU and national level **foster more regular ways of collaboration** and especially when they have already been gathered within the same direction.

¹³ European Commission, Final Report: “[European Agenda for culture, Working group on developing synergies with education, especially arts education](#)”, June 2010

¹⁴ [COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS on a European agenda for culture in a globalizing world](#), Brussels, 10.05.2007, COM (2007) 242 final

¹⁵ [2009 European Year of Creativity and Innovation](#)