

Arts, culture, and cultural awareness in education

SUMMARY

Cultural and educational policies can contribute to the development of skills needed to cope with the complexity of contemporary multicultural societies, and to qualify for jobs in the fast-growing creative and cultural industries. This is supported by research on learning processes and the impact of art and cultural education. Both Unesco and the OECD have called for a proper place for, and recognition of, art and culture in education.

In the EU, competence for culture and education policies lies with the Member States, though the EU plays a role too, by supporting them financially, and supplementing and coordinating their efforts in this field. A 2006 European Parliament and Council recommendation on key competences included cultural awareness and expression as a transversal competence. This was understood to comprise knowledge of particular works of art from local, regional, national and European cultural heritage; their relationship to other cultures worldwide; self-expression in various media, styles, and forms; and openness to intercultural communication.

The European Commission continues to support projects to modernise education. In 2017, it launched a public consultation on the revision of the key skills and competencies needed for the labour market of the future, with a view to updating them. The European Parliament has undertaken work on the subject in an own-initiative report.



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Global challenges faced by arts and cultural education

Arts education covers the expression of cultural diversity in line with the [Unesco 2005 Convention](#) on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression, to which the EU is party. Since then, two Unesco conferences have focused on the integration of arts and culture in school curricula and as an extra-curricular activity.

The first one, the 2006 Lisbon conference, pointed to the growing gap between the cognitive and emotional development of students in education systems worldwide. It suggested that emotional intelligence could be addressed through arts education focusing on emotional processes, and through a better balance between the intellectual and emotional aspects of human development, which, once established, can contribute to a peaceful culture among societies in a globalised environment. It resulted in a roadmap, which set a number of objectives for arts education to attain, among them:

- developing a sense of beauty, creativity, and critical thinking;
- cultivating an awareness of the cultural environment and cultural diversity in a globalised world;
- ensuring access to cultural goods, services and practices, and preparing audiences to appreciate art;
- developing the imagination, creativity and cooperation needed in a knowledge-based society, and the creativity and imagination needed in multicultural societies;
- perceiving art as a means of cultural transmission, community life and individual transformation;
- ensuring the transmission of cultural and aesthetic values and identity, to promote cultural diversity and to develop peaceful, prosperous and sustainable societies;
- appreciating the value of art in the learning process and its role in developing qualities such as cognitive and social skills, innovative and creative thinking, tolerance, values, and social integration.

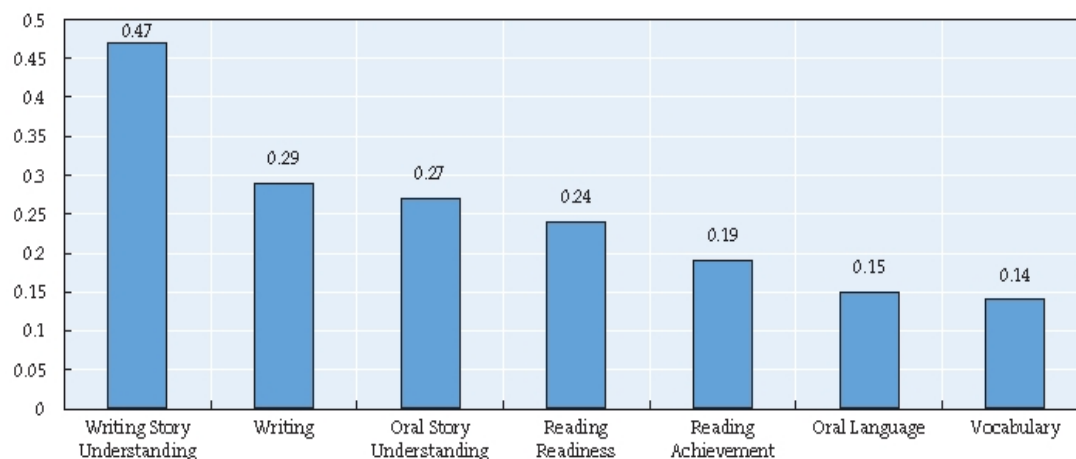
The roadmap covers both arts education as a narrower area pertaining to creative self-expression and critical thinking, and the broader notion of cultural education referring to cultural diversity and transmission.

The second Unesco conference, held in Seoul in 2010, set the Seoul [Agenda](#) and identified three goals for arts education: accessibility, high quality of programmes and teaching, and the use of arts education principles to address contemporary social and cultural challenges.

Potential benefits of arts and cultural education

Scientific argument

While the role of culture and arts in improving social cohesion, or in serving as an instrument for social emancipation, has been questioned on the grounds of lack of solid scientific research, existing studies suggest that arts and cultural education does have an instrumental value.¹ For instance, researchers have investigated the [links](#) between learning arts and performance in numeracy or speech, as shown in a study on the link between language and music skills in dyslexic children. They seem to make faster progress when musical activities address the difficulties they experience with [rhythm](#). Another example is a study on the relationship between musical training and the development of hand-motor skills mentioned in a 2013 [OECD paper](#) on the potential effects of arts education.

Figure 1 – Strengthening verbal skills through theatre education: a clear link

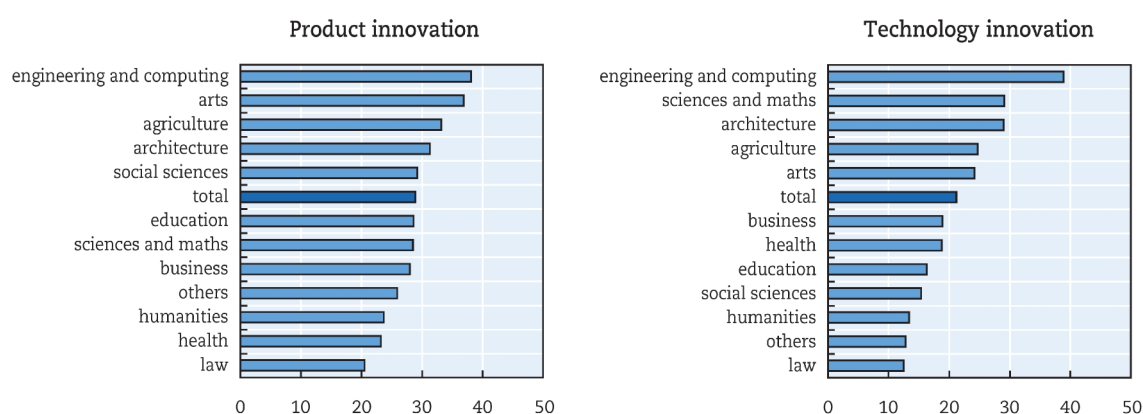
Source: [OECD](#), 2013 (after Podlozny, A. (2000) 'Strengthening verbal skills through the use of classroom drama: A clear link', *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 34/3-4, pp. 91-104.).

Musical engagement projects have helped youth deal with [social difficulties](#) and have contributed to a better teaching and learning process. While these links are difficult to prove, that between theatre and verbal skills seems well-established (see Figure 1).

Socio-economic arguments in favour of arts and cultural education

According to Unesco's 2013 report on the cultural and creative industries (CCI), employment in the cultural industry [ranged](#) from 6.51 % in Switzerland to 1.38 % in Qatar. The top EU achiever was Sweden (6.24 %). The sector gains importance for the economy because the labour market needs creative individuals able to innovate, work in teams, communicate and adapt to changing environments and requirements. Arts education recognises creativity as a [basic human capacity](#) that needs to be nurtured.

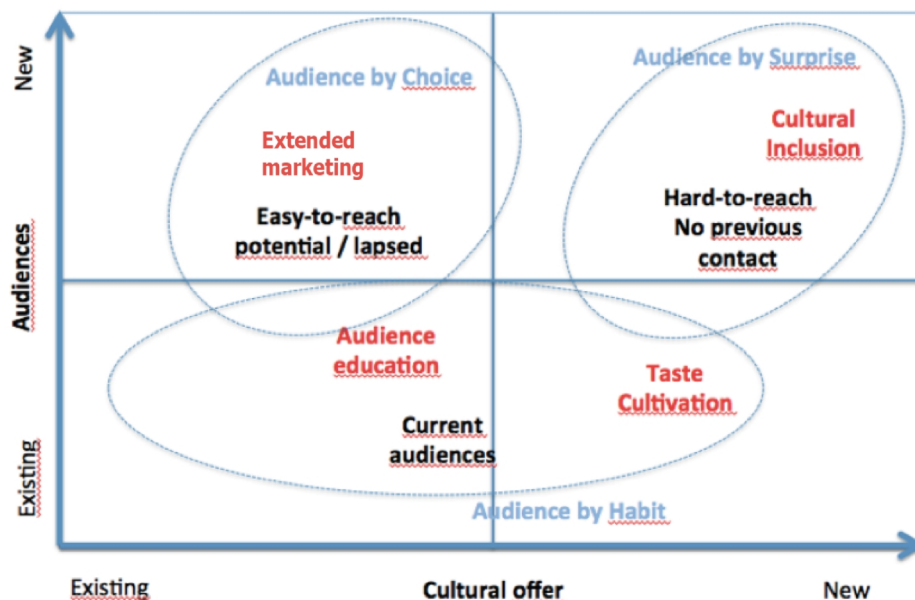
According to the OECD, on an instrumental level, vocational training in this domain is needed for an economy, with an estimated [share of CCI](#) ranging between 3 % and 6 % of GDP. However, it also argues that, generally, clear recognition of artistic skills at par with skills in other domains gives students self-confidence and encourages them to develop their talents. The OECD also investigated the role of arts education in the development of other skills. Figure 2 shows how education, for example artistic education, contributes to innovation.

Figure 2 – Tertiary graduates from different fields in highly innovative jobs

Source: [OECD](#), 2013 (quoting Avvisati, Jacotin and Vincent-Lancrin (2013). Based on Reflex and Hegesco).

The growth of CCI reflects the rise in cultural consumption, which provides another reason in favour of arts and cultural education. Cultural demand rooted in cultural literacy, and possibly in artistic practices, could benefit both consumers and producers in CCI (Figure 3).

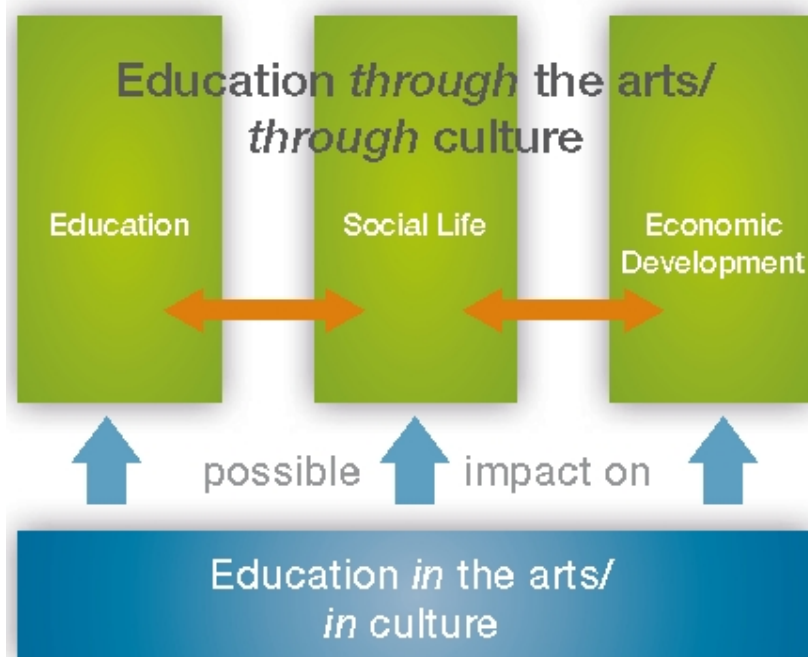
Figure 3 – Relationship between cultural offer and audiences



Source: European Commission final report, [Study on Audience development](#), 2017.

In the context of multiculturalism and global economic competition, reliance on creative talent, and cultural and arts education seem to be more important than in industrial societies where artistic instruction, defined as high culture, was provided only to the elite.

Figure 4 – Relation between arts and cultural education, economy and society



Source: [Cultural Awareness and Expression Handbook](#), p. 25, European Union, 2016.

Figure 4 shows the inter-relation between education in and through arts and culture, and education, social life and economic development. Reports on creativity in culture suggest that an environment which allows for diversity favours the development of individuals who are willing to adapt to change, are able to engage with the growing [complexity](#) of social values and ways of life, and are better able to flourish in a multicultural society. Awareness of social, confessional and ethnic complexity, and a sense of [empathy](#) are important for democracy and social cohesion. Some evidence shows that participation in performing arts helps develop [positive identity](#) and higher self-esteem, thus empowering disadvantaged children.

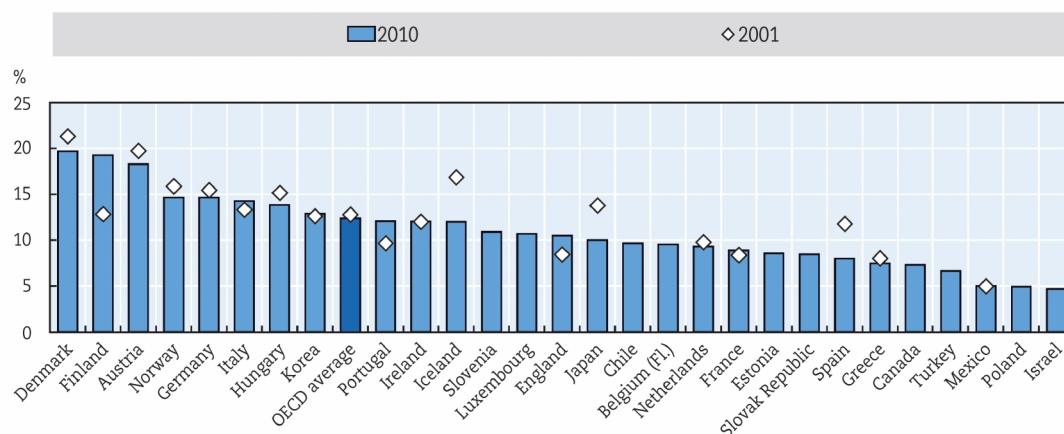
The place of arts and culture in education

The focus on compulsory education is important, since public education institutions are the place where all pupils and students have an opportunity to study arts and to acquire cultural competences as part of their education. However, the place of arts and cultural education in compulsory public schooling is not to be taken for granted, even though today's youth live in multicultural societies and are a part of the digital revolution that allows them easier access to, and participation in, culture and arts.

School curricula tend to vary in the importance they attribute to cultural or arts education. Likewise, a variety of skills and competences are taught in public schools as part of the arts and cultural education. [Arts education](#) is provided in compulsory pre-school teaching, where a wide range of arts is covered, and in primary school curricula, where mostly music and visual arts are taught. These are optional study areas in lower-secondary education in some Member States, or are provided as extra-curricular activities, against payment, or in specialised secondary schools.

The OECD's comparative analysis of the time devoted to artistic education in different mandatory school curricula by age groups (Figures 5 and 6) shows sizeable differences within the EU.

Figure 5 – Instruction time in arts subjects as a percentage of total compulsory instruction time for 9-11 year-olds (2001-2010)

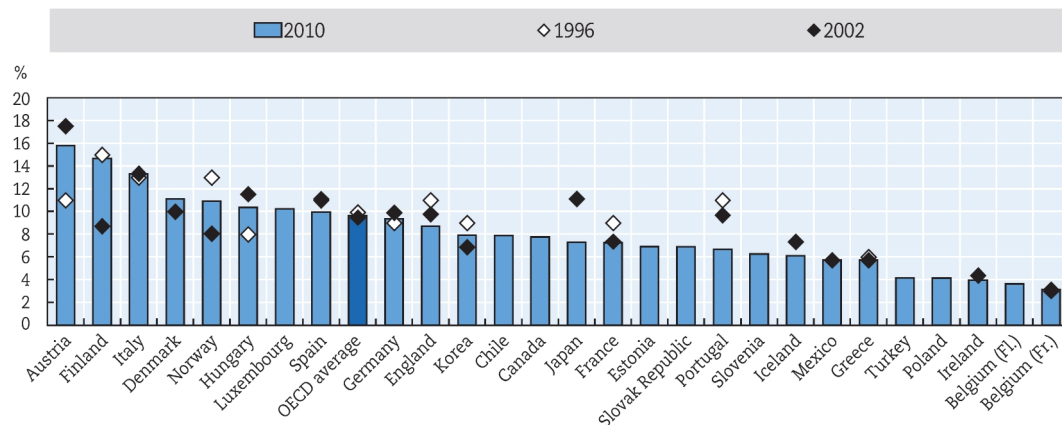


Source: [OECD](#), 2013.

While Austria, Finland, Italy and Denmark devote the highest percentage of total compulsory education to arts, only Finland ranks second in science, third in reading, and six in mathematics, reaching the highest scores among EU Member States in [PISA 2009](#) (the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment) results among 15 year-old students. Austria ranks 39th in reading and Italy ranks 35th both in mathematics and science, with other EU Member States that spend much less time on arts instruction

reaching better results in PISA scores. These divergent results pose a further question about the possible reasons behind these differences and about the relationship between arts and science education. Some research on these aspects would provide a useful contribution to educational policies. Ken Robinson, a scholar investigating educational models that work for pupils experiencing difficulties in school, provides examples of very successful schools in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, whose success is based on the importance and role they assign to arts in education, at par with other subjects.²

Figure 6 – Instruction time in arts subjects as a percentage of total compulsory instruction time for 12-14 year-olds (1996, 2002, 2010)



Source: [OECD](#), 2013.

The OECD study [concludes](#) that art, together with science, technology, mathematics and the humanities, is part of human experience, and can be taught in different ways, which can be innovative or traditional, and more or less open to experiment. Cultural or arts education in itself will not result in open-minded individuals, more equality or social cohesion. On the contrary, a focus that is exclusively national or ethnic, or is solely placed on high culture, can lead to social alienation or nurture feelings of superiority and disdain towards those who are different, or even foster fanatical or xenophobic attitudes. The study suggests that it is probably the way arts and culture are taught that makes the difference. This view is supported by Ken Robinson's studies and research, and applies to all subjects.

Cultural and arts education in compulsory school curricula, when taught on an equal footing with other subjects and approached in an experimental way, offers children an area for exploration and learning through experience and self-expression. Cultural and arts education entails both knowledge to be acquired and space for experimentation. Culture and arts are complementary and one is not a substitute for the other. Education in both is needed.

Cultural engagement as part of arts and cultural education

Learning as an innate human capacity goes beyond the formal framework of institutions tasked with providing education according to established curricula. It also takes the form of informal and non-formal education. [Informal education](#) results from leisure and other personal projects undertaken out of a personal interest in activities such as sports, or in artistic undertakings. Non-formal education refers to planned learning with a defined timeframe and programme outside mandatory school curricula. This could correspond to attending arts courses in cultural centres or institutions.

The EU's role in and support for cultural education

EU competences

Competence for culture and education policies lies with the Member States. EU actions in the domain are based on [Article 6](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which gives the EU a role in supporting Member States through the allocation of financial means, and in supplementing and coordinating their efforts. [Articles 165](#) and [166](#) TFEU refer specifically to the EU competences concerning education and vocational training, while [Article 167](#) TFEU defines EU actions in the cultural domain. In both cases, the Council can adopt recommendations for Member States' cultural policies, and encourage them to engage in educational cooperation and to exchange good practices. The European Parliament, together with the Council, can adopt incentives in both domains. [Article 9](#) TFEU imposes an obligation on the EU to promote a high level of education, without defining it precisely.

EU converging economic and educational goals

The Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and jobs sets a number of objectives in 2010 for the EU economy, supported by seven flagship initiatives. In the light of recent developments and the digital revolution, three flagship initiatives under the 'smart growth' objective – '[Digital agenda for Europe](#)', '[Innovation Union](#)' and '[Youth on the move](#)', as well as '[An agenda for new skills and jobs](#)' under the inclusive growth objective – point to possible convergence between economic and educational goals. The digital economy, the steady growth of the cultural and creative industries, and a strong reliance on innovation require arts and cultural education to support economic growth and job creation. The agenda for new skills and jobs includes, among other practical measures, the European framework for [key competences](#) for lifelong learning, which also covers cultural awareness and expression.

The [Education and Training 2020 strategy](#) for cooperation in education and training, set out in May 2009 Council conclusions, is aimed at implementing the Europe 2020 strategy's educational objectives. It relates to lifelong learning and the recognition of skills and competences. One of its objectives is the enhancement of innovation and creativity, among other things through partnerships between educational and research institutions, and cultural entities and CCI.

Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council

Key competences for lifelong learning were first mentioned in a December 2006 [recommendation](#) of the European Parliament and Council, whereby cultural awareness constitutes the EU's main framework for cultural education. Cultural competence is defined in terms of the ability to express ideas creatively in a variety of media, to possess knowledge about cultural heritage and popular contemporary culture, and to develop appropriate attitudes (Figure 7).

Cultural competence covers education in arts and culture, namely the knowledge of major works of local, regional, national or European cultural heritage against the backdrop of world cultures. Arts education could also entail practical knowledge of artistic techniques and media, and of their historical development. Cultural awareness is a process that develops throughout life by exposure to all art forms, styles or media.

Figure 7 – 'Cultural awareness and expression' key competence: knowledge, skills, attitudes

Knowledge of the learner	Skills of the learner	Attitudes of the learner
Basic knowledge of facts, ideas and emotions related to expressions of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – arts – applied arts – heritage/history/tradition – popular culture – subcultures – media – diversity (cultural and linguistic). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ability to perceive, enjoy, appreciate, analyse and criticise cultural artefacts and processes; • capacity for cultural expression in a range of media. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • confidence and motivation to cultivate cultural capacities; • open attitude to and interest in cultural expression (self and other); • respect for the cultural expressions, identities and views of others.

Related to general skills: critical thinking, creativity, initiative, problem solving, risk assessment, decision making and constructive management of feelings

Source: [Cultural Awareness and Expression Handbook](#), p. 45, European Union, 2016,

The educational aim is to help understand and develop a sense of belonging to a culture, as well as to understand and respect the diversity of cultural identities. Education is expected to foster open and creative attitudes accompanied by aesthetic development, an interest in cultural practices and informed cultural consumption. If properly implemented in classrooms, it helps develop critical thinking and the ability to express one's opinions, and relate this to divergent points of view.

EU support for cultural education

The [Creative Europe programme](#), the EU's main tool for providing support for cultural activities and education over the 2014-2020 period, was established by Regulation (EU) No 1295/2013. The programme envisages support for cultural education projects covering various artistic and media activities. The programme co-funds cultural cooperation, networking and platform projects involving organisations from the EU Member States and other eligible countries.

The EU-supported [European Theatre Convention](#) has been working on theatre education projects, such as '[Young Europe 2: Multilingual Creation and Education in Theatre](#)'. The project offered artistic education through theatre and multilingualism, allowing the creation and presentation of theatre performances to young audiences, including schools, until 2013. It has been followed by a new international theatre cooperation project, '[Searching for NADIA](#)', focusing on young audiences and investigating questions of identity and radicalisation by means of open dialogue through digital communication. It will develop a digital online education tool and an open-source platform on this pan-European issue.

The Creative Europe programme funded a 2015 study by the European Theatre Convention on [audience for European theatre](#) (pp. 38-39), which pointed to the role of education in audience development. The research covered several theatres from EU and non-EU countries and analysed various aspects of audience development. It concluded that educational activities ranked highest as the most popular and efficient way of attracting new audiences. Such activities include workshops and theatre clubs as well as lectures, talks and introductions to theatre productions provided in interested institutions. Activities at schools and universities, that is, outside theatre premises, target specific audiences and foster closer relationships. The study recommends amateur practices (cultural engagement) involving the non-academic public as a way of providing theatre education.

A January 2017 [study](#) on audience development also funded from the Creative Europe envelope confirms the role of education (Figure 3) in attracting new audiences to theatres, but also highlights the importance of participatory approaches ([cultural engagement](#)) for involving new audiences in theatre performances.

The Creative Europe Media sub-programme has recently included actions in the field of [film education](#) (media literacy) aimed at promoting film literacy thanks to increased knowledge and interest, particularly among youth, in European audiovisual works that are either contemporary or belong to the film heritage. Moreover, in respect of cinematographic art, the European Commission recommends that its Member States undertake the task of [film heritage digitisation](#) and use funding from the EU Structural Funds for such projects. It claims that film works on celluloid or VHS will perish or stay inaccessible and unknown if not digitally preserved and archived, with copyrights cleared for educational purposes.

Other EU programmes offer support for cultural education projects and youth mobility. The [European Voluntary Service](#) (EVS) set up the [European Youth Portal](#) listing EU-supported projects in various domains, including culture and cultural education. EVS projects, such as one in Budapest on [theatre in education](#), are funded through the [Erasmus+ programme](#). The Budapest project aims at initiating a dialogue with young people on their place in society using the theatre experience.

Recent policy developments in cultural education

Experts' recommendations for cultural awareness and expression

In 2014, an expert group was established following the framework of the EU open method of coordination ([OMC](#), aimed at supporting policy reform in areas where the EU has no direct competence). The group, composed of experts from culture ministries and national cultural institutions from all Member States, set itself the goal to implement the Council work plans for culture for the 2011-2014 and 2015-2018 periods. During its regular meetings, the group further developed the 2006 recommendation on cultural awareness and expression, by analysing educational practices in Member States to find and define successful solutions in developing skills related to cultural awareness and expression.

As a result, in December 2015 the expert group published a [handbook](#) covering all levels of school education and all forms of education. It recommended ways to develop cultural [skills](#), to gain knowledge about cultural and artistic works and to learn how to appreciate works of art and artistic performances. Cultivating all these attitudes, the experts argue, is conducive to self-expression in a variety of media and to openness to other points of view on cultural and artistic issues. Eleven recommendations address cultural and educational policies and accompanying actions for Member States, the European Commission and EU policy-makers.

Research projects and international cooperation

'Horizon 2020', the EU programme supporting research, co-finances the [CoHERE](#) project, which investigates cultural heritage, traditions and identities, explores museum displays, interprets heritage, supports school curricula, dance and music performances, as well as traditions related to food, cuisine and rituals. Having kicked off in April 2016, the multidisciplinary project seeks to create tools for shaping policy, curricula and good museum and heritage practice.

In its 2016 communication 'A New Skills Agenda for Europe', the Commission announced its intention to work together with the OECD and to assist Member States in setting up national skills strategies and action plans based on evidence and an interdisciplinary, collaborative approach.

Expert group recommendations for EU-level action:

- to improve knowledge of cultural awareness, to support policy-making in this field through support for the work of existing international bodies, the exchange of research, policy actions and good practices, and links between the Commission and Member States with bodies such as Unesco, the Council of Europe and the OECD;
- to support policy development in cultural awareness and expression through monitoring that ensures high quality, and through an update of the Eurydice network's 2009 report on cultural awareness and expression;
- to develop initial teacher education and continuing professional development for all educators, support staff and culture education professionals, in order to improve the skills and understanding necessary to enable them to develop cultural awareness and expression in learners. This is to be achieved through the mapping of cultural awareness and expression in teacher-training and through continued professional development of all educators;
- for the Commission to make culture more accessible for all citizens, by facilitating investment in cross-sectoral infrastructure. This would aim at increased and sustainable accessibility to cultural institutions, while investment in digital tools for cultural and educational institutions would improve access to artefacts, cultural experiences, and develop skills for media literacy;
- for the Commission to look for ways to integrate cultural awareness and expression in specific and cross-curricular subjects in primary and secondary school curricula, through mapping, an online survey, or a Eurydice study. The aim is to better understand how learning in different teaching environments can impact on the competence, and to develop reference frameworks for teachers, school leaders and educational resource providers, including a teacher-artist cooperation as suggested in the 2009 Eurydice study;
- to promote a transversal approach that favours interconnections among different policy areas and sectors.

Digital access

The Commission has initiated digitisation projects on cultural heritage, which is in line with the recommendation to provide digital tools facilitating access to heritage and other cultural artefacts. DG CONNECT is in charge of [digital cultural heritage](#) projects for making European libraries, archives, museums and audiovisual archives available online. One of its achievements, [Europeana](#), which has been financed through the Connecting Europe Facility, is a single access point, a digital platform providing access to Europe's cultural heritage and culture in general, for all citizens, for educational and leisure purposes. In 2016 it initiated the [Europeana 280](#) cross-border campaign to popularise ages-old European artworks.

Experts believe the EU could play a role in raising cultural awareness and promoting artistic expression in schools, by initiating research, creating networks for the exchange of good practices, and establishing reference frameworks for monitoring as well as for mapping achievements and areas in need of development. They recognise the importance of teachers' qualifications and preparedness for the task of developing students' competence in the cultural and artistic domains. The recommendations point to the need to monitor the quality of art education in order to improve its status and the quality of teaching.

However, cultural awareness and expression are not on an equal footing with other competences taught in school curricula in the way they are evaluated. The 2009 Eurydice study 'Arts and Cultural Education at School in Europe' pointed out that formal evaluation

is rarely applied, and the lack of [assessment criteria](#) does not allow outside monitoring of students' progress in art education. When certain domains of knowledge and skills are tested, while others are not, their status is rendered unequal. This could undermine the status of those domains, such as [arts teaching](#), which are not tested.

In order to address this shortcoming and face the challenge of assessing the acquisition of cultural awareness and expression, the OECD initiated a [research project](#) on assessing creative and critical thinking skills developed in an interdisciplinary teaching environment, which also covers arts and cultural instruction. As a result, skills belonging to cultural awareness and expression will be assessed in a 2021 PISA survey.

New Commission input on cultural awareness and expression issues

In June 2016, in its communication 'A New Skills Agenda for Europe', the Commission announced the review of the 2006 Council and Parliament recommendation 'The Key Competences for Lifelong Learning', which will take place in the last quarter of 2017. In February 2017, the Commission launched a [public consultation](#) on the key competences in order to check their validity and usefulness eleven years later. The communication aims at modernising education, also as concerns supporting teachers and trainers in introducing new methods; stimulating innovation and creativity; and making the best use of cultural diversity in classrooms.

Consultative bodies' views

In its [opinion of February 2017](#) on the communication on the new skills agenda, the European Economic and Social Committee regretted that the Commission did not put enough focus on transversal, transferable and social skills, such as critical thinking. It also noted that cultural competences covered by cultural awareness and expression mentioned in the 2006 recommendation were not sufficiently taken into consideration, since the Commission approached skills from a job market perspective and focused on 'minimal sets of skills' and skills mismatch.

According to the EESC, such an approach disregards the importance of communication, cultural and personal skills in bringing together workers originating from various cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds, to fully benefit from mobility opportunities and to enhance creativity and innovation as well as critical thinking.

The European Parliament's concern for arts and cultural education policy

MEPs' questions to the Commission on cultural awareness and expression

MEPs in the current legislature continue to follow the implementation of the 2006 recommendation of the European Parliament and Council on lifelong learning, which includes cultural awareness and expression, recognition of the importance of artistic and cultural education for social cohesion and creative self-expression for critical thinking and openness.

EP support for the EU Youth Orchestra (EUYO)

The EUYO was [founded](#) on 8 March 1976 following an EP [resolution](#). It offers young musicians from the EU Member States the opportunity to work with internationally renowned professionals, conductors and soloists and to achieve the highest standards of orchestra performance. Young musicians are cultural ambassadors of the EU.

Developing the [skills and competences](#) of young musicians to enhance their professional prospects, as well as bringing Europeans closer to music as a contribution to the development of a better society, are among its ambitious objectives.

When in 2016 the EUYO was about to close down due to lack of EU funding, the Parliament proposed a pilot project, '[Promotion of EU values through music](#)', funded from the Creative Europe programme, to ensure the necessary funding.

MEPs have asked the Commission to provide additional clarification concerning [film literacy](#) in education, be it formal, non-formal or informal, and funding opportunities from the Creative Europe programme. In 2016 the Commission launched a call for proposals for a pilot project called for by the EP, '[Media Literacy for all](#)'. Media literacy is considered essential for a healthy democracy. Thus the project aims at enabling all citizens to think critically when dealing with information and to be able to distinguish information from propaganda, and interact with social media in a mindful, respectful and critical way. A special expert group on media literacy was set up to discuss the possibility of developing and disseminating a tool enhancing [critical thinking](#).

The European Parliament

In March 2017, the Parliament started preparing an [own-initiative report](#) on a new skills agenda for Europe, and considered a recommendation for Member States to broaden their basic skills framework to cover intercultural skills too.

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² K.Robinson, Ph.D., L. Aronica, Creative Schools, 'The Grassroots Revolution that's Transforming Education', Penguin, 2016.

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