

# ACCESS TO CULTURE



**A fundamental right of all citizens**

## **Cultural participation in education and lifelong learning:**

**a catalyst for personal advancement, community development, social change and economic growth**

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## Context and rationale: culture, education and lifelong learning

The **Access to Culture Platform** is a channel for cultural stakeholders to provide concrete input and practice-based policy recommendations to European, national, regional and local policy-makers<sup>2</sup>. It has the mandate to bring in the voice of civil society to provide recommendations for policies that can foster access of all to the cultural life in its different dimensions. As a new effective instrument for consultation at European level, the Platform facilitates the open dialogue on crucial issues and provides guidelines and recommendations that aim at opening the way to new policy development at all levels<sup>3</sup>. The Platform currently has 48 representatives from 36 different cultural organizations in Europe, covering diverse areas from performing arts, heritage, architecture, culture centres, schools, minority languages and more.

The **Working Group on Education and Learning** (WGEL) is one of the three main threads of the Access to Culture Platform<sup>4</sup>. It explores the benefits of the interaction and the synergy between education, learning and culture and the role that cultural participation plays in different educational settings. The Working Group explored the importance of cultural experiences not only within the formal educational system, but in the overall developing of social and civic competences and in the elaboration of lifelong learning concepts. From a practical perspective, lifelong learning concept covers the ongoing educational experiences over the entire life of individuals, from their early childhood on to their older senior years, that utilize non-credit and out-of-classroom courses, educational initiatives, diverse training settings, community services and different forms of volunteerism to fully engage the human brain, heighten physical activity, and maintain healthy social relationships in a society. Learning is seen as an ongoing activity to acquire new knowledge or develop skills at the workplaces and other community settings, and is related to constant interactions with others.

Therefore lifelong learning programmes enhance social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development and in this way contribute to the competitiveness and employability. Cultural participation and activities have a strong role to play in this process from variety of perspectives. One of the difficulties is that when the cultural sector creates learning activities with no relation to formal education, it is often approached as “leisure”, or “craftsmanship”, and sometimes not taken seriously by decision-makers and funders. Therefore, a deeper understanding of the impact of cultural engagement in education and lifelong learning is required, as well as wider dissemination of extraordinary practices and cases that lead to positive outcomes.

This document summarizes the key papers produced by the WGEL as a result of its collective work in the last 3 years.

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<sup>2</sup> The platform was launched on 5 June 2008 at the initiative of the European Commission in the framework of the European Agenda for Culture.

<sup>3</sup> The Policy Guidelines of the Platform as a result of its first year of existence were released on June 9, 2009 and can be downloaded from the Cultural Portal of the EC [http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-policy-development/doc1581\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-policy-development/doc1581_en.htm).

<sup>4</sup> The other two working groups are: the Working Group on Creativity and Creation and the Working Group on Audience Participation.

## Key statements

- [ The triangle “*culture-education-learning*” has a transformative long-term effects and impact at individuals, organizations, communities and the society as a whole.
- [ The creative potential of people in a society may be nursed, stimulated and cultivated. Culture and arts have a key role to play in this process, especially in relation to connections between creativity and education, both formal and non-formal one.
- [ Cultural sector has a strong pedagogical impact: it is capable to produce original and effective pedagogical programmes that are based on the engagement with culture.
- [ Cultural sector contributes effectively to the lifelong learning: it creates learning activities that reach people in a true and real lifelong and life wide meaning.
- [ Cultural sector offers learning of several key competences: cultural awareness is just the tip of the competence iceberg.

## Shared practices: “extraordinary meetings between education and culture”

Learning through cultural engagement has an enormous potential and is still underexplored. WGEL collected 60 examples and best practices of innovative connections between education and culture that have a strong impact on diverse target groups and give evidences for long-lasting effects: personal, social and economic. These “*extraordinary meetings between education and culture*” introduce unique methods and mechanisms that can be developed further in other settings and countries. The cases and examples were collected through a process whereby all participating organisations asked their members to look for and report on activities which they themselves saw as interesting examples of learning through cultural engagement beyond the usual. The final material represents diverse sectors, such as: heritage and museums (23 examples), music (10), theatre (7), adult education (13), building conservation and architecture (5), library sector (1) and modern art (1). The focus on children and young people is evident in the collected examples. Other target groups are: adults, seniors, and families. Below are highlights of several cases where evidences of innovation, creativity, and professionalism bring long-lasting effects. They give a good flavor on why and how cultural participation could be related to education and lifelong learning.

### [ **Helping children with special educational needs**<sup>5</sup>

The Barclays Special Educational Needs Project is design to suit children with special educational needs by organizing focused days on: Shakespeare, Working Animals, Fire and Light and Harvest. The aims are two-fold: to develop a sustainable programme of activities for this educational group, which included children with physical, intellectual and behavioural problems, and to encourage staff from Barclays Bank to attend the Museum on those days as

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<sup>5</sup> Website: [www.wealldown.co.uk](http://www.wealldown.co.uk)

assistants in a voluntary capacity. The corresponding outcomes are: to increase social participation and interaction for the children involved, and develop in the participating bank employees an interest in community and voluntary activities.

[ **Raising awareness among youth aged 12-15 to architectural heritage and related professions<sup>6</sup>**

This initiative of the Walloon Institute for Cultural Heritage stresses on organizing of four day courses as well as short summer schools at the Cistercian abbey, founded in 1244, currently under restoration. Living and working for a number of days on a prestigious site, accompanied by conservation and restoration experts and professionals, instils a passion for cultural heritage and its values, and opens a door to a future professional life in the field. Over 5000 students and more than 350 teachers have been involved in these courses in the past 10 years.

[ **Artistic expression in aid to the school performance**

The Music Manifesto National Singing Programme in UK (2007-2011), led by Youth Music, with AMV-BBDO, Faber Music and The Sage Gateshead, supported by the UK government, aimed to raise the status of singing and increase opportunities for school children to enjoy singing as part of their everyday lives, and to support all primary schools to become “singing schools”. The programme showed a noticeable impact on pupils’ self-esteem, sense of belonging and personal development. Singing together is a collective performance and a social activity where everyone is equal. It creates the feeling of mutual collaboration and working in a team: both very important to be nurtured since early ages as they help in the adulthood professional environment. Training and developing children’s’ voices boost their self-confidences and their capacity to take on challenges: another important feature that helps individuals to achieve their future goals.

[ **Towards an active democracy by engaging marginalized young people<sup>7</sup>**

Theatre in Education project engages children from various age groups from different communities in Hungary, Slovakia and Serbia. It offers opportunities for artistic expression of young people living in marginalized communities and facilitates an open debate about key democratic concepts. The project crosses borders not only between arts and education, but also-national, social and ethnic ones. The exhibition and publication as a result of the project gives voice to the young peoples’ artistic input and disseminate them widely.

[ **Widening access and inclusive creative process<sup>8</sup>**

The Guildhall School of Music & Drama in London has widened access to music making in the last three years by offering creative music workshop environment where people of all ages and experiences are able to engage with inclusive live music making process led by tutors and students. “*Gudhal Connect*” programme is about making connections, putting people, organizations and cultures in touch with each other and thus-enabling them to do better together. Such interaction increases the social cohesion and leads to better understanding and respect for differences. Four key activity areas underpin the programme: Youth

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<sup>6</sup> Website: [www.paixdieu.be](http://www.paixdieu.be)

<sup>7</sup> Website: [www.drama.hu](http://www.drama.hu)

<sup>8</sup> Website: <http://www.gsmd.ac.uk/connect>

music/creative partnership; Arts and community development project; MAP/making: Exploring new landscapes in music, art and performance, and Trans-cultural collaboration and research. They encourage widespread access and participation in music creation in an innovative and responsive way. This process enables organizations and people to do better together what they would do less well alone.

[ **Creative engagement as a factor to restart education and find work**<sup>9</sup>

The Xpress on Track project is a partnership between the Nordic Centre of Heritage Learning NCK, Jamtli Museum, Birka Fold High School and the State Regional Archives of Norway. It targeted young people who lack basic education and are unemployed. The participants get stimulated through a great variety of activities related to heritage which includes research, archaeology, exhibitions, genealogy, and restoration etcetera. The aim of the project is to stimulate the participants into re-starting their education, possibly, but not necessarily, at Birka Folk High School, or to work more intensively at applying for jobs and finding work. The results show that a third of them have begun basic education, another third have found employment.

[ **Deepening the dialogue between residents and migrants in an intercultural way**<sup>10</sup>

Changing Horizons – Secrets of the New City is an intercultural and interdisciplinary art project dealing with migration. By enabling theatre groups from different countries and cultures to share recent migration history and to cooperate in making and performing theatre about it, the project aims to deepen the dialogue between residents and migrants and bring different cultures together. The mutual influence and collaboration produces a “democratisation” of the dramaturgy by using elements of dance, movement, theatre and visual arts. The intercultural way of theatre making tries to establish a theatrical dialogue between different cultures that usually aim for the ‘living apart-together relationship’.

[ **Reminiscence and respectful citizenship: helping elderly people with symptoms of dementia**<sup>11</sup>

The open air museum in Aarhus, Denmark elaborated programmes focusing on holistic stimulation of all senses of elderly people. The creation of such open space for personal expressions through listening and conversations welcomes participants in a three dimensional authentic environment from the past (period between 1920s – 1940s). Elderly people may listen to popular music, political speeches, look at pictures from the past, smell or taste food from their childhood. The programme accommodates the special needs of the participants which are researched in advance. The results shows indicators for better functioning of elderly people involved in the programmes, higher quality of their life and improved dignity, a tendency of decreased violent behavior. The programme was made possible because of an untraditional creative partnership between the municipality and the museum.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.nckultur.org/en/>

<sup>10</sup> Website: [www.fabrevieux.nl](http://www.fabrevieux.nl)

<sup>11</sup> Website: [www.dengamleby.dk](http://www.dengamleby.dk)

## Results and impact

Collected examples show the strong impact that the programmes of connection between cultural participation, education and learning have on individuals, organizations, communities, as well as on the society as a whole. In a long-term well elaborated policy framework, such programmes contribute to the social changes and the economic growth.

### Impact on individuals

Cultural engagement as part of lifelong learning and education:

- [ Raises self-value and self worth of individuals, with an overall positive impact on their whole lives, well being and happiness.
- [ Develops artistic competences, creativity and skills of people from all ages and improves their confidence in being a creative person.
- [ Breaks isolation and leads to social cohesion by bringing people from wide range of backgrounds, ages and experiences.
- [ Makes individuals more aware of social issues and the need for a cohesive behavior for solving them.
- [ Makes people of all ages more interested in the arts, develop their sense of ownership, transforming them from “outsiders” to “insiders” in the creative process.
- [ Improves personal curiosity, motivates people to learn more and understand about different subject matters related to society and beyond.
- [ Improves the abilities of individuals to learn by experimenting, engaging and active participation which leads to increase of the overall individual learning capacity.

### Impact on advancing competences

It is important to emphasize that as a result of the lifelong learning, individuals acquire competences that are developed throughout their lifetime and this process contributes not only to the individual well being, but gives economic results and improves the life of communities in a long-run. Within the European context, the key competences for lifelong learning are formulated as: Communication in the mother tongue; Communication in foreign languages; Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; Digital competence; Learning to learn; Social and civic competences; Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; Cultural awareness and expression. The collected by WGEL programmes for extraordinary learning through cultural engagement show that the combination of social and civic competences, cultural awareness and expression competence and learning to learn competence are the most advanced as a result.

### Impact on cultural organizations

The key success factors in elaborating programmes connecting culture, education and lifelong learning are: professionalism, well elaborated methodological framework, incorporating innovative elements, high quality of programming and engaging of diverse stakeholders. These programs are important from organizational perspective because they help a cultural organization to:

- [ Explore elements of new organizational models in relation to further strategies and development at organizational level.
- [ Elaborate of participatory models of artistic creation by active engagement of audiences.
- [ Find, develop and engage new audiences, including from disadvantaged areas.
- [ Raise the profile of cultural organizations on local, national and international level.
- [ Extend the horizon of finding new colleagues and partners for further collaborative creative work.
- [ Create new groups of supporters and friends for further lobbying and advocacy level in support of the importance of arts and culture in the society.

### Impact on communities

Programmes connecting culture, education and lifelong learning are important for improving the life and the overall living standards of the communities because they:

- [ Help people from marginalized communities to express themselves and be actively involved in collaborative creative processes.
- [ Provide opportunities for exchange of opinions and open debates between community members and make their voice widely heard.
- [ Integrate immigrants to the life of community and increase the level of intercultural understanding.
- [ Improve educational level and help for returning to school by the help of creativity and collaboration.
- [ Give a sense of ownership to a cultural project and improves inclusive cultural policy models.
- [ Improve level of social and economic engagement of community members and reintegrate them to the society.

## Key conclusions and policy recommendations

As a result of the collaborative work with members, chain of open discussions, the undertaken research process, and analysis of examples of extraordinary connections between cultural participation, education and lifelong learning, the WGEL puts forward the following ten key conclusions and policy recommendations:

1. There is a need to [strengthen the relations between cultural organizations and institutions dealing with both formal and non-formal education.](#) Cross-connections between culture and education open new learning methods, adapted to different target groups, among them children, young people, adults and seniors. Cultural sector has proven to answer effectively to the needs of different learning styles of peoples and groups, especially related to using creativity and innovation and participation as part of the learning process.
2. [Engaging children and young people in innovative and interactive creative processes](#) as part of their formal and non-formal education is a very important way to develop future audiences and supporters of arts and culture. This process will increase cultural participation in a strategic framework.
3. [Nurturing the democratic attitude of young people through multicultural programmes](#) that explore new models of an open dialogue is an important background for building up democratic societies. The “*no-winners and losers*” concept which stays at the bottom of the programs connecting cultural engagement with education certainly helps for developing the sense of equality and collectiveness.
4. [Creating open spaces for personal expression of vulnerable groups of the population](#) where participants feel active and important for the programmes improves self-confidence, dignity, the overall quality of life of people, especially the one facing physical, emotional or mental health problems. Cultural engagement and the use of artistic methods in educational programmes for vulnerable groups of the population are proven to be effective and deserve further attention, as well as support.
5. Cross-artistic initiatives with [innovative elements and high responsiveness to changes](#) need a special focus. Developing adaptability of both individuals and organizations in the constantly changing world is an important tool for survival and strategic improvement.
6. The power of connecting cultural participation with education and learning should be incorporated into [programmes for adaptation of migrants.](#) Intercultural way of art making is an effective path to mutual influence and collaboration between people from different ethnic, religious and cultural background.
7. Connections between culture, education and learning [widen participants’ access to both cultural and educational products and services.](#) This process leads to increased participation in both cultural and educational sector which brings arts and education nearer to everyday life. It also brings economic benefits to cultural organizations.
8. Programmes connecting cultural participation with education and learning are proven to improve [individual creativity and potential for innovation.](#) If combined with relevant entrepreneurial training, such programmes could be a powerful catalyst for improving entrepreneurial capacity in a society and could contribute to further economic growth.
9. Cultural professions and possibilities for [undertake a career in the cultural sector](#) should be introduced to children and youth from the very early ages. In a long-term



this process results in improving the employment in the cultural sector and brings economic benefits.

10. [Creative partnership and collaboration](#) between government, non-profit and business sectors on projects where the triangle between culture, education and lifelong learning is present should be encouraged and supported. Raising awareness in social issues among stakeholders is an important prerequisite for the success of programmes connecting culture with education and lifelong learning.

Learning through cultural engagement at all levels and for diverse target groups seems to be a powerful way for solving social and economic issues in the society. Stakeholders, cultural organizations, educational institutions, citizens and policy-makers need to continue seeking effective and innovative ways for further developing the triangle “culture-education-lifelong learning”. This need to be done as part of a participative and inclusive strategy-making and policy-making process at all levels. The true potential of the cultural sector in educational and lifelong learning programmes has been overlooked and needs special attention in the future as the positive impact at all levels is indisputable.