

Reply to the Call for Evidence on the Education Package 2040 Roadmap: Quality Education for All, Basic Skills, Teachers and Digital Education

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Introduction

Pearle*-Live Performance Europe is the European federation representing over 13,000 organisations and companies in the music, performing arts, and live event sectors. As a European employers' association, Pearle* takes part in the European sectoral social dialogue.

Pearle* supports the European Commission's ongoing initiative to strengthen basic skills in school education. Education is the foundation of a thriving cultural sector and society, in the same way as culture and the arts are an intrinsic value. While literacy, numeracy and digital skills are indispensable, Pearle* considers that the current framing of "basic skills" is incomplete without cultural and artistic skills. Engagement with music, theatre, dance, visual arts and other forms of creative expression is foundational to personal development, social cohesion, democratic participation and Europe's competitiveness in the cultural and creative industries.

Comments

Pearle* would like to highlight four key considerations for the proposed initiative:

1. **Cultural and artistic education should be recognised as a basic skill** alongside literacy, numeracy and digital competence. Cultural skills are the foundation of other basic skills: cultural education embraces the development of all arts, music, language, literature and world heritage, and lays the basis for professional development in the cultural sectors.

Two complementary types of skills can be distinguished within cultural and artistic education. On the one hand, studying the arts (visual arts, theatre, music and other art forms) helps develop analytical thinking, memory and pattern recognition, and provides learners with the knowledge to interpret and assign meaning to the world around them. On the other hand, practising arts and creativity develops soft skills and transversal skills, notably communication, self-expression, collaboration and adaptability. Self-expression through the arts, by practising theatre, dance, music, and more, develops core skills that assist a child's ability to learn from the earliest years. Culture is what shapes our world and our personal development; thus, cultural education supports knowledge transfer, independent thinking, participation and the ability to assign meaning to the world.

2. Pearle* supports the Commission's attention to **equity and inclusion in education**. Cultural education underpins social inclusion and cohesion and is a pillar to citizenship in society. Artists, cultural professionals, and cultural organisations are therefore important partners for educational institutes. Cultural education fosters mutual respect, empathy, understanding, tolerance and appreciation of diversity. In multicultural communities, most fears come from the unknown; cultural education offers knowledge and experience, enabling children to develop curiosity, openness, understanding and mutual respect. The initiative should include a strategy to ensure equitable access to cultural education. Not all children have equal access to cultural activities: family income and geographic location can shape the opportunities they receive. Systems between schools (ranging from public, state, private, and depending on their location in urban or rural areas) may magnify imbalances regarding children's access to culture. Schools should have the ability and means to act as equalisers, and EU policy should reflect the democratic function of schools in ensuring access for all, including children and young people from disadvantaged, minority and migrant backgrounds. Research and specific initiatives in different countries demonstrate that access to culture through education has positive effects on the personal growth and well-being of children and young people.
3. Pearle* recognises that skills development is closely linked to **economic productivity**. The cultural and creative sectors generate significant economic output and are a dynamic economic and social driver for achieving more growth and more and better jobs. Cultural education is an investment in Europe's future creative workforce, entrepreneurial capacity and innovation ecosystem. It equips young people with creativity, critical thinking and the ability to interpret, solve problems and contribute to a shared cultural life and society, which are skills increasingly demanded by employers.
4. Pearle* welcomes the Commission's recognition of the **value of non-formal and informal learning environments**. Learning does not happen only in schools: cultural organisations can powerfully complement the work of teachers and form an integral part of the wider learning environment around schools. In this context, particular attention should be given to ensuring that all children and young people have opportunities to experience professional arts and culture throughout their education, including professional performing arts. Encounters with professional theatre, music, dance and other live performances provide children not only with cultural knowledge, but also with direct experiences of artistic expression, creativity and the work of professional artists. Access to such experiences should not depend on family income, geographic location or the resources available to an individual school. Active cultural practice and participatory cultural activities also have proven positive effects and need to be included in a structural manner in educational policy. The Commission should therefore promote and support stronger and more structural cooperation between schools and cultural organisations at all levels, moving beyond one-off projects towards sustained partnerships with theatres, orchestras, festivals, cultural venues and professional artists. Such a framework could support regular school visits to

professional performances, workshops and artist-led activities, as well as longer-term partnerships between schools and cultural organisations. The situation is currently uneven across Europe, and EU-level action can help address disparities between and within countries. The EU should also facilitate greater exchange of good practices on arts-based learning and successful school–culture partnerships, for example through guidelines, a repository of examples, or adaptable models that schools and Member States can draw on.

Conclusion

Pearle* supports the Commission’s ambition to strengthen basic skills and urges that cultural and artistic skills be included in the strategy’s definition of foundational competences. Learning through and about culture is an integral component of quality education, lifelong learning and democratic participation.

The EU can ensure that every learner benefits from the creative, social, democratic and economic value of cultural education. EU-level support could usefully complement national, regional and local action and address imbalances across Europe in several ways: dedicated funding instruments to support research into the added value of cultural and artistic skills within basic skills frameworks; support for piloting projects at local and regional level that test culture-in-education approaches; and mechanisms that facilitate structured cooperation between cultural organisations, artists and schools, building on and reinforcing existing networks and Erasmus+ actions.