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The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on education and culture

Report[1]
Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media
Rapporteur: Mr Constantinos EFSTATHIOU, Cyprus, Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group

Summary

Long periods of isolation during the Covid-19 pandemic have shown to what degree education and exposure to culture are vital for individual and collective well-being. Adherence to democratic values and active citizenship, particularly among young people, are fundamental to address the numerous social, cultural, economic, and environmental challenges of the 21st century.

Both the European Commission and the European Parliament have taken important political steps to ensure that education and culture sectors are considered among priorities and are eligible for support through the emergency European Recovery and Resilience Facility with a reinforced EU budget for the period 2021-27. However, to benefit from this support, education and culture must be included in national recovery programmes.

In the context of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and of the European Green Deal, the investments in education and in cultural and creative sectors in Europe could also be an integral part of investments in innovation leading towards more sustainable and creative economies. Building synergies, mainstreaming culture and education in other sectors and providing incentives for creative partnerships with private sectors could be key for the future. Moreover, it would be urgent to establish a strong European digital framework that would be well-adapted for on-line education and for various cultural online offers.

1. Reference to committee: Doc. 15119, Reference 4523 of 15 September 2020.

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A. Draft resolution[2]

1. Long periods of isolation during the Covid-19 pandemic have shown to what degree education and exposure to culture are vital for individual and collective well-being. The Parliamentary Assembly urges that both sectors must continue to play their fundamental role to uphold an inclusive and democratic society, by reducing inequalities, creating opportunities and helping people, and particularly young people, develop positive attitudes and the competences required to be active and creative citizens in a healthy and vibrant democracy.

2. During the first lockdown in spring 2020, nurseries, primary schools, high schools and universities were closed, as a result a mixed solution of limited physical presence and distance learning has become the norm. Different culture sectors have been particularly hard hit with substantial economic losses. It is of concern that smaller independent cultural institutions are particularly at risk of disappearing if left without any public support. Seven million artists and cultural professionals in Europe are under threat of losing jobs due to the precariousness of their situation.

3. The Assembly welcomes that both the European Commission and the European Parliament have taken important political steps to ensure that education and culture sectors are considered among priorities and will be eligible for support through the emergency European Recovery and Resilience Facility with a reinforced EU budget for the period 2021-27. However, to benefit from this support, education and culture must be included by the member States in their national recovery programmes. There is a special responsibility for all democratic countries to ensure that education and culture can effectively respond to any challenges and obstacles which may derail the democratic process. In this respect a series of measures must be adopted to guarantee this.

4. The Assembly considers *inter alia* that national strategies ought to build on synergies and acknowledge that culture and education policies should be mutually reinforcing. The Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture provides an excellent basis to develop innovative partnerships and projects between schools and different culture sectors to guide young people in developing key democratic competences.

5. In the context of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and of the European Green Deal, the Assembly considers that investments in education and in cultural and creative sectors in Europe could also be an integral part of investments in innovation leading towards more sustainable and creative economies. Building synergies, mainstreaming culture and education in other sectors and providing incentives for creative partnerships with private sectors could therefore be key for the future.

6. The digital space became the main place for schools and higher education institutions to provide education and for numerous actors in cultural and creative sectors to perform and connect with their audiences. While this can be a very positive trend to democratise access to education and culture it also brings serious threats. The swift change to almost exclusive use of digital technologies has deepened the existing digital divide and inequalities and deprived artists and creative sectors of fair revenue due to lack of regulation. The Assembly therefore believes it would be urgent to resolve persisting challenges with global digital providers and to establish strong European digital framework that would be well-adapted for online education and for various cultural online offers.

7. Accordingly, the Assembly calls for the governments and parliaments of the member States of the Council of Europe to evaluate lessons learned from the implementation of emergency measures and review their policies, putting more emphasis on the long-term perspective, and to address structural weaknesses, which have deepened during the Covid-19 pandemic. Policy makers should in particular:

7.1. concerning the overall policy framework:

7.1.1. incorporate education and culture in national Covid-19 recovery plans and long-term strategies;

7.1.2. re-engage in a broad debate on policies for education and culture, encouraging citizen participation in the debate and the involvement of the relevant stakeholders;

7.1.3. consider a broader view across sectors where investments in education and in cultural and creative sectors can be also integral part of investments in innovation, leading towards more sustainable and creative economies in line with the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals;

2. Draft resolution adopted unanimously by the committee on 28 September 2021.

7.1.4. build synergies between the culture sectors and the education system, including formal education and lifelong learning, encouraging innovative partnerships to promote social inclusion and a culture of inclusion;

7.2. concerning the cultural sectors:

7.2.1. sustain the right of everyone to participate in cultural life as a core human right;

7.2.2. secure sustainable funding for cultural policies and develop strategic thinking at inter-ministerial level to mainstream culture and creativity in other policy areas such as education, vocational training, employment, research and innovation, social services, welfare and health; and increase public participation in the definition of cultural policies;

7.2.3. provide support mechanisms for artists and culture-related micro-enterprises and continue to financially support European exchange and co-productions to sustain the diversity of cultural and creative expressions and cultural pluralism, which reflect the vitality of European cultural identities and are also positive factors for innovation, global competitiveness and sustainable development;

7.2.4. improve working arrangements for standard and non-standard cultural workers to ensure social security and decent income levels, and provide them with training on income generation and project financing as well as on digital competences;

7.2.5. co-operate at European level to strengthen the legal protection of authors and regulate digital platforms to ensure fair income and legal protection of artistic and creative work online;

7.3. concerning education:

7.3.1. undertake all efforts to promote equity, social cohesion and active citizenship through high-quality inclusive education in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 and the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers CM/Rec (2012)13, and making best use of the available Council of Europe educational materials, guidelines and practical tools;

7.3.2. stimulate both the acquisition of knowledge and personal development of learners, consider different models of delivery ranging from classroom teaching, through working in smaller groups to making use of quality online and blended learning resources and possibilities, and further develop the role that schools play in developing students' competences for democratic culture;

7.3.3. develop a rights-based approach as part of inclusive education, valuing human dignity and human rights, together with a critical understanding of social inequalities;

7.3.4. develop mechanisms that will ensure that quality online education eliminates gender, ethnicity, culture, age and other stereotypes;

7.3.5. give due consideration to the right of learners from language minority groups to learn in their own language, especially in primary education;

7.3.6. provide safe learning environments (in schools, libraries or other public institutions) to avoid learning losses and exclusion;

7.3.7. reassess and review the provision of education for disadvantaged students and those with special needs; consider setting up school-based or local support groups consisting of various stakeholders to provide adequate learning support in co-operation with teachers (trained volunteers, parent peer groups, specialised psychologists and other professionals, IT specialists);

7.3.8. provide pre-service and in-service training and guidance for teachers and supporting staff to implement in an open and creative way the Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture in schools; consider developing conditions for innovative partnerships while involving cultural institutions and individual artists in this process;

7.3.9. facilitate online professional development and peer-to-peer learning opportunities for teachers to meet remotely and share experiences; include relevant methodological training and access to educational resources as part of digital learning opportunities for teachers;

7.3.10. guarantee free access to virtual learning environments, which give access to open educational resources, to alleviate dependence on digital platforms provided by private companies.

8. The Assembly invites the European Union to co-operate with the Council of Europe and support innovative projects and European exchange programmes that could serve as guidance to develop new models ensuring a viable and sustainable functioning of education and culture sectors. Building synergies, mainstreaming culture and education in other sectors and providing incentives for creative partnerships with private sectors would be key for the future, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the EU Green Deal initiative. Moreover, the Assembly believes it would be urgent to resolve persisting challenges with global digital providers and to establish a strong European digital framework to further democratise access to education and culture, while ensuring that it is well-adapted for online education and that it would guarantee fair treatment and fair income for online cultural offers.

B. Draft recommendation[3]

1. The Parliamentary Assembly, referring to its Resolution … (2021) "The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on education and culture, considers that education and culture are central to democratic stability in Europe, for they help people to acquire knowledge, a critical mind and a broader understanding of the world, to interact with others, to have a voice and to define their role in society. Active citizenship, particularly among young people, will be fundamental to address collectively the numerous social, cultural, economic, and environmental challenges of the 21st century.

2. The Council of Europe has a long-standing experience in the field of education and culture and must stay at the forefront of positioning them as an integral part of democratic processes. In this respect, the Assembly fully supports the intergovernmental work intended to deliver policy guidance and develop practical tools to assist member States in shaping new models for a synergic and sustainable functioning of education and culture sectors, which uphold democratic, cohesive, inclusive and resilient societies in the future.

3. The Assembly welcomes the adoption, by the informal Conference of Ministers of Education held on 29 October 2020, of a Political Declaration and a Roadmap for Action to help member States face the education challenges of the pandemic, including, in particular, a recommendation to bring together relevant practice of online or hybrid education provision through the Democratic Schools Network and developing a full-scale online training programme for educators on Digital Citizenship Education.

4. Accordingly, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers instruct the relevant sectors of the Council of Europe to:

4.1. consider developing a standard-setting instrument on inclusive quality education, taking into consideration the new online and hybrid education environment;

4.2. continue and finalise, in line with the Declaration of Ministers, the work on a model framework to govern equitable partnerships between business enterprises and education institutions, respectful of the overall public responsibility for education;

4.3. create guidance for innovative approaches and partnerships between the education and culture sectors to implement the Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture and foster culture and heritage education in the member States;

4.4. in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, co-operate with the European Union to support innovative projects and European exchange programmes that could uphold sustainable functioning of education and culture sectors, and to establish a strong European digital framework well-adapted for online education and culture.

3. Draft recommendation adopted unanimously by the committee on 28 September 2021.

C. Explanatory memorandum by the rapporteur, Mr Constantinos Efstathiou, rapporteur

1. Introduction

1. The motion for a resolution[4] which has launched the preparation of the present report, rightly states from the outset that: “Education and culture are sources of intellectual renewal and human growth. Access to education and exposure to culture help people to acquire knowledge, a critical mind and a broader understanding of the world, to interact with others, to have a voice and to define their role in society”.

2. Both sectors have been hard hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. In spring 2020 – during the total lockdown in most European countries – nurseries, primary schools, high schools and universities have been closed. A mixed solution of limited physical presence and distance learning has become the norm afterwards. Lessons must be drawn to avoid that inequalities in access to education do not deepen with time. Investments in technical equipment, teacher training and adequate assistance to pupils and their families are crucial.

3. Due to physical distancing, lockdown and the halt of tourism, most cultural institutions have been forced to close. This sector has been particularly hard hit by the second and third wave of the pandemic in autumn 2020 and the first half of 2021. The economic losses are substantial. For instance, European museums show an average drop of 80% in their revenues. Smaller independent cultural institutions are particularly at risk of disappearing if left without any public support. Seven million artists and cultural professionals in Europe are under threat of losing jobs due to the precariousness of their situation.

4. Long periods of isolation during the Covid-19 pandemic have shown to what degree access to education and participation in and exposure to culture are vital for individual and collective well-being. Both sectors must continue to play their fundamental role to uphold an inclusive and democratic society, by reducing inequalities, by creating opportunities particularly for young people, develop positive attitudes and competences to be proactive and creative citizens in a healthy and vibrant democracy.

5. In my report[5] and in line with the motion, I will strongly argue that education and culture are integral parts of the democratic processes and stability in Europe and that the Parliamentary Assembly should call on the member States to ensure that they both remain a political priority not only for emergency support measures, but equally in national recovery strategies. The pandemic years are a turning point and perhaps an opportunity to develop new models to ensure a viable, sustainable and innovative functioning of education and culture sectors and to develop stronger synergies in the future.

2. Impacts of the pandemic and lessons learned

6. The Covid-19 pandemic has so radically and rapidly changed our lives. Digital technologies became indispensable to ensure continued access to education and in the case of different culture sectors to provide a digital online presence to ensure cultural continuity during lockdown periods and to compensate for the loss of physical audience. While such a hasty digital transition provided quick solutions in this emergency, it has at the same time increased discrepancies in digital infrastructures and skills between bigger and digitally more advanced institutions and smaller disadvantaged institutions with less resources and skills. Consequently, the increasing gaps in digital access to education and culture have only amplified the existing inequalities between people, communities, institutions, public and private organisations, cities, regions and countries, and it may cause new forms of inequalities as a consequence of the Covid pandemic.

7. While digital technologies have proven instrumental during the emergency, I would strongly argue that they cannot be a substitute for human contact and social interaction that are so fundamental to both education and culture activities.

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4. Doc. 15119.

5. I wish to thank the experts who assisted me: Ms Olena Styslavska, Teacher trainer and educational consultant in the field of Democratic Citizenship, Human Rights and Intercultural Education in Poland, for her research on quality online education [AS/Cult/Inf (2021) 05] and Mr Călin Rus, Director of the Intercultural Institute of Timișoara, Romania, for his report on inclusive education [AS/Cult/Inf (2021) 04]. Concerning impacts and analysis of challenges for the culture sectors in Europe, I also wish to thank three experts who took part in hearings that the committee organised on 3 December 2020 and 21 May 2021: Mr Philippe Kern, Managing Director, KEA, Brussels, Ms Isabelle de Voldere from IDEA Consult, and Ms Sylvia Amman from Inforelais, co-authors of the European Parliament expert study entitled “Cultural and creative sectors in post-Covid future”.

2.1. Impacts on education

8. Most educational sectors in Europe gave a speedy response to sustain the learning process despite social distancing and closure of schools. According to the World Bank website,[6] the most common approaches co-ordinated by education authorities were: a shift to online education, broadcasting educational content through TV and radio stations, launch of e-learning systems and platforms, telephone helplines, publication of printed materials for learners, developing guidelines for distance learning delivery and creating repositories of e-learning resources.

9. Schools were forced to replace face-to-face compulsory instruction with online learning and home schooling, in most cases facilitated by teachers and parents. Higher education institutions organised their distance learning independently. Cloud solutions, e-learning and collaborative platforms from companies like Microsoft and Google, offered for free during the lockdown period, gained unprecedented popularity. According to the UNESCO-UNICEF-World Bank joint database all European countries have chosen online remote instructions for 100% of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary sectors and approximately 50% for the pre-primary sector. Almost 50% of the countries broadcasted educational content through the TV, while 25% of countries used radio stations broadcasting and paper-based learning.[7] School closures caused disruptions to the process of assessment of students and evaluation of learning outcomes. In many countries exams were postponed, in a few countries they were cancelled and in others they were replaced by continuous assessment or alternative modalities, such as online testing for final exams.[8]

10. There were also less common solutions, undertaken by certain countries, such as adaptation of legislation concerning assessment and grading to the context of distance learning, intensification of training and experience exchange among teachers, adaptation of online classes to learners with special needs, inclusion of learners into decision-making processes while transferring teaching and learning to distant forms, provision of psychological support for learners and their parents, provision of free internet access or distant learning equipment to learners in a difficult financial situation.[9]

2.1.1. Disadvantaged learners

11. For students with a disability and specific learning needs, the move to remote learning has presented additional challenges, including various barriers to engaging with technology, reduced access to educational support and individualised learning, and the loss of social connections. Materials that were developed for online knowledge delivery were not fully available in the accessible formats required for persons with visual, hearing, intellectual and learning disabilities.

12. Parents of children with special needs were faced with significant challenges during this period, for which they were often unprepared and without necessary support. Many cases have been reported of regression in terms of competences, due to the loss of connection with the school. Parents were left to address alone the complex needs for care, learning and emotional support for their children with special needs. In families with more children, this was often accompanied by limited attention given to the other children, with negative consequences for well-being and for learning.

13. Teachers struggling to adapt to distance learning chose in many instances to consider mostly the situation of those students who had the technology and the conditions for learning and simply ignored the needs of those who did not and who were not able to comply with general requirements. Even teachers who in the past had made efforts to adapt their teaching to the diversity in their classes, felt compelled to prioritise and accept that some students remain out of contact.

14. However, there were examples of specific and adapted support provided, and additional efforts made by teachers and schools. These include:

– adapting the online teaching methods, the learning assignments and the way they are communicated, in such a manner as to make them accessible to a larger number of students;

– distributing printed materials and homework to students without online access;

– providing digital devices and/or free access to internet to students with disadvantaged backgrounds;

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6. Based on “How countries are using edtech (including online learning, radio, television, texting) to support access to remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic”, the WorldBank, www.worldbank.org/en/topic/edutech/brief/how-countries-are-using-edtech-to-support-remote-learning-during-the-covid-19-pandemic.
7. Policy Brief: “Education during Covid-19 and beyond”, UN, August 2020.
8. UNESCO, “Covid-19 A glance of national coping strategies on high stakes examinations and assessment”.
9. Worldbank, *op. cit*.

– keeping school premises partially open for students who lack a proper learning environment at home;

– providing adapted learning resources to be used with family support or for self-learning.

15. Such responses from within the education systems were generated according to the perceived reasonable possibilities, not according to the actual needs incurred for equal access to education to be provided. Moreover, this did not solve the more complex and subtle effects of exclusion, which may produce significant negative long-term consequences, including the feeling of being disconnected from class peers, negative image and self-image, frustration, and even pressure towards dropping out of school early.

2.1.2. Lessons learned

16. While online teaching and learning became the norm across education systems, such a hasty transition has exposed the gaps in digital infrastructures and skills between schools, regions, countries and socio-economic backgrounds. In my report on "Role of education in a digital era: from "digital natives" to "digital citizens"[10] I observed back in 2019, that in the EU countries less than half of the children were in digitally equipped schools and only 20-25% of students were taught by teachers who were themselves confident using technology in the classroom. The divide was even wider in the greater Council of Europe area.

17. While there is plenty of educational material available in most spoken languages, not much can be found in regional or minority languages, needed to secure language rights and to contribute to social cohesion and inclusion of all. Although remote e-learning brings a lot of benefits for meeting the particular needs of learners, one of its main disadvantages is that it can also deepen inequalities and reinforce stereotypes.

18. As European education systems move now from an emergency situation to a more sustainable response, it will be important that the lessons from this experience are collected and evaluated to identify ways through which innovative teaching and learning environments can be more fully integrated into schooling. The first lesson that was learned during the lockdown is, that technology is not a substitute for the physical classroom and that direct human contact is irreplaceable in education. However, technology can nevertheless greatly facilitate teaching and learning, bringing more freedom, flexibility, inclusion and accessibility.

2.2. Impacts on culture sectors

2.2.1. Sector by sector analysis

19. Closures of most cultural institutions and activities during the first and then second or third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, have been devastating for culture sectors and in particular museums; theatres; libraries and bookshops; cinemas, performing arts and festivals, publishing, cultural heritage, crafts, audio-visual sector and its production.

2.2.1.1. Performing arts

20. Performing arts are among the most affected sectors, due to their venue and visitor-based nature. The cancellation of events, shows and festivals generated a chain of negative effects, which were very difficult to compensate even when venues were able to reopen with limited capacity.

21. The missing income for various performing arts disciplines (theatre, dance, opera, circus, outdoor performance, etc.) is linked to loss of ticket sales, subsidies, sponsorship, and donations. In addition, other types of revenues were lost, for example, commercial deals related to catering, revenues from advertisers, participation fees for workshops and masterclasses. Self-employed artists were particularly hard hit due to the precariousness of their situation and weak social and contractual rights when venues withdrew from agreements without compensating for losses. In some countries, artists could not rely on public support as they were not eligible to receive it. Most freelance performance artists are portfolio and project-based workers, who additionally suffered because of closures of international borders and the halting of international projects.

22. Behind every performing art show and/or festival there is a large ecosystem of people carrying out support activities (technicians, stage builders, costume and make-up designers, light designers and companies in charge of organisation of events). The scale of the damage is therefore massive, well beyond the loss of ticket sales. The direct loss of income deriving from the cancellation of festivals and events also had indirect negative effects on local economies.

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10. Doc. 15000, Resolution 2313 (2019) and Recommendation 2167 (2019).

2.2.1.2. Music

23. Covid impacts differently to recorded music in comparison to live music. According to the Live DMA Network[11] an estimated 17 million visits instead of 70 million planned visits equated to a 53 million loss in audience visits to music venues in 2020. This represents a 74% decline compared to 2019. Loss of income to 2 600 live music venues that are members of the Live DMA Network is estimated to € 1.2 billion, which represents a loss of 64% for 2020. The impact on freelance live performing musicians and accompanying technical staff has been dramatic. By contrast streaming revenues and digital sales for recorded music suffered a less severe impact although they are closely linked to live performance for promotion. However, the crisis affected physical sales since listening to music switched rapidly to digital platforms and therefore accelerated the trend which had already started before the Covid pandemic. The closure of retailers and the impairment of supply chains had strong consequences on trade. For example, the German music industry had estimated Covid related damages of almost € 5.5 billion within the first six months in 2020.

2.2.1.3. Museums and cultural heritage sites

24. Museums, art galleries and cultural heritage sites closed in March 2020 with sporadic reopening in summer 2020 before the second wave closures in autumn 2020 and progressive reopening in May 2021. While museums and heritage sites in the public sector had emergency support in most European countries, the magnitude of job losses varied by size and location of institutions and were severe, particularly for smaller institutions in the private sector. The loss of revenue in ticket sales for museums and cultural heritage sites was accompanied by reduced sponsorships and charity funding. It did not concern only core activities, but also auxiliary services, which are outsourced activities in many cases.

25. To compensate for the loss of a physical audience, most larger museums and heritage sites increased their digital online presence (online communication, virtual tours, online exhibitions). However, smaller institutions lacked trained staff to make a rapid shift to digital communication and displays, which now requires additional funding sources.

2.2.1.4. Arts and crafts

26. Artists and craftsmen were particularly hard hit with loss of income, cancellation of sales, orders and events such as fairs, festivals and workshops. It was only partially offset with a shift to digital platforms and access to support schemes. The significant decrease in the number of international tourists across Europe is another factor that had and will continue to have a strong impact on this sector.

2.2.1.5. Audio-visual sector

27. The film industry suffered severe consequences of Covid containment measures throughout its entire value chain. Cancellations or postponement of shootings and production affected the entire artistic and technical crews, as most people involved are generally freelance. The distribution side experienced a severe loss in income since most cinemas in Europe have been closed for very long periods of time. Consequently, they could not recover the technical and marketing expenses invested for the release of movies. Small and independent cinemas are particularly at risk.

28. The Covid measures have also led to cancellation and postponement of European and international film festivals, which are important marketplaces for the film industry. Some festivals moved digitally in 2020 such as the Cannes Film Festival with 12 500 participants attending virtual shows with 4 000 movies presented from 120 countries.

29. Online streaming has been much less affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Video on demand subscriptions had already been on the rise before the pandemic and this trend has just accelerated. The big streaming portals such as Netflix and Prime Video (Amazon) have acquired a bigger share of the market because of successive Covid lockdowns.

2.2.1.6. Book publishing

30. Due to the loss of main distribution channels with closures of bookshops and retailing, coupled with restriction of movement and activities, many publishers experienced massive reduction of their work. Consequently, many planned new titles were cancelled or postponed, which affected revenues. Publishers'

11. www.live-dma.eu.

licences were made more flexible during the crisis, like in France where several publishers provided libraries with improved licensing conditions. In the United Kingdom, libraries saw a two-fold increase in eBook library loans.

31. Many publishing costs were already sustained or not recoverable. Rights acquisitions, translations, promotion, logistics, etc. were impacted. Loss of income concerns also writers and translators due to cancelled lectures, workshops, book fairs, or delays in royalty advances or cancelled commitments. For example, Amazon had lowered significantly the prices of e-books, with repercussions for the remuneration of authors. Due to the increasing demand of digital content, many publishers chose to release certain titles only digitally. Compared to severe losses suffered by small booksellers in Europe, online sales increased sharply particularly for big distribution companies such as Amazon.

2.2.2. Initial assessment and lessons learnt

32. Accurate assessment of the overall economic and social impact on the culture sector in Europe is still lacking since each sub-sector estimates and national estimates vary in methodology and content, but also due to uncertain future circumstances. Nevertheless, available estimates provide a snapshot of the seriousness of damage suffered across different cultural sectors.

33. For instance, in spring 2020 European museums have shown an average drop of 80% in their revenues according to the Network of European Museum Organisations (NEMO). A follow up survey is currently underway to map where museums in Europe stand now and how they deal with issues that emerge from the second wave of the pandemic. The long-term damage will also come from the diminishing philanthropy, since both businesses and foundations suffer economic losses due to the crisis.

34. It is of great concern that smaller independent cultural institutions are particularly at risk of disappearing if left without any public support. Moreover, seven million artists and cultural professionals in Europe are under threat of losing their jobs due to the precariousness of their situation since they are predominantly self-employed.

35. In addition, many artists and cultural institutions have put part of their current or past productions on-line in order to ensure cultural continuity during lockdown. But having made their work available for free on the internet, will they be able to recover funding for their work after the recovery of the situation? I believe this issue will remain important to resolve, given that on-line cultural productions are likely to increase, setting a new trend towards democratisation of culture in the post-pandemic era.

36. Since March 2020, policy makers in Europe have launched considerable and unprecedented emergency measures with great vigour, to support the cultural and creative sectors to survive the crisis. However, the support measures in place are far outweighed by the losses of income.

37. In many countries, emergency support was accessible also for artists and freelance cultural workers despite their general lack of social rights. However, the emergency measures were temporary and too fragmented to ensure sustainable working and living conditions.

38. Whereas public actors primarily focused on launching income generating support and cost reduction measures, those providing non-public support were keen to invest in innovation-related measures to overcome the crisis. However, the concept of “innovation” was generally reduced to digital transition and lacked a broader perspective to address other major challenges for society.

3. Vision for education and culture in national recovery strategies

39. Our societies will need open-minded people with a strong attachment to democratic values and human rights, ready to interact in a constructive way and to accept the challenge of differing opinions, able to make critical judgments and to value what can bring people together instead of asserting divisions. Such positive attitudes will be fundamental to address the numerous social, cultural, economic, and environmental challenges of the 21st century.

40. The Covid-19 pandemic is therefore an opportunity to develop new models to ensure a viable, sustainable and innovative functioning of education and culture sectors in the future. Governments and parliaments will have a prominent role to determine a clear vision for the future and to define long-term comprehensive strategies for education and culture sectors that are fully integrated in the Covid recovery plans.

41. National strategies ought to build on synergies and acknowledge that culture and education are intertwined. Education and culture policies should be mutually reinforcing. The Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture[12] – which defines 20 competences in four key areas including values, attitudes, skills and knowledge, and critical understanding – provides, in my view, an excellent basis to develop innovative partnerships and projects between schools and different culture sectors to guide young people in developing these key democratic competences.

42. Such creative partnerships between education and culture sectors would also widen and democratise young people's access to culture and offer an opportunity to actively and creatively engage in different cultural expressions.[13] In her report entitled "The right of everyone to take part in cultural life"[14] Ms Muriel Marland-Militello (France, EPP/CD) emphasised the role of the State and of local authorities to cultivate the "desire for culture" among young people, arguing that such initiatives would draw on subjective sensitivity and creative imagination, giving young people a considerable freedom of initiative and self-confidence at a critical time in their lives when they are building a future for themselves as adult citizens.

43. In her report entitled "Culture and democracy",[15] Ms Vesna Marjanović (Serbia, SOC) has argued not only for a more systematic integration of cultural activities in the system of education as a way to improve access for marginalised and underprivileged children and youth, but also for policies that aim to integrate cultural activities in other sectors such as health, social services, prisons and penitentiary rehabilitation schemes. Culture and education are both powerful means to fight exclusion, to inspire, give hope and to empower the most vulnerable or marginalised people in society.

44. In the context of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and the European Green Deal initiative which aim to address the multiple challenges we face globally; I would argue that investments in education and in cultural and creative sectors could also be an integral part of investments in innovation leading towards more sustainable and creative economies for the future. Mainstreaming culture and education in other sectors and providing incentives for creative partnerships with private sectors could therefore be key for future post-Covid policies. As part of this process, legislators have the responsibility to ensure that such partnerships are respectful and balanced, based on a set of well-defined rules.

45. Digital technologies are fundamentally reshaping European society and the economy, a trend which has only accelerated during the Covid-19 pandemic. Digital space became the main area for education and numerous actors in the cultural and creative sectors to perform and connect with their audiences. While this can be a very positive trend to democratise access to education and culture and trigger individual activity, it also brings serious threats, in particular deepening the existing digital divide and inequalities on the one hand and depriving artists and cultural workers of fair revenue due to lack of regulation on the other hand. It would be therefore urgent to resolve persisting challenges with global digital providers including GAFAM[16] and to establish a strong European digital framework that would be well-adapted for on-line education and different culture sectors.

4. Reinforcing democracy by sustaining cultural vitality and diversity in Europe

46. The cultural and creative sectors have shown exceptional inventiveness during the Covid crisis in providing access to arts, culture, and creativity for the well-being of citizens, local communities and societies at large, despite the difficult working conditions. The cultural and creative sectors have shown their potential to contribute more widely to a reflective process to re-formulate our collective ambitions for a better, more inclusive and more sustainable society – a genuine "reset".

47. Supporting artists and micro-enterprises that provide a very rich and diverse cultural fabric in Europe and investing in cultural vitality is a powerful political means to actively engage citizens, to open public debates on key societal issues and to ensure a long-term democratic stability in Europe. In co-operation with the European Union, the Council of Europe has developed a set of indicators[17] to demonstrate this correlation

12. www.coe.int/en/web/campaign-free-to-speak-safe-to-learn/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture.
13. For example, video, music, theatre, performing arts, design, etc.
14. Doc. 12815 and Recommendation 1990 (2012).
15. Doc. 14070, Resolution 2123 (2016), and Recommendation 2093 (2016).
16. Big Tech, also known as Tech Giants or Big Five, is a name given to the five largest and most dominant companies in the information technology industry of the United States – namely Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft.
17. Indicator Framework on Culture and Democracy, www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/indicators-culture-and-democracy.

between investments in cultural vitality and democracy. This set of indicators should be valuable to decision-makers at European, national and local level to argue and justify investments in culture as medium- and long-term investments in more resilient and democratic societies.

48. The European cultural sectors however are characterised by a very fragmented ecosystem structure with small and medium-sized enterprises and micro-sized enterprises that dominate the vast majority of cultural activities in Europe. A large number of freelance artists and cultural workers take part in this system. They live in rather precarious conditions, based on temporary contracts. A few countries including France offer an "intermittent" work status to artists and cultural workers in order to provide them with some degree of social protection for periods in-between projects.

49. The cultural and creative sectors in Europe are consequently characterised by fragmented value chains, with numerous non-standard workers and organisations of various size and nature that need to closely collaborate. While this may be perceived as a weakness in economic terms, I would argue that this is also a real strength since a variety of small actors provide a high diversity in cultural and creative expressions, services and goods, as well as linguistic diversity, that we should cherish and preserve in Europe.

50. Income generation and project financing have always been challenging for the culture and creative sectors in Europe, and for this reason the structural, financial, and social weaknesses have only become aggravated during the Covid-19 pandemic.

51. A fair income from decent fees and rates would be of the utmost importance for the culture sector and especially for the working life of artists and culture workers to become more resilient and sustainable. Working arrangements for standard and non-standard cultural workers must be improved to provide social security and decent income levels. States should put in place supportive regulatory and information systems to ensure the level of transparency and reduce the administrative burden related to contractual settings, taxation and social security systems, as well as copyrights. Strong networks and representation of cultural workers in different sectors are needed to enforce rights and to ensure an equal and level playing field.

52. Digital technologies are accelerating major cultural transformations and have the potential to democratise culture in society. However, this trend should not be to the detriment of artists and cultural workers. Digital transformation in Europe should be strongly anchored in democracy, humanism, co-operation and solidarity. The European digital space is still very fragmented and fragile. The digital economy and related cultural activities must be rules-based, including a clear regulation of copyrights. The digital divide among citizens, regions and states but also among different cultural organisations must be overcome by developing digital competence and access.

5. Investments towards a more resilient society through quality education and inclusiveness

53. According to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 4) "Quality education" includes complete free primary and secondary schooling, provides equal access to affordable vocational training, eliminates gender disparities in education and helps to achieve universal access to a quality higher education. The Council of Europe advocates quality education to prepare young people not only for employment, but also for their lives as active citizens in democratic societies, and to ensure their personal development and the development and maintenance of a broad, advanced knowledge base in society.[18]

54. Quality online education can therefore be characterised as: accessible to all, inclusive, providing a secure and non-violent learning environment, ensuring personal development, preparing for life as active citizens in democratic societies and maintaining a broad, advanced knowledge base.

5.1. Access to education

55. For quality online education in the future, education systems need to take care that technology does not further amplify existing inequalities in access to online learning. A key factor to ensure accessibility of online learning is common access to broadband internet coverage. Examples from member States show that there is a wide range of solutions possible, such as reduction of internet access costs for low income households, equipping learners with free SIM cards, establishing public wifi hotspot areas at schools and other designated areas. The experience of some countries shows the need for the additional broadcasting of educational content through television and radio channels.

18. www.coe.int/en/web/education/about.

56. The second essential component is access to learning devices, such as computers, laptops and tablets. Some countries report successful use of mobile phones to help bridge the equipment divide. There is a wide range of possible solutions to ensure availability of learning equipment for quality online education, including surcharges for equipment purchase, free distribution of equipment or lending school equipment, to name a few. Member States report that schools could be very helpful in tracking learners that need learning devices and offer their support to obtain them.

57. Access to online learning also means access to safe learning conditions, physical learning space and a conducive environment at home. Schools and social welfare centres can monitor the situation of vulnerable learners to increase motivation, provide support and ensure relevant learning conditions. Open learning spaces should be available in schools, community centres, libraries and other public institutions.

58. Finally, States should guarantee free access to virtual learning environments, which give access to open educational resources and they should facilitate remote learning. Students should have access to the software and the tools they need for learning, like simulators and virtual reality programmes. Open educational resources must be prioritised; public education cannot be dependent on digital platforms provided by private companies.[19]

5.2. Personal development

59. In the remote learning situation, more attention has been given to ensuring the continuity of academic learning than to the socio-emotional development of students.[20] The absence of socialisation and the personal development aspects of education has been a real and essential cost of the pandemic. The physical health of learners has also been negatively affected by the extended use of digital devices for education. These factors, combined with enforced loneliness of learners and the ambiguity of their situation, have posed challenges to their mental health and well-being.[21]

60. Quality online education needs to recognise collaborative group work as a powerful tool to help change behaviours and get better results. Sharing of experiences, giving feedback and working to a common plan increases motivation, leads to richer and longer-lasting outcomes, supports higher levels and creative forms of thinking and equips learners with relevant social and emotional skills.

61. Education systems and institutions can combine different models of delivery ranging from classroom teaching, through working in smaller groups, to making use of quality online and blended learning resources and possibilities, and further develop the role that schools play in developing students social competences.[22] Online educational programmes that are designed following a hybrid approach, for example initiating learning online asynchronously, followed by real life implementation and concluded by experience exchange, reflection and drawing conclusions in an online synchronous mode, seem to be the most beneficial for both – acquisition of knowledge and the personal development of learners.

5.3. Preparation for life as active citizens

62. With the main focus on academic learning, there was a definite decrease in opportunities for students to participate in decision-making processes in their schools, contribute to their communities, express their opinions and develop their competences for democratic culture. The participation rights of children and young people have been massively affected.

63. Loss of faith in democracy among young people is a particularly alarming trend to which no response can be found without education[23] and cultural activities. The Council of Europe has developed innovative education materials to help teachers and learners discuss important issues arising out of the current health emergency, which are flexible and easy to use. They can be taught in a variety of distance-learning situations and adjusted to suit available e-learning platforms or devices, age of learners, local context, time on-line and level of digital skills.[24]

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19. “Education in a post-Covid world: nine ideas for public education”, International Commission of the Future of Education, UNESCO, 2020.
20. “The education response to the Covid crisis”, political declaration, informal conference of education organised under the Greek Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, 29 October 2020.
21. “Education in a post-Covid world: nine ideas for public education”, *op. cit*.
22. “The education response to the Covid crisis”, *op. cit*.
23. “Making the right to education a reality in times of Covid-19”, a roadmap for Action on the Council of Europe Response to Covid-19, Council of Europe, October 2020.
24. www.coe.int/en/web/education/new-materials.

64. Educational systems of member States might benefit from the Council of Europe project on digital citizenship education,[25] that provides an example of innovative approach to online learning building on the tried and tested principles of education for democratic citizenship and human rights, such as dialogue, critical thinking and active, social and co-operative learning. Moreover, innovative partnerships with artists and cultural workers from different culture sectors would be a way forward to put into practice the Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture.[26]

5.4. Maintenance of broad, advanced knowledge base

65. When rethinking education for the future, e-learning should be treated as a supplement that leads to better outcomes, not a substitute or replacement for classroom learning. The knowledge and experience gained with various modalities of remote learning are assets that could be deepened and deployed in the future, creating blended modalities of teaching and learning, also in service of greater personalisation of education, and to extend learning time and learning opportunities for all students.[27]

66. Education systems and institutions need to reassess and review the way in which they teach, and students learn. Quality online learning should go beyond replicating the physical lecture or transfer of knowledge through video and use a range of collaboration tools and engagement methods to ensure active experimental learning. Traditional pedagogical methods used in the physical classroom should be modernised by establishing guidelines and standards for blended learning and also expanding partnerships with different cultural institutions or individual artists.

67. Education systems and institutions need to introduce a variety of assessment methods, relevant to new approaches to teaching and learning. As with traditional education, States should establish an accreditation scheme for online programmes to regulate offerings and ensure quality, and it is necessary to use the momentum to reshape curricula to the needs of the 21st century.[28] The new curricula should be less based on consuming information and memorising facts, as those are widely accessible due to information and communication technology. More attention should be paid to the development of competences – starting from critical thinking and reflective approach to information technology and information itself, and expanding with problem-solving, communication, collaboration, decision making, creativity, adaptability, responsibility and self-efficacy, which are necessary to deal successfully with new and unknown challenges, like the present health crisis.

5.5. Inclusive education and partnerships

68. Despite public statements made at the Council of Europe level,[29] public declarations of education officials in various countries expressed prevailing concern for the loss of content matter during the Covid-19 crisis. This reveals an implicit focus on knowledge acquisition. However, the pandemic emphasised once again that school is not just a place where you acquire knowledge, but also a place of interaction and of socialisation.

69. Quality education must be inclusive.[30] The Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture[31] also explicitly promotes an inclusive approach to education. It has proved to be a very relevant conceptual and practical tool for addressing various challenges that our societies are facing, and this is valid also for the response of education systems to the Covid-19 pandemic and its follow-up.

70. To guarantee quality online education in the future, the provision of education for students with special needs should be reassessed and reviewed. Attention should be paid to making Information and communications technology applications and distance learning available and accessible to learners with varied disabilities. This includes assistive technologies which can improve communication, allow mobility and increase participation. “Edtech” can be an indispensable tool to assist and empower learners with disabilities and improve their social and economic integration in society by enlarging the range of activities available to them.

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25. Digital Citizenship Education website, www.coe.int/en/web/digital-citizenship-education/home.
26. www.coe.int/en/web/campaign-free-to-speak-safe-to-learn/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture
27. “Education in a post-Covid world: Nine ideas for public action”, *op. cit*.
28. “Lessons for Education during the Covid-19 crisis”, World Bank.
29. “The education response to the Covid crisis”, *op. cit*.
30. Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on ensuring quality education.
31. www.coe.int/en/web/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture.

71. Special attention should be paid to the right of learners from language minority groups to learn in their own language, especially in primary education. It is necessary to develop mechanisms that will ensure that quality online education eliminates gender, ethnicity, culture, age and other stereotypes.

72. For example, developing self-efficacy is especially important to overcome a negative self-image, that may lead to lower school achievement and even dropping out of school. Moreover, developing empathy, communication and co-operation skills and civic mindedness, can enhance the motivation and ability of children belonging to more privileged groups to relate to their peers that need additional support and provide such support themselves. For both categories, valuing human dignity and human rights, together with a critical understanding of social inequalities, would be essential to develop a rights-based approach as part of inclusive education.

73. Better results were obtained in cases where schools established a systematic and adapted communication with the parents of children with special needs. For teachers, this implied switching from their usual role of working directly with children to the new role of designing adapted and personalised learning paths for the children with special needs and instructing the parents, and/or other adults volunteering to support, in working with the children. Ensuring a two-way communication, supporting parents to also provide feedback on the progress made by children has proven to be essential for the effectiveness of such co-operation.

74. Governments should take the necessary actions to effectively train all supporting staff including caretakers of the disabled children. Such training should be based on adequate professional guidance, as well as on developing sensitivity and empathy. Necessary means, technology, alternative communication methods and training materials should be provided. Parents' preferences should be taken into account to a greater extent when selecting the adequate supporting staff, provided that they are aligned with the best interest of the child. Additionally, and most importantly, the child's own opinion should become the decisive factor as to the selection of supporting staff, whenever applicable. The supporting staff and caretakers' actions ought to principally focus on equality and inclusion of a disabled child with other children.

75. There are good examples of schools which managed to provide appropriate support for students who need it and for engaging in a systematic and explicit process of promoting inclusion by using existing local community resources. Such co-operation takes various forms, including:

– co-operation with NGOs, for example NGOs specialised in working with children with specific needs, or NGOs that can prepare online or offline activities to respond to the need for contact and socialisation of children;

– co-operation with cultural institutions and artists who have the ability to develop creative and alternative approaches for learning and for socialising and gaining self-confidence that would be well-adapted for children with specific needs;

– establishment of informal groups of volunteers that can provide adapted support to parents and children. Some of the most successful such experiences were those in which volunteers were properly guided and prepared, while teachers focused more on the design of appropriate educational interventions and on ensuring that the needs of all students are considered;

– peer support groups among parents, helping each other with ideas and resources, while also providing psychological support and the feeling of not being alone and facing challenges together;

– co-operation with psychologists and various other relevant categories of professionals who can offer pro bono support, counselling or advice to parents or children;

– assistance pro bono provided by IT specialists or simply people with advanced digital skills for exploring new ways of using technology, or innovative applications and adapt the technology for use by children with various special needs;

– setting-up a school-based or local support group consisting of various stakeholders ready to assist the schools in responding to the challenges they face in providing inclusive education.

76. In my opinion, it would be crucial to invest and support vulnerable groups and especially children with learning difficulties, bearing in mind that not all members of society are healthy or empowered. The quality of our democracies is dependent upon our ability to address those special needs and provide comfort, care and empathy and the means for all – including those who are more vulnerable – to participate fully in public life.

5.6. The key role of teachers and supporting staff

77. With the new learning reality of the post-pandemic world, it is becoming necessary to redefine the role of the teacher. The shift from teaching culture to learning culture means that teachers are no longer sources of information but increasingly becoming guides to help learners navigate various sources of information, build values, socialise with peers and address social reality. The success of quality online education will depend on teachers, as the emergency learning measures depended on them. Teachers were able to implement emergency distance learning modalities often without sufficient guidance training or resources. But even in contexts with adequate infrastructure and connectivity, many educators lack technological and methodological skills to facilitate quality distance learning.[32]

78. High quality blended and online learning must be supported by highly skilled education professionals, enjoying good working conditions and quality resources. Digital learning opportunities for teachers should include relevant methodological training and access to educational resources. Schools and institutions, teachers and students, as well as parents, must be equipped with both the required infrastructure and the competence to make good use of it.[33]

79. Teachers need also to be better prepared to promote an inclusive approach and consider risks related to unwanted effects of labelling "students with special needs", as well as those associated with subtle forms of institutional discrimination and interpersonal racism.[34] The pre-service and in-service training of teachers should focus on these aspects and adapted training and support can be built and offered based on the resources provided by the Council of Europe in relation to the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture. Teachers would also benefit from broader and more systematic partnerships with cultural and creative sectors to help them develop innovative and inclusive methods to apply the Reference Framework.

80. The Council of Europe has developed the Reference Framework Teacher Self-Reflection Tool[35] and new pedagogical resources, based on the Reference Framework[36] to be adapted and used online, in presence, or blended learning. The Reference Framework Teacher Self-Reflection Tool is designed to support teachers in reflecting on their own competences, but also to support them in addressing with their pupils some complex and sensitive issues such as disinformation, bullying and discrimination. It also provides guidance, based on previous Council of Europe materials, for teaching controversial issues and for encouraging students to make their voice heard in the life of the school. The Council of Europe is also offering from the school year 2021-2022 a training pack that can be used to deliver training for teachers at both European and national levels, based on the Reference Framework and with a focus on promoting inclusive education.[37]

6. Conclusions

81. The European Union has proposed a variety of measures to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the pandemic and in particular: the ambitious emergency European Recovery instrument (Next Generation EU); with reinforced long-term EU budget for the period 2021-27.[38] Both the European Commission and the European Parliament have taken important political steps to ensure that education and culture sectors are considered priority and will be eligible for support under the Next Generation EU programme. However, it is the responsibility of the EU member States to include education and culture in national recovery programmes in order to benefit from these measures.

82. Particular attention should be given to the situation of education and culture in non-EU countries, that are not benefiting from similar funding measures. Especially since public funding in the culture sector has been severely cut in numerous non-EU countries and used to fund the health sector and socio-economic recovery which are given priority. I therefore hope that this report could serve as guidance for national recovery strategies in a wider Council of Europe area.

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32. UNESCO "Education Sector Issue. Note no 2.2".
33. "The education response to the Covid crisis", *op. cit*.
34. This is further elaborated in a Position Paper on Access of Roma to quality inclusive education, to be published in 2021 by the Roma and Travellers Team of the Council of Europe (www.coe.int/roma).
35. www.coe.int/en/web/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture/-reflection-tool-for-teachers.
36. www.coe.int/en/web/education/new-materials and www.coe.int/en/web/education/current-projects.
37. www.coe.int/en/web/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture/resources.
38. The package consists of the long-term budget, the 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework, made up of €1.074 trillion, combined with the temporary recovery instrument, Next Generation EU, of €750 billion.

83. In the context of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and the European Green Deal initiative which aim to address the multiple challenges we face globally, I would argue that investments in education and in cultural and creative sectors could also be an integral part of investments in innovation leading towards more sustainable and creative economies for the future. Mainstreaming culture and education in other sectors and providing incentives for creative partnerships with private sectors could therefore be key for the future.

84. We must do our utmost to argue at the level of the Parliamentary Assembly and nationally in our parliaments that investments in education and culture sectors are fundamental to support democratic, cohesive, more sustainable and resilient societies, able to address the numerous social, cultural, economic, and environmental challenges of the 21st century. As our committee rapporteur and former President of the Assembly, Ms Anne Brasseur, has rightly stated it in her report,[39] parliaments have a prominent role to determine a vision for the future and to define long-term comprehensive strategies for the education and culture sectors and an oversight role to make sure that they are properly implemented.

39. Doc. 13142 and Resolution 1929 (2013) "Culture and education through national parliaments: European policies".