EUROPEAN
POLICYBRIEF

INTRODUCTION

Cultural Heritage and Identities of Europe's Future (CHIEF) is an international research project funded by the European Commission and led by Aston University (UK). The project started in May 2018. It involves academic, civil society and policy-maker partners across nine countries (Croatia, Georgia, Germany, India, Latvia, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey, UK) and will run for three years.

The twinned ideas of respect towards minorities' rights and cultural diversity are facing well-documented challenges across Europe. These include the radicalisation of young people and the revival of tribal identities and separatism. These and other phenomena raise questions about the idea of Europeanness as a culture of dialogue and mutual respect. CHIEF aims to examine the processes and environments that influence young people's cultural literacy and cultural identity. Its purpose is to explore ways of changing how cultural literacy is shaped and encouraged. It therefore also aims to facilitate knowledge exchange between researchers, educators, civil society practitioners and policy-makers to develop effective strategies for enhancing cultural literacy and challenging intolerance and chauvinistic attitudes among young people.

At its most basic, cultural literacy describes references to cultural and historic content that must be learnt in the course of formal education in order to participate effectively in society. The concept has been denounced as elitist and for universalising Western values.

CHIEF's interdisciplinary approach to grappling with the concept starts from the premise that European populations have never been culturally homogeneous, and aims to develop a new approach to the cultural literacy of young Europeans, which advocates a more inclusive interpretation of Europe's cultural heritage as a foundation for cultural identity. To this end, it examines the role played by history and collective memory in the construction of cultural identity, which are often

expressed in ethno-national terms within institutionalised forms of cultural literacy. Ethno-national framings of cultural literacy represents a major risk to constructive inter-cultural dialogue. Nationalism is strongly bound to 'cultural essentialism' and promotes the idea that cultural traits and differences are central to national identities. This can feed deep-seated cultural anxieties, which become expressed in xenophobia, cultural conservatism and intolerance towards minorities. Equally, Eurocentrism in the selection of cultural knowledge and cultural participation can work to exclude the cultural heritage of ethnic and religious minorities and migrant communities. When combined with socio-economic disadvantage, this can seal these groups off from important 'social lifts', compounding their marginalisation and potentially opening them up to divisive political ideologies. These two tendencies put the future of the European project at risk. The project's analytical scepticism of cultural essentialism and ethno-nationalism, combined with its methodologically mixed reassessment of cultural literacy, gives it a key advantage in making practical recommendations that can facilitate an inclusive interpretation of European cultural identity and heritage that helps to facilitate closer European integration.

EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS

The first stage of the research involved two systematic reviews. The first centred on policy documents (n=194) relevant to cultural literacy education within CHIEF countries and regions (see Deliverable 1.2). The second focused on national curricula (n=107) for secondary education social science and humanities subjects (Deliverable 2.1). These reviews produced the following key findings.

1. Incoherent and inconsistent institutional contexts and content

1.1 Most policy documents and curricula do not provide basic definitions of 'culture', 'cultural literacy', or 'cultural heritage'. There are some isolated exceptions in school curricula, which conceptualize culture in a fluid and inclusive way, but there is no consistency of approach.

1.2 Most national policies approach cultural education in an instrumental way. Objectives are diverse and include:
- preserving cultural diversity and national identity;
- forging individual identities, monetisable skills, a greater sense of social cohesion, community belonging and tolerance for minority groups;
- combatting social exclusion, promoting a shared sense of belonging to cultural spaces and gender equality;
- facilitating responsible citizenship, in which young people exhibit a range of socially functional attributes (including patriotism, respect for the rule of law, a sense of social equity);
- supporting international diplomacy and the security of the state;
- mitigating emigration;
- a means of encouraging creativity and general educational and emotional development;
- promoting social mobility, health and well-being;
- revenue generation, economic growth, and socio-economic regeneration and development.

1.3 The prominence given to the economic potential of cultural literacy in policy documents appears to be part of departmental strategies to attract additional funding for cultural literacy education. Policy actors appear to have responded to the growing perception that culture represents an expense,

rather than an investment, by emphasising the economic potential of culture and cultural heritage and their capacity to drive local and regional development.

1.4 Dispersed responsibility for cultural literacy education compounds the ambiguity and lack of policy coherence that arises in policy contexts where fundamental concepts are ill defined and equivocal.

2. Resources and funding

Declining or static public funding appears to be shaping the economics of cultural literacy education in the following three respects.

2.1 Public investment in cultural literacy education appears to be increasingly targeted towards larger institutions (typically associated with high culture) and projects that are considered to produce either observable returns or economically self-sustaining cultural practices.

2.2 Major reforms tend to focus on innovations that, relative to total government budgets, are fiscally benign.

2.3 Declining public funding coincides with calls for cultural providers to diversify financial support. This is especially marked in the UK, where funding streams are highly diverse and include finance from major companies, increasing reliance on self-funding through earned income and fundraising, and philanthropic giving.

3. Tensions between national identity and cultural inclusivity

3.1 Broad commitments to cultural and social tolerance are reflected in a range of programmes that seek to operationalise cultural literacy as a driver of social tolerance for diversity and inclusion (hereafter just inclusion). Alongside these commitments and programmes, cultural literacy education is also reported to instil a strong awareness and understanding of national culture in young people as it relates to collective, national identity.

3.2 The importance of this twinned commitment to inclusion and national culture to understanding policy coherence in cultural literacy education primarily resides in the fact that its tensions and potential contradictions are rarely recognised. Policy texts either fail to address how inclusion and national culture should be reconciled, or subtly conflate inclusion with integration around prevailing cultural norms.

3.3 The failure to satisfactorily reconcile the tensions between inclusion and national culture poses several mutually reinforcing risks to developing inclusive forms of cultural literacy education. It may, for example, lead to inclusion becoming conceived of as a conditional offer in which diversity is indulged in so far as citizens submit to unspecified (or underspecified) national cultural characteristics or forms of cultural heritage. This is particularly problematic where national cultures and identities reproduce national myths that fail to engage with 'difficult pasts', as this may stymie cultural participation of those whose histories are excluded. It can also lead to the general population being excluded from actively creating cultural education, and create a political milieu for cultural literacy education to actively work against commitments elsewhere to cultural and social tolerance.

3.4 The approach of national history curricula to 'difficult pasts' reflects basic tensions between national identity and inclusion, as well as past and existing asymmetries of social power. Thus, (post)colonial and (post-)socialist pasts are either differently interpreted within, or absent from, school curricula. In India, for example, emancipation from the colonial past, as well as recognition of its ongoing impacts, are issues of constant debate. By contrast, in postcolonial Europe, history curricular tend to perceive colonialism as an external phenomenon, and the relationship between colonialism and migration is addressed as an historical artefact. In the UK, the history curriculum covers the colonial past with a focus on India, but the emphasis is on the 'past': the present postcolonial reality of migration and multiculturalism is not addressed. Equally, neither Germany's colonial history nor its impact on contemporary Germany are addressed in Hamburg's curricula.

3.5 An emphasis on differences between cultures in the context of intercultural education, and the continuous reproduction of 'we and the other' discourses manifest a static and closed understanding of culture, rather than an inclusive one. This applies to several national contexts (Germany/Hamburg, Croatia, Slovakia, India, Turkey, UK).

3.6 In some national curricula, the tensions between national identity and inclusion are further problematized where national identity, culture and religion are conflated. This is particularly prominent in countries where religious education is included in the school programme (all project countries except India and Latvia). Religious education often features as a key channel for introducing students to 'cultural differences'. At the same time, some national curricula suggest that religion should play a role in educating students about ethics and values, especially where religious institutions are explicitly involved in the design of subject programmes. In some cases, there are declarations that curricula should reflect majority religious traditions, which works against commitments to emphasise cultural inclusion in religious teaching.

3.7 Language is typically represented as an attribute of national identity and used in schools as a means of socialising children within a unitary national culture. The value of multilingualism is rarely recognised. In the UK, the curriculum emphasises the educational obstacles faced by students for whom English is not a first language, without recognising the benefits of bi and multilingualism. India represents a conspicuous exception, where a multilingual approach to education reflects the country's linguistically pluralistic definition of national identity.

4. Structural and infrastructural barriers to access and participation

4.1 In general, discussion of barriers to access and participation in policy documents is selective and superficial. Reported obstacles include:
- time and financial constraints (exacerbated by the high cost of enrolment in some cultural activities);
- a mismatch between the needs of young people and 'cultural offers' (where, for example, core, publicly funded cultural institutions provide content that is largely unattractive to young people);
- incomplete provision due to inadequate provider resources;
- geographical constraints (where cultural activities are concentrated in cities, larger towns, or more developed regions);
- poor information on existing programmes;
- general youth passivity.

4.2 Little consideration is given to barriers of access and participation beyond socio-economic status and ethnicity. The effects of inequalities arising from religion, gender, and physical and mental disabilities are underemphasised.

4.3 Barriers to access and participation do not appear to be mapped systematically. No policy documents reported in depth empirical data on either the extent of the problem or how it takes effect. This is reflected in policy documents' tendency to report obstacles in isolation, rather than holistically. There appears to be little understanding of what combination of factors prevent access and participation, or of what cultural activities are affected. Policy documents typically ignore how discrepancies between cultural offers and young people's needs and interests affect access and participation, and fail to explore the tensions between efforts to monetise culture that place an emphasis on the development of talent, and participation for all.

4.4 Policy documents in some countries tend to conflate barriers to access and participation. For example, weak access and participation for ethnic minorities in Germany is typically linked to their socio-economic status, with little consideration given to the specific effects of racial discrimination.

4.5 The longer-term social consequences of fiscal contraction on access and participation are rarely outlined in depth in policy documents.

4.6 Policy documents in some countries (Spain, Georgia, Latvia, Turkey) focus primarily on access, ignoring questions of participation. In countries where policy documents discuss participation as well as access (Croatia, Germany, Slovakia, UK), discussion of participation tends to focus more on young people's involvement in cultural production, rather than decision-making.

4.7 The contemporary financial and institutional environment of civil society organisations is rarely discussed in policy documents, despite their key role in facilitating access and participation.

5. European cultural identity: the Struggle for Common Ground

5.1 Few countries seek explicitly to promote a common European identity: we found little evidence of specific programmes or initiatives aimed at situating national cultural practices within a pan-European identity.

5.2 In some countries, an emphasis on national culture is represented as constitutive of EU culture and identity. Whereas in other cases the emphasis is placed on European regions rather than the EU.

5.3 In countries either seeking accession to, or having expressed an interest in joining, the EU (Georgia and Turkey), policy documents emphasised the growing convergence between national cultural practices and the EU.

5.4 School curricula reflect the lack of common ground in defining European identity at the national level. The concept of Europe is strongly associated with colonialism in the Indian curriculum. In this way, Europe, and especially the UK, work as a foil in defining Indian identity as a postcolonial nation. In Turkey, European cultural heritage is mainly addressed through references to thinkers and scientists. In the Georgian curriculum, the focus is on the relationship between European and Asian cultures and their influence on Georgian culture. In the Latvian curriculum, 'European culture' is a

widely used (but ill-defined) concept and the preservation of national culture is understood as ensuring Europe's cultural diversity.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are relevant to developing more consistent, effective, and inclusive policies.

1. To achieve policy coherence all relevant policies (those relating to education, development, sport, and 'culture') should be consistent with, and work towards a country's (or Europe's) cultural literacy goals. Policy coherence will depend on an organised approach to policy development and implementation, which includes:
- effective goal-orientated policy design;
- implementation of policy goals in which stakeholders are engaged from the outset;
- an unambiguous investment plan which is mapped against implementation goals;
- a clear demarcation of mandates for all actors and agencies involved in implementation;
- targeted allocation of limited resources.

2. A new approach to funding of cultural literacy education is required, which recognises non-formal and informal environments of cultural socialisation as rich sources of cultural literacy innovation, creativity and inclusion. The potential of these environments is being held back as a result of imbalances in the allocation of public funds. There is also a strong case for increased public funding of cultural literacy education in order to offset the capacity of public companies and wealthy individuals to shape the direction of cultural literacy through corporate sponsorship or philanthropy.

3. Greater consideration needs to be given to recognising and engaging substantively with the tensions between inclusion and national culture. To this end, policy and curricula need to give increased attention to the fluid and hybrid nature of culture, and the importance of collective interaction and adaptation to shaping cultural practices and identity. In practice, this will require clear political statements and guidance for the implementation of policies and curricula, which:
- include an unconditional recognition of the value of cultural diversity to society, national heritage and identity;
- challenge national myths that ignore 'difficult pasts' and marginalise minorities from national historical narratives;
- engage with grass-root forms of cultural activism, and civil society initiatives that celebrate and enhance intercultural dialogue and inclusion.

4. There is a strong case for taking a more co-ordinated approach to tackling structural and infrastructural barriers to young people's access to and participation in cultural activities. This should include:
- allocating a greater share of public funding to initiatives that target economically disadvantaged groups;
- democratising the current top-down approach to cultural participation by integrating young people from different backgrounds into all aspects of decision-making and collaborating with stakeholder groups already delivering grassroots cultural education activities;
- synchronising cultural 'offers' with young people's current and emerging cultural interests;

- carrying out consistent and constructive evaluation of efforts and initiatives aimed at enabling access and participation.

5. As long as policies and curricula continue to conflate the notion of culture with nation, race, ethnicity and religion (which essentialises cultural differences and explains social inequalities primarily in terms of cultural differences), attempts to forge common ground over European culture, heritage and identity will remain undeveloped and ineffectual. The future idea of European cultural identity needs to reflect the heterogeneity of modern Europeans' cultural backgrounds and heritage. Diversity in all its forms needs to be recognised as a key feature of European social and cultural spaces and as something that has defined Europeanness historically.

RESEARCH PARAMETERS

The CHIEF project has 10 key objectives which it will aim to achieve through a variety of methods. The objectives, work packages and methodology of the project are outlined below:

Objectives:
1. To achieve a better underlying conceptual understanding of young people's cultural literacy as a process that takes place in diverse educational environments (including schools, families, civil society, (social) media), framed within national and supra-national policy agendas and shaped by the intergenerational dynamics of reproduction of cultural practices, values and attitudes.
2. To critically evaluate the meanings of 'European Culture' and 'European Cultural Heritage' as a central reference point for policies aiming to develop more effective inter-cultural dialogue in Europe, by questioning the interpretation of (supra-)national culture as a form of construction of collective identities.
3. To bring a truly global and inter-cultural perspective in exploring the meanings of 'European Culture' by expanding the regional focus of the investigation to non-EU countries, with a view to examining the political, cultural and economic ties that connect Europe to other parts of the world.
4. To investigate actual practices and attitudes of young people articulated in the course of their inter-cultural communication, which constitute the fabric of their inter-cultural experiences. The focus here is on the intersubjective nature of every day inter-cultural exchanges.
5. To map the existing pedagogical approaches to enhancing young people's cultural literacy in Europe (and beyond) as manifested in national curricula, textbooks and actual classroom practices.
6. To evaluate the effectiveness of young people's learning practices in relation to the pedagogy of cultural literacy.
7. To assess civil society as a non-formal educational environment for developing young people's cultural knowledge, stimulating their cultural participation and supporting inter-cultural dialogue.
8. To methodologically examine young people's cultural literacy as part of a process evolving in the course of intergenerational transmissions of cultural practices and values, in the context of mnemonic socialisation within families.
9. To examine the political and practical limitations of elitist and historically static understandings of European cultural heritage by unpacking its underlying politics of cultural sensitivity, with reference to 'heritage in the making'.
10. To facilitate knowledge exchange between the research community, education and civil society practitioners, and policy makers, in order to enhance the development of effective strategies that raise cultural literacy and challenge xenophobic stereotypes among young people.

CHIEF is designed as a cross-disciplinary, multi-task and multi-method project. The project's mixed-methods approach integrates several empirical Work Packages to investigate the role of formal, non-formal and informal education in shaping young people's cultural literacy and intercultural competences, and examine how young people's experiences of Europe's cultural heritage influences their cultural identities and cultural participation. To achieve this, we are conducting our research activities in diverse educational contexts that involve young people (aged 14-25) as well as adults (family members, heritage and education practitioners, and civil society activists). CHIEF combines qualitative (in-depth ethnography based on participant observation, interviews, diaries and visual documentation; textual analysis and comparison) and quantitative methods (multi-level survey, systematic and thematic analysis and modelling) developed within anthropology, sociology, history and policy research.

To maximise impact, we are also working with non-academic stakeholders who possess practical experience of working in non-formal education and heritage sectors, and knowledge of their respective policies. Finally, to facilitate the dissemination of research findings to diverse audiences, we use a range of media, including a project website and blog, and various social media platforms. We are also collaborating with a professional filmmaker to produce short documentaries informed by the research.

PROJECT IDENTITY

PROJECT NAME Cultural Heritage and Identities of Europe's Future (CHIEF)

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FURTHER READING	National Cultural/Educational Policy Review http://chiefproject.eu/deliverables/national-cultural-educational-policy-review/
	National Curriculum Review Reports http://chiefproject.eu/deliverables/national-curriculum-review-reports/