



EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEF



Cultural Heritage and Identities of Europe's Future



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CULTURAL HERITAGE AND IDENTITIES OF EUROPE'S FUTURE (CHIEF) – POLICY BRIEFING

CHIEF is an international project led by Aston University (UK), involving partners across 9 countries. The research explores young people's cultural literacy, heritage and identities in various educational contexts (schools, youth groups and families).

This third policy briefing makes recommendations, drawing on research conducted in Georgia.

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Rediscovering culture in schools

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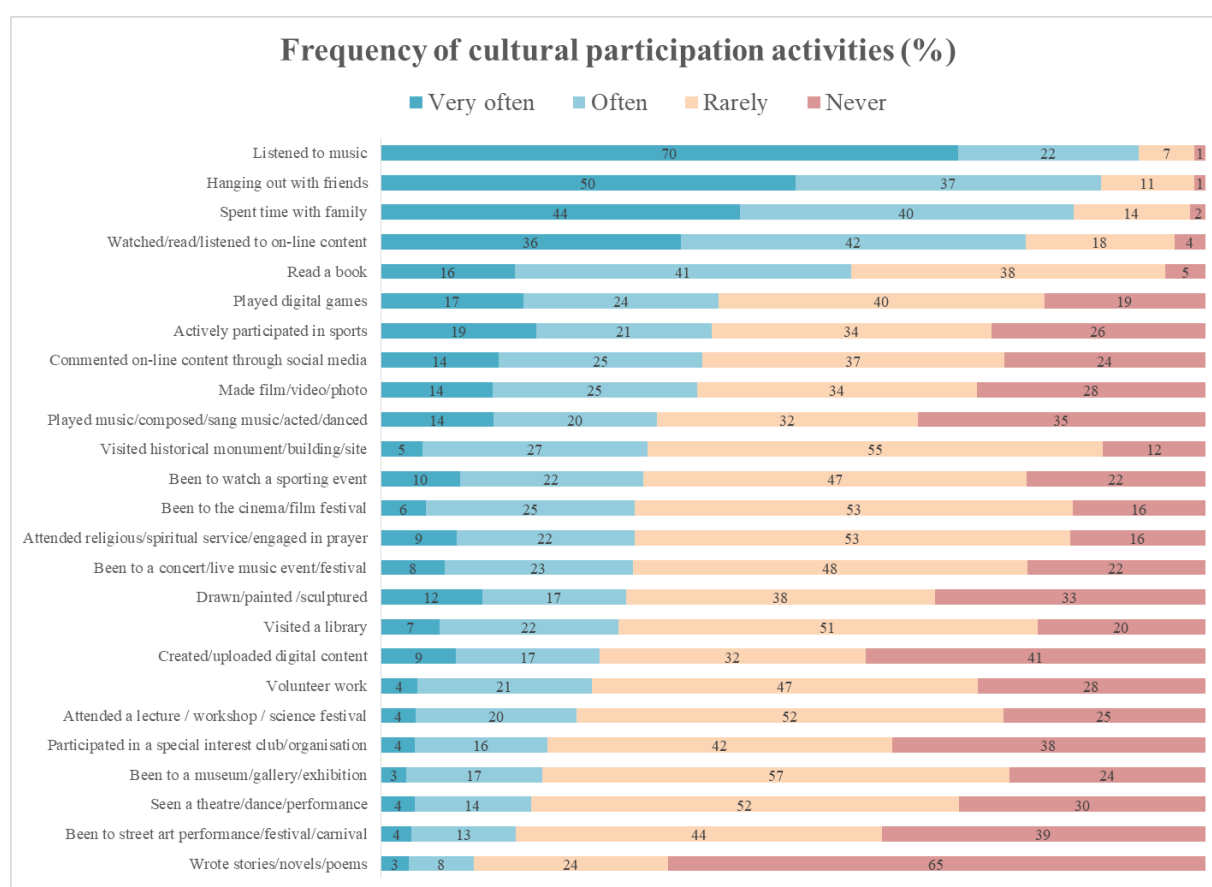
INTRODUCTION

The goal of this policy brief is to present research findings related to cultural engagement and intercultural relations of young people in Georgia, and potential policy implications. This brief will propose recommendations on ways to enhance young people's involvement in cultural activities, to raise interest in and tolerance of different cultures and subcultures, and to make museums and exhibitions more attractive to young people in Georgia. The formal education setting, which can be regarded as the main transmitter of cultural education, seems to have less impact: studies show relatively low levels of cultural participation and intercultural dialogue among young people in Georgian public schools. This is especially true in rural schools, where young people have next to no contact with other cultures and where cultural participation is limited to occasional trips to historical churches.

EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS

Finding 1: Low level of cultural engagement/ No diverse cultural activities at school

A study of secondary schools in Georgia showed that young people had a low level of cultural engagement. Data analysis based on a survey of young people in thirty public schools illustrates that young people most frequently listen to music, hang out with friends, and spend time with family members. Little time is spent on 'traditional' cultural activities that are often referred to as 'high culture': only about 4% of young people reported that they visited a museum, gallery or exhibition, attended a theatre play, dance or art performance, or had been to a festival or carnival 'very often' during the last twelve months.



Source: CHIEF survey conducted from 29 November 2019 to 5 March 2020 in public schools in Georgia, before the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to qualitative interviews, young people's favourite thing about school was their interactions with friends and peers. Peers and family members are the strongest predictors for cultural participation among young people. Schools encourage some cultural participation, mostly by taking young people on excursions to old monasteries, churches, heritage sites, and in rare cases to museums. However, these visits are irregular and infrequent, especially in rural regions, and do not spark particular interest in young people.

Culture is mostly associated with history, which is often presented as something that needs to be 'memorised', rather than questioned and discussed. While schools provided some information about 'traditional' Georgian culture, no modern approaches to teaching contemporary culture (e.g. more involvement and research from students) were mentioned during the qualitative interviews in schools. Moreover, some cultural subjects (e.g. art, art history, music, dance, and even sports) were regarded as 'useless', as they offer no profitable job prospects.

Finding 2: Lack of information about and contact with representatives of other cultures at school

Another issue is that young people have only infrequent personal contact with other cultures. A survey of Georgian public schools shows that one fourth of the respondents never spoke (25%) or socialised (26%) with people of other cultures, while another 25% did so only annually. These findings are not surprising given the fact that most schools in Georgia are primarily composed of ethnic Georgian students. This is especially true of rural schools, where students have practically no contact with other ethnic groups and nationalities. However, even in urban schools, where different ethnic minority students are present, they seem not to be well integrated with ethnic Georgians. This could lead to intolerance of the 'unknown' minority students, especially if these young people do not share the same values or worldviews of the ethnic Georgian students.

As well as having little contact with non-Georgian ethnic groups, nationalities, and cultures, young people also receive no information about and have little contact with the different sub-cultures living in Georgia. Findings from observations of alternative sub-culture groups in Tbilisi showed that young members feel that they are not well tolerated in society. Because their views and identities are different from mainstream Georgian views, they feel that a large part of society is not open to their cultural activities. While this is more true of the older generation, public schools also have no programmes related to youth sub-cultures and their activities (e.g. street art or modern dance cultures).

Finding 3: Museums, exhibitions and other cultural places are not adjusted to modern needs of young people.

Museums, exhibitions, and cultural spaces do not seem to attract young people. Young people rarely visit these spaces, and when they do, it is mostly under the influence of family members. Despite the government's strategy to revive and promote museums, young people have no great interest in going to them. Museums' reluctance to adopt modern and innovative approaches was named as the main obstacle. In addition, young people feel that the museums need to be better taken care of and the exhibits presented in a more engaging way.

In interviews, young people suggested that museums and exhibitions could become more interactive by introducing more visual materials, videos, and presentations such as short films about artists, artworks, or artefacts. This would better engage the visitors with the stories behind exhibits. Architecture, design, atmosphere, and exhibition content could also be 'modernised' to be more attractive for the young generation. In addition, criticism was directed at tour guides, who young people felt could present the displays in more interesting, comprehensive, and sometimes more objective ways.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy recommendations addressed to the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia:

- Georgian youth need more support when it comes to cultural activities. Currently, these activities tend to be limited and linked to close circles of friends and family members. Georgian educational institutions should be more proactive and change their methods to attract young people to a variety of cultural activities. Currently, cultural engagement primarily consists of visits to old Georgian churches and heritage sites, which provide only superficial

information, making young people memorise dates and facts without further discussion or explanation.

- In formal education settings, culture should be promoted as an interesting and profitable field. In order to spark interest in young people, schools should bring culture into their lives by incorporating more cultural events, like going to museums, concerts, and exhibitions, as well as more modern cultural activities tailored to younger generations. More inclusion of youth sub-cultures in the curriculum, and giving students assignments to independently research their own cultural interests, would be fruitful. Young people should be able to question traditional Georgian culture and search for alternative answers when it comes to historical and cultural events (in school as well as at university).
- The formal education system should put more effort into increasing young people's exposure to people of different cultures and ethnic groups living in Georgia (via inter-school exchange programmes, presentations, etc.). Cultural tolerance could be broadened by providing more information about cultures and sub-cultures that are not necessarily Orthodox Christian or traditional. This could also enhance the cultural participation of young people, since multicultural experience is correlated with cultural participation indicators.
- According to young respondents, the majority of Georgians are resistant to changes that alternative sub-cultures of young people offer society. In order to normalise different cultures and sub-cultures, more information should be given to people during secondary school. Schools should provide more information on foreign or unfamiliar, which for Georgians are mostly non-Christian, cultures. More information could lead to more knowledge, tolerance, engagement, interest and positive attitudes.

Policy recommendations addressed to the Ministry of Culture:

- The study showed that young people rarely go to museums. In order to make museums more attractive to young people, and to the general public, they must keep up with the modern world. Museums and exhibitions should cater to young people's tastes, interests, and lifestyles. For example, they could become more interactive by introducing visual materials, videos, and presentations such as short films to better engage the visitors with the stories behind exhibits. Architecture, design, atmosphere and the content of the exhibitions could also be 'modernised' to make the spaces more attractive for young people.
- As family and peers have an important impact on cultural education and the engagement of young people in cultural activities, specific policies could be drafted that facilitate the engagement of family members or peer groups with cultural activities in museums. Facilitating family tours of museums led by specially-trained guides would increase general exposure to culture.

RESEARCH PARAMETERS

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, to run for three and a half years. It involves academic, civil society and policy-maker partners across nine countries (Croatia, Georgia, Germany, India, Latvia, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey, UK).

CHIEF:

- examines the processes and environments that influence young people's cultural literacy and cultural identity through an interdisciplinary and methodologically varied approach;
- advocates for an inclusive interpretation of Europe's cultural heritage as a foundation for cultural literacy and cultural identity;
- challenges ethno-nationalist, xenophobic or otherwise exclusionary understanding of European cultural identity that may lead to intolerance and marginalisation, threatening the future of the European project;
- recommends effective strategies for enhancing cultural literacy among young people in ways that reflect both the heterogeneity of modern European cultural backgrounds and heritage and diversity as a historic feature of Europeanness.

The findings presented in this policy brief are based on data obtained in Georgia through:

- Qualitative research in formal educational settings (WP2, Deliverable 2.2)
- A survey of young people's cultural literacy (WP3, Deliverable 3.1)
- Qualitative research in heritage sites (WP6, Deliverable 6.2)
- Engagement with young people's cultural practices (WP7, Deliverable 7.1)

PROJECT IDENTITY

PROJECT NAME

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

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Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020), Societal Challenge 6 – Europe in a changing world: inclusive, innovative and reflective societies", call H2020-SC6-CULT-COOP-2017-two-stage UNDERSTANDING EUROPE - PROMOTING THE EUROPEAN, topic "CULT-COOP-03-2017- Cultural literacy of young generations in Europe".

DURATION

May 2018 – October 2021 (42 months).

BUDGET

EU contribution: €4,580,371.25

WEBSITE

<http://chiefprojecteu.com>

**FOR MORE
INFORMATION**

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FURTHER READING

Qualitative research in formal educational settings. Country based reports: cultural literacy practices in formal education in Georgia (WP2, D2.2)

<http://chiefprojecteu.com/deliverables/country-based-reports-cultural-literacy-practices-in-formal-education/>

Survey of young people's cultural literacy. Country-based reports: measuring cultural literacy and participation in Georgia (WP3, D3.1)

<http://chiefprojecteu.com/deliverables/country-based-reports-measuring-cultural-literacy-and-participation/>

Qualitative research in heritage sites. Heritage sites case-study report-Georgia (WP6, D6.2)

<http://chiefprojecteu.com/deliverables/heritage-sites-case-study-reports/>

Engagement with young people's cultural practices PAR ethnography case-studies reports in Georgia (WP7, D7.1)

<http://chiefprojecteu.com/deliverables/par-ethnography-case-studies-reports/>

Policy Briefing 1

<http://chiefprojecteu.com/deliverables/policy-briefing-1>