

**EUROPEAN
EXPERT
NETWORK
ON CULTURE
(EENC)**

***Which skills for culture in a globalised
and digitised world?***

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EENC Paper, October 2011

This document has been prepared by Colin Mercer¹ on behalf of the European Expert Network on Culture (EENC). Produced for The European Culture Forum 2011 (Panel 2).

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The EENC was set up in 2010 at the initiative of Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission (DG EAC), with the aim of contributing to the improvement of policy development in Europe. It provides advice and support to DG EAC in the analysis of cultural policies and their implications at national, regional and European levels. The EENC involves 17 independent experts and is coordinated by Interarts and Culture Action Europe.

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'... [the] practices of cultural consumption and cultural creation are at the very core of the battle over the institutional ecology of the networked information economy'.²

Context

The value production chain for the cultural and creative industries (CCI) - from the moment of creation, through production and reproduction, promotion and marketing, distribution and access, to consumption, in both local and global markets - has been, and is being, dramatically transformed in the past decade by the technologies, platforms, new formal and informal practical and conceptual skills, and new audiences, communities and transnational/global networks of users/consumers and creators/producers developing in the digital and creative economy. In many ways, like the invention and mechanisation of printing from the late 15th century in Europe which led to such new 'cultural technologies' as the personal and portable vernacular Bible, the novel, the newspaper, the almanac, the dictionary, the diary - the web pages, wikis, blogs, the portable devices and social media of their day which had such an effect on both the Reformation and Revolutions of their respective times - the digital revolution is transforming the ways in which culture is created, produced, known about, accessed and distributed, purchased, consumed and used ... and *recreated*. In Benkler's words 'it is precisely this freedom [to cut, paste, and remix present culture]...that most directly challenges the laws written for the twentieth century technology, economy, and cultural practice'³. From this perspective, the skills spectrum for the digital creative economy is both long and broad: from skills of basic understanding and cognition to the skills necessary for competing effectively in open markets no longer constrained by national or linguistic borders. There is an urgent need for a EU-wide strategic assessment of this spectrum including the development of new and often hybrid business skills and models enabling individuals and organisations to compete more effectively on global markets and to develop new revenue streams in public and private sectors. This is especially urgent in the context of the current economic crisis and budget cuts and the need to revisit the forms of financing of the cultural and creative sector.

As with the print revolution certain capacities, competencies - *skills* - were necessary from basic literacy through authors writing in a standardised vernacular national language, composers, publishers, distribution agencies and networks, to the audience or, as we might now call it, the consumers and the market. In the print revolution these capacities and institutions grew exponentially after the invention of the technology of moveable type and even more rapidly after the invention of steam-driven presses in the late 18th century. The demand was for everything from basic literacy skills to high level production techniques in editing and binding and teaching and training in skills of reading, understanding and analysis by end-user individuals and the intermediaries of literary and media criticism.

The *Digital Agenda for Europe*⁴ faces similar challenges on a greatly accelerated scale with the combined triple imperatives of globalisation and economic development, the opening and creation of new transnational and global markets, and the social dimensions of digital literacy, inclusion and identity. The differences from the print revolution, which pose significant new policy, legal and skill development challenges are in the emergence of such phenomena as social network media, User

² Yochai Benkler, *Networks and the Wealth of Nations. How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006, p. 277.

³ Benkler, *ibid.*, p. 300.

⁴ European Commission, Communication on a Digital Agenda for Europe, COM (2010) 245.

Generated Content (UGC), the 'prosumer' (the consumer also as creator/producer of content), and a culturally diverse digital and global market *space* of cultural and commercial transactions and exchanges. This is especially so now as we move from the enhanced *interactive* and multilinear Web 2.0 to the *collaborative* and hypertextual Web 3.0 or 'semantic web' environments of exponentially-increasing connections and associations between people, computers and data or information effortlessly crossing both national and regional borders and opening new global markets. The similar rapid escalation of portable digital devices (phones, pods and pads) as a first point of call/reception and creation/ transmission from the home or from public squares in Cairo or Tripoli, London, Paris and Brussels and many more provide eloquent and topical testimony to the social, cultural and political power of these new digital media platforms and devices.

The 2011 EC *Green Paper* on online distribution of audiovisual works in the EU puts it clearly: '...digital technology and the internet are rapidly changing the way in which content is produced, marketed and distributed to consumers. The traditional value chains are in flux and business models are evolving to meet consumer expectations...'⁵. Many new skill challenges - and some older ones - emerge, or need to be revisited, in this context. The 2010 CCI *Green Paper*, notes that 'cultural diversity, globalization and digitization...are key drivers for the further development of these [cultural and creative] industries' and identifies the need for (i) key innovation and experimentation *enablers*, (ii) a strong local and regional base to enable a global *presence*, and: (iii) catalyzing *spill-over effects* from the cultural and creative industries into other industries and areas of social innovation.⁶ This is the broader context for the skills challenges that follow.

Challenges

The skills, competency and capacity challenges, practical and conceptual, presented to policy makers and stakeholders in the cultural and creative industries sector can therefore be read along this 'value production chain' - or digital skills spectrum in the following terms framed as sub-topics. The value of this approach is that it enables a strategic and 'whole of industry/cultural ecology' public and private sector analysis of the cost-benefits of digitalisation from creation to point of sale, the identification of new revenue and funding streams, and assessment of skills needs to inform policy priorities for the CCI sector in the digitalised and globalised environment. The term 'skills' here is taken to include practical, conceptual and cognitive competencies and capacities in order to position them not simply at the advanced and technical end of the scale but also in the context of lifelong learning, multiple entry and exit points for skills development, and social inclusion for disadvantaged, but far from 'unskilled' population sectors.

1. Creation, Production, and Reproduction Skills

New skills for creation, production, reproduction and, increasingly, collaborative 'commons-based peer production' have emerged, in the digital environment and are changing both business models and management structures and hierarchies. Benkler defines commons-based peer production as '...a new modality of organizing production: radically decentralized, collaborative and non-proprietary; sharing resources among widely distributed, loosely connected individuals who co-operate with each other without relying either on market signals or managerial commands.'⁷ In production and post

⁵ European Commission, *Green Paper on the online distribution of audiovisual works in the European Union: opportunities and challenges towards a digital single market*, COM (2011) 427 final.

⁶ European Commission, *Green Paper: Unlocking the Potential of Cultural and Creative Industries*, COM (2010) 183, p. 3.

⁷ Benkler, *op.cit.*, p. 60.

production this is especially the case in advanced areas such as digital rendering, non-linear audio and video editing, and computer generated images (CGI) which are in high demand in CCI sectors such as architecture, design, games, film, tv and radio special effects and post-production, and animation. In some sectors, notably massive multiplayer online games (MMOGs), we are witnessing the emergence of decentralised, collaborative commons-based peer production where loosely collected individual users/consumers contribute to developing and refining the product without necessarily following market signals or industry command structures. Evidence from digital skills audits in the UK especially⁸, suggests two things: (i) that the current talent pool in these areas is limited both practically and conceptually, often necessitating the import of labour from beyond the EU and, (ii) that education and training for these high value added skillsets, especially at the further and higher education levels, is not well adjusted to meet the increasing demand for these skills from industry, the public sector, and the emerging markets.

This is not, however, just a question of developing advanced technical skills in the further and higher levels of education. There is a strong argument - and evidence - that technical, conceptual, and *cognitive* skills more closely related to a digital, non-linear, and associative environment can be instilled into the educational curriculum from pre-primary level onwards. Pre-literate children and people from oral rather than print-based cultures have shown considerably more skill in navigating and manipulating the resources, levels and hypertext/hyperlink environment of the World Wide Web and collaborative software platforms than those formally trained in more traditional curricular environments and there is a strong case for the re-tuning and modernisation of the curriculum in a broad and inclusive digital agenda concerned with lifelong learning, from pre-primary to postgraduate education and beyond. This is what a EC Expert Group calls 'digital fluency' crucial for 'both life and jobs' in an increasingly competitive global race for talent in which Europe is currently 'losing part of its highly skilled workforce'.⁹

2. Promotion and Marketing Skills

The current three levels of digital skills (Low, Medium, High), as specified in EC documentation for the *Digital Agenda for Europe*¹⁰, while very useful in tracking positive and negative trends at member state and EU *population* levels, is not sufficiently geared to *industry and workforce* - especially digital CCI - needs and interests in creation, production and reproduction. The *i2010 Benchmarking Digital Europe 2011-2015 Conceptual Framework* report further emphasises that 'measuring e-Skills in the workforce is also needed' (p.9). Specific research in this sector is required which will lead to and inform new skills, measures, and indicators. New advanced programmes need to be developed at further education and university levels such as industry internships and advanced digital professional apprenticeships in partnership between industry, government and educational institutions. As the EC's 2010 CCI *Green Paper* puts it, there is a need to 'better understand and map new skills' necessary for this dramatic 'crossroads of creativity and entrepreneurship'.¹¹ Within the EU there has been a good deal of work on digital competencies and general communications skills as in the 2007 *Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* where it includes 'confident and critical

⁸ The UK has two relevant national skills councils: *Skillset*, for Creative and Cultural Skills, and *eSkills* for the ICT industry. Together these have produced the following recent documents: *Strategic Skills Assessment for the Creative Industries*, January 2010, and *Sector Skills Assessment for the Creative Industries of the UK*, January 2011.

⁹ European Commission Expert Group on New Skills for New Jobs, *New Skills for New Jobs: Action Now*, 2010, pp. 25, 13-14.

¹⁰ European Commission, *Europe's Digital Competitiveness Report 2010*, SEC (2010) 627, p.78. 6 skills are identified as follows: (i) copying or moving a file or folder; (ii) copying and pasting in a document; (iii) using basic formulae in a spreadsheet; (iv) compressing or zipping files; (v) connecting and installing new devices; (vi) programming. Low skills are 1 or 2 of these; Medium skills 3 or 4, and High skills are 5 or all of them.

¹¹ European Commission, COM (2010) 183, p. 10.

use.... for work, leisure and communication',¹² in the subsequent work of the Expert Group on New Skills for New Jobs (2010) and in the 2010 DG EMPL *Transversal Analysis on the Evolution of Skills Needs in 19 Economic Sectors*.¹³ In the latter report, however, it is only the publishing industry, within the CCI sector, which is analysed.

At this crucial crossroads of creativity and entrepreneurship formed by the *whole* CCI sector, there are, crucially, cross-platform and *convergent* production (and marketing, distribution, etc.) skills which require multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and 'joined-up' approaches, thinking, and training beyond the current *silos* of education and training provision and current policy settings on cultural funding categories and needs.

One of the distinctive features - and a potential strategic and competitive advantage - of the CCI sector over more traditional industry sectors is that it is a 'content' industry. It produces signs, symbols, meanings, values, in textual, audio and visual forms. Most of its content in the audiovisual and publishing sub-sectors is now *digital* from the moment of creation; much of its content in visual arts and crafts, performance, design and heritage and collecting institutions, is *digitisable* in various combinations of image, text and sound in production and reproduction. While the audiovisual and publishing sub-sectors, as the oldest established of the industrialised CCIs, have strong profiles in promotion and marketing, the same is not true of the other sub-sectors which are mostly made up of SMEs at the largest, and micro businesses, self-employed/sole traders, and freelancers at the smallest scale. In the digital environment, creation, production, reproduction, marketing, distribution, and sales of content are now, *in principle*, both much cheaper and capable of generating new revenue streams and sources of funding and investment. To move from 'in principle' to 'in practice', however, there is a priority need to address skills needs in digital promotion and marketing, taking advantage both of the lower cost of these activities in the digital environment and the greatly enhanced audience and market reach both within and across borders enabled by new platforms and devices including social media and 'cloud computing'. Such business management and financial skills are not often combined with core creative skills in traditional education and training offers but there is an urgent need for them in order to develop the *hybrid* skills of understanding and developing new business models, developing new team- and flexible project-based management styles, and new forms of creative leadership through partnering programmes, mentorship and 'business angel' initiatives, incubator and 'collaboratory' environments, and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) initiatives. These are the *hybrid* skills of the creative community, business and industry, education and training institutions and agencies, and government - especially local government with the support of national and transnational funding programmes like the EC's Media Programme promoting multi-territory availability of audiovisual content (According to the 2011 *Green Paper on Online Distribution of Audiovisual Content*, there were sixteen such projects funded by the Media Programme in 2010, only four of which were for nationally specific audiences).¹⁴ More 'Creative Intersection/Partnership' initiatives of this type will be necessary for the cultural sector to recognise, engage, and take advantage of the actual and potential emergence of new and diverse markets for its *content* in the context of globalisation in order to develop new business opportunities and models, and

¹² European Union, *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – European Reference Framework*, Luxembourg, European Communities, 2007, p. 7.

¹³ Oxford Research A/S, *Transversal Analysis on the Evolution of Skills Needs in 19 Economic Sectors. Report prepared by Oxford Research for DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities*, Frederiksberg, Oxford Research, 2010.

¹⁴ European Commission, COM (2011) 427 final, pp. 11-12.

new revenue streams for its products and services.¹⁵ A useful slogan might be 'Build local' (cultural, creative resources, skills and capacities) to 'Go Global'.

3. Distribution and Access Skills

Digital technologies have enabled a dramatic transition from the notion of market *place* to market *space*, from 'atoms' to 'bits' as one commentator has put it¹⁶ or from 'local' and 'global' to 'glocal' in economic and policy terms. In this new market space, now greatly enlarged by *Google*, *Facebook*, *YouTube*, *Twitter*, *Flickr* and portable digital devices, the landscape and architecture of distribution and access have been dramatically transformed from a 'few to many' to a 'many to many' communication and media environment. This opens up significant new opportunities and challenges for the distribution of, and access to, the product - the 'content' - produced by the CCI sector. But, as with promotion and marketing there is a need for hybrid skills here including business management, marketing, (social) network development, and event and venue management. The combination of traditional cultural and digital platforms such as the subscription-based simultaneous transmission of New York Metropolitan Opera productions to various public and commercial venues around the world and the free global transmission in public places such as squares and parks of the BBC's *Last Night of the Proms* from London's Royal Albert Hall provide examples of greatly increased access and distribution of cultural content. As they are broadcast and/or streamed on free-to-air or subscription TV services they can also be received on portable devices and potentially viewed anywhere with sufficient wired or wireless access. Combining the 'atoms' of the physical infrastructure of performing arts venues and performances with the 'bits' of digital production and transmission opens up a whole new set of opportunities for engaging new audiences for and consumers of cultural content. Places, become *spaces*. Similar lessons can apply to traditional cultural institutions such as museums and galleries, libraries and archives, and their collections. The UK's *Culture24* family of websites, for example, provides opportunities for 'hijacking' of images and texts, together with personalised 'flagging and tagging', through platforms such as *Facebook* and *Flickr*, of images and texts from the *Online Museum*. This is an example, according to Jane Finnis, co-ordinator of *Culture24*, '...of people appropriating an aspect of culture in personal ways that mean something to them, an aspect of engagement'.¹⁷ To 'cut, paste, and remix present culture..' in Benkler's words, as an action that challenges many of the legal and policy conventions relating to culture, technology and the economy that have been inherited in the cultural domain from the twentieth century. Noting that cultural professionals '...are not profiting enough from the opportunity to develop user-generated content on cultural websites', Lidia Varbanova poses the question of whether 'European cultural organisations and networks watch or participate in this new game?'¹⁸

These questions and issues point to the urgent need for a whole new 'tool kit' for digital cultural management skills and an accompanying 'manual' that has yet to be written - but for which the knowledge and experience exist in diverse forms and practices in which synergies need to be encouraged and developed in priority areas. What is clear, however, is that a major focus of skills development which simultaneously addresses economic, cultural and social development needs in the digital environment will need to be on this combined and continuing explosion of the capacities to distribute and provide access to cultural content and to understand the ways in which it is being *actively* consumed, negotiated, and *used* to diverse ends.

¹⁵ See, on this theme, the recent paper by Annamari Laaksonen for IFACCA: *Creative Partnerships: Intersections between the arts, culture and other sectors*, IFACCA D'Art Report, n°41, Sydney, 2011.

¹⁶ Nicholas Negroponte, *Being Digital*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1995.

¹⁷ Jane Finnis, 'Turning cultural websites inside out: changes in online cultural behaviour, Web 2.0 and the issues for the culture sector' in A. Uzelac and B. Cvjeticanin, eds., *Digital Culture: The Changing Dynamics*, Zagreb, IMO, 2008, p. 160.

¹⁸ Lidia Varbanova, 'The online power of users and money: can culture gain?' in *ibid.*, 171-72 and 178.

4. Consumption and Usage Skills

Most data on digital activities in the EU is based on consumption and usage activities. *Eurostat's* surveys of computer usage cover areas such as broadband access, extent of usage, purpose of usage, basic demographics, etc. These are often condensed and supplemented and used in indicator tables such as the *Riga Benchmarks* and the *Riga Dashboard* relating to digital inclusion and exclusion across the EU. Beyond the public sector, data collection on computer usage by *Google*, *MSN* and *Facebook*, for example, is much more targeted - focussing not only on basic demographics (gender, age, location), but also on lifestyle and cultural preferences as demonstrated through purchases, links to other websites, and 'interests' where these are stated in profiles and not privacy-protected. 'Lifestyle and cultural preferences' and demographics are an important factor when it comes to targeted digital marketing campaigns where, for example, if you state that you are 50+ in a profile you are likely to receive ads as pop-ups on *Facebook* for 50+ insurance deals, 50+ holiday packages, 50+ dating sites, etc rather than ads for skateboards and trainers. The same goes for preferences in reading, tv, films, music, etc which are also tracked by marketing interests from *Amazon* and *Google* on down the scale to credit reference agencies. Some cultural websites also pop up so some cultural organisations are beginning to play the game too. But the fact remains that, on the whole, the cultural sector, used to talking to itself mostly, knows very little about its actual or potential digital audience - or 'market share' out there, in the ether, across the borders, around the world, and needs to know much more about it - as do we all. Skills in market and consumer analysis including the more conceptual sociological and ethnological ones of the analysis of the formation of taste cultures, subcultures and 'lifestyles' are necessary. This is another example of a possible output of a partnership and collaborative arrangement between the cultural sector, universities, and the private sector which is much easier to achieve now, in the context of globalisation, digitisation and the demonstrable evidence-based growth of the CCI sector and renewed policy interest in it as both *economic and social* in its effects, than it would have been 20 years ago.

Equally important, as stressed above, is usage understood from the point of view of creation, production and reproduction by industry and the workforce. Some local and regional surveys of the CCI sector have shown, for example that where, say, 10-15 years ago, the computer in the cultural work place was simply a business machine looking inwards on word processing, accounts, invoices, tax dues, payrolls, etc., now digitisation, convergence and the development of new software, platforms and skills have enabled those machines to look and expand ever outwards and to play a crucial role along the value chain in creation, production and reproduction, and on to marketing, distribution, and finally acting as a point of sale of content or service. At the EU level we need to know much more about the uses of digital technologies and skills by the CCI sector along this chain and a survey instrument - or instruments - needs to be developed for use at EU and member state and regional and local levels to inform skills development in these areas, to know both workforce and consumer needs and interests, and to inform policy and funding priority areas towards new skills for a digital and sustainable creative economy.

Key Questions

✦ *Partnerships for lifelong learning*

What are the most effective mechanisms, as demonstrated in EU and international best practice, of forming and consolidating ongoing partnerships between the creative community, industry, educational institutions, and EU and member state government agencies, to build the necessary broad skill base, conceptual and practical, for the digital creative economy from pre-primary to

advanced levels, including Continuing Professional Development, within a framework of lifelong learning?

✦ *Improving information on skills*

How can the existing data, indicators, and benchmarks in the *Digital Agenda for Europe* and related documentation be improved by, for example, industry and labour force specific data on uses of digital technologies and platforms in the various stages of the value production chain: in creation, production and reproduction, promotion and marketing, distribution, and sales, to inform priorities for skills development. Does the EC need something like a 'Digital Skills Council' to guide and oversee this work?

✦ *Toolkits and manuals*

What might a 'tool kit' and 'manual' for digital cultural skills - practical, conceptual, and cognitive - look like and what partnership of creative, industry, educational and government agencies would commission it, guide its development, and ensure both its completion and ongoing revision?

✦ *Improving information on uses and users*

How can *Eurostat* and other surveys of digital usage and markets be supplemented, refined, and developed by more refined data and information on the diverse *uses* of culture - including in education, sub cultures, assertions of identity and ethnicity, transnational creativity, communication and mobility, intercultural dialogue, etc., to inform practical and conceptual digital skills needs for the CCI sector in understanding existing, new, and emergent transnational markets and consumers and their uses of culture in a globalised digital environment?