

**Topic: Creativity.** The European Union has declared the year 2009 as the Year of Creativity and Innovation. The actual intention is to promote creativity in the economy, but this cannot be achieved without the individual ingenuity and personal creativeness of the people. What is offered by the innumerable courses on artistic creation and artistic crafts throughout Europe, from Malta to Norway, does not only serve individual development, but ultimately the economy, too. Alongside other current topics, we present a few examples for you in this InfoLetter.

Cartoon: Mester



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## European Year 2009: A welcoming fanfare by carrot-flutes

**Europe.** Interview with Roger O'Keeffe (Directorate General (DG) Education, Youth and Culture in the European Commission) Manager of the Year 2009, about definitions, expectations, sustainability of a European Year that was not in a pole position for its start.

### The evolution of a European Year

(Simone Kaufhold) The inaugural concert of the Vienna Vegetable Orchestra on 5 December 2008 was the official handover from the European Year 2008 of Intercultural Dialogue to its successor of 2009.

The upcoming European Year that promotes creativity and innovation itself could not have been presented in a better way as the original idea for the year 2009 was to make a European Year of Music, proposed by the Austrian Ministry of Culture and Education in 2006. In this year Mr. O'Keeffe started the task of preparing the implementation of the year and at the same time he was already on boat managing the European Year 1996 of Lifelong Learning. The European Commission enlarged the idea of having a year of music to creative education, including all forms of artistic self-expression, and the aspect of innovation was added later on from Jose Manuel Barroso the president of the European Commission when the idea was brought for approval.

What the European Year is about answered Mr. O'Keeffe by telling that the European Commission did not come up with a clear definition of creativity or innovation but the aim is to get people talking and arguing about concepts. Innovations, so O'Keeffe, should be seen in a broad way that also includes social innovation. Both components

innovation and creativity should be complementary to each other.

### Overbooked years and other administrative hurdles

The European Year 2009 did not go an easy way: During the calculations the Commission became clear that the year had to be in 2009 as 2010 was already booked, 2011 was too far away for a number of reasons: The year 2009 should feed into thinking about the Lisbon strategy after 2010. Unfortunately, in late 2006 was no time left to discuss about a separate budget line for the year. The decision of the Commission was to do it without a separate budget line and therefore they thought that there would be no need for a legal basis. The intention was to get a political declaration by the European Institutions. But when it rains, it pours... Hard working members of the European Parliament decided "no half measures": the European Year 2009 needs a formal legal bases and put that proposal to the President of the European Parliament Mr. Pöttering who signed the petition as one of the probably thousand papers he has to sign everyday.

But at the beginning of December 2008 the official website [www.Create2009.europa.eu](http://www.Create2009.europa.eu) could be published and projects by member states could be financed by the existing lifelong learning programmes.

### Full story in database



Roger O'Keeffe



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**EUROPEAN AFFAIRS**

# The benefits to health and the reduction of isolation through arts and crafts learning

**Budapest EAEA Conference - December 2008**

At the EAEA Conference in Budapest proposals for innovation were made to the European Commission for implementing its adult education Action Plan. ▶

**How important is education in view of the global economic crisis?**

The World Forum on Education highlighted the paradox between an increased need for education and weak investment. ▶

Education, Youth and Culture (EYC) Council Meeting – conclusions in the field of adult education. ▶

More and more EU citizens use the Internet - but educational level still makes a difference. ▶

European Commission presents Legislative and Work Programme 2009. ▶

**Projects**

**Reflection of Talent: Intergenerational work with Community Arts**

**Netherlands.** It seemed simple enough: young and old must be given the opportunity to get to know one another better by learning from each other. After all, they each have a completely different view on a number of issues and a completely different perspective on life. ▶

**EUREVINQ project sets standards for sector-related qualifications**

**Europe.** EUREVINQ, a Leonardo da Vinci project, has developed a training concept consisting of a curriculum and quality standards; the aim is to support the implementation of sector-related qualifications on the European further education market. ▶

**UK.** *Arts and crafts learning has a huge impact on people's health and reducing their isolation. In many places in the UK this type of learning is used as therapy to restore confidence and enable learners to discover new skills and even future employment.*

(Ed Melia) During the course of their lives one in four people in the UK will have a mental health issue so serious they will need to seek medical advice, usually from their doctor. NIACE ran an initiative – Learning on Prescription – where doctors would prescribe a course of learning rather than a course of pills. The type of learning wasn't prescribed but there is a host of evidence that creative learning; and arts and crafts in particular, can have a huge beneficial impact.

For that evidence you need look no further than Ray Jackson, from Wolverhampton. Ray worked as a welder for 30 years before experiencing major stress at work. This major stress led to a serious nervous breakdown and he ended up in rehabilitation for two years.

As part of his treatment in rehab Ray was encouraged to attend Art for Health classes. He was happy to take part because he wanted to be around people and as so often happens with adult learning, one course led to another. So after completing a course in General Art, Ray enrolled on an Access to Higher Education Art and Design course.

**Difficult to express himself**

Not surprisingly Ray was very nervous at first. He found it difficult to express himself and had very low self esteem. Because of the academic side to the Access course Ray discovered he had dyslexia which only increased his frustration and he became despondent. However, when Ray was introduced to sculpture it soon became apparent that he had, according to his tutor David Westwood, "a real aptitude for the three-dimensional disciplines."

"The transformation - once [Ray] had discovered that he had these abilities - was fantastic. His self-confidence grew daily, he became passionate about sculpture. He developed a thirst for knowledge...which gave him the desire to tackle his dyslexia. He then went on to become one of the most accomplished students in his year."

David became a great friend to Ray. He saw Ray's potential long before Ray acknowledged it. "I didn't realise how good I was – discovering that took a long while because I didn't believe David at first when he told me I had the talent for sculpture. He was my inspiration. My confidence was low but David kept on at me and on at me to keep going, to keep trying but I just couldn't put it into practice."

"Then it suddenly clicked for me and the encouragement from the tutors kept coming. David was insistent that I 'work big'. So I did. I worked big and did a 9 ft high by 12 ft long sculpture which was massive release for me."

Ray now volunteers at schools and community art projects. But most significantly, and to prove that the creative learning he has excelled at works, he helps people who are in a similar situation he found himself. He works with people with mental health difficulties at the same occupational therapy unit he was at. He has gone from student to employed teacher, teaching woodwork, art and crafts. "It really helps because I know both sides of the experience. I'm completely open and honest with the patients and they love that. That breaks down a lot of barriers, if I'd had the same experience when I was a patient it would've helped me enormously at first."

**"You're making something remarkable"**

"Doing something creative really helps, you're making something remarkable out of nothing. Learning like this has totally changed my life, I can talk to people, it is lovely being in the social world, talking to other artists and the buzz you get when people say they love your work makes me feel like crying."

Ray was keen to overcome his isolation as are the members of the Sight Service Art Group in the North-East of England.

Joyce Phipps began to lose her sight as a teenager, "Losing your sight is one of the loneliest things in the world. I can't imagine what you can see and you can't imagine how little I can."

But learning how to paint and sculpt has changed her life and the lives of all her fellow artists, "until the art group started, everyone was finding their lives very empty, they needed a challenge rather than just sitting and talking."

As with Ray and his sculptures art has given the group a chance to express their emotions. One artist has made a sculpture of walls closing in on her. According to Sue Taylor, the Chief Executive of Gateshead and South Tyneside Sight Service, "It's her way of communicating the feeling of being enclosed in a world of blindness and not being able to get out to do the things that she wants."

All students have more confidence since joining the group. A number have used it as a stepping-stone to further learning and the chance to earn formal qualifications in subjects such as IT. The class has also held several public exhibitions that have proved so popular that they've been extended.

But what is truly remarkable about this group is that, not only did they have little or no experience of art whatsoever but that people who have no sight whatsoever have produced a variety of arts and crafts, including paintings, pottery and collages of things they have never seen.

Sue Taylor is in awe of their achievements, "They are a marvellous group of people who are now proving to be an inspiration to other visually impaired people as they have shown that it is possible to learn and enjoy and achieve, and that the marvellous opportunities of learning or in this case, 'belonging to an art group' actually can lead on to so many other things."

# Authentic creativity in traditional handicraft and folk dancing

**Norway.** *In the work with traditional folk-culture, authenticity has been an important criteria. In the latest decades creativity has come in as an important motivation. To distinguish between creativity and the traditional aesthetics the term "authentic creativity" is used to describe traditional aesthetics.*

(Mette Vaardal) At the end of the 1900's we saw a renewed interest in working with popular traditions, and an increased commitment to preserving traditions in Norway. The enthusiasts have been called neo-traditionalists and have found new ways of approaching and reworking traditions. As well as the traditional work in groups and associations throughout the 1900's, the preservation of cultural expression had now also become significant. But it was no longer just a case of reproducing and preserving the actual dance or hand-made product itself, but also the historic understanding of creativity and personal expression.

## Creativity and tradition

Creativity and tradition had long been seen as opposing concepts, with the one excluding the other. People now began to work on knowledge which could convey an 'authentic creativity'. This means that they were trying to establish frameworks and standards for personal expression, using the historical material, in order to use the scope this would allow, within the boundaries set by traditions, to create their own expression. Within folk arts and the art and craft movement this means moving away from an emphasis on the structure of products and decor to an appreciation of the skill involved in the handicraft itself. The traditional practice is the most important thing to get across, knowledge of materials, tools and execution. With this as a historical base there is room to be creative, either with a traditional product and appearance, or to make something completely new. For example with normal knitting needles and wool a person would have far more opportunity to be creative and still remain traditional, than if they were knitting on a knitting machine. A modern creation knitted by hand can be an important expression of tradition, while a traditional pattern knitted on a machine would not have the same status, in some environments it could even be seen as a threat.

## Folk dancing

In the teaching of folk dancing, too, there is a move from teaching the actual dances to working more with the basic skills involved in performing the traditional dancing styles. But the local dances continue to be extremely important, and many people are sceptical about new creations which threaten the things that make the local tradition stand out. In order to be creative in this context you first need to get an understanding of what is significant or meaningful in the individual dances. In Norway the step and how you move up and down to the music is so important that to make any changes to this aspect would be considered

as spoiling the dance. On the other hand, new and unexpected music, for example hip hop, could be used as long as the original steps are preserved. The use of the upper body, the arms and head does not receive so much attention, so there is much more scope for personal expression in this aspect. New turns/figures which don't have much to do with tradition can be worked into the dance to a certain extent.

So we see that the neo-traditionalists are increasingly receptive to creativity and new creation, but at the same time close the door on other changes. This distortion is to some extent consistent with the fact that the focus is on the point of moving away from the actual cultural heritage (the knitted sweater, the individual dance, etc) to the intangible cultural heritage (handicrafts, stitching skills, dancing skills).

## "Heritage of expression"

Egil Bakka, professor of folk dancing at NTNU, has also coined the term "heritage of expression" to describe this. It is the fact that we knit and dance which is significant, not what it looks like. But in practice we can see that very few people feel so uninhibited as regards tradition that they would feel comfortable with loosening the boundaries. It is more a matter of identifying and describing the boundaries and keeping within them. Different environments will still define these boundaries differently, meaning that we could get a number of interpretations of the traditional material and creative forms of expression, in conflict with one another to a greater or lesser extent. ▶

## ADAM, the new online database for EU continuing education projects

**Europe.** The old problem with EU projects of making the results accessible and publicising them, is to be solved through a new database. On the website ([www.adam-europe.eu](http://www.adam-europe.eu)), more than 4000 different projects can be viewed, which have been carried out within the framework of the Leonardo da Vinci programme. In this line of funding within the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme, the projects focus on further vocational education and initial training. Products and results can be easily found on ADAM (Advanced Data Archive and Management System) through an elaborate search system and a detailed index of the individual projects. As with the Leonardo support programme, the spectrum reaches from very specific questions on professional training in the craft trades, for example, right down to general questions on education, such as methods, gender, creativity or key qualifications, which are also of significance for non-formal adult education. A similar database (EST – European Shared Treasure) is planned for the Grundtvig adult education projects for next year. ▶

## Project for social and political education with young migrants

**Germany.** The aim is to achieve the long-term integration of young migrants (male and female) by means of new approaches and modes of working. ▶

## NATIONAL AFFAIRS

### Agreement between the public sector and civil society

**Sweden.** Liberal adult education is one of the non-profit-making sectors which has decided to enter into a cooperation agreement with the public sector. The agreement involves guidelines for future cooperation between the public sector and civil society. ▶

**France:** State inflicts further budgetary cuts on non formal education for adults. ▶

**Austria:** 50 years of the Catholic Social Academy of Austria (Katholische Sozialakademie ksoe). ▶

## PRACTICE

### Artistic creativity in primary school: the influence of art education projects

**Belgium.** Despite a more prominent role in school curriculum, primary school teachers pay little attention to creativity within artistic education. Collaboration with art education organisations encourages teachers' artistic creative work. ▶

### Living constructively in a welfare aid home

**Poland.** Dom pomocy społeczny: welfare aid home; the official and commonly-used name for an institution with the underlying notion of ensuring a peaceful old age for people who can neither cope with everyday life themselves, nor count on the assistance of family or friends. ▶

**Promoting health and integration from the stage**

**Denmark.** A Minister of Life Style is rapping. A parent of double standards is preaching to his child. These are some of the odd characters on stage when theatre, adult education and health issues get together. ▶

**Artistic Crafts: A Way to Build Your Future With Your Own Hands**

**Italy.** The artistic trades can offer concrete employment prospects for disadvantaged or unemployed youths and adults. Training in artistic crafts, the unique heritage of many Italian regions, is an interesting experience. ▶

**Creativity and Adult Education in Malta**

**Malta.** Creativity is a vital ingredient in art and also in education. ▶

**The theatre as a basic training tool, used for ongoing training and the reintegration of adults; some examples of how it works in practice.**

**Switzerland.** The use of theatre practices as an adult training tool has been going on for about twenty years. ▶

**A Hungarian speciality: The Dance house**

**Hungary.** The revival and boom in Hungarian folk music and folk dancing is the result of dancing instruction being given in the so-called dance house establishments. ▶

**Local social networks and the elderly: Help and support systems or expressions of active citizenship?**

**Belgium.** The current debate on the alleged loss of cohesion focuses mainly on the questions whether or not local communities have disappeared and how to promote local social networks. ▶

**Germany:** Tilling the text field: Gerhard Liene-meyer's typographical interpretations of adult education topics ▶

# Creative learning is shaping the person

**Greece.** *Learning can no longer be regarded as delivering a body of knowledge and skills of undeniable facts and theories to be applied. Creative learning is more about shaping a kind of person. Based on this understanding a methodological approach for the realisation of creative learning in practice has been elaborated in Greece since 2000*

(Christos Doukas) The increased importance of creativity in the learning process is related to the rapid changes at social, personal and cultural relations. In these contexts learning can no longer be regarded as delivering a body of knowledge and skills of undeniable facts and theories to be applied. This is counterproductive for citizens, persons and workers of the present and near future.

Rather than commanding a body of knowledge, creative learning is more about shaping a kind of person. A person able to navigate change and diversity, to learn-as-he-goes, to set and solve problems, to promote autonomous learning and produce new knowledge transferable to different environments in a collaborative manner.

**Learning by Design**

For the realisation of creative learning in practice, a methodological approach has been elaborated in the Cultural and Artistic Projects of the Hellenic General Secretariat of Life Long Learning (GSLLL) since 2000. This model was applied at the "Spaces of Creativity" Project of the Hellenic Association for Adult Education (AAE) in the informal settings of 5 local communities (2007-2008).

The conceptual approach is based on the New London Group and its Hellenic branch. According to this perspective creative learning is a "Learning by Design" process. The practice of design relies on the concept that learning and products are the results of the designs of people environments, technology, identities and artefacts. Moreover Designs is a dynamic meaning-making process in which practitioners continually redesign their activities in practice.

**Multi-literacies in Art**

Learning by Design in Arts is broadening the application of the literacies in the changing life-worlds. The term multi-literacies is used to address two aspects of literacy in the changing community environment: the diversity of meaning-making in different cultural and social contexts and the nature and impact of new communication technology.

According to these views competences in multi-literacies need to engage diverse, multilayered learning identities in multimodal modes of communication- linguistic, visual, audio, gestural and spatial.

In particular the multi-literacies of Art Designs are organised on competences such as:

- The key-competences of "Cultural Awareness and Expression" included in EU key-competences
- Contextualized competences in local communities, personal and work life
- Multimodal competences

**Painting meets music**

This methodology is applied at the Hellenic projects. For example the GSLLL projects in the areas of theatre, painting or music were situated to the local communities. They were structured as communities of practice for the creation of "cities of culture".

Also the AAE "Creative Spaces" Project was applied at local cultural environments. In this project local painters and musicians co-operated with experts on audio-visual means and presented the performance: "when Painting meets Music".

The event was video-taped, digitalised and disseminated at meetings and further training activities. It was characterized by the convergence of visual, audio, gestural and spatial multimodal literacies.

The same approach will be further developed in the new cultural project "Audio-visual workshops for young and adults: An educational tool". It is a Grundtvig Project (2008-2010) concerning the training on Multimodal designs in Art.

Concluding, the methodology expands the modes of meaning and focuses on multiple ways of formulating identities. It promotes belonging and transformation of competences and subjectivities. ▶

## Live action role-play attracts many people

**Sweden.** How would you like Orc porridge? A bunch of elves' mushrooms or scrambled dragons eggs? Have you been invited to the Hobbits' autumn party or the Dark Elves' full moon sacrifice? Probably not.

Sweden's young role players on the other hand can move easily from everyday life to an exciting fairy tale world. And for this they need detailed knowledge. In Sweden there has been a lot of discussion in recent years on the future of liberal adult education; how adult education and the popular movements need to change and take root in the lives and attitudes of new generations.

One movement which has attracted large numbers of young people since the year 2000 is the role-playing movement. Thousands of young people now belong to local role-play associations where they play tabletop role-play and live action role-play games. The associations are conducted along democratic lines and are often organised as study circles. Role-play is a good example of young people becoming involved and organising themselves with creativity as a new concept.

"Live action role-play is much more than fantasy and mediaeval things. Tabletop role-playing games are not just tin figures and board games. Role-play involves working together, seeking knowledge and teaching each other. Liberal adult education." That is the opinion of Tobias, an active role-player from northern Sweden. ... ▶