

Fostering cooperation in the European Union on skills, training and knowledge transfer in cultural heritage professions

A. Galán-Pérez,

PhD Fine Arts-Conservation, ACRE Vice President, OMC Chair, Spain

I.M. Grumazescu

Curator, Dimitrie Gusti National Village Museum, OMC Member, Rumania

K. Gunthorpe

Senior Building Surveyor, Historic England, OMC Member, UK

A. Limburg

Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Department of Heritage and Arts, OMC Member, The Netherlands

N. Roche

PhD Architectural Conservation, Senior Architectural Advisor, Built Heritage and Architectural Policy Section, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, OMC Member, Ireland

E. Sciacchitano

PhD Historic Buildings Survey and Master in European Studies and International Negotiations, Policy officer, European Commission, OMC EU, Belgium

J. van Leeuwen

PhD Architecture, FARO, Flemish Support Center for Cultural Heritage, OMC Member, Belgium

G. Almevik

PhD Heritage Conservation, Professor, University Gothenburg, OMC Member, Sweden

ABSTRACT: For the first time in the European Work Plan for Culture, a group of National Experts are investigating the skills, training and knowledge transfer in the heritage professions in Europe, under the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). Traditional professions and skills at risk, the digital shift, the development of new professions and need for new competences, in both intangible and tangible heritage (mobile and built), have been the main subjects examined by the group during 2017. A final report and recommendations will be presented at the end of the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) is a flexible but structured way EU Member States use to cooperate at European level in the field of culture. Through an exchange of good practice between EU countries, it contributes to improving the design and implementation of policies, which are outside regulatory instruments. The method is anchored in the *European Agenda for Culture* and is complemented by structured dialogues with civil society. Cultural Heritage constitutes one of four priorities of the current

Work Plan for Culture, and cooperation on skills, training and knowledge transfer within the

heritage sector is the topic selected for 2017–2018. While European expertise in heritage preservation and conservation is well renowned, the combined effect of the age pyramid and cuts in public budgets are affecting the transmission of knowledge and skills to the younger generations. This happens at a time when new skills and competences are needed, to progress towards more integrated and participatory management of cultural heritage, and better use the opportunities offered by the new technologies to preserve heritage and enhance the visitor experience in heritage sites and museums. Thus, it is urgent for Europe to consider the responses to enhance, promote and protect the traditional, technical and professionals skills and

ensure the long-term sustainability of Europe's cultural heritage.

2 SKILLS, TRAINING AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER IN HERITAGE PROFESSIONS

The working group on skills, training and knowledge transfer in heritage professions started in March 2017 and will be finished by the end of 2018. The group is mandated to examine capacity building for heritage professionals, focussing on the transmission of traditional skills and know-how and on emerging professions in the tangible, intangible and digital heritage field, including in the context of the digital shift, and to produce a manual of good practices for cultural and education institutions by the end of 2018. The group consist of national representatives from twenty two countries of the European Union. This paper presents the emerging views of one year of work about the 'state of play' in cultural heritage professions in Europe. We can say that fostering European cooperation is a main goal by itself, and under the results and the network created, the OMC system has been tested as a good tool to achieve it.

2.1 Inputs

The OMC group works collaboratively, in face to face working meetings and via remote working. In addition to the working meetings, the group benefits from various inputs. Parallel to the OMC process, the European Commission has opened a structured dialogue with 35 selected stakeholders, operating under the name of *Voices of Culture* (VoC), on the topic "Skills, Training and Knowledge Transfer: traditional and emerging heritage". (Ateca Amestoy et al. 2017) Two experts from VoC

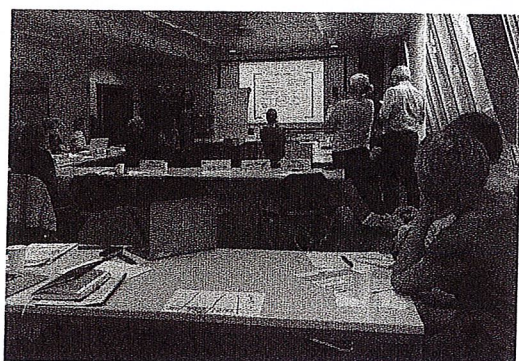


Figure 1. OMC group initial working meeting in Brussels, March 2017. Photographer: Ana Galán.

have been invited to participate in the OMC group, to exchange ideas and to cross reference information. The European Commission has also ordered an expert report on the same theme (van Lakerveld et al. 2017). The expert report focuses on societal trends affecting the heritage sector and the professions within it. The results point at common strands, in geographical and sectorial variants, and indicate how the situation relates to general trends in the cultural heritage sector in Europe. In particular, it highlights the impact of the digital shift.

2.2 SWOT analysis

The group have faced problems concerning poor access to information on cultural heritage education and training activity, and lack of harmonised sectorial and economic statistics, making it impossible to map the professionals. Hence the group have used a qualitative approach. OMC members have different backgrounds and expectations of the mandate, and ran the risk of holding interminable discussions. Thus, the group needed a common method on which to focus and to be able to make comparisons. The group wanted to identify shared challenges and common objectives, and it was decided that the SWOT was the best tool to achieve this. A SWOT is a well-known and often used tool for strategic planning. It consists of a list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It means looking at helpful and harmful factors both from an internal and an external perspective.

The scope of the SWOT exercise was to collect information on the training needs of present and future heritage professionals. The group decided to express the strengths and weaknesses on the level of heritage politics and practice, such as: existing networks for the transfer of heritage skills, accreditation and certification systems or the gaps between formal training and the reality in the heritage sector. On the other hand, opportunities and threats are external factors, formulated on a more general level. They concern general trends, like digital learning, new trends in Artificial Intelligence or increasing commercial pressures.

A taskforce with representatives from Belgium and the Netherlands prepared a short questionnaire for each aspect of the SWOT and provided a concise example. Subsequently, the other members were invited to complete their own SWOT, based on the situation in their country, using one page per aspect of the SWOT. The members could choose how to compile their information. Some of the SWOTS are based on desk-research only, others have interviewed key persons on these various topics or sent out a survey. The taskforce also provided scenarios to organize a focus group for

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the members who wanted to collect information in a round table discussion. SWOTs were submitted from Austria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Belgium (Flanders), France, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

3 RESULTS PREVIEW

The taskforce studied all the SWOTS that were submitted. They analyzed shared challenges and needs to produce one shared SWOT on a European level. This meant that they had to look for more broad categories to formulate more general items on the list:

Strengths

- Increasing accessibility
- National cooperation
- Existing training centres
- Accreditation and certification schemes
- Engaging with society
- Engaging with young people
- Law, regulation and subventions from the government

Weaknesses

- Skills at risk: traditional crafts in tangible heritage, archaic traditions in intangible heritage & new digital heritage skills
- Little content on cultural heritage (CH) and heritage skills in formal education, gaps between content formation and the reality of the labour market
- Weaknesses in training for CH, not enough focus on interdisciplinary and of low quality
- Problems with quality assurance in profession: no standards in education and training, few occupational profiles, no formal organisation sector, gaps between academics and crafts people
- No structural financial investment in knowledge transfer
- Small size of companies/organisations in CH is regarded as a problem
- No articulated government policy on quality in preserving CH
- Need to improve community engagement and volunteering in CH

Opportunities

- European Qualification Framework (EQF) and the validation of prior and informal learning
- New learning approaches and training formats
- Digital learning and digital technologies
- Working with volunteers
- Increasing interest and participation in heritage

- Possible cross-sectoral partnerships
- Increasing cooperation with formal education at all levels

Threats

- Market conditions and commercial pressure
- Reduction of funding and institutional instability
- Conflicting interests
- Academisation and decline of status of practical skills
- Impact of robotics, automation and new technologies
- Negative aspects of volunteer developments
- Workforce demographics and recruitment problems

4 THE HERITAGE PROFESSIONAL TIMELINE

In compiling the SWOTs, it emerged that the entries were mainly referring to four phases of knowledge transfer: the awareness raising, professional training, lifelong learning and expert knowledge transfer. Thus, the group have adopted these themes for more in depth study in smaller working groups.

4.1 Awareness raising

Theme concentrates on the raising of awareness for cultural heritage and of interest in the cultural heritage-working field. It focuses on children before they start basic education and on adults in general.

The goal is to inquire how cultural heritage can become an essential element in the development of each individual and how the professions in cultural heritage can become more attractive, starting at early ages. To achieve this goal, the methodology is a survey among institutions that are active in the heritage field. The focus is on the countries involved in this working group (Romania, Italy, Spain, Slovakia, Czech Republic, the Netherlands). The questions to ask these institutions focus on how organisations in the heritage field think we can raise more awareness about and interest in the heritage field, both concerning visiting heritage and working in heritage. More precisely, the questions concentrate on: (1) collecting more good practices, learning about why they are a success and what is needed to implement them in other countries, (2) questions about the skills that are required to attract young people and people in general, and (3) questions about what tools and instruments are needed, and from what institutions, to achieve the increase of awareness.

The survey will be analysed and drawn together with findings of the Voices of Culture report, and

relevant examples from the SWOTS to provide a description of the current landscape and draw out conclusions and recommendations.

4.2 Basic education and training

This theme looks at the means to acquire competences in Europe that bring people to work as cultural heritage professionals. It is about how to become a professional in this field. It focuses on vocational training and higher education, from level four to seven according to *European Qualification Framework* (EQF). The main questions are: What is the status of basic education and training? What are the gaps? How do people access the field and with what prequalification? How do we bridge the gap between education and labour market? The method draws on the SWOT analysis and the review of research and sectorial reports on EU level (eg. Ateca Amestoy et al. 2017, Mercy & Beck-Domžalska 2016, ESSnet-CULTURE 2012).

European member states have developed common frameworks for *Vocational Education and Training* (VET) and *Higher Education* (HE). The general structure proposed in the Bologna declaration in 1997, with a three cycle education system, is widely implemented and facilitates student mobility in Europe. The first undergraduate cycle usually awards a bachelor's degree, the second cycle leads to a master's degree and the third cycle leads to a doctoral degree. There are variants within the framework but in most cases, it takes three years to earn a bachelor's degree, another two years for a master and additional three years for a doctoral degree. The UK and Ireland stand out with a range of one year "taught master's" integrating post-graduate diplomas and certificates.

The EQF was adopted in 2008 and aimed to cross-reference the national qualification framework to harmonise the learning outcome on all levels for employer's and educators recognition of competences. EQF is being implemented through the OMC mode of governance, and it has not been as pervasive as the Bologna process. By 2012 all European educational programmes were required to articulate their goals in terms of learning outcomes, but these are generally not tuned with the EQF framework. Just a few countries, Sweden and Netherlands, have EQF instruments to evaluate informal competences. Belgium is possibly the only country that has adopted EQF in a national framework for the cultural heritage sector.

The EU's *New skills agenda* was launched in 2016 to enhance the process from policy to reality, "to make the right training, skills and support available to people in the EU". The status of the suggested actions are still underway.

A general observation in this investigation is that educators offer broader bachelor programs and specialisations at master's level in growing numbers. Emerging fields and new professions are recognised at the master level. The Bologna system facilitates mobility and the educators commonly favour wide entry requirements to the master's programmes. There is however still a lack of formal careers for people with a baseline education in for instance sociology, economics or law. Today, more and more people become cultural heritage specialist through learning by working in the field. The establishment of cultural management as an academic field may obviate this problem, as could further professionalism in transversal skills.

Craftspeople are a comprehensive group of professionals who access the cultural heritage sector through informal, semi-informal or formal vocational education and training, frequently at EQF level 4 to 5. The SWOT analysis shows a wide range of education and training opportunities for craftspeople. The system of dual education, that iteratively combines workplace learning and school teaching, is a longstanding and proven model in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, providing the opportunity to enrol in systematic vocational training for traditional skilled crafts and trades. The large cathedral workshops, the world heritage sites and inscription of traditional crafts as elements of intangible cultural heritage generate

QUALIFICATION ROADMAP

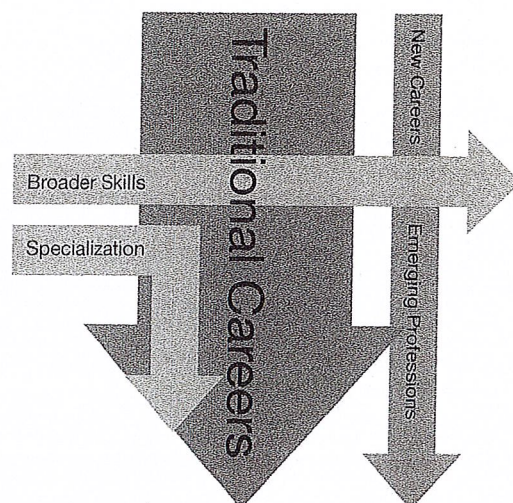


Figure 2. Qualification roadmap by the OMC group on skills, training and knowledge transfer in the heritage professions in Europe.

sustainable venues and networks for traditional craft professions.

4.3 Lifelong learning

For cultural heritage professionals lifelong learning means broadening and deepening core and transversal skills through formal (prescriptive), non-formal (descriptive) and informal (self-driven) means. It plays a role in the continuing development of the qualified heritage professional, to equip them to apply, adapt, internalise and understand the evolving requirements of their role and may be essential in retaining accredited status or complying with externally imposed competence standards.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD), a framework for maintaining knowledge, skills and competence throughout a chosen career, is increasingly used for heritage professional lifelong learning. Cultural heritage professionals may be obliged to undertake CPD as part of an accreditation system, but it is not universally required.

Increasingly, basic training is considered insufficient to carry a professional throughout their career. There are different types of understanding, knowledge and skills that can only be learned when experienced, or as a result of technological change, or when roles change. Can non-formal lifelong learning provide a quick solution to evolving structural, strategic or operational problems in a sector more speedily than accredited training can adapt to do?

Basic training may not impart all necessary skills, especially in areas which overlap into cultural heritage, such as the built environment or the digital sphere. The cultural heritage sector is heterogeneous and contains many different actors, many of whom do not have the assurance of belonging to an established profession with oversight of education and established roles, such as architect or archivist. There is no agreed lifelong learning structure or process map for such professionals to strategically plan their career so they can direct their pathways towards an appropriate specialism. The provision of CPD is often ad-hoc and non-formal. It is often not available as part of a series of units or modules to advance specific areas of technical or managerial competence. Professionals should be able to use CPD to influence their careers.

Non-formal training is unregulated with no quality metrics. Should a quality assurance framework be created or adopted for cultural heritage lifelong learning providers and content, to cover formal, non-formal and informal methods? Any such framework should measure the quality and relevance of teaching inputs and whether the intended learning outcomes have been attained. Should there be lifelong learning 'train-the-trainer'

modules for those whose roles may involve any type of training? How best can formal and non-formal lifelong learning provision be appropriately benchmarked in such a quality assurance framework? Is the concept of 'best practice' useful for heritage professionals? Best practice seeks constantly to utilise feedback from the community of practice to create and maintain a 'body of knowledge'. It recognises that knowledge and understanding are dynamic, and must adapt to remain relevant. Such fluidity may be better matched to continual mini-upskilling efforts than are formal education awards.

Many cultural heritage professionals work in areas away from their basic training, or are working at a more advanced level. Training and learning on the job are important. Professional qualifications are general, and in many cases the specific cultural heritage skills are acquired through practice. Lifelong learning should give participants a means of verifying the competences they have gained through non-formal training courses and on the job. The concept of a skills smart card should be pursued, which would verify the holders' lifelong learning attainments for clients or employers and would contain documented evidence of their roles in projects. It would also help with professional mobility. This will require *Recognition of Prior Learning* (RPL) to be tailored to cultural heritage professionals.

Motivation for undertaking lifelong learning should be explored with thought given to whether it should be compulsory or voluntary, and how to best fit potential trainees with available strands of training to increase the chances of successful engagement. The potential to gain recognition for existing skills should be a motivating factor and may well increase uptake of lifelong learning. Specific examples useful to illustrate these points will be taken from the country SWOTs.

To conclude, many benefits stand to be gained from creating a cultural heritage professionals' lifelong learning guidance framework, underpinned by quality assurance and with the capacity to steer participants to best utilise their strengths, with the aim of achieving and maintaining best practice.

4.4 Expert knowledge transfer

The aim of this theme is to examine how knowledge and skills can be transferred from expert individuals to other individuals. The focus is: what do these experts need to share their knowledge: how can we support them to do so? And which learning formulae are ideal for this purpose (both face to face and digital).

While it is recognised there are different ways to define and understand what an expert is, the group

has found the Dreyfus model of skill acquisition useful. (Dreyfus 2004, Dreyfus & Dreyfus 1986) This is a model of how learners acquire skills through formal instruction and practical work. Professionals move through five stages from Novice, Advanced beginner, Competent, Proficient to become an Expert. An expert is defined as someone who transcends reliance on rules, guidelines, and maxims, has "intuitive grasp of situations based on deep, tacit understanding", has "vision of what is possible" and uses "analytical approaches" in new situations or in case of problems.

The aim is to gather views and opinions from such experts, gaining a qualitative and bottom up view to understand the range of knowledge transfer activities across Europe. What is working well? What isn't working well? What are the barriers? Ideas for improvements?

An online survey was selected as the best tool to achieve this. The survey was circulated to reach across European countries and to cover all the range of professions across heritage, covering tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The results of the survey will be analysed and drawn together with findings of the Voices of Culture report, and relevant examples from the SWOTs to provide a description of the current landscape and draw out conclusions and recommendations.

5 CONCLUSION

The group will conclude its final report towards the end of this European Year Of Cultural Heritage in 2018. At the time of writing, this is a work in progress. The Voices of Culture Report will inform the group and their recommendations, in particular the integrated approach to cultural heritage to go beyond current sectoral boundaries highlighted by their work. The group will look at emerging skills rather than emerging professions. By the end of 2018, the report will present a collection of good practice examples for cultural and education institutions, and practical case studies from across Europe highlighting lessons to learn. Furthermore, the group will also present a set of recommendations.

Based on work to date, in this final section we explore some key challenges and opportunities that are emerging which will shape the final recommendations.

1. Fostering professionalism in the cultural heritage sector will require strategic data and visibility. It is essential that Eurostat improves the collection of strategic data on the field of cultural heritage. Connected to this, there is urgent need to develop relevant occupational

classifications for cultural heritage, which correspond to standard systems, such as the NACE classification ('Nomenclature générale des Activités économiques dans les Communautés Européennes') which classifies the employer's main activity, and the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO).

2. Each member state should map skills at risk, and create action plans (according to the European strategy for cultural heritage) to safeguard and augment these skills. The European Centre for Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) or alternative EU organization could support these action plans by providing strategic data on traditional crafts and craft-based small and micro companies in Europe within the cultural heritage sector. This could be linked with the apprentice portal.
3. The member states should implement national qualification frameworks for cultural heritage profession skills. To support and encourage this process, a database with formal description of professions and knowledge, skills and competences aligned to the EQF would be beneficial. The existing database ESCO (European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations) should be augmented by this work. A coherent framework with professional profiles and descriptions of qualifications will facilitate mobility within Europe and RPL.
4. At European, national and regional level, systems should be promoted for the accreditation of qualifications and of professionals. Greater commonality is required between accreditation, education and training schemes, which will aid the mobility circulation of cultural heritage professionals across Europe.
5. A European lifelong learning guidance toolkit should be explored as a mechanism for cultural heritage professions to co-ordinate the organisation of interdisciplinary CPD, formal training and self-development.
6. The development of an online portal should be considered that informs young people and career changers of cultural heritage professions, the competences and skills needed for these professions and the possibilities for formal and vocational training. The portal could also be used by educators and professionals to exchange learning resources education, training and for knowledge transfer. The portal should be located and submitted with resources to be managed and developed by a stable and qualified organisation.
7. Closer links should be encouraged between further and higher education and the workplace. According to respondents from the online survey, further and higher education programs

should engage more with the workplace to find out what skills are lacking and tailor their courses to meet the needs of the workplace.

8. Knowledge transfer and succession planning should be supported. Cultural heritage organisations should include expert knowledge transfer in job descriptions, so it is seen as core to professionals' roles and work programmes.

From contacts with many cultural heritage professionals in this project, they are shown to be resilient, collaborative, respond to change and innovative. Cultural heritage professionals face many demands and recognise new skills are required to address continuing change. Cultural heritage is frequently celebrated and valorized in European policy, but the sector's skills needs and capacity requirements are not measured or planned for. The call is for action now as over the next ten years a large proportion of heritage professionals in Europe, the baby boomer generation, will reach retirement age.

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