



EU-Eastern Partnership Programme

# DEVELOPING CULTURE- EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS IN THE MARZES OF ARMENIA

A Policy Brief for the EU-Eastern  
Partnership Culture and Creativity  
Programme

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## Nº 9



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Tufenkian Old Dilijan Complex  
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many Armenian cultural institutions are encouraged to develop special educational programmes offered to urban and rural schools. These educational programmes serve as additional support to school materials and allow schoolchildren to get engaged in cultural education better and quicker.

However, no specific consideration is given to schools and schoolchildren in Marzes. The authors of this policy brief held a survey in 80 schools in the Marz of Kotayk and collected feedback from 80 school directors and 500 school teachers. The participants identified two areas which need to be reinforced in the cultural education framework:

## Official school curricula

The school curriculum often includes study of lives and works of prominent Armenians, which can be studied more thoroughly by attending the house-museums of these personalities, watching videos and video-lectures, etc. Some schools however still hesitate to cooperate with cultural organisations.

## Extra-curriculum programmes

Cultural institutions do not cooperate in extra-curricular programmes on national holidays, for rites, inter-cultural events or museum night programmes.

The survey findings revealed that currently there are five impediments to the proper organisation of cultural education initiatives. This includes:

1. Some schools do not have the financial means to undertake similar initiatives.
2. A lack of enthusiasm and sufficient interest with the school teachers .
3. A lack of proper promotion and cultural awareness activities
4. Limited educational materials and tools
5. Weak cooperation mechanisms (or lack of them) among the educational and cultural organisation

These issues could be solved by establishing a Centre for Culture and Education Development (CCED) that would operate as a non-profit organisation and foster culture and education partnership in Marzes could be launched in Kotayk Marz



Armenian traditional dance  
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## **Recommendations:**

1. Give Marz schoolchildren have opportunities to attend cultural events
2. Cultural institutions should develop arts education programmes for the Marzes
3. Revise laws to require cultural education activities in all schools
4. Local and central authorities should support culture-education partnerships
5. Engage parents` councils
6. Engage culture and education specialists
7. Develop a website to raise schools awareness of cultural education
8. Cultural institutions should host activities to complement school instruction



At Aghitu Memorial  
© Norayr Yerznkyan

# CURRENT SITUATION

Many Armenian cultural institutions are encouraged to develop special educational programmes offered to urban and rural schools. These educational programmes serve as additional support for the school material and allow schoolchildren to get engaged in cultural education better and quicker.

In their turn schools take the opportunity to partner with cultural institutions and get schoolchildren attend museums, art galleries or theatres which help them better comprehend elements of the school curricula. According to the regional schools administrations and educators' reports and survey results the school materials are better understood after a tour in a cultural institution.

Currently schools have both curricular and extra-curricular arts classes. Their number largely depends on the school workload.

Sixteen percent of class hours in Armenian primary and secondary schools are devoted to arts education. This includes classes on drawing, literature and music. Some schools may include classes on art history, which is recommended by the Ministry of Education and Science of the RA, but left at the discretion of the school administration.

During the first two years of secondary school, this allocation is reduced to 8,33 percent<sup>1</sup>. In comparison 38 percent of Marz school curriculum is dedicated to foreign languages, and 27 percent - to science. This leaves very few class hours for arts education. It is therefore important to make these classes as effective as possible.

School programmes are developed centrally and then distributed to the regions. No specific consideration is given to schools and schoolchildren in Marzes. The school curricula does not take into account of the pupils' availability, the amount of time they can allocate to education and the distance that children need to travel to school.

These factors affect pupils' comprehension and attention levels.

Many cultural institutions have educational programmes, which are not accessible for the majority of Marz schools. A lack of proper information, short and unstable communications between cultural institutions and Marz schools only contribute to this state of affairs.

Some cultural institutions do not host school visits, online tours, summer schools, exhibitions and do not wish to contribute to arts education.

The authors of this policy brief held a survey in 80 schools in the Marz of Kotayk and collected feedback from 80 school directors and 500 school teachers. The survey was followed by 10 round table discussions to measure the extent of cooperation of Marz schools with cultural institutions. During formal and informal discussions, the

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO Culture for Development Indicators Suite for Armenia, 2017.



participants identified two areas which need to be reinforced in the cultural education framework. These are:

## Official school curricula

The school curriculum often includes study of lives and works of prominent Armenians, which can be studied more thoroughly by attending the house-museums of these personalities, watching videos and video-lectures, etc. However some schools still hesitate to co-operate with cultural organisations (the reasons are mentioned below).

## Extra-curriculum programmes

Cultural institutions do not co-operate in extra-curricular programmes on national holidays, for rites, inter-cultural events or museum night programmes.

For example the school curriculum of the 8th grade includes literature classes on prominent Armenian writers such as Sundukyan, Shirvanzade, Nar-Dos, which implies that the schoolchildren would need to attend theatre performances of the works of these writers. It means that one visit to a theatre will not be enough as the performances will be staged at different times.

The survey findings revealed that currently there are some impediments to the proper organisation of cultural education initiatives. This includes:

1. Some **schools do not have the financial means to** undertake similar initiatives, as their budgets are too tight. In addition, the parents cannot pay for their children's participation in most cases. For example a school in Saralanj is located just 35 kilometres from the capital Yerevan. The school offers elementary, secondary and high school instruction but has very few pupils. There are on average seven pupils in each class. Each visit to a cultural institution would cost each pupil at least 5,000 AMD (€9.60) and if the school would like to have continuous co-operation with a cultural institution and organise at least four monthly visits, then every learner would need at least 20,000 AMD (€38.50) each month. For most of the families in rural areas this is quite a big amount of money, considering that the average salary in Armenia is approximately 50,000 AMD and that there is a serious issue with unemployment.
2. **A lack of enthusiasm and sufficient interest** with the school teachers for developing and maintaining partnership projects. The survey showed some heads of cultural institutions and schools find similar events as something unnecessary and annoying. They do not get additional pay for hosting the visiting pupils and spending considerable time and efforts on drafting programmes which hardly stimulates them. In addition they would need also to be very careful with drafting



Nature in Odzun  
© Olga Khalatyan



a non-boring and attractive programme and constantly update and refresh them. The museum tour in Khachatur Abovyan House-Museum in Yerevan has launched online tours taking its virtual visitors through the museum halls and they have been already integrated into some school curricula. Unfortunately there are no texts or explanatory notes to accompany the videos, which are not designed with pupils in mind. A joint effort by the school teachers and museum staff could easily improve the video tour. Schoolteachers could collaborate and design video sessions on a specific topic in co-operation with the specialists from the respective cultural institutions.

This is because the educational programmes are developed with city schools where the level of education is much higher. There is no issue of travel so there is no need to have video-lectures and online tours. For schools in Yerevan it is much easier to attend museums, theatres and art places as the cost of transportation and time allocated to the activity is significantly different from the activities in the Marzes.

3. **There is a lack of proper promotion and cultural awareness activities** among the local community members, parents, school administration and central government officials. Unlike city residents, rural residents have a larger workload which includes housework, farming and many other duties and obligations. Families often engage their children in these, and quite often a visit to a cultural institution becomes a non-priority. There is little realisation about the importance of the cultural education for the development of a child. Mostly it is connected to lack of information and a low level of appreciation of such exercises as a result of weak promotion and awareness raising activities by the schools, cultural organisations, the community, in a word, all the stakeholders.
4. **Limited educational materials and tools**, such as video and audio materials - lectures, short films and booklets. Even if there was one visit to a cultural organisation, the school teachers could initiate discussions later about information contained in booklets, or organise a short video film in the class and analysis and discussion of the topic.
5. **Weak cooperation mechanisms (or lack of them) among the educational and cultural organisations, community, local and central governments in developing and forming a culture-educational partnership.**

Projects developed by cultural institutions should also **reflect the needs of schools in rural areas and be designed in line with the school curricula of each year**. For example, the information on life and work of Hovhannes Tumanyan, a prominent Armenian writer, poet and public person, should include two different offers: one for elementary schools and another – for high class students. The administration of the museum would need to devise two conceptually different educational programmes in close cooperation with the education specialists. Another example is the National Gallery of Armenia in Yerevan, which offers



Children playing dhol  
© Narek Aleksanyan



a wide range of educational programmes that could have been offered to schools in Marzes. However, the Gallery partners with most advanced high schools such as the "Ayb" high school, leaving regional schools out of its cooperation framework. The Gallery offers the Greek and Roman mythology classes to 7th or 8th grade schoolchildren under its educational programme "On Mount Olympus", while this might seem a bit too complicated for rural schoolchildren of the same age group.

Taking into account the fact that developing proper and effective cultural educational joint efforts or initiatives requires a considerable knowledge, efforts and means, it is proposed to devise **a Culture and Educational Partnership**<sup>2</sup>, as seen in the UK, and implement such an initiative in Armenia. This partnership could be modelled after successful The Cultural **Education Challenge**<sup>3</sup>, as initiated by the Arts Council England (ACE)<sup>4</sup>.

## **OPTIONS:**

**Option 1:** Establish a Centre for Culture and Education Development (CCED)

**Option 2:** Leave the things as they are (Status Quo)

### **Option 1: Establish a Centre for Culture and Education Development (CCED)**

A pilot project, such as a Centre for Culture and Education Development (CCED) that would operate as a non-profit organisation and foster culture and education partnership in Marzes could be launched in Kotayk Marz.

The Centre would deal with the development of proper educational programmes for the Marz schools, in close cooperation with the local authorities and cultural institutions. It would select the appropriate staff, devise programmes, apply for funding to the central and local governments first of all, schools, angel investors, etc. The centre's activities would target schoolchildren aged 6-17 years.

The centre would make sure that more children can learn to create, compose, and perform. Every child would have the chance to visit, experience and participate and be able to know more, understand more and review the work done before.

The centre would have small groups which would include experts on culture and education and a logistics and administrative officer to coordinate the works. The groups would work each in one district of Kotayk Marz (there are 3 districts in the Marz). The experts would be Cultural and Educational Leaders who would coordinate the programmes with the schools and cultural organisations, local authorities, develop

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<sup>2</sup> CULTURAL EDUCATION IN ENGLAND The Government response to Darren Henley's Review of Cultural Education. See at: [http://www.mmf.org.uk/sites/default/files/Cultural\\_Education\\_Govt\\_response.pdf](http://www.mmf.org.uk/sites/default/files/Cultural_Education_Govt_response.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> The Cultural Education Challenge. See at: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/children-and-young-people/cultural-education-challenge>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/news/ace-support-50-new-cultural-education-partnerships>



Road to Tatev Monastery  
© Narek Aleksanyan



relevant programmes in close coordination with all the stakeholders and with account of the needs of concrete pupils groups. They would constantly look for interesting programmes, combinations, improve audio-visual materials and engage more people into the partnership experience enlargement. They would also contact the relevant Ministries and employ efforts for pushing new and innovative ideas.

For this purpose the following steps would need to be taken:

- Define the mission of the centre
- It can be built around connection of the school, pupils and cultural organisations
- Devise relevant strategies and short-term for reaching the goals
- Develop the structure and recruit staff for the CCED according to the structural subdivision of Kotayk Marz; form the groups

For instance a provincial school considering designing a video session on writer Avetik Issahakyan's life would ask the management team of the House Museum of A. Issahakyan if they could cooperate to design a joint video lesson. The Sundukyan Academic Theatre has Gabriel Sundukyan's play Pepo and William Saroyan's play My Heart is in the Highlands in its repertoire. These two plays are part of the school curriculum so the theatre could perform them when the pupils are studying these plays. The CCED could also contact theatres on schools behalf and request them to stage plays that are on the school programme and guarantee matinee audiences from a number of schools on certain days.

It would be also necessary to maintain control and supervision over the whole partnership process, starting from drafting the structures up to the spending of the funds.

A special auditing commission (CCED Audit Commission) will be created composed of representatives of all the stakeholders, parents, first of all, local authorities, central government, etc.

Upon the completion of every project, the CCED Audit Commission would survey pupils and their parents to research the extent to which the projects have met the objectives set by the school, cultural institution and the CCED itself. The survey findings would help update and improve projects.



H. Tumanyan House-Museum  
© Norayr Yerznkyan

# SWOT Analysis

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Shaping of aesthetical component among the schoolchildren</li> <li>2. Balanced representation of all the stakeholders</li> <li>3. Establishment of a positive image for the schools, cultural organisations and organisers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Lack of appropriate funding</li> <li>5. Initial lack of specialists and understanding of the project</li> <li>6. Limited assistance from the local authorities</li> </ul>
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Development of rural perceptions of culture and creativity</li> <li>8. Improvements of the community's cultural image</li> <li>9. Promotion of cultural organisation among the community and form a cultural offer to be used in other enterprises</li> <li>10. Encourage cross-community cooperation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. Inaccurate estimates of the actual needs</li> </ul>



Street Dance  
© Narek Aleksanyan



If the system remains unchanged there would be no development and no further growth in the culture-educational partnerships. The schools would continue to follow the old and difficult pattern of such partnerships without any further development, saving time and effort, largely to the detriment of the growing generation, especially children and youth from Marzes.

As such, the following problems would come into being should the state of affairs remain as it is now:

1. Lack or limited development of the culture-educational partnership
2. Lack of interest on the part of children towards culture and creativity
3. Lack of development of cultural and educational organisations
4. Reputational risks for the nation, its culture and education
5. Waste of time, in terms of not giving as much information as needed to the children and youth when they need it most

Therefore the alternative is to develop culture-educational partnership on a corporate level, with serious assistance from the state and municipal authorities.



First day at school  
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# RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Make sure the Marz schoolchildren have opportunities to attend the events/projects organised by cultural institutions. We need to consider that it is not enough to make a visit once a year, but several times per year could be useful to engaging schoolchildren into arts education programmes launched by various cultural institutions.
2. Cultural institutions developing and launching arts education programmes need to consider the needs of Marz schools.
3. Revise and supplement the legislation to include specific and clear sections on cultural education, emphasising the legal requirement for the school and cultural organisations to spend efforts on the promotion of the cultural development of the pupils and youth. Cultural education forms an important part of a broad and balanced curriculum, and children and young people should be provided with an engaging variety of cultural (including music) experiences throughout their time at school.
4. Local and central authorities are urged to support culture educational partnerships and provide financial, logistical and political assistance.
5. Engage the community and especially parents` councils into the monitoring and audit activities of the partnerships for ensuring transparency and balanced views in decision-making
6. Engage culture and education specialists, as well as public and private institutions into the formation and operation activities of the partnerships
7. Raise the cultural awareness of schools and cultural institutions. For instance, the CCED could design and develop a website, make regular information updates and engage its audience through the social media. This would help additionally schools and institutions in other provinces learn about this programme.
8. Cultural institutions including house-museums should host visits, online tours, interactive programmes, summer schools, exhibitions and competitions to complement school instruction This includes house museums of outstanding Armenian personalities, such as writer Avetik Issahakyan, artist Martiros Saryan, poet Yeghishe Charents, writer and national public figure Khachatur Abovyan, composer Aram Khachaturyan and writer Hovhannes Tumanyan, as well as Sundukyan State Academic Theatre, State Musical Theatre after H. Paronyan, Yerevan State Puppet Theatre after H. Tumanyan, National Gallery and similar institutions.

## Annex 1

This table provides a breakdown of cultural infrastructure by province and population size.

Province	Population	Number of museums	Centres hosting performing arts events	Number of libraries
Yerevan	1,071,500	68	18	31
Aragatsotn	131,300	2	0	71
Ararat	260,100	2	1	93
Armavir	267,000	3	0	81
Gegharqunik	233,000	2	1	86
Lori	228,000	8	3	70
Kotayk	255,000	5	1	62
Shirak	246,400	8	2	95
Syunik	140,200	4	2	129
Vayots Dzor	51,400	1	0	44
Tavush	126,700	3	0	65
Total	3,010,600	106	28	827

Table: Percentage of population that has attended a cultural event at least once over the last six months.

	Visit to the theatre, cinema				Visit to the museum, gallery
	2011 (N= 2365)	2012 (N= 2384)	2013 (N= 1832)	2015 (N=1863)	2011 (N= 2365)
Yes	17%	19%	17%	22%	11%
No	83%	81%	83%	78%	89%

# Annex 2

## References

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The policy briefs are the result of capacity building work undertaken by the EU-Eastern Partnership Culture and Creativity Programme in 2016-2017 with 240 Programme Associates, who had completed a series of eight workshops in business management for mid-career cultural operators. The purpose of these briefs is to help them additionally understand the role of professionals in providing concise and neutral policy advice in the area of their competence. The task was to identify problems with in the sector, provide potential models, options and solutions, support critical thinking, evidence-based policy analysis and the formulation of recommendations. The ideas were developed by the Associates themselves.

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