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DOMESTIC AND EU POLICIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ECOSYSTEM OF CREATIVE EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

DORU CUROȘU

PhD student

Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova, Republic of Moldova

dorin.curosu@gmail.com

ORCID ID: 0009-0007-5369-5837

ELINA BENEĂ-POPUȘOI

PhD, Associate Professor

International Business Department,

Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova, Republic of Moldova

elina.benea-popusoi@ase.md

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-9102-9682

Abstract. The paper explores the domestic and EU policies aimed at fostering the ecosystem of creative education in the Republic of Moldova. Creative education plays a vital role in preparing students for the challenges of the 21st century, fostering innovation, and promoting cultural and artistic expression. Creative education is a fundamental driver of innovation, cultural preservation, and economic growth, serving as a bridge between artistic expression and practical application. In the Republic of Moldova, a nation with a rich cultural heritage and a growing creative industry, the development of a vibrant ecosystem for creative education is not just an aspiration but a strategic imperative. This paper delves into the intricate interplay between domestic and EU policies, exploring their roles in shaping and advancing creative education within Moldova's educational landscape. Also it aims to go deeper into the current state of creative education in Moldova, reviews EU initiatives and funding opportunities, and recommends strategies for enhancing the creative education ecosystem.

Keywords: human creativity, creativity resource, educational systems, creative industries, Republic of Moldova

JEL Classification: I20, I25, I31, J24

Introduction

Creative education is integral to the holistic development of individuals and societies. It encompasses a broad spectrum of disciplines, including visual arts, performing arts, literature, and design, and cultivates skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and innovative thinking. In the Republic of Moldova, as in many other countries, nurturing a thriving ecosystem for creative education is essential for the nation's social and economic advancement.

Creative education serves as a cornerstone of human development, providing individuals with the tools to express themselves, think critically, and innovate. It encompasses a diverse array of disciplines, from the visual and performing arts to literature, design, and beyond. These disciplines not only enrich culture and artistic expression but also play a vital role in nurturing a dynamic, forward-thinking society. In the Republic of Moldova, as in many nations around the world, fostering

a vibrant ecosystem for creative education is imperative for the nation's social, cultural, and economic advancement.

Republic of Moldova, a country rich in history and culture, stands at a pivotal juncture in its quest to nurture the creative capacities of its citizens. In an era marked by rapid technological advancement and the global flow of ideas, the need for creativity and innovation is more pronounced than ever. Creative education is the key to preparing the next generation of Moldovans for the multifaceted challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. As the world undergoes a dynamic transformation, propelled by technological advancements and evolving cultural dynamics, Moldova's creative education ecosystem stands as an example of adaptability and innovation.

In this context, this paper addresses the limited access to qualitative creative education, issues related to infrastructure, the shortage of skilled educators, and the need for greater synergy between creative industries and educational institutions. However, it is also essential to acknowledge the growing interest in creative disciplines among Moldovan students, the existence of a small yet vibrant creative community, and the nation's rich cultural heritage, all of which can serve as a fertile ground for the development of creative education.

Furthermore, this paper explores the initiatives and funding opportunities offered by the EU, which can serve as a catalyst for the enhancement of creative education in Moldova. These include programs like Erasmus+, Creative Europe, Horizon Europe, and the Eastern Partnership experience sharing opportunities, each of which provides avenues for cooperation, exchange, and investment in creative education and cultural initiatives.

The development of a robust ecosystem for creative education in the Republic of Moldova is not merely a cultural endeavour but a strategic imperative for the nation's future. Through the exploration of the current state, EU support, and recommended strategies, we aim to provide a comprehensive framework for the advancement of creative education in Moldova, thereby nurturing the talents and creativity of its people while positioning the nation more firmly on the European and global stage.

The paper comprises Introduction, Research Methodology, Main Findings, Conclusion, Bibliography.

Research methodology

Given the complex nature of our topic, we capitalized on a series of research methods. To review existing policies, their implementation, and their outcomes we relied on an exploratory and descriptive research design. In terms of data collection, we used the documentary analysis of the policy acts, reports, legislation, and educational materials related to creative education policies in the Republic of Moldova and the EU. As for data analysis we mainly drew on content analysis to identify key themes, trends, and changes over time.

Likewise, the authors relied on comparative analysis to compare the creative education policies in R. Moldova with those of other European countries and EU policies to identify similarities, differences, and potential areas for alignment or improvement. In terms of policy evaluation, the impact and effectiveness of creative education policies in Moldova was analysed by considering indicators such as student performance, access to creative programs, and outcomes in the creative industries. The practical implications of the research were revealed by discussing how the research findings can

inform policy recommendations and practical interventions to improve the creative education ecosystem in the Republic of Moldova.

Main findings

Current state of the creative education in the Republic of Moldova, challenges and gaps

Creative education in the Republic of Moldova faces a myriad of challenges and gaps that need to be addressed to unlock its full potential. These challenges not only impact the quality of education but also hinder the nation's ability to harness the creativity of its citizens effectively.

Limited Access to Quality Creative Education. One of the primary challenges facing creative education in Moldova is the limited access to quality programs. While there may be creative educational institutions in urban areas, access in rural regions is often inadequate. Approximately 75% of creative educational institutions in Moldova are concentrated in the capital city [1], Chisinau, leaving rural areas with limited access. This geographic disparity restricts opportunities for many Moldovan students to fully explore their creative potential.

Underinvestment in Infrastructure and Resources. Many creative education institutions in Moldova suffer from inadequate funding and underinvestment. This results in outdated facilities, limited access to modern equipment, and a scarcity of learning resources, ultimately hampering the development of students' creative skills and talents. On an average, schools based on creativity programs receive approximately 30-40% less funding than traditional educational institutions.[2]

Shortage of Skilled Educators. Another challenge is the shortage of skilled and qualified educators in the field of creative education. Moldova faces difficulty in retaining and attracting professionals who can inspire and guide students in various creative disciplines. The shortage of such educators not only affects the quality of education but also inhibits innovation within the field.

Lack of Synergy between Creative Industries and Education. Creative industries play a vital role in the economic and cultural development of Moldova. However, there is often a lack of synergy between these industries and educational institutions. This disconnect hinders students from gaining real-world exposure and experience in creative fields, limiting their ability to transition smoothly into the job market upon graduation.

Limited Funding and Scholarships. Moldova dedicates only 6% of its total educational budget to creative disciplines [2]. Creative education often requires specialized materials, equipment, and facilities that can be costly. Moldovan students who aspire to pursue creative careers may face financial barriers due to the lack of scholarships and financial aid dedicated to creative disciplines. This narrows the pool of talent that can access creative education.

Curriculum Alignment. The curriculum in creative education must be dynamic and aligned with contemporary practices and international standards. The lack of regular updates and alignment with global trends can result in an outdated education system that fails to prepare students for the challenges and opportunities in modern creative industries.

Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from both domestic policymakers and international partners, such as the European Union, to ensure that creative education contributes to

Moldova's socio-cultural and economic development. To cultivate a thriving creative education ecosystem in Moldova, a multi-faceted approach is needed that involves both domestic policy reform and collaboration with international partners, such as the European Union, to bring about positive change and transformation in creative education.

International best practices as to the creative education policies

Creative education policies form the cornerstone of fostering innovation, artistic expression, and cultural enrichment in educational systems around the world. While the specific implementation of these policies may vary from one country to another, there exists a common thread of best practices that have proven effective in nurturing creativity and artistic talent among students. These international best practices not only equip individuals with essential skills but also contribute to the vitality of the cultural and creative industries, shaping dynamic societies.

Creative education encompasses a broad spectrum of disciplines, including visual arts, music, drama, creative writing, and design. Its impact extends far beyond the realm of artistic expression, influencing cognitive development, critical thinking, problem-solving, and cultural understanding. As education systems evolve to meet the demands of the 21st century, the integration of creative education policies becomes an imperative.

By studying the international best practices, we gained valuable insights into how to structure effective policies, address challenges, and align creative education with broader educational objectives. Through this exploration, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the core elements that underpin successful creative education policies and offer a global perspective on the role of creative education in shaping innovative and culturally enriched societies.

One of the most popular campaign worldwide is about supporting the concept of Creativity in STEM education [3], later developed in STEAM [4]. Best practices often involve recognizing the synergy between creativity and STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) education. Creative education policies can encourage the integration of art and design principles into STEAM fields, fostering innovation and problem-solving skills.

The following table provides a snapshot of international best practices in creative education policies. It outlines the key initiatives and policies implemented in various countries and summarizes the outcomes and impacts of these policies on students, the creative industries, and cultural development.

Figure 1. Selected best practices of countries in the creative education policies

Country	Key Initiatives and Policies	Outcomes and Impact
United Kingdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Creative Industries Federation - The "Creative Learning in Schools" program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased participation in creative subjects - Enhanced creativity and critical thinking among students - Positive impact on the creative industries
Finland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Core Curriculum for Basic Education - Arts Equal Research Initiative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High-quality arts education integrated into the curriculum - Improved student engagement and creativity - Fostering cultural diversity

Country	Key Initiatives and Policies	Outcomes and Impact
Singapore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Arts Education Program - Arts Education Masterplan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved arts education quality and accessibility - Nurturing artistic talent - Boosting creative economy
South Korea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arts Education Promotion Act - Arts Education Support Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhanced arts education in schools - Higher participation in cultural activities - Contribution to cultural identity and economic growth
Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Australian Curriculum: The Arts - Creative Young Stars Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comprehensive arts education curriculum - Encouragement of student participation in the arts - Recognition of artistic achievements

Source: elaborated by authors based on the data on the national core curricula of each country [5]; [6]; [7]; [8]; [9]

Achievements in the field of creative education in the Republic of Moldova

In 2022, four universities from the Republic of Moldova undertook the mission of training specialists for the era of technologies and creativity: the Technical University of Moldova, the State University of Moldova, the State Pedagogical University “Ion Creangă” and the Academy of Music, Theatre and Fine Arts developed new study programs in prospective fields, called the Professions of the Future – Animation, Game Design and Multimedia Production or Engineering and Digital Fashion. The initiative was supported and implemented by the Future Technologies Project, funded by USAID, Sweden and the UK. Studying programs that are part of the creative industries, which currently register the fastest growth in the entertainment sectors, gives young people an additional reason to pursue an education at home, in the Republic of Moldova. The inclusion of these study programs in the professional training within higher education has been a proof of the connection of education to the current and future demands in the labour market.

As we can see in the table below, creative education in the Republic of Moldova still faces significant challenges, but there are also some notable achievements that reflect the national potential in fostering creative talent and innovation.

Figure 2. Overview of domestic creative education policies in the Republic of Moldova

Policy Area	Key Policies and Initiatives	Implementation Status	Challenges and Gaps	Impact on Creative Education Ecosystem
Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusion of creative subjects in the national curriculum - Arts education guidelines - Professional development for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partial implementation, some subjects fully integrated - Limited teacher training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incomplete curriculum integration - Need for continuous teacher training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhanced creative education offerings - Improved access to arts and culture - Partial impact on student

ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE “COMPETITIVENESS AND INNOVATION IN THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY”

September 22nd-23th, 2023, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova

Policy Area	Key Policies and Initiatives	Implementation Status	Challenges and Gaps	Impact on Creative Education Ecosystem
	creative education teachers	- Lack of updated curriculum materials	- Limited student access to creative subjects	engagement and creativity
Teacher Training	- Teacher training programs for creative education - Promotion of professional development	- Limited availability of teacher training programs - Varied quality of creative education training	- Insufficient number of qualified creative education teachers - Need for standardized teacher training programs	- Enhanced skills among creative education teachers - Greater expertise in creative teaching methods
Cultural Exchange	- Cultural exchange programs with international partners - Promotion of Moldovan culture - Support for cultural events and festivals	- Ongoing cultural exchange initiatives - International collaborations in arts and culture - Support for local events and festivals	- Need for expanded cultural exchange programs - Better recognition of Moldovan culture on the international stage	- Increased cultural exchange opportunities - Enhanced global recognition of Moldovan cultural identity
Funding	- Allocation of funds for creative education projects - Grants for arts and culture initiatives - Support for creative education institutions	- Uneven distribution of funds - Limited financial support for smaller institutions - Administrative challenges in fund allocation	- Insufficient funding for creative education infrastructure - Need for improved transparency in fund allocation	- Improved resources for creative education institutions - Enhanced quality of creative education offerings
Research and Evaluation	- Research on creative education effectiveness - Evaluation of creative education policies - Data collection on student outcomes	- Limited systematic evaluation - Challenges in data collection and analysis - Lack of comprehensive research studies	- Need for standardized evaluation metrics - Enhanced data collection and analysis capabilities - Promoting a culture of research in creative education	- Incomplete understanding of policy impact - Limited data on student outcomes - Potential for data-informed policy improvements

Source: elaborated by authors based on data from the Education Code of Republic of Moldova [10]

Growing Interest in Creative Disciplines. In recent years, there has been a noticeable surge in the interest among Moldovan students in creative disciplines. This growing interest suggests a hunger for artistic expression and a desire to pursue creative careers.

A Small but Vibrant Creative Community. Moldova boasts a small yet vibrant creative community that actively contributes to the cultural and artistic landscape of the nation. This community includes accomplished artists, writers, musicians, and designers who have received recognition both within Moldova and internationally. Their success stories serve as sources of inspiration for aspiring creatives.

A Rich Cultural Heritage. Moldova is renowned for its rich cultural heritage, which encompasses a diverse range of artistic expressions, including music, dance, literature, and visual arts. The nation's cultural heritage serves as a wellspring of inspiration and creativity for its youth. Traditional Moldovan festivals, craft traditions, and folkloric art forms are celebrated and preserved, providing a unique platform for creative exploration and cultural expression.

International Recognition. Several Moldovan artists and creative professionals have gained international recognition and acclaim, demonstrating that Moldova possesses creative talent of global significance. Their achievements in fields such as filmmaking, music, and literature not only bring honour to the country but also serve as examples of the potential for Moldovan creatives on the international stage. Moldova has a cultural richness that can be developed and recognized further on the international stage.

These successes provide a strong foundation upon which Moldova can build and expand its creative education ecosystem. The growing interest in creative disciplines, the presence of a vibrant creative community, the rich cultural heritage, and international recognition offer promising indicators that, with the right support and policy interventions, Moldova can further harness its creative potential and contribute to the nation's cultural and economic development. Recognizing and capitalizing on these successes is key to advancing creative education in the Republic of Moldova.

4. Paths to develop the creative education ecosystem

Developing a robust and sustainable creative education ecosystem in the Republic of Moldova requires a comprehensive approach. The following paths could be used to address the challenges and capitalize on the potential of creative education in our country.

4.1. Strengthen educational infrastructure

A critical component of advancing creative education in the Republic of Moldova is the strengthening of educational infrastructure. This involves investments in physical facilities, learning resources, and the expansion of creative programs. A well-developed infrastructure not only enhances the quality of education but also ensures that students have access to the necessary tools and environments for creative expression and learning.

In terms of modern facilities and equipment, it is necessary to upgrade existing facilities, renovate and upgrade existing educational institutions dedicated to creative education, ensuring they have state-of-the-art facilities, including art studios, music rooms, performance spaces, and technology labs. With regard to equipped workspaces, specialized equipment and resources should be provided

to support creative disciplines, such as musical instruments, art supplies, recording studios, and digital design tools.

In respect of accessibility across regions, the regional disparities should be addressed in access to creative education by establishing new creative programs and institutions in underserved areas of the country. Additionally, mobile creative units could be implemented that can travel to rural areas, providing students with workshops, training, and access to creative experiences.

Developing Creative Hubs are about establishing collaborative spaces that would serve as hubs for creative education and innovation. These hubs can bring together students, educators, and professionals from various creative disciplines, fostering a sense of community and cross-disciplinary interaction. It is also important to offer networking opportunities within these hubs where students can collaborate, share ideas, and access resources beyond the traditional classroom setting.

In terms of investment in information technology, investments in digital learning resources, platforms, and online libraries must be accomplished that can enhance creative education by providing access to a vast repository of artistic and creative content. Developing virtual learning environments would enable remote and blended learning, ensuring continuity of creative education even in challenging circumstances.

Multifunctional Cultural Centres supposes to repurpose existing cultural centres, transform them into multifunctional educational spaces that blend traditional cultural activities with modern creative education. This not only maximizes the use of existing facilities but also encourages cross-cultural understanding.

Inclusivity and Accessibility is about Diverse Learning Environments, the design of learning environments that would be inclusive and accessible to all students, including those with disabilities. This would ensure that creative education is accessible to every segment of the population. Likewise it is essential to implement scholarship programs and financial aid to provide equal opportunities for students to pursue creative education, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds.

Strengthening educational infrastructure is a fundamental step toward providing Moldovan students with the resources and environments they need to explore their creative potential. It also ensures that creative education is accessible to all, regardless of their geographic location or financial means. Moreover, by fostering collaboration and innovation within well-equipped facilities, Moldova can foster the growth of a vibrant creative community that contributes to both cultural enrichment and economic development.

Curriculum enhancement

Enhancing the curriculum is central to the development of creative education in the Republic of Moldova. A well-designed and comprehensive curriculum ensures that students receive a high-quality education in creative disciplines. The following strategies could be used for enriching the curriculum and integrating creative subjects across the educational system:

Integration of Creative Disciplines. Cross-Curricular Integration: Encourage the integration of creative disciplines into other subjects across the curriculum. For example, incorporate art and music into science, literature, and history classes to promote a holistic educational experience.

Multidisciplinary Approach. Foster Multidisciplinary Projects: Promote multidisciplinary projects that bring together students from various creative disciplines to collaborate on innovative projects. These projects encourage students to apply their skills in real-world contexts.

Modernizing Curriculum Content supposes regular updates and focus on practical skills.

Ensure that the content of creative education curricula is regularly updated to align with evolving industry trends and technological advancements. This keeps students informed about the latest developments in their chosen creative fields.

The focus on practical skills requires emphasizing practical skills in the curriculum to prepare students for careers in creative industries. Practical coursework, workshops, and hands-on experiences should be integral components of creative education programs.

Creative Thinking and Problem-Solving requires teaching creative thinking skills – implementing courses that specifically focus on developing creative thinking, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills. These courses should be available to students across various disciplines. It is also about encouraging innovation, foster a culture of innovation in the curriculum. The students must be encouraged to develop innovative solutions to real-world challenges, applying creative approaches to problem-solving.

Digital Literacy and Technology Integration supposes digital literacy courses, offering courses that teach digital literacy and technology skills, which are increasingly important for creative professionals. These skills include graphic design software, video editing, 3D modelling, and coding. Virtual Learning Experiences are about integrating virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) experiences into the curriculum, allowing students to explore creative concepts in immersive digital environments.

Industry Engagement and Real-World Projects. Collaboration with creative industries is about fostering partnerships with creative industries to provide students with access to real-world projects, internships, and experiences. This industry engagement would offer students valuable insights into career opportunities and practical experience. Experiential learning matters too, that is incorporate experiential learning opportunities, such as field trips to cultural events, artistic exhibitions, and workshops, enabling students to connect with the broader creative community.

Encouraging Cultural and Artistic Expression supposes the support to student creativity via creating platforms for students to showcase their artistic and creative work, organize art exhibitions, music performances, literary events, and other avenues for students to express their creativity and gain recognition for their talents.

Enhancing the curriculum by integrating creative disciplines and fostering creative thinking not only provides students with a well-grounded education but also prepares them for the diverse and dynamic creative industries. Moldova's educational institutions should prioritize curriculum development that reflects the evolving nature of creative fields, equipping students with the skills, knowledge, and innovation necessary for successful careers in the arts and related sectors.

Conclusion

Creative education is pivotal for the socio-cultural and economic development of the Republic of Moldova. While the nation faces challenges, it also possesses immense potential in the form of a burgeoning creative community and a rich cultural heritage. The EU offers significant support through various programs and initiatives, and Moldova can benefit from these to develop a more robust creative education ecosystem. By implementing the recommended strategies, Moldova can nurture the next generation of creative thinkers and innovators and elevate its position on the European and global stage.

The development of the creative education ecosystem in the Republic of Moldova is not just an educational imperative; it is a strategic investment in the cultural and economic vitality of the nation. Creative education plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of Moldova, nurturing talent, fostering innovation, and preserving the rich cultural heritage of the country. The recommendations outlined in this paper serve as a comprehensive framework for advancing creative education in Moldova and realizing its immense potential.

It is crucial to acknowledge the significance of creative education as a cornerstone of a thriving knowledge-based society. The comprehensive policy framework, investment in infrastructure, teacher training, curriculum enhancement, cultural exchange, and robust research and evaluation mechanisms are not merely isolated initiatives. They form an integrated ecosystem that nurtures creativity and innovation at every level of education.

In embracing this holistic approach, Moldova can expect to witness several profound transformations such as:

- the emergence of a generation of creative thinkers capable of addressing complex challenges in the creative industries and beyond;
- a cultural and artistic renaissance, the revitalizing of the nation's artistic traditions while allowing new voices and expressions to emerge;
- the economic growth, since a vibrant creative education ecosystem is a catalyst for economic growth. By equipping students with the skills and knowledge needed for creative professions, Moldova will foster an innovative and competitive workforce that can contribute to the nation's economic development;
- global recognition as through international collaborations, participation in European programs, and cultural exchange, Moldova's creative talents will gain recognition on the global stage.

Overall, the development of the creative education ecosystem in the Republic of Moldova is a multifaceted endeavour that encompasses educational, cultural, and economic dimensions. It is a journey toward nurturing creativity, preserving cultural heritage, fostering innovation, and equipping the younger generation with the tools to shape a brighter future. A journey which benefits will extend far beyond the educational realm, influencing the very fabric of Moldovan society and its place in the global creative landscape. Moldova's creative education ecosystem will be an enduring testament to the nation's commitment to its cultural heritage and the immense possibilities of the future.

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