

6.1 Rationale: Cultural mediation has an influence on the economy

The European Commission declared 2009 the → [European Year of Creativity and Innovation](#) and allocated funds to EU member countries to pay for related projects. The key message on the relevant EU website “Creativity and innovation contribute to economic prosperity as well as to social and individual well-being”. The economist Richard Florida, whose book “The Rise of the Creative Class” was published in 2002, served as one of the year’s ambassadors. Florida was highly influential in the establishment of the figure of the “creative, unconventional thinker” as an economic figure affecting the attractiveness of a location and thus as highly relevant for international competition in the minds of politicians and urban planners (Florida 2002). In many places, it was common for the funding associated with the European Year of Creativity and Innovation to be invested in cultural mediation projects. In Austria, for example, the government’s major project partner in this regard was → [Kulturkontakt Austria](#), an organization highly influential in the field of cultural mediation. Kulturkontakt Austria played an active role in the initiative, with its school student competition “Projekt Kreativität Europa”.

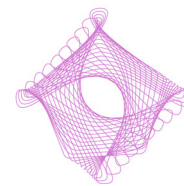
Another indication of the importance of the economic legitimization for cultural mediation is the key lobbying paper for this area, the → [UNESCO Roadmap for Arts Education](#). Adopted and released in 2010 at the second World Conference on Arts Education in Seoul, South Korea, it declares: “21st century societies are increasingly demanding workforces that are creative, flexible, adaptable and innovative and education systems need to evolve with these shifting conditions. Arts Education equips learners with these skills, enabling them to express themselves, critically evaluate the world around them, and actively engage in the various aspects of human existence. Arts Education is also a means of enabling nations to develop the human resources necessary to tap their valuable cultural capital. Drawing on these resources and capital is essential if countries wish to develop strong and sustainable cultural (creative) industries and enterprises. Such industries have the potential to play a key role in enhancing socio-economic development in many less-developed countries.”

This rationale for cultural mediation concentrates chiefly on economic benefits. In addition to promoting personality components which are presented as favouring economic development, the Roadmap rationale emphasizes the significance of cultural mediation for creative industries. The development of artistic or creative skills in the largest possible part of the population is seen as an investment in the sustainability of cultural industries and the economy as a whole – an echo of great World Fairs era, which saw the introduction of general drawing instruction to school curricula. Other economic arguments for supporting cultural mediation

→ [European Year of Creativity and Innovation](#) http://create2009.europa.eu/ueber_das_europaeische_jahr.html [30.4.2012]

→ [Kulturkontakt Austria](#) <http://www.kulturkontakt.or.at> [11.4.2012]

→ [UNESCO Roadmap for Arts Education](#) http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=30335&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html [30.4.2012]; see Resource Pool MFE060501.pdf



include the upgrading of urban districts through the presence of artists, the contribution of cultural and creative industries to the gross national product and the → change of attitudes in the workforce toward greater flexibility and inventiveness. Finally, cultural mediation contributes to the formation of both producers as well as well-informed and motivated consumers.

→ change of attitudes in the workforce see Text 3.5

→ precarity see Glossary

Critics of this strategy of legitimization point to the fact that policy makers' newly awakened interest in cultural mediation appears to be based less on a desire to promote self-determination or independent judgement with respect to the arts than to train people to be willing to perform and able to solve problems creatively and thereby prevent them from becoming an economic or social burden on the state. However, engagement with the arts can in fact lead to precisely the opposite effects. It can cause people to refuse to perform, to reject the principle that material and social opportunities should be based solely on individual performance and the principle of competition and motivate them to consider and contribute to alternative ways of shaping one's life. The arts themselves can expose and criticize the market economy and its effects. Moreover, artistic and research fields themselves have raised the criticism that employment conditions, what is called the → precarity of most artists and cultural mediators remain, despite all the talk about the great importance of the arts for the economy (Raunig, Wuggenig 2007).