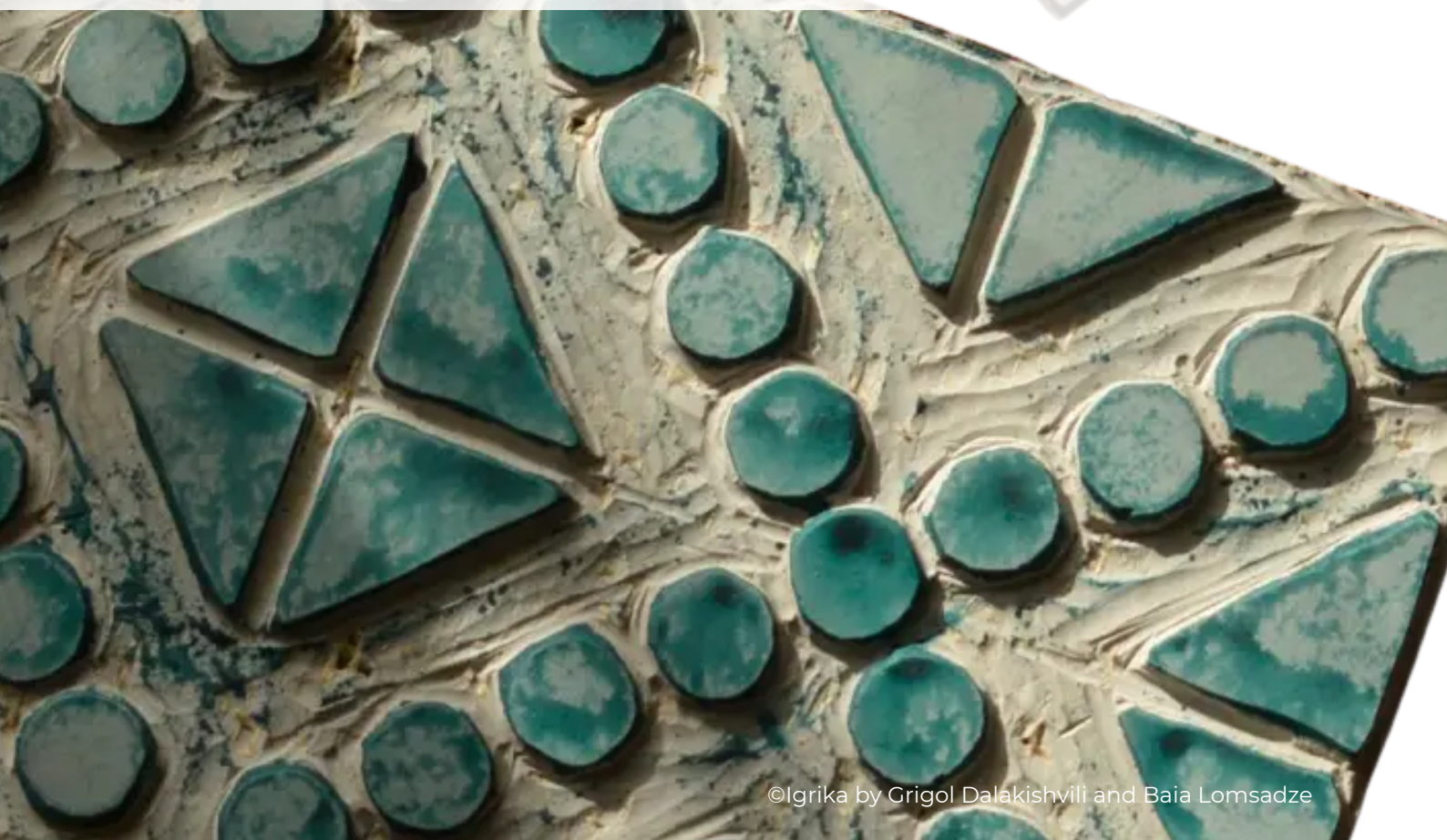




BUILDING BRIDGES, BUILDING SKILLS

BRICKS - Building Bridges, Building Skills: Enhancing Non-Formal Craft Education for Sustainable Cultural Transmission

CONSOLIDATED REPORT
BELGIUM, GEORGIA, ITALY, POLAND



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Table of contents

Table of contents	2
Executive summary	3
Partners	6
Rationale and needs analysis (MIE)	9
Methodology : how BRICKS addresses these needs (GACC)	12
Key Findings	16
Introduction	16
General Survey Highlights	43
General Conclusions	48
Policy Recommendations (MIE all review)	49
1. Recognition and certification	49
2. Funding and accessibility	50
3. Training Quality and Skills Transmission	50
4. Awareness and attractiveness of craft careers	51
5. Governance, coordination and evidence-based policy	51
Concluding Recommendation	52
Glossary	53
Annexes	54
I. Detailed national reports	54
II. Full survey results	96
5. Annex 1 - The questionnaire	129

Executive summary

The transmission of traditional and heritage craft skills is increasingly recognised as a major challenge across Europe. While craft professions contribute significantly to cultural heritage, local economies, creativity, and social cohesion, many sectors face common difficulties, including ageing workforces, skills shortages, limited visibility, and the gradual disappearance of specialised knowledge and techniques. At the same time, a substantial proportion of craft skills continue to be transmitted outside formal education systems through workshops, apprenticeships, mentorship, community initiatives, and other forms of non-formal learning.

The BRICKS project (Building Bridges, Building Skills) was developed to improve understanding of the role of non-formal education in the transmission of heritage craft skills and to identify ways of strengthening learning pathways across Europe. Bringing together partners from Belgium, Italy, Poland, and Georgia, the project explored how non-formal education is organised, supported, recognised, and connected to wider education and training systems. Throughout the project, the findings highlighted that non-formal education is not a secondary alternative to formal education, but a complementary and often indispensable pathway for the transmission of heritage craft skills.

The research combined state-of-the-art analyses of the craft education landscape in each participating country, surveys, international study visits, stakeholder exchanges, and comparative assessment of national contexts. Particular attention was given to legal and policy frameworks, learning pathways, support mechanisms, governance structures, good practices, and the relationship between formal and non-formal education.

The findings demonstrate that non-formal education plays a crucial role in the transmission of craft skills across all four countries. Practical learning environments such as workshops, craft enterprises, museums, cultural institutions, and community initiatives remain essential spaces for acquiring skills that are often difficult to transmit through classroom-based education alone. Non-formal learning provides opportunities for lifelong learning, career transitions, professional specialisation, and intergenerational knowledge transfer.

The comparative analysis also shows that all four countries recognise non-formal education within broader lifelong learning policies and have introduced mechanisms for the

recognition of learning acquired outside formal education systems. However, significant differences remain in terms of governance structures, validation systems, implementation, and accessibility. While some countries have developed relatively advanced recognition frameworks, practical access to validation procedures remains uneven and heritage crafts rarely benefit from dedicated educational policies.

The research further highlights that formal and non-formal education should not be viewed as competing systems. Rather, they fulfill complementary functions. Formal education provides structured learning pathways, recognised qualifications, and theoretical foundations, while non-formal education offers practical, experience-based learning closely connected to professional practice. The strongest examples identified through the project are those where effective bridges exist between these two forms of learning, allowing learners to combine theoretical knowledge with hands-on experience.

Survey results further confirmed the importance of non-formal education for both learners and organisations. Respondents highlighted the need for greater recognition of competences, stronger professional networks, improved access to funding, and clearer links between training opportunities and employment pathways. The research also revealed significant gaps in data collection and monitoring systems, limiting the ability of policymakers and stakeholders to assess skills transmission trends and design targeted interventions.

The project also demonstrates the value of European cooperation in enabling the exchange of methodologies, policy approaches, and educational practices that can strengthen heritage craft education across diverse national contexts.

Despite numerous examples of good practice, the project identified several common challenges across the participating countries. These include limited visibility of craft careers, insufficient attractiveness among younger generations, fragmented learning opportunities, difficulties in recognising competences acquired through non-formal pathways, limited pedagogical support for craftspeople acting as educators, and a lack of comprehensive data on skills transmission in the sector.

To address these challenges, BRICKS proposes a series of policy recommendations structured around five key priorities.

First, recognition and certification systems should be strengthened to ensure that competences acquired through non-formal learning can be more easily identified, validated, and recognised. Flexible approaches, including modular certification systems and micro-credentials adapted to practice-based learning, should be further explored.

Second, greater investment is needed to improve the accessibility and sustainability of non-formal education. Stable funding mechanisms, financial support for learners, and support for workshop-based training environments are essential to maintaining opportunities for skills transmission, including within mobility schemes.

Third, greater attention should be given to training quality and educator support. Craftspeople play a central role in transmitting knowledge and should be recognised and supported as educators through professional development, pedagogical training, and peer-learning opportunities.

Fourth, efforts should be made to improve the visibility and attractiveness of craft careers. Communication campaigns, improved career guidance, and increased visibility of training opportunities can help attract new generations to the sector.

Finally, stronger governance and coordination mechanisms are needed to connect education, culture, heritage, employment, and regional development policies. Improved data collection, monitoring systems, and mapping of training opportunities would support more informed and evidence-based decision-making.

The BRICKS project demonstrates that non-formal education is not a secondary or marginal component of heritage craft learning. It is a fundamental mechanism through which knowledge, skills, and cultural practices continue to be transmitted across generations. Strengthening its recognition, accessibility, quality, and visibility is therefore essential to ensuring the long-term sustainability of heritage crafts and the preservation of Europe's rich cultural diversity.

Partners

The BRICKS project is built upon a consortium of partners that are deeply rooted in the craft and cultural heritage sector, bringing together complementary expertise in training, advocacy, cultural preservation, and innovation. The partnership between Belgium, Georgia, Poland, and Italy reflects both geographical diversity and a shared commitment to addressing the key challenges identified in the non-formal craft education path: skills transmission, lack of recognition, limited funding, and generational renewal.

The project is led by **Mad'in Europe (MIE – Belgium)**, which plays a central coordinating and strategic role. Founded in Brussels in 2013, MIE has developed a strong positioning at the European level, focusing on enhancing the visibility and recognition of heritage professions, including traditional crafts, fine crafts, building crafts, and conservation-restoration. Its mission is to highlight the contribution of these professions to employment creation and sustainable development, positioning them as key assets in achieving the objectives of the European Green Deal. MIE also places strong emphasis on the transmission of skills to new generations, advocating for the recognition of crafts as professions of excellence rather than marginal activities. This positioning directly responds to several challenges identified in the survey, particularly those related to lack of visibility, limited institutional recognition, and the need to reframe crafts within contemporary socio-economic debates.

The project benefits from the expertise of the **Georgian Arts and Culture Center (GACC - Georgia)**, an organisation with more than 25 years of experience in the fields of cultural heritage, creative industries, and international cooperation. GACC operates within a context where traditional crafts are deeply embedded in cultural identity but are increasingly at risk due to economic pressures, migration, and limited institutional support. As an accredited NGO to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention, a member of the European Crafts Alliance, and the official representative of Europa Nostra, GACC plays a key role in the preservation, promotion, and sustainable use of Georgian cultural heritage. Its activities include educational programmes, support for cultural entrepreneurship, and international networking, aiming to strengthen the economic viability and resilience of craft-based sectors. GACC's positioning reflects many of the structural issues highlighted in the BRICKS project, particularly the urgency of safeguarding endangered skills and creating sustainable pathways for new generations of artisans.

The **National Museum in Gdańsk (Poland)** contributes to connecting craft education with museum practice, heritage preservation, and public engagement. As one of the oldest museums in Poland and a national cultural institution under the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, it plays a central role in the collection, conservation, and dissemination of artistic and cultural knowledge. Its scope includes not only Polish and European art, but also ethnographic and intercultural heritage, making it a key actor in interpreting and transmitting material culture. Through its educational activities, exhibitions, and research, the museum contributes to the public understanding of crafts and heritage, reinforcing the link between non-formal education and broader cultural ecosystems. Its involvement in BRICKS ensures that the project integrates institutional knowledge and heritage-based perspectives, complementing more practice-oriented approaches.

Artex – Centre for Artistic and Traditional Craftsmanship in Tuscany (Italy) brings over 30 years of experience in supporting and developing the craft sector. Established on the initiative of Confartigianato and CAN – the two main Italian crafts associations, Artex operates as a key reference point for artistic and traditional crafts at regional and international levels, working closely with public institutions such as the Tuscany Region and the Municipality of Florence. Its activities focus on promoting craftsmanship, enhancing its competitiveness, and fostering innovation, particularly through the integration of digital technologies and sustainable practices. Artex's positioning is particularly significant in a context where craftsmanship is both economically relevant and culturally embedded, yet faces increasing challenges related to global competition and generational transition. By combining training, business support, and policy engagement, Artex plays a crucial role in bridging traditional knowledge and contemporary market dynamics.

Across all partner countries, a common element clearly emerges: partners are not external observers of the sector, but active actors within it, working directly with artisans, learners, institutions, and communities. This ensures a practice-based and experience-driven perspective, allowing the project to address real challenges and develop operationally relevant solutions.

The strength of the consortium lies in this combination of local embeddedness and transnational vision. Each partner contributes specific expertise—ranging from European advocacy (Belgium), to heritage preservation and international cooperation (Georgia),

institutional and cultural transmission (Poland), and innovation and sector development (Italy)—while the project framework enables comparison, exchange, and mutual learning.

Ultimately, the partners act as bridges between knowledge and practice, connecting heritage and innovation, local realities and European strategies, individual learning experiences and systemic development needs.

Through this collaborative approach and their direct experience in the field, the consortium contributes to repositioning non-formal craft education as a strategic domain, capable of supporting skills development, sustainability transitions, and the preservation of cultural heritage in contemporary Europe.



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Rationale and needs analysis (MIE)

Traditional and heritage crafts form an important part of Europe's cultural diversity, local identities, and living heritage. Beyond their cultural significance, craft professions also contribute to economic development, employment, entrepreneurship, tourism, conservation activities, and the vitality of local communities. They embody generations of accumulated knowledge, techniques, and practices that continue to shape both historic and contemporary societies. Ensuring the continuity of these professions is therefore not only a cultural objective, but also an economic and social one.

The transmission of craft skills relies heavily on learning processes that differ from those found in many other sectors. Heritage craft knowledge is often practical, embodied, and experience-based. Many techniques can only be fully acquired through observation, repetition, experimentation, and direct interaction with materials, tools, and experienced practitioners. As a result, non-formal learning environments such as workshops, apprenticeships, mentorship schemes, community-based initiatives, and practice-oriented training programmes have historically played a central role in the transmission of craft knowledge. While formal education provides important theoretical foundations and recognised qualifications, non-formal education remains essential for developing the practical competences and tacit knowledge required in many craft professions.

Despite their importance, traditional and heritage crafts face significant structural challenges across Europe. One of the most pressing concerns is the transmission of skills and knowledge between generations. Many experienced craftspeople are approaching retirement age, while fewer young people are entering the sector. As a result, specialised techniques and know-how are at risk of disappearing. This challenge affects not only individual professions but also the broader ecosystems of cultural heritage preservation, restoration, artistic production, and local economic development that depend on these skills.

The sector also faces difficulties related to visibility and attractiveness. Craft professions are frequently affected by outdated perceptions that associate manual occupations with limited career prospects, despite the high levels of expertise, creativity, entrepreneurship, and innovation they often require. Young people and adults seeking professional reorientation are not always aware of the opportunities offered by craft careers, while pathways into the

sector can be difficult to identify and navigate. This contributes to recruitment difficulties and limits the renewal of the craft workforce.

Another challenge concerns the recognition and visibility of non-formal learning. Across Europe, a significant proportion of craft skills continue to be acquired outside formal education systems. Although various mechanisms for the validation and recognition of competences exist, their implementation remains uneven. Learning opportunities are often fragmented, differ considerably between countries and regions, and are not always clearly connected to qualification frameworks or professional pathways. As a consequence, the educational value of non-formal learning and its contribution to skills development are not always sufficiently recognised.

The quality and accessibility of non-formal education are also influenced by the capacities of crafts educators themselves. While many craftspeople possess extensive technical expertise, they may have limited pedagogical training or opportunities to develop educational competences. At the same time, limited access to international exchange and peer-learning opportunities can restrict the circulation of innovative teaching approaches and methodologies. Strengthening the competences of crafts educators is therefore an important factor in improving the quality, inclusiveness, and sustainability of non-formal learning provision.

These challenges are compounded by a lack of research and comparative evidence on non-formal education in the heritage craft sector. While numerous initiatives exist across Europe, knowledge about learning pathways, support mechanisms, governance models, and skills transmission practices remains fragmented. Differences in legal frameworks, qualification systems, and the status of crafts professions further complicate cross-country comparisons. As a result, policymakers, educators, and sector organisations often lack the evidence needed to design effective and targeted interventions.

At the same time, the challenges facing heritage crafts are not confined to individual countries. Ageing workforces, skills shortages, uneven recognition of non-formal learning, and difficulties in attracting new generations are shared concerns across Europe. Yet responses to these challenges are often developed locally or nationally, limiting opportunities for mutual learning and the transfer of successful practices. Greater European cooperation is therefore needed to strengthen the visibility and recognition of non-formal

education, support the exchange of methodologies and experiences, and contribute to more informed policy development.

Against this backdrop, the BRICKS project was developed to improve understanding of non-formal education in the heritage craft sector and to address key gaps in knowledge, practice, and policy. Through comparative research, surveys, international exchange activities, and the identification of good practices, the project seeks to strengthen the evidence base on skills transmission, support the professional development of crafts educators, and contribute to the recognition and sustainability of non-formal learning pathways. By bringing together organisations from Belgium, Italy, Poland, and Georgia, BRICKS also promotes the exchange of experiences across different national contexts and supports a broader European reflection on the future of heritage craft education and skills transmission.

Methodology : how BRICKS addresses these needs (GACC)

The BRICKS methodology has been designed as a direct response to the structural, educational, cultural, and economic challenges identified during the needs analysis phase. The project applies a research-based, participatory, and transnational approach that combines comparative analysis, capacity building, peer learning, and dissemination activities in order to strengthen non-formal education in the heritage craft sector across Europe.

The methodology is based on the understanding that heritage crafts are primarily transmitted through practice-oriented, community-based, and non-formal learning environments. However, these systems currently face multiple challenges, including insufficient visibility, weak institutional recognition, ageing craft communities, limited pedagogical competences among educators, and restricted access to quality training opportunities. BRICKS addresses these issues through an integrated set of activities that combine knowledge production, international cooperation, and skills development.

A major methodological component of BRICKS is the identification and analysis of existing non-formal learning pathways in the heritage craft sector. To address the lack of comparative knowledge and evidence-based approaches in the field, the project conducts research in four partner countries — Belgium, Italy, Poland, and Georgia. This research includes mapping educational practices, analysing support instruments, and identifying successful methodologies and good practices. The research incorporates desk studies, surveys of both non-formal educators and learners, as well as the identification and analysis of good practices. It includes mapping educational practices, analysing support instruments, and identifying successful methodologies and approaches in the field of heritage crafts.

The comparative nature of the research enables the consortium to identify both common European challenges and country-specific realities within the craft sector. The resulting national reports and consolidated analysis create a methodological foundation for future actions, while also contributing to the broader lack of studies related to adult non-formal education in heritage crafts.

In parallel, BRICKS applies a capacity-building methodology focused on crafts educators, master craftspeople, and organisations involved in non-formal education. The project

recognises that many practitioners possess strong technical competences but limited pedagogical knowledge and experience in adult education methodologies.

To respond to this need, the project organises cross-national study visits and peer-learning activities that expose participants to diverse educational models, teaching approaches, and community engagement practices. Through direct observation, exchange of experience, and interaction with fellow professionals, participants strengthen both their educational competences and their understanding of international practices in heritage craft education.

This methodology supports not only skills development but also the professionalisation of crafts educators and the improvement of the overall quality of non-formal educational provision.

Another important methodological dimension of BRICKS concerns the visibility and recognition of non-formal learning within the heritage craft sector. The needs analysis identified that workshop-based learning, mentorship, apprenticeships, and community-led educational practices often remain undervalued despite their essential role in safeguarding traditional skills and knowledge.

BRICKS addresses this challenge through documentation, dissemination, and exchange of good practices at both national and international levels. The project methodology includes the collection and presentation of successful examples of non-formal craft education that demonstrate its educational, cultural, and economic relevance. Through this process, the project contributes to strengthening the legitimacy and visibility of non-formal learning pathways within broader educational and cultural policy discussions.

Multiplier events organised in partner countries further support this objective by creating opportunities for dialogue among educators, craftspeople, organisations, local communities, and other stakeholders. These activities increase awareness of the value of non-formal education while also promoting networking and exchange between actors operating in the craft sector.

The transnational structure of BRICKS also contributes to recognition at European level. By bringing together organisations representing different regions and craft traditions, the project facilitates the development of transferable approaches and shared methodologies

that may support future policy development and cooperation within the field of heritage craft education.

Accessibility constitutes another key methodological principle of the BRICKS project. The needs analysis highlighted that access to high-quality craft education remains uneven, particularly in rural areas and among disadvantaged groups. Limited mobility, financial constraints, and insufficient digital competences further restrict participation opportunities.

To address these challenges, BRICKS promotes flexible, community-based, and practice-oriented educational approaches that can be adapted to different local contexts and learner profiles. The project's comparative research and good practice analysis provide examples of inclusive methodologies that can be replicated or adapted by organisations working in the field of adult education and heritage crafts.

International study visits and peer-learning activities also improve accessibility to knowledge and professional networks for crafts educators who would otherwise have limited opportunities for international exchange. Through participation in transnational activities, educators gain access to new methodologies, resources, and collaborative opportunities that strengthen their professional capacity and broaden their educational perspectives.

The project methodology additionally acknowledges the importance of digital competences within contemporary non-formal education. Weak digital skills were identified as one of the barriers preventing crafts educators from expanding educational outreach and engaging wider audiences. BRICKS therefore encourages the integration of digital tools and innovative communication methods into non-formal education practices, while still maintaining the central role of practical and workshop-based learning.

The safeguarding of traditional craft knowledge and the strengthening of intergenerational transmission mechanisms form the core methodological framework of BRICKS. The project recognises that many heritage craft professions are endangered due to ageing practitioners, declining attractiveness among younger generations, and insufficient opportunities for structured knowledge transfer.

In response, BRICKS supports educational environments where mentorship, practice-based learning, and direct interaction between experienced practitioners and learners remain

central. The project methodology places strong emphasis on peer learning, exchange of experience, and the active role of crafts educators as transmitters of intangible cultural heritage.

The identification and dissemination of good practices further contribute to safeguarding traditional knowledge by documenting methodologies and approaches that have proven effective in maintaining craft traditions within contemporary social and economic realities. Through comparative analysis and international exchange, BRICKS supports the development of sustainable approaches to knowledge transmission that remain adaptable to local contexts while benefiting from wider European cooperation.

Importantly, the project approaches heritage crafts not as static historical practices, but as living cultural processes capable of innovation and adaptation. The methodology therefore combines safeguarding objectives with contemporary educational approaches, community engagement, and capacity building, ensuring that traditional crafts remain relevant, visible, and accessible within modern European societies.

Key Findings

Introduction

Non-formal education plays a crucial role in preserving traditional and heritage crafts by enabling the transmission of practical knowledge, skills, and techniques through apprenticeships, workshops, community initiatives, and other experience-based learning models. As many craft competences are not fully addressed within formal education systems, non-formal education represents an essential pathway for lifelong learning, professional development, social inclusion, and the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage.

The comparative desk research across Belgium, Italy, Georgia, Poland, and other partner countries reveals a diverse landscape in terms of the legal recognition, certification mechanisms, governance structures, and institutional support available for non-formal learning. Although all countries acknowledge the value of practical and skills-based learning, they differ considerably in the extent to which non-formal education is integrated into national education systems and linked to recognised qualification pathways.

A major area of divergence concerns the recognition and validation of learning outcomes. Belgium and Poland have developed more structured approaches, with qualification frameworks and validation systems that allow competences acquired through non-formal pathways to be recognised and connected to broader lifelong learning strategies. In contrast, Italy and Georgia have established legal or strategic references to non-formal learning but continue to face challenges related to the implementation of systematic certification procedures, resulting in fragmented or limited recognition of acquired skills.

Differences also emerge in governance models. More decentralised systems, particularly in Belgium and Poland, provide greater opportunities for regional authorities, local institutions, and craft organisations to develop programmes adapted to local cultural heritage and labour-market needs. In comparison, more centralised or less coordinated approaches can limit flexibility and create uneven access to training opportunities, especially where initiatives depend on individual organisations, NGOs, or temporary projects.

Despite these differences, common trends can be identified across all partner countries. Non-formal education often complements formal education by offering practical, hands-on experiences and specialised skills that are difficult to integrate into traditional curricula. In areas where formal craft education is absent or insufficient, non-formal education also acts as an alternative pathway for transmitting knowledge between generations of artisans and learners.

Accessibility and sustainability remain key challenges across all contexts. Stable funding, wider geographical coverage, stronger awareness of craft careers, and greater inclusion of underrepresented groups are necessary to ensure the long-term impact of non-formal education initiatives. Countries where programmes rely heavily on private actors, NGOs, or external funding face particular challenges in maintaining continuity and expanding successful initiatives.

Overall, the comparison demonstrates that there is no single model for effective non-formal education in the heritage craft sector. However, successful systems tend to combine clear recognition and certification mechanisms, cooperation between national and local actors, sustainable financial support, and strong links between non-formal learning, formal education, and labour-market opportunities. The diversity of approaches identified across partner countries provides valuable opportunities for exchange of good practices and for developing more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable models of craft education.

1. Legal and Policy Frameworks for Non-Formal Education

Non-formal education is increasingly recognised across Europe as an important component of lifelong learning, skills development, and social participation. The comparative analysis conducted within the BRICKS project shows that Belgium, Italy, Poland, and Georgia all acknowledge the value of learning acquired outside formal education systems. However, significant differences exist regarding definitions, governance structures, recognition mechanisms, and the extent to which non-formal learning is supported through dedicated policies. While all four countries have developed legal or policy frameworks that recognise non-formal education, none has established a comprehensive framework specifically dedicated to non-formal education in the traditional and heritage craft sector.

Recognition of non-formal education within lifelong learning frameworks

A common feature across all four countries is the integration of non-formal education into broader lifelong learning strategies. Non-formal learning is generally understood as structured learning that takes place outside formal educational institutions and is pursued voluntarily by individuals seeking to acquire knowledge, skills, or competences.

Italy provides one of the most detailed legal definitions through Law No. 92/2012, which distinguishes formal, non-formal, and informal learning and explicitly recognises non-formal education as part of lifelong learning policies. The legislation establishes non-formal learning as an intentional educational activity taking place outside formal education systems, while also introducing mechanisms for the certification and recognition of competences acquired through different learning pathways.

Similarly, Georgia has developed a clear legal basis through its Law on Vocational Education, which defines non-formal education as part of the lifelong learning system and establishes procedures for recognising learning outcomes acquired outside formal education. The Vocational Education Strategy 2024–2030 further promotes non-formal learning as a tool for upskilling, reskilling, and adult education.

Poland recognises non-formal education through a combination of legislative and policy instruments, including the Education System Act, the Integrated Qualifications System, and the Integrated Skills Strategy 2030. These frameworks acknowledge the importance of

learning that takes place through courses, workshops, training programmes, and community-based educational activities outside the formal school system.

Belgium presents a different situation due to internal division (Flanders, Wallonia Brussels Capital). Although non-formal education is widely recognised in practice and supported through numerous regional policies, there is no unified legal definition at national level. Instead, the concept is reflected in statistical classifications (STATBEL), European lifelong learning principles, and regional policy frameworks. Recognition therefore depends largely on the approaches adopted by the different language communities and regions.

Validation and recognition of learning outcomes

Beyond recognition in principle, all four countries have introduced mechanisms aimed at validating competences acquired through non-formal learning. These systems seek to improve the visibility and portability of skills gained outside traditional educational pathways.

Italy has developed one of the most comprehensive frameworks through its National Skills Certification System, the National Framework of Regional Qualifications, and the National Qualifications Framework. Together, these instruments provide procedures for identifying, validating, and certifying competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning while facilitating recognition across regions.

Poland has similarly established the Integrated Qualifications System, which creates links between qualifications, learning outcomes, and labour market needs. Through this framework, competences acquired through various learning pathways can be recognised and connected to the Polish Qualifications Framework.

In Belgium, the region of Flanders has implemented the Validation of Acquired Competencies (VAC) framework and the Flemish Qualification Framework, which provide mechanisms for identifying, assessing, and certifying skills acquired outside formal education. These systems contribute to employability and lifelong learning objectives, although they are not specifically designed for heritage crafts. In addition to validation mechanisms, Belgium supports work-based vocational training through specialised institutions such as IFAPME in Wallonia, EFP in Brussels, and Syntra in Flanders. These

organisations combine practical workshop training with theoretical instruction and contribute to the transmission of craft skills through apprenticeship and alternance models leading to recognised qualifications.

Georgia has also introduced recognition mechanisms linked to its National Qualifications Framework. However, despite a relatively advanced legal framework, implementation remains limited. Existing policy documents acknowledge that recognition opportunities remain underdeveloped, public awareness is low, and access to validation procedures is still restricted in many fields.

Across all four countries, the existence of recognition systems demonstrates growing awareness of the value of non-formal learning. Nevertheless, implementation remains uneven, and the practical accessibility of validation procedures varies considerably.

Governance and administrative approaches

The governance of non-formal education differs significantly between countries and reflects broader administrative schemes.

Belgium represents the most decentralised model. Responsibility for education and training is largely devolved to regions and language communities, resulting in diverse approaches across Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels. Non-formal education is embedded within youth, cultural heritage, adult education, and employability policies rather than being governed through a single framework.

Italy combines a national legal framework with strong regional responsibility for implementation. National legislation establishes common principles for lifelong learning and skills certification, while regions play a central role in organising vocational training, recognising qualifications, and supporting educational initiatives such as the Bottega-Scuola.

Poland adopts a multi-level governance approach in which national legislation establishes overarching frameworks while regional and local authorities support implementation through cultural institutions, museums, educational centres, and community organisations.

Georgia represents the most centralised model among the countries studied. Legal definitions, qualifications frameworks, and recognition procedures are established at

national level, while regional and local authorities have limited formal responsibilities in relation to non-formal education. At the same time, there are no dedicated regulations specifically targeting the transmission of heritage craft skills.

In conclusion, the comparative analysis reveals broad recognition of non-formal education as a legitimate and valuable component of lifelong learning across Belgium, Italy, Poland, and Georgia. All four countries have established legal or policy instruments that acknowledge learning taking place outside formal education systems and, to varying degrees, support the validation of competences acquired through these pathways.

However, important differences remain in terms of governance, implementation, and accessibility. While Italy, Poland, and Georgia have adopted explicit national definitions and recognition frameworks, Belgium relies primarily on regional approaches and indirect policy recognition. Furthermore, despite growing recognition of non-formal learning, none of the analysed countries has developed a comprehensive legal framework specifically dedicated to non-formal education in traditional and heritage crafts. As a result, the transmission of craft skills continues to depend largely on broader lifelong learning policies and sector-specific initiatives rather than dedicated educational strategies for crafts.

2. Non-Formal Learning Pathways and Support Instruments in Heritage Crafts

Non-formal learning has become one of the most important mechanisms for safeguarding traditional crafts and ensuring the transmission of practical knowledge that is often difficult to preserve through formal education systems alone. Across Europe, heritage crafts continue to rely heavily on direct practice, mentorship, workshop-based training, and community participation. Belgium, Italy, Poland, and Georgia each demonstrate different approaches to organising and supporting non-formal learning in this field, reflecting their institutional traditions, cultural priorities, and economic realities.

Although the structures differ considerably from country to country, all four cases reveal that heritage crafts depend strongly on flexible and practice-oriented educational models. In most cases, craft knowledge is transmitted through direct engagement with materials, tools, and experienced practitioners rather than through classroom-based theoretical instruction. Non-formal learning therefore functions not only as an educational pathway, but also as a mechanism for cultural continuity, intergenerational exchange, and local identity preservation.

Belgium presents one of the more structured systems among the analysed countries, particularly in the field of architectural heritage and restoration crafts. In Wallonia, public institutions play a central coordinating role in organising non-formal training opportunities. The Agence Wallonne du Patrimoine (AWAP) supports specialised training programmes focused on traditional building crafts such as masonry, carpentry, and stone restoration. The programmes are modular, highly practice-oriented, and adapted to learners with different levels of experience. In addition to technical training, these initiatives contribute to professional upskilling and the preservation of restoration knowledge connected to historic buildings.

A particularly important characteristic of the Belgian system is the close connection between heritage conservation policies and non-formal training. Institutions such as the Centre de la Paix-Dieu and the Pôle de la Pierre combine educational activities with real restoration environments, allowing learners to develop practical skills within authentic heritage contexts. At the same time, other organisations such as SIEP create bridges between

learners and broader craft-training opportunities in fields including ceramics, textiles, metalwork, and leatherworking.

Despite the relatively strong institutional support, the Belgian landscape remains uneven. Opportunities are more developed in architectural and construction-related crafts than in decorative or artistic crafts. Furthermore, the organisation of learning pathways differs between Wallonia and Flanders. In Flanders, non-formal craft education is often embedded within museums and cultural institutions rather than vocational systems. The Museum of Old Techniques in Grimbergen, for example, focuses on experiential and short-format learning activities that emphasise hands-on engagement and accessibility.

Italy represents a distinctive model in which non-formal craft education is strongly linked to regional governance and workshop-based learning traditions. While national legislation establishes the overall framework for craft education, implementation largely depends on regional authorities. The most characteristic feature of the Italian system is the Bottega-Scuola model - workshop-schools operated by recognised master craftsmen.

These workshop-schools function as spaces where learners acquire professional skills directly within craft enterprises. The educational process is based on observation, repetition, practical execution, and close mentorship relationships between master craftsmen and apprentices. Depending on regional regulations, courses may be publicly funded, partially subsidised, or privately organised.

Italy also demonstrates how non-formal learning can be integrated into broader vocational and labour-market systems. Apprenticeships play a particularly important role in connecting education and employment. Young people may spend several years learning within workshops while simultaneously acquiring professional qualifications recognised within regional systems. This creates stronger pathways from training into employment than in many other countries.

However, the Italian system also faces structural challenges. Funding availability depends heavily on regional budgets and political priorities, resulting in territorial disparities. In some regions, workshop-schools receive stable support, while in others opportunities remain limited or irregular. Nevertheless, Italy offers one of the clearest examples of how traditional

master-apprentice learning can coexist with contemporary certification and vocational training structures.

Poland demonstrates a more decentralised and community-driven approach to non-formal craft learning. Here, cultural institutions, NGOs, museums, regional associations, and master craftsmen themselves form the backbone of educational activities. Traditional crafts are transmitted primarily through workshops, short courses, and community initiatives focused on local heritage.

Regional identity plays a particularly important role in Poland's craft-learning ecosystem. Many initiatives are closely connected to specific local traditions such as Kashubian embroidery, pottery in Bolesławiec, blacksmithing in Silesia, or woodcarving traditions in mountain regions. Cultural centres, ethnographic museums, and folk universities organise practical workshops that attract both local communities and wider audiences interested in traditional culture.

Another characteristic feature of the Polish system is the collaboration between vocational education institutions and craft workshops. Apprenticeships and internships allow students from vocational schools and art academies to gain practical experience within real workshop environments. This creates valuable connections between formal and non-formal learning systems while ensuring continuity of traditional skills.

Support mechanisms in Poland are often implemented at local or regional levels. Municipalities, NGOs, and heritage organisations organise grant programmes, scholarship schemes, and educational projects that support endangered craft traditions. However, as in many countries, funding often depends on project-based financing and regional initiative rather than long-term national strategies.

Georgia presents a significantly different context, where non-formal learning plays an especially critical role due to the relatively limited availability of formal craft education pathways. Existing studies indicate that a large majority of craft practitioners acquired their skills through informal or non-formal learning environments.

The Georgian system is highly fragmented and largely dependent on individual initiatives, NGOs, private studios, museums, and community networks. Workshop-based learning,

direct mentorship, family transmission, and self-directed learning remain dominant mechanisms for skills acquisition. Short-term courses organised by NGOs or donor-funded projects often provide opportunities for practical training, while municipal art schools and museum-based activities contribute to introductory craft education.

Religious and community institutions also play an important role, particularly in preserving ecclesiastical arts and traditional decorative techniques. At the same time, emerging private studios and creative businesses increasingly provide workshops and apprenticeships that combine traditional techniques with contemporary creative industries.

Despite the richness and diversity of existing initiatives, Georgia lacks systematic legal and financial support instruments specifically designed for non-formal craft education. There are no dedicated subsidy schemes, tax incentives, or long-term public funding programmes supporting this field apart from a few cases of courses run by the public institutions like museums. As a result, many initiatives depend on temporary donor funding, participant fees, or private investment, which limits sustainability and accessibility.

Conclusion

A comparison of the four countries reveals several common tendencies. First, all systems rely heavily on practice-based learning and direct interaction between learners and skilled practitioners. Heritage crafts continue to be transmitted primarily through embodied experience and personal mentorship.

Second, non-formal learning often compensates for limitations within formal education systems. Traditional crafts frequently require highly specialised, localised, or tacit knowledge that cannot easily be standardised within conventional curricula.

Third, the level of institutional support strongly influences accessibility and continuity. Countries with stronger public frameworks and stable funding mechanisms are generally able to provide more consistent learning opportunities and broader participation.

At the same time, all four countries face similar challenges. These include ageing master craftsmen populations, limited attractiveness of craft professions for younger generations, fragmentation of educational opportunities, and dependence on short-term project funding.

There is also a broader challenge related to the recognition and validation of non-formal learning outcomes within labour markets and educational systems.

Nevertheless, the analysed cases demonstrate that non-formal learning remains one of the most effective tools for safeguarding heritage crafts and intangible cultural heritage. Flexible learning environments, mentorship-based approaches, and community participation allow traditional knowledge to remain active, adaptable, and socially relevant.

Future development in this field may benefit from stronger integration between formal and non-formal systems, improved public support mechanisms, increased international exchange, and the use of innovative technologies that can expand accessibility and engagement. While each country reflects different historical and institutional realities, all demonstrate the continued importance of non-formal learning in sustaining Europe's living craft traditions.

3. Good Practices in Craft-Based Non-Formal Learning

The analysis of good practices in Belgium, Italy, Poland, and Georgia demonstrates the diversity and vitality of non-formal learning approaches in the field of traditional and heritage crafts. Although the organisational structures, funding mechanisms, and institutional frameworks differ significantly across countries, the identified practices reveal several shared characteristics: strong emphasis on hands-on learning, close interaction with experienced practitioners, integration of cultural heritage with contemporary needs, and increasing efforts to make heritage crafts accessible to wider audiences and younger generations.

These examples illustrate how non-formal education can effectively contribute to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage while simultaneously supporting professional development, cultural participation, social inclusion, and local economic development.

Practice-Based Learning and Direct Knowledge Transmission

A common feature across all identified good practices is the central role of experiential and practice-oriented learning. Heritage crafts are primarily transmitted through direct engagement with materials, tools, and skilled practitioners in authentic working environments.

In Belgium, institutions such as Museum of Old Techniques (MOT) in Grimbergen offer accessible workshops and multi-day training programmes in blacksmithing, woodworking, traditional construction techniques, and stone engraving. These initiatives focus on practical skill acquisition through short-term and flexible formats designed for adult learners. Similarly, the Centre de la Paix-Dieu and the Pôle de la Pierre in Wallonia combine technical instruction with practical restoration activities, creating learning environments closely connected to architectural heritage conservation.

Another notable Belgian example is Table Ronde de l'Architecture (TRA), which operates outside formal education systems and organises alternative learning formats such as summer schools. These programmes create important connections between architecture students, professionals, and skilled craftspeople, strengthening awareness of traditional building techniques often underrepresented in conventional architectural education.

Italy provides some of the most structured and advanced examples of craft-based non-formal learning. The Bottega Scuola model in Tuscany demonstrates how traditional workshop environments can function as accredited learning spaces integrated within regional vocational training systems. Learning takes place directly in the workplace through close interaction with master craftsmen, enabling highly personalised and practice-based training. The model successfully combines traditional one-to-one transmission methods with recognised professional standards and certification opportunities.

The Bottega Scuola system is aligned with the Regional Register of Professional Roles of Tuscany, strengthening the link between non-formal education and recognised vocational qualifications.

Other Italian initiatives, such as Tirocini a Bottega and Una Scuola un Lavoro. Percorsi di Eccellenza, further reinforced the relationship between education and professional practice by supporting long-term apprenticeships, internships, and mentorship programmes in artistic craftsmanship. These projects facilitate both skills transmission and employment opportunities for young practitioners.

SCHOLA, based in Florence, represents an innovative contemporary interpretation of craft education. By combining traditional craftsmanship with contemporary design, sustainability principles, and intensive practical training, SCHOLA demonstrates how non-formal learning can successfully adapt heritage crafts to modern creative industries and international audiences.

In Poland, good practices strongly emphasise regional identity and community participation. Kashubian embroidery workshops illustrate how traditional craft forms can remain vibrant through local cultural institutions, associations, and master craftswomen. The workshops preserve both technical skills and symbolic cultural meanings associated with regional heritage.

Similarly, the Master–Apprentice Scholarship Programme of the National Institute of Culture and Rural Heritage directly supports intergenerational transmission of endangered craft skills within local communities. The programme focuses particularly on preserving authentic folk art traditions and ensuring continuity of disappearing skills.

The WICI Association represents another important Polish example, focusing not only on skills transmission but also on raising public awareness about the cultural, artistic, and economic value of handmade production. Its activities connect traditional craftsmanship with creative entrepreneurship, design, and contemporary well-being practices.

In Georgia, good practices demonstrate a wide variety of organisational formats despite the overall fragmentation of the sector. Publicly supported initiatives such as the Summer School of the Open Air Museum and the Educational Mini-Gallery of Folk Crafts in Gori combine craft education with public engagement, tourism development, and awareness-raising activities.

Civil society organisations also play an especially important role in Georgia. The Heritage Resource Centre by ICOMOS Georgia provides specialised training in traditional building techniques, while the DVV International Georgia Adult Education Centres expand access to community-based vocational learning, including vulnerable groups.

Regional initiatives such as MOSAICA Studio in Zugdidi demonstrate innovative approaches combining craft training, creative tourism, entrepreneurship, and heritage-sensitive commercialisation. MOSAICA functions simultaneously as a learning centre, creative hub, tourism destination, and support platform for local craftspeople.

The emergence of private educational initiatives in Georgia, including White Studio, Estia Handmade Art, Kasta, and Kettari Academy, reflects a growing interest in professional craft education and creative industries. These initiatives combine traditional techniques with contemporary artistic practices and market-oriented approaches, contributing to the modernisation and diversification of the craft sector.

An especially important role is also played by the network of parish schools and courses operated by the Patriarchate of Georgia, which contributes significantly to the preservation of ecclesiastical and traditional craft techniques such as embroidery, enamel work, icon-making, and felt-making.

Flexibility and Accessibility of Learning Formats

Another major strength of the identified practices is their flexibility and accessibility. Most programmes are designed to accommodate diverse target groups, including young people, adults, beginners, career changers, professionals, and local communities.

Short-term workshops, intensive courses, apprenticeships, internships, summer schools, and modular training formats allow learners to participate according to their interests, availability, and skill levels. This flexibility makes non-formal learning particularly suitable for heritage crafts, where personalised learning processes and practical repetition are essential.

Several initiatives also demonstrate efforts to reduce barriers to participation. Public funding, scholarships, grants, and subsidised training opportunities contribute to broader accessibility, particularly in Belgium and Italy. In Poland and Georgia, many community-based and NGO-led activities provide affordable or free participation opportunities through donor support or local partnerships.

Integration of Tradition and Innovation

An important trend emerging from the analysed practices is the integration of traditional craftsmanship with contemporary innovation. While preserving historical techniques remains central, many initiatives actively connect heritage crafts with design, sustainability, tourism, entrepreneurship, and digital communication.

Italian examples such as SCHOLA and Tirocini a Bottega combine traditional manual skills with modern creative industries and innovation-oriented approaches. Georgia's MOSAICA Studio similarly integrates heritage preservation with tourism development and creative economy models.

These examples demonstrate that heritage crafts can remain economically and culturally relevant when connected to contemporary markets, creative practices, and new forms of cultural participation.

Importance of Master Craftsmen and Mentorship

All four countries highlight the irreplaceable role of master craftsmen and experienced practitioners in non-formal learning processes. Knowledge transfer is often deeply personal and based on long-term mentorship relationships. The master-apprentice model remains

one of the most effective mechanisms for transmitting tacit knowledge, technical precision, and cultural values associated with traditional crafts.

This intergenerational transmission model is particularly visible in Italy's Botteghe Scuola, Poland's scholarship programmes, and Georgia's workshop-based learning traditions.

Contribution to Cultural Heritage Safeguarding

The analysed good practices demonstrate that non-formal craft education contributes not only to skills development but also to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, community identity, and cultural continuity. Through active participation, learners become both carriers and future transmitters of traditional knowledge.

Many initiatives also contribute to broader social and economic objectives, including:

- strengthening local cultural identity;
- supporting creative entrepreneurship;
- promoting sustainable tourism;
- encouraging social inclusion;
- revitalising rural and regional communities;
- creating professional opportunities for young people.

Conclusion

The good practices identified in Belgium, Italy, Poland, and Georgia demonstrate the significant potential of non-formal learning in preserving and revitalising heritage crafts. Despite differing institutional contexts, the most successful initiatives share several key characteristics: strong practical orientation, close mentorship relationships, flexibility, community engagement, and the ability to connect tradition with contemporary cultural and economic realities.

At the same time, the examples reveal the importance of long-term support mechanisms, professional recognition, sustainable funding, and stronger cooperation between cultural institutions, educational providers, public authorities, and craft communities. Expanding such practices and encouraging international exchange could further strengthen the role of non-formal learning in safeguarding Europe's tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

4. Articulation Between Non-Formal and Formal Education

The relationship between formal and non-formal education in the heritage craft sector is often presented as a distinction between two separate learning systems. However, the comparative analysis conducted within the BRICKS project suggests a more nuanced reality. Across Belgium, Italy, Poland, and Georgia, non-formal education is neither entirely independent from formal education nor merely a substitute for it. Instead, the two systems frequently interact and complement one another, while non-formal education also plays an important gap-filling role where formal provision is limited or absent.

Formal education generally provides structured learning pathways, recognised qualifications, and theoretical foundations. In the heritage craft sector, these pathways may include vocational schools, technical institutes, higher education programmes, and specialised training centres. Formal education can also provide broader professional competences and create recognised progression routes within national qualification systems. Several examples identified through the research, particularly in Belgium and Italy, demonstrate efforts to combine theoretical instruction with practical experience through placements, apprenticeships, and collaborations between educational institutions and professional environments.

Non-formal education, by contrast, is characterised by its flexibility, responsiveness, and close connection to professional practice. Learning often takes place in workshops, craft businesses, museums, heritage organisations, community initiatives, and training centres. These environments allow learners to acquire practical skills through observation, repetition, experimentation, and direct interaction with materials, tools, and experienced practitioners. Such forms of learning are particularly important in heritage crafts, where tacit knowledge and manual expertise are often difficult to transmit through classroom-based approaches alone.

Across all four countries, the research demonstrates that non-formal education plays a complementary role by providing learning opportunities that formal education cannot always offer. In Belgium, cooperation between institutions such as AWaP, IFAPME, EFP, FOREM, and universities illustrates how theoretical and practical dimensions can be combined. Training programmes often involve multiple actors, with practical learning

delivered by sector specialists and certification provided through recognised educational institutions. Similarly, advanced programmes in heritage conservation and restoration combine academic instruction with practical expertise provided by craft professionals.

Italy presents perhaps the most developed examples of articulation between the two systems. Formal pathways, including vocational schools, academies, and Higher Technology Institutes (ITS Academies), increasingly integrate practical placements within businesses and workshops. Internships, school-work training programmes, and collaborations between educational institutions and master craftspeople create opportunities for learners to move between classroom learning and real production environments. These arrangements recognise that professional competence in artistic and heritage crafts requires both theoretical understanding and practical experience.

At the same time, the research reveals that non-formal education often fulfills a gap-filling function. In Poland, many traditional crafts are not covered by dedicated formal educational pathways, particularly in smaller communities and less common craft specialisations. As a result, workshops, museums, cultural centres, associations, and community initiatives frequently become the primary means through which knowledge is transmitted. For many learners interested in traditional crafts, non-formal education represents the only accessible pathway into the profession.

A similar situation can be observed in Georgia. Although vocational education reforms have strengthened formal training opportunities and introduced mechanisms for the recognition of non-formal learning, many craft fields continue to rely heavily on workshops, community-based initiatives, and master-apprentice relationships. Non-formal education often provides access to traditional techniques and practical experience that remain insufficiently represented within formal curricula. While mechanisms for validating non-formal learning outcomes exist, their practical use remains limited due to low awareness, administrative barriers, and the small number of authorised institutions able to conduct assessments.

The analysis also highlights an important distinction between recognition and integration. In several countries, mechanisms exist to validate competences acquired through non-formal learning and connect them to qualification frameworks. However, the existence of validation systems does not necessarily imply strong integration between formal and non-formal

education. In practice, cooperation often depends on individual institutions, local partnerships, or project-based initiatives rather than systematic policy arrangements.

Overall, the evidence gathered through BRICKS suggests that the relationship between formal and non-formal education should not be understood as a competition between two alternative models. Rather, they fulfil distinct but complementary functions within heritage craft education. Formal education contributes structure, qualifications, and broader professional competences, while non-formal education enables the transmission of practical skills, tacit knowledge, and craft-specific expertise. The strongest examples identified across the four countries are those where bridges exist between the two systems, allowing learners to move between theoretical learning and hands-on practice.

At the same time, the persistence of sectors and specialisations that rely almost exclusively on non-formal learning demonstrates that important gaps remain within formal provision. Strengthening cooperation between educational institutions, craft organisations, heritage bodies, and practitioners therefore represents a key opportunity for improving skills transmission and ensuring the long-term sustainability of heritage crafts across Europe.

5. Governance of Craft Education Policies

Governance of non-formal craft education policies varies widely across Europe and neighbouring regions, shaped by different administrative traditions, levels of decentralisation, and the degree to which crafts are recognised as part of cultural, educational, or economic policy. A comparison of Poland, Belgium, Italy, and Georgia reveals four distinct governance models, ranging from relatively coordinated multi-level systems to fragmented or weakly institutionalised approaches.

Poland represents a moderately centralised model with structured multi-level governance. At the national level, a central role is played by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, which frames craft education primarily within cultural heritage policy. Through programmes such as the Culture Programme and Intangible Heritage initiatives, the state funds non-formal education activities including workshops, training schemes, and intergenerational knowledge transfer. These programmes aim not only to safeguard traditional crafts but also to adapt them to contemporary socio-economic conditions, highlighting a dual focus on preservation and innovation.

A distinctive feature of Poland's governance model is the integration of craft education with economic and institutional development. The Polish Craft Incubator programme supports craft organisations by strengthening their human and social capital, as well as their institutional capacity. This reflects a broader policy orientation in which non-formal craft education is linked to entrepreneurship, labour market participation, and dual education systems. As a result, governance at the state level is relatively coherent, with clear objectives and funding mechanisms.

At the regional level, Poland's voivodeships play a significant role in implementation. Regional governments and cultural institutions design and deliver programmes tailored to local craft traditions, often supported by funding instruments such as the Rural Development Programme. These initiatives include grants for workshops, training activities, and scholarships for craftspeople. This decentralised implementation allows for responsiveness to local cultural contexts, particularly in rural areas where traditional crafts remain embedded in community life. Overall, Poland's system can be described as centrally guided but regionally executed, balancing national priorities with local adaptation.

Belgium, by contrast, exemplifies a highly decentralised and fragmented governance model. There are no federal policies specifically dedicated to non-formal craft education, as responsibility for education and training lies with regions and language communities. This results in significant variation between Flanders, Wallonia, and the Brussels-Capital Region.

In Flanders, governance is indirect and integrated into broader frameworks for vocational training, adult education, and cultural heritage. Instruments such as the Flemish Qualification Framework (FQF) and systems for Validation of Acquired Competences provide mechanisms for recognising skills gained through non-formal learning. While these tools are important for craft education, they are not specifically designed for traditional or heritage crafts. Instead, craft-related learning is embedded within general lifelong learning and heritage policies, including decrees supporting the safeguarding and valorisation of cultural heritage.

Wallonia offers a more targeted approach through specialised heritage institutions. The Agence Wallonne du Patrimoine (AWAP) is a key actor, delivering non-formal training programmes in heritage crafts, particularly in architecture and restoration. These programmes are organised through dedicated centres such as Paix-Dieu and the Pôle de la Pierre and are supported by public funding. This creates a more structured and visible governance framework for craft education compared to Flanders.

Belgium also relies on intermediary coordination bodies, such as the Office francophone de la formation en alternance (OFFA) and the Service francophone des Métiers et des Qualifications (SFMQ), which help align training provision with labour market needs. These organisations define competence profiles and oversee alternating training systems, indirectly shaping non-formal craft education. However, the overall system remains fragmented, with no integrated policy framework specifically addressing crafts. In the Brussels-Capital Region, governance is further complicated by the coexistence of multiple language communities, leading to overlapping responsibilities and coordination challenges.

Italy presents a multi-layered governance model of craft education, based on a mixed system where formal, non-formal, and work-based learning coexist. Training pathways include artistic high schools and vocational institutes (“Made in Italy” streams), ITS Academies, and a dense network of regional workshop-schools, private academies, and foundations offering apprenticeships and specialised programmes.

Responsibilities are distributed across levels: the national government (Ministry of Education and Merit) oversees formal education, while Regions manage vocational training, apprenticeships, and non-formal learning, often extending to local authorities. Additional coordination occurs through inter-ministerial frameworks involving labour, culture, and enterprise policies, reflecting the cross-sectoral nature of the craft sector.

A key feature of the system is the role of practice-based training environments, particularly workshop schools recognised at regional level, where certified “Master Artisans” transmit skills directly through hands-on experience. This is complemented by foundations and private institutions offering scholarships and high-level training, as well as apprenticeships, which combine formal frameworks with workplace learning. A specific and highly structured model exists in the restoration sector, where distinct professional roles and regulated training pathways link higher education institutions, academies, and vocational centres.

Overall, Italy’s governance can be described as a functionally differentiated and territorially articulated system, combining strong local relevance and diverse training offers. However, the multiplicity of actors and levels of responsibility can create challenges in coordination, visibility, and consistency, particularly for non-formal education pathways.

Georgia represents a fourth model, characterised by limited institutionalisation and weak governance structures in the field of non-formal craft education. Unlike Poland or Belgium, Georgia lacks a comprehensive policy framework or dedicated institutions for this sector. Research and monitoring activities are scarce and unsystematic, with no national system for data collection or evaluation.

Most available information on craft education in Georgia comes from project-based studies, such as those conducted by sectoral organisations or international initiatives, including analyses supported by the European Training Foundation. While these studies provide valuable insights, they do not constitute a continuous or systematic evidence base. Consequently, policymaking in this area is not fully data-driven, and there is limited capacity to assess skills gaps or labour market needs.

The absence of structured monitoring and evaluation mechanisms has significant implications for governance. Without reliable data, it is difficult to design effective policies, allocate resources efficiently, or measure the impact of existing initiatives. This contributes

to a cycle of low visibility and limited investment in non-formal craft education. Strengthening research and monitoring systems would therefore be a critical step toward improving governance in Georgia, enabling more strategic and sustainable development of the sector.



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6. Research and Monitoring of Skills Transmission in the Craft Sector

Research and monitoring initiatives focusing on non-formal learning and the transmission of skills in the craft sector are present across several European contexts, although they remain uneven in structure, scope, and continuity. The available evidence shows that while traditional and heritage crafts rely heavily on informal and non-formal learning processes—such as apprenticeships, workshops, and intergenerational transmission—the systems used to study, document, and evaluate these processes are often fragmented. Nevertheless, a range of studies, statistical sources, and evaluation initiatives provide valuable insights into how craft knowledge is preserved and transmitted.

In **Belgium**, the governance of education and training is decentralised, which leads to distinct approaches in Wallonia and Flanders. In Wallonia, non-formal learning is closely associated with youth development and civic engagement. Research and monitoring initiatives therefore tend to focus on the social and educational impact of participation in youth organisations, rather than specifically on craft skills. The government supports training for youth workers and provides infrastructure for non-formal activities, which indirectly contributes to the transmission of practical and creative skills. However, there is limited systematic monitoring specifically dedicated to the craft sector, and data tends to capture participation in activities rather than detailed outcomes in terms of skills transfer.

In contrast, Flanders has developed a more structured approach to recognising and monitoring non-formal learning. The system of Validation des Acquis de Compétences (VAC) plays a central role in this regard. It provides a framework for identifying, documenting, assessing, and certifying skills acquired outside formal education, including those developed in craft-related activities. This system constitutes a concrete evaluation initiative, as it translates non-formal and informal learning into recognised qualifications that can be used in the labour market. It also contributes indirectly to monitoring, as it generates data on the number of individuals undergoing validation processes and the types of skills being assessed. While not specific to the craft sector, VAC is a significant example of how non-formal learning outcomes can be measured and integrated into broader policy frameworks.

In **Italy**, research and monitoring initiatives are more diversified, although they lack a single coordinated national system. A key reference point is the framework of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which places strong emphasis on the transmission of knowledge as a core element of heritage preservation. Within this framework, traditional craftsmanship is recognised as a major domain of intangible heritage, and numerous Italian cases document how skills are transmitted through non-formal means. These include master–apprentice relationships, family-based learning, workshop practice, and community-based teaching. For instance, in the case of traditional Cremonese violin-making, knowledge is transmitted not only through specialised schools but also through direct, long-term relationships between masters and apprentices in workshops. Similarly, traditional bell-ringing practices rely on informal learning within families and associations, demonstrating how non-formal education remains central to sustaining heritage crafts.

Beyond the UNESCO framework, several organisations in Italy contribute to research and monitoring activities. Associations such as Confartigianato, CNA, and Unioncamere regularly conduct studies on the craft sector, focusing on issues such as generational renewal, vocational training, and the preservation of traditional skills. Although their primary focus is often economic and employment-related, these studies provide important data on the difficulties of transmitting skills to younger generations and the risk of losing specialised know-how. This constitutes an indirect but valuable form of monitoring. In addition, regional registers of Master Artisan and “Botteghe Scuola” (training workshops), such as those available in Tuscany, offer concrete tools for mapping and documenting centres of knowledge transmission. These registers allow for the identification and geolocation of workshops where traditional skills are actively taught, providing a basis for both research and policy intervention.

Academic research also plays an important role in **Italy**, with universities and study centres investigating topics such as intangible cultural heritage, informal education, and tacit knowledge. These studies often adopt qualitative and ethnographic methods, analysing how skills are transmitted through observation, imitation, and participation. However, monitoring non-formal learning remains challenging, as many activities are unstructured and not systematically recorded.

In **Poland**, the development of research and monitoring initiatives in the field of non-formal learning and craft skills transmission has gained momentum in recent years. The Central Statistical Office (GUS) provides an important data source, defining non-formal education as organised learning activities outside formal education systems. Its surveys indicate that participation in non-formal learning is significant, with around one in five adults (aged 18–69) taking part in such activities. While these data are not specific to crafts, they establish a broader context in which craft-related training can be situated.

More targeted research is conducted through regional and thematic studies focusing on traditional crafts. These initiatives often document techniques that are still transmitted through workshops, courses, and apprenticeships. In some cases, the research goes beyond documentation and contributes to the development of educational materials designed to support non-formal learning. Museums also play a key role in monitoring, particularly through ethnographic departments that analyse how craftspeople transfer their skills to younger generations, how workshops are structured, and how demand for traditional crafts is evolving. These monitoring activities are typically qualitative, relying on observation, interviews, and case studies.

Academic research in **Poland**, including doctoral studies, further explores the educational processes involved in craft training. These studies examine the role of master craftsmen, the structure of workshop-based learning, and the importance of tradition in shaping educational practices. Additionally, ethnographic research documents local systems of knowledge transmission, often focusing on communities of practice and tacit knowledge. The Polish Chamber of Crafts contributes to monitoring by analysing labour market demand and assessing changes in skill transmission. Finally, the Integrated Qualifications Register (ZRK) provides a formal structure for recognising qualifications, including those related to crafts, thereby linking non-formal and informal learning to national frameworks.

In **Georgia**, research and monitoring of skills transmission in the craft sector remain limited and largely unsystematic. There is no national monitoring system dedicated to the crafts sector's non-formal education or craft skills, and no regular data collection on participation, outcomes, or labour market integration. As a result, policymaking in this area is not strongly evidence-based, and it is difficult to assess skills gaps or training needs in a comprehensive way.

The available information in Georgia is mainly derived from project-based studies and international initiatives. These include research conducted within specific programmes or collaborations with international organisations, which provide valuable but isolated insights into how skills are transmitted in the craft sector. While these studies often explore non-formal learning practices and highlight the importance of traditional knowledge, they do not constitute a continuous or coordinated evidence base. Consequently, there is a lack of consistent indicators and evaluation mechanisms, which limits the ability to design targeted interventions or to monitor their effectiveness over time.

Conclusion

Overall, research and monitoring initiatives on non-formal learning and skills transmission in the craft sector do exist, but they are characterised by fragmentation and uneven development across countries. Belgium illustrates how non-formal learning can be recognised and evaluated through validation systems, although not always specifically targeted at crafts. Italy offers a rich combination of heritage-based documentation, sectoral studies, and regional mapping tools, providing valuable insights despite the absence of a unified system. Poland demonstrates a growing integration of statistical data, ethnographic research, and institutional monitoring, reflecting increasing attention to the topic. In contrast, Georgia highlights the challenges faced in contexts where monitoring systems are still underdeveloped and rely largely on external initiatives.

These examples show that while significant efforts are being made to study and evaluate skills transmission in the craft sector, there is a clear need for more coordinated, systematic, and data-driven approaches. Strengthening monitoring mechanisms, improving the recognition of non-formal learning, and integrating qualitative and quantitative data will be essential to ensure the sustainability of traditional and heritage crafts in the future.



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General Survey Highlights

Introduction

As underlined in the sections above, the BRICKS project is conceived as a transnational partnership aimed at strengthening non-formal craft education as a strategic lever for skills development, cultural transmission, and sustainable innovation. Within this framework, the project addresses a key challenge: how to better understand, support, and enhance the ways in which craft knowledge is currently transmitted outside formal education systems, and how this contributes to key priorities such as employability, sustainability of the craft skills, and the preservation of cultural heritage.

In this context, the survey was developed as a core research tool to map the current landscape of non-formal craft education across partner countries. It forms part of a broader evidence-based approach combining field research (case studies and workshop visits) with quantitative and qualitative data collection. While in-depth case studies provide detailed insights into specific practices, the survey enables a wider and more comparable overview, capturing a broad diversity of actors, learning pathways, and organisational models.

The questionnaire was jointly designed and agreed upon among all project partners, ensuring a shared analytical framework while allowing adaptation to different national contexts. It includes both closed questions (for quantitative analysis) and open-ended questions (to gather qualitative insights and testimonies), and was translated and disseminated through partners' networks. Closed questions include single and multiple choices due to the nature of the courses that can be implemented for a wide variety of audience, different targets and stakeholders, even from the same provider. Throughout the report, references to individual questions are indicated as "Q n.", with the full questionnaire available in the annex.

From a methodological perspective, Artex coordinated the data collection process, supported by all partners, resulting in 117 completed questionnaires. Approximately 80% of responses were provided by organisations (artisans, training providers, workshops, educators) and 20% by learners, ensuring a dual perspective on both the supply and demand sides of non-formal craft education. Data were collected during 2025, offering a recent and representative snapshot of the sector.

The survey aims not only to describe existing practices, but to build a structured and shared knowledge base, identifying recurring patterns, strengths, and critical gaps. In this sense, it acts as a bridge between research and action, informing the development of tools, capacity-building initiatives, and policy reflections within the BRICKS project. By doing so, it contributes to repositioning non-formal craft education as a relevant and strategic domain, capable of supporting economic resilience, social inclusion, and cultural continuity.

Key Trends

The survey highlights several consistent trends shaping the current landscape of non-formal craft education.

A first key element is its hybrid nature, combining professional and personal motivations. While many participants engage in training to upgrade skills, change career paths, or develop entrepreneurial activities, a similarly significant share participates for personal fulfilment, creativity, and well-being. These motivations often overlap, resulting in flexible and evolving learning trajectories.

A second defining feature is the strong practical orientation of training. The vast majority of programmes prioritise hands-on learning, with knowledge transmitted through practice, observation, and mentorship. This reinforces the importance of tacit knowledge and experiential learning, positioning non-formal education as a complementary system to formal training, particularly in skill-based sectors.

The survey also confirms a strong link with cultural heritage and material-based practices, particularly in areas such as ceramics, textiles, woodworking, restoration, and decorative crafts. At the same time, there is a gradual integration of transversal skills—including design, communication, and digital tools—although this remains uneven across organisations.

From an economic perspective, the sector operates within a dual system of access, combining free or publicly funded opportunities with high-cost specialised programmes. This creates both opportunities for inclusion and barriers linked to financial capacity.

Finally, the results point to a fragmented system of assessment and certification, where training outcomes are often strong but not formally recognised, limiting the transferability of competences in professional contexts.

Needs expressed by learners

Learners consistently emphasise the need for greater accessibility, particularly through financial support mechanisms such as scholarships, subsidies, or publicly funded programmes. For many, especially those undergoing career transitions, access to training depends directly on affordability.

A second key need is the recognition of acquired skills. While certification is not always the initial motivation, it is considered important for professional development, employability, and business creation. The absence of recognised systems of validation is therefore perceived as a limitation.

Learners also express a strong demand for continuity in training pathways, including opportunities for advanced courses, apprenticeships, and mentoring relationships. Craft learning is widely understood as a long-term and progressive process, rather than a one-off experience.

At the same time, the importance of quality learning environments is clearly highlighted. Access to skilled practitioners, appropriate tools, and authentic workshop settings is seen as essential for effective learning.

Needs expressed by artisans, educators and organisations

From the perspective of training providers, the needs are both operational and structural.

A primary need is the strengthening of collaboration networks among craftspeople, considered essential for knowledge exchange, diversification of skills, and innovation. The relational dimension of the sector is therefore seen as a key driver of quality.

Another major requirement concerns access to tools and equipment, both traditional and modern. These are necessary to ensure the effectiveness of practice-based training, particularly in environments with limited resources.

Financial sustainability also emerges as a critical issue, affecting the ability to maintain training activities, invest in infrastructure, and ensure accessibility for learners.

Moreover, organisations report a strong need for improved systems of recognition, particularly regarding non-formal certification, which currently lacks consistency and formal validation.

Finally, there is a clear demand for stronger links with the labour market, including internships, partnerships with enterprises, and clearer pathways from training to professional opportunities.

Barriers and expectations

The survey identifies several structural barriers that limit the development and sustainability of non-formal craft education.

The most significant is financial fragility, affecting both organisations and learners. Limited funding restricts access, reduces training capacity, and hinders long-term sustainability.

A second major barrier is the lack of formal recognition of skills, which reduces the visibility and value of training outcomes in professional contexts.

The sector also faces challenges in attracting younger generations, often due to perceptions of crafts as economically unstable or lacking career prospects. This is linked to broader issues of cultural perception and awareness.

In addition, the survey highlights limited systemic collaboration, particularly with larger enterprises and institutional actors, leading to a lack of structured pathways between training, employment, and innovation.

Despite these barriers, expectations expressed by both learners and organisations are strong and aligned. There is a clear demand for:

- recognition and validation of non-formal competences,
- stronger networks and collaborative ecosystems,
- and better integration with the labour market.

More broadly, stakeholders express a shared ambition to reposition craft education as a contemporary and strategic field, capable of addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges.

Overall, the survey confirms that non-formal craft education represents a dynamic but structurally fragile ecosystem, characterised by high engagement, strong cultural value, and diverse learning pathways. At the same time, it requires targeted support, recognition, and strategic development to fully realise its potential as a driver of skills, employment, and sustainable transformation.



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General Conclusions

Comparing Belgium, Georgia, Italy and Poland highlights different approaches to centralisation and decentralisation in the governance of non-formal craft education. Poland demonstrates a relatively balanced model, combining central strategic direction with regional implementation and local adaptation. Belgium represents a highly decentralised system with strong regional autonomy but significant fragmentation and limited policy integration. Italy shows how decentralisation without coordination can hinder policy development, particularly in the absence of research and monitoring. Georgia, meanwhile, illustrates the challenges of weak institutionalisation, where governance structures are underdeveloped and lack the data necessary for informed decision-making.

These differences suggest that effective governance of non-formal craft education requires not only an appropriate balance between centralisation and decentralisation but also strong coordination mechanisms and a robust evidence base. Countries with clearer strategic frameworks and integrated policies, such as Poland, are better positioned to align cultural, educational, and economic objectives. In contrast, systems characterised by fragmentation or limited data, such as Belgium, Italy, and Georgia, face challenges in ensuring coherence, visibility, and long-term sustainability.

Ultimately, the comparison underscores the importance of recognising non-formal craft education as a distinct policy area. Whether through centralised programmes, coordinated regional frameworks, or improved research and monitoring, strengthening governance in this field is essential for preserving cultural heritage, supporting economic development, and fostering skills transmission across generations.

Policy Recommendations (MIE all review)

The BRICKS project highlights the important contribution of non-formal education to the transmission of heritage craft skills across Europe. The comparative analysis demonstrates that non-formal education is recognised across all countries examined and forms an established component of lifelong learning systems. However, important challenges remain regarding the visibility of heritage craft learning, the accessibility of validation and certification mechanisms, the sustainability of training provision, and the coordination of policies and support measures. The following recommendations aim to strengthen the contribution of non-formal education to the transmission of heritage craft skills and to support more coherent and accessible learning pathways across Europe.

1. Recognition and certification

Challenge

Although skills acquired through non-formal learning are increasingly recognised within national qualifications frameworks, validation procedures remain uneven, difficult to access, or insufficiently adapted to the realities of heritage crafts.

Recommendation

Strengthen the recognition of non-formal craft learning through accessible validation mechanisms, recognition of prior learning, and flexible certification pathways. Particular attention should be given to the development of modular and practice-based certification systems, including micro-credentials adapted to hands-on learning and aligned with national and European qualifications frameworks.

Expected impact

Improved visibility and legitimacy of non-formal learning pathways, enhanced mobility of learners and professionals, and greater recognition of competences acquired through workshops, apprenticeships, and community-based learning.

2. Funding and accessibility

Challenge

Many non-formal learning initiatives depend on short-term project funding or limited regional support. Financial barriers can restrict participation, particularly for young people, career changers, self-employed craftspeople, and rural communities.

Recommendation

Develop sustainable funding mechanisms that support both learners and training providers. These may include grants, vouchers, scholarships, mobility schemes, support for workshop-based training, and incentives for master craftspeople involved in skills transmission.

Expected impact

Increased participation in non-formal learning, improved access to training opportunities, and greater long-term sustainability of educational initiatives.

3. Training Quality and Skills Transmission

Challenge

Many craftspeople possess extensive technical expertise but have limited opportunities to develop pedagogical competences. At the same time, practical learning environments such as workshops, museums, heritage sites, and craft centres remain insufficiently recognised as educational spaces.

Recommendation

Strengthen support for craftspeople acting as educators by providing pedagogical training, peer-learning opportunities, and professional development activities. Public authorities and educational institutions should also recognise and support workshops, heritage sites,

museums, and community-based organisations as key environments for learning and skills transmission.

Expected impact

Improved quality of training provision, stronger intergenerational transfer of knowledge, and enhanced capacity among crafts educators.

4. Awareness and attractiveness of craft careers

Challenge

Traditional and heritage crafts continue to face recruitment difficulties, ageing workforces, and limited visibility among younger generations. Non-formal learning opportunities are often poorly known outside specialist networks.

Recommendation

Develop communication and awareness-raising initiatives that promote the diversity, creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainability of contemporary craft careers. Career guidance systems should provide clearer information about craft professions and available learning pathways. Greater visibility should also be given to non-formal training opportunities at local, national, and European levels.

Expected impact

Improved attractiveness of craft professions, increased participation in training opportunities, and stronger renewal of the craft workforce.

5. Governance, coordination and evidence-based policy

Challenge

Responsibilities for non-formal craft education are often fragmented across education, culture, heritage, employment, and regional development policies. In addition, limited data

is available regarding participation, learning outcomes, and skills transmission in the craft sector.

Recommendation

Strengthen coordination between public authorities, educational institutions, heritage organisations, craft associations, and local stakeholders. Develop national and European mechanisms for mapping training opportunities, monitoring participation and outcomes, and collecting data on skills needs and transmission challenges.

Expected impact

More coherent policy development, improved evidence-based decision-making, and stronger integration of heritage crafts within lifelong learning and skills strategies and mobility opportunities .

Concluding Recommendation

Across all countries studied, the most successful initiatives are those that build bridges between formal and non-formal education, connect learners with experienced practitioners, and combine practical training with recognised learning outcomes. Future policies should therefore prioritise collaboration between educational institutions, craft organisations, heritage actors, and public authorities in order to create accessible, visible, and sustainable pathways for the transmission of heritage craft skills across Europe.



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Glossary

Craftsmanship / Handicraft

Manual production of objects using specific skills, tools, and techniques, typically carried out in small workshops or by independent craftspeople. It may include contemporary or traditional practices.

Traditional Craftsmanship

A broad term encompassing traditional, artistic, and heritage-based practices, including fine arts, applied arts, folk art, and regionally specific craft techniques.

Heritage Craft (HC)

Craft activities and techniques that hold cultural, historical, or regional significance and contribute to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage.

Traditional Craft (TC)

Craft practices rooted in long-standing techniques, materials, or regional identities. Often transmitted through intergenerational learning.

Non-formal Education (NFE)

According to the research of the BRICKS project, non-formal education in heritage crafts refers to “community-based, hands-on learning outside formal systems, where adults gain skills through mentorship and intergenerational exchange. It plays a key role in preserving craft traditions, promoting inclusion, and supporting regional development”. For more definitions, click [here](#).

Certification

Any process that validates or recognises the skills, knowledge, or competences acquired through formal, non-formal, or informal learning.

Competence

A combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to perform specific craft tasks or professional activities.

Learning Outcomes

Statements describing what a learner is expected to know, understand, and be able to do after completing a learning activity or training process.

Annexes

I. Detailed national reports

Belgium

1. Legal and Policy Frameworks for Non-Formal Education

Question : Which legal, policy or administrative documents define non-formal education? Have they been adopted at national, regional or local level?

Definitions and approaches:

- **National level (Statbel):** The Belgian statistical office, Statbel, clearly distinguishes formal education from non-formal training. Formal education is defined as "education recognised by the Ministry of Education, generally leading to a diploma or certificate." Non-formal training encompasses "all other courses, private courses and workplace training, including short training courses." This definition, although statistical, is important because it serves as a basis for data and analyses.
- **Influence of the European definition:** The EU definition is often used in Belgium: non-formal and informal education and training complement formal education and training, and their value, particularly for the acquisition of skills by young people, must be recognised. This definition emphasises complementarity and the recognition of acquired skills.
- **Common characteristics:** There is convergence around the following characteristics: a framework and objectives, but without sanction by a formal diploma; learning methods based on active participation, sharing and voluntary engagement.

Political and administrative documents (regional level - Wallonia-Brussels Federation):

- **Policy statement of the Government of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation 2014-2019:** Although it does not provide a formal definition, this statement highlights the importance of non-formal education for the emancipation and citizenship of young people. It emphasises support for youth organisations, the International Youth Bureau (BIJ), the valorisation of animator training and access to infrastructure. This is therefore a political document that recognises and supports non-formal education.
- **Studies of the Observatory of Childhood, Youth and Youth Assistance (OEJAJ):** The research of the OEJAJ, in particular the study on child and youth policies (1999-2020), highlights the role of youth organisations, important actors in non-formal education. These studies contribute to the recognition and understanding of this type of education.

Objectives and strategies (regional level - Flanders):

- **SDG 4 in Flanders:** The integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into Flemish policy, with a quantified objective of increasing adult participation in formal and non-formal education, demonstrates recognition and a desire to develop this sector.
- **Policy framework for Validation of Acquired Competencies (VAC) at an approved validation body:** The Flemish government defines a **professional qualification** as an official description of what you must know and be able to do in order to practise a profession. It is possible to obtain such a professional qualification through an educational programme (in Dutch) or a vocational qualification programme (in Dutch) that consists of a vocational training programme or a validation programme. It exists as a common [framework](#) for the validation of acquired competencies (VAC). The validation of acquired competencies takes place in a validation programme that consists of four steps:
 - Step 1: identifying = naming competencies,
 - Step 2: documenting = mapping out competencies,
 - Step 3: assessing = having competencies assessed,
 - Step 4: certifying = getting competencies certified.
- **Flemish Qualification Framework (FQF):** The Flemish Government recognises professional and educational qualifications, they have a [database](#) (in Dutch). An **educational qualification** reflects what you need to know and be able to do in order to embark upon further studies, function in our society or practice a particular profession. You can look in the database for wood ("hout") and have a list of the professional qualifications needed for that [job](#).
- The Flemish government also [proposes](#) a **vocational qualification pathway** that leads the person to prove their professional qualifications, partial qualifications or competences. A vocational qualification path is based on a professional qualification. This describes what you need to know and be able to do in order to practice a profession. For example, there are professional qualifications for forklift driver, hairdresser, baker, refrigeration technician, etc.

Some data

According to a study conducted by STATBEL about non formal education 34.3% of people aged between 18 and 69 are taking non-formal training (outside regular education). 'To do their job better' is the most frequently cited reason for taking training (63.4%). (source : <https://statbel.fgov.be/fr/themes/emploi-formation/formation-et-enseignement/education-des-adultes#news>)

2. Non-Formal Learning Pathways and Support Instruments in Heritage Crafts

Question : What non-formal education pathways exist in your country for transmitting traditional and heritage craft skills, and are there legally established subsidies or support mechanisms for these training systems?

Wallonia: Structured training and support for heritage crafts

- **AWAP (Agence Wallonne du Patrimoine)** is dedicated to preserving and passing on Walloon heritage through thematic and diploma-based training programs. These courses, tailored to different skill levels, may be partially or fully subsidised depending on the participant's status. For instance, employees or self-employed individuals must pay the full price, while job seekers benefit from reduced fees, and European project participants may have their costs covered entirely.
- **Centre de la Paix-Dieu & Pôle de la Pierre** provide high-quality training in architectural heritage crafts, including stonework, carpentry, and traditional restoration techniques. These institutions offer school activities, international training opportunities, and courses for adults, ensuring the transmission of artisanal expertise by experienced professionals.
- **SIEP (Service d'Information sur les Études et les Professions)** runs circuit academies offering year-round training for various audiences. Through their online platform, individuals can search for craft-focused courses in leatherworking, textiles, metalwork, stone carving, glassmaking, ceramics, and more. SIEP collaborates with institutions such as **CEFA** (Centres d'Éducation et de Formation en Alternance), **IFAPME** (Walloon Institute for Alternance Training), and **social promotion schools**, where graduates earn recognised certificates specific to social promotion education (EPS).
- **The Round Table of Architecture (TRA)** operates outside formal education systems, focusing on traditional architectural craftsmanship and heritage conservation. It raises political awareness regarding urban planning and sustainability while also offering direct training, such as its Summer School of Architecture, which prioritises hands-on learning and immersive experiences.

Flanders: hands-on learning and heritage craft preservation

- **Museum of Old Techniques (MOT)** in Grimbergen, supported by the Flemish government and the Brabant Flamand, plays a key role in non-formal education for technical and heritage crafts. Through its "Does" (How-To) workshops, adults can participate in introductory sessions on woodwork, blacksmithing, stone engraving, and wattle and daub construction. Multi-day courses allow learners to engage in deeper skill development under expert guidance.
- **Brabant Flamand** actively funds non-formal education initiatives for adults, including MOT programs, ensuring accessibility to practical, hands-on training in traditional techniques.

Support instruments for traditional craft education

While direct subsidies established by law for heritage crafts are limited, various financial aid mechanisms exist to facilitate access to training:

- **Subsidised programs through European projects** cover tuition costs for participants engaged in heritage-related training.
- **Reduced fees for job seekers** encourage career shifts into heritage crafts.
- **Sector-specific funding** from regional governments ensures that traditional skills are

preserved and transmitted to future generations.

3. Good Practices in Craft-Based Non-Formal Learning

Question : cite and describe good practices or examples of non-formal learning experiences in the traditional and heritage crafts sector that exist in your country? Are they active for specific crafts such as textiles, wood, ceramics?

In the Flemish region, the [Museum of Old Techniques \(MOT\)](#) in Grimbergen, funded by the Flemish government and Brabant Flamand, offers various non-formal learning experiences in traditional crafts. Through its "Does" (How-To) workshops, held twice a month from June to September, adults can participate in hands-on sessions covering diverse technical subjects. Multi-day courses provide deeper training in crafts such as bread oven construction, wattle and daub timber framing, stone engraving, and blacksmithing, guided by both MOT staff and specialist teachers.

In Wallonia, the Centre de la Paix-Dieu and Pôle de la Pierre focus on preserving and transmitting skills in architectural heritage, offering hands-on training by experienced professionals. They provide courses for both adults and students, including international training opportunities. Additionally, the Table Ronde de l'Architecture (TRA) promotes traditional architectural and artisanal knowledge outside academic frameworks, emphasising sustainability and urban beauty.

These initiatives ensure the continued transmission of traditional skills in wood, stone, and metalworking through non-formal education.

4. Articulation Between Non-Formal and Formal Education

Question : Referring to the examples of non-formal education practices listed in the previous point, say if they complement formal education pathways? Or if they exist because there are no formal education pathways in the sector?

Non-formal education plays a key role in passing on craft skills and heritage trades, complementing the teaching provided in formal education. While schools and universities provide an essential theoretical foundation, they are sometimes far removed from the realities of the field. Conversely, non-formal training courses, such as those offered by AWAP, the Table Ronde de l'Architecture or SIEP, favour a practical, professionalising approach, often involving immersion with craftspeople and experts in the sector.

One of the major advantages of non-formal education is its flexibility and accessibility. Unlike

traditional school courses, it can be adapted to the needs of a wide range of people: students, adults undergoing retraining, the self-employed and jobseekers. Thanks to short, specialised courses, these learners can acquire targeted skills that are directly applicable to the job market. What's more, some courses benefit from financial aid, making apprenticeships accessible to a larger number of people.

Finally, non-formal education plays an essential role in preserving and passing on traditional skills. Art and heritage professions require specific techniques that are not always covered in traditional academic education. By ensuring that these skills are learned and adapted to meet today's challenges, non-formal education helps to promote and perpetuate these trades.

So, far from being opposites, formal and non-formal education complement each other. Formal education lays the foundations and structures of knowledge, while non-formal education encourages learning through practice and specialisation.

5. Governance of Craft Education Policies

Question : How are policies for education in the field of traditional and heritage craft developed at state, regional or local level?

In Belgium, at federal level, there are no proper policies for education in the field of traditional and heritage crafts because it falls under the jurisdiction of the regions.

The Flemish Government integrates heritage craft education within policies related to vocational training, adult education, and cultural heritage preservation. Institutions such as the Museum of Old Techniques (MOT) and the Flemish Qualification Framework (FQF) provide pathways for learning traditional skills such as woodworking, stone engraving, and blacksmithing. There is also the [Decree supporting cultural heritage operations](#) (Decreet houdende de ondersteuning van cultureelerfgoedwerking). The decree aims to promote care and dealing with moving and intangible heritage by developing the cultural heritage field, promoting qualitative and sustainable cultural heritage work and enhancing the social embedding of cultural heritage. However, there is no explicit focus on education in the field of traditional and heritage crafts.

The Walloon Government, through organisations like AWAP (Agence Wallonne du Patrimoine), Centre de la Paix-Dieu, and Pôle de la Pierre, develops specific training programs for architectural heritage crafts, including masonry, carpentry, and stonework. These programs receive financial aid and are structured around non-formal education frameworks.

Brussels-Capital Region: While Brussels has some regional autonomy, education policies are mostly influenced by either Flemish or Walloon regulations, depending on the language community. However, [heritage and cultural policies](#) in Brussels often support craft-related training, particularly in restoration and urban conservation.

6. Research and Monitoring of Skills Transmission in the Craft Sector

Question : Are there research or monitoring initiatives on non-formal learning in the craft sector and on the transmission of skills and knowledge in the traditional and heritage craft sectors?

In Belgium, education and training are regionalised responsibilities, leading to different approaches in Wallonia and Flanders.

In **Wallonia**, non-formal education is strongly linked to the emancipation of young people and civic engagement. The government emphasises the role of youth organisations and supports initiatives such as training for youth workers and access to dedicated infrastructure.

In **Flanders**, on the other hand, the emphasis is on vocational training and the validation of skills. The Flemish government has put in place a structured framework, called Validation des Acquis de Compétences (VAC), to identify, document, assess and certify professional skills acquired outside the school system. This system facilitates access to the labour market by officially recognising workers' skills.

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Italy

1. Legal and Policy Frameworks for Non-Formal Education

Question : Which legal, policy or administrative documents define non-formal education? Have they been adopted at national, regional or local level?

The Italian definition of non-formal education is set out in paragraph 53 of Article 4 of the Italian law No. 92/2012 on the Reform of the Labour Market (Fornero Law). Paragraphs 51 to 54 mention the lifelong learning: “In line with European Union guidelines, lifelong learning refers to any activity undertaken by individuals through formal, non-formal or informal channels at various stages of their lives, with a view to improving their knowledge, skills and competences for personal, civic, social and employment purposes”.¹

Formal learning refers to learning that takes place within the education and training system, as well as in universities and higher education institutions specialising in the arts, music and dance, and which leads to the award of an academic qualification, a vocational qualification or diploma – including those obtained through apprenticeships – or a recognised certification.

Non-formal learning refers to learning characterised by a person’s intentional choice, which takes place outside formal systems, within any organisation pursuing educational and training objectives, including voluntary organisations, national civil service and the private social sector, as well as within businesses.

Informal learning refers to learning which, regardless of any deliberate choice, takes place as individuals carry out activities in everyday life and in the interactions that occur within it, in the context of work, family and leisure.

The relevant policies on lifelong learning are determined at national level by agreement within the Unified Conference, on the proposal of the MIM: Ministry of Education and Merit and Ministry of Labor and Social Policies, after consulting the Ministry of Business and Made in Italy (MIMIT) and the social partners, starting with the identification and recognition of the cultural and professional heritage accumulated by citizens and workers throughout their personal and professional lives, to be documented through the full implementation of a single information backbone via the interoperability of existing central and regional databases.

¹ [LEGGE 28 giugno 2012, n. 92 - Normattiva](#)

Furthermore, the above mentioned law provides for the establishment of a national public system for the certification of competences, based on minimum service standards that are uniform across the whole country.

The certification of competences is defined as a public act aimed at ensuring the transparency and recognition of learning, in line with the guidelines set by the European Union. Certification leads to the award of a certificate, diploma or qualification that formally documents the assessment and validation carried out by a public body or an accredited or authorised entity.

In implementation of the aforementioned law, Legislative Decree No. 13/2013 was therefore issued, setting out the general rules governing the national skills certification system. The legislative decree brings the new National Skills Certification System into operation and aims to identify and develop professional skills acquired not only at work but also in leisure time, in order to promote geographical and professional mobility, facilitate the matching of supply and demand in the labour market, and increase the transparency of learning and the recognition of certifications at national and European level.²

Pursuant to the aforementioned decree, on 30 June 2015, an interministerial decree (Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education) established the National Framework of Regional Qualifications. It established:

1. a mechanism for the mutual recognition of regional qualifications,
2. standardised processes, certification and procedures for services identifying/validating non-formal and informal learning and certifying skills.

Finally, an interministerial decree (Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education) of 8 January 2018 established the National Qualifications Framework (QNF) as a tool for describing and classifying qualifications awarded within the National Certification System.³

We can say that non-formal education in Italy represents a flexible and dynamic approach to learning that complements traditional educational systems. Taking place in diverse contexts such as associations, workshops, and corporate environments, it allows individuals to engage in knowledge-building beyond formal institutions. Its methodology, rooted in “learning by doing,”

²[https://nuoviprofessionali.indire.it/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/decreto legislativo 13-2013 certificazione competenze-1.pdf](https://nuoviprofessionali.indire.it/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/decreto_legislativo_13-2013_certificazione_competenze-1.pdf)

³ <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2018/01/25/18A00411/sg>.

encourages active participation through experiential activities, seminars, and collaborative workshops, making the learning process both practical and engaging. Participation is voluntary, reflecting the importance of personal motivation and individual choice in shaping one's educational path.

Although non-formal education does not typically result in formal qualifications, it still offers valuable recognition through skill-based certifications. Overall, non-formal education in Italy stands out as an inclusive and responsive learning model, tailored to evolving personal and professional needs, and capable of equipping individuals with the skills required in a rapidly changing society.

2. Non-Formal Learning Pathways and Support Instruments in Heritage Crafts

Question : What non-formal education pathways exist in your country for transmitting traditional and heritage craft skills, and are there legally established subsidies or support mechanisms for these training systems?

The definition of training in the craft sector is set out at national level in Law No 443 of 8 August 1985, the so-called Framework Law on Crafts (currently under review).⁴

Article 8 of that law – entitled Craft Education – states:

“The craft education referred to in Article 117 of the Constitution is provided within the framework of vocational training and within the limits of the fundamental principles governing that field.

Craft enterprises, whether individual or associated, may be called upon by the region, through its own legislation, to contribute to functions relating to craft education, in implementation of policy guidelines and on the basis of specific, time-limited and renewable agreements, for the delivery of specific courses.

Regions may regulate the recognition of Botteghe Scuola (workshop-schools) for the period defined by regional agreements for the craft enterprises referred to in the preceding paragraph that so request ...

Regions are responsible, within the framework of vocational training, for the promotion and coordination of entrepreneurial training and professional development activities for craftspeople”.

⁴ [LEGGE 8 agosto 1985, n. 443 - Normattiva](#)

Non-formal education in the craft sector in Italy is therefore organised primarily at regional level, whilst complying with the provisions of the aforementioned national law.

The Botteghe Scuola are a prime example of non-formal education in the craft sector and, whilst they may take on different forms across the various regions, they share certain common features: first and foremost, they are workshops and/or businesses that employ a Master Artisans – that is a craftsperson capable of passing on their technical expertise.

Botteghe Scuola has been regulated in almost all Italian regions: Tuscany; Marche; Piedmont; Trentino; Valle d'Aosta; etc. Training courses in the Botteghe Scuola may be managed and organised in different ways – with or without the support of training agencies – and may or may not receive funding from the regions as part of the funds allocated to vocational training.

Such funding may take various forms:

- vouchers and/or monthly work grants for students and a lump-sum reimbursement for host companies (for example, in Piedmont);
- a grant to master artisan for teaching activities, either in the form of an hourly rate – Aosta Valley Region – or a lump-sum grant for running the course, subject to the submission of a suitable training programme – Tuscany Region (currently under review).

In any case, this is free, accredited training for students, typically aged between 18 and 29; in some cases, however, the age range may be extended for professional retraining programmes.

Funding for courses at the Botteghe Scuola depends on regional budgets and is not always available: consequently, there is no guarantee of a constant supply of funded courses. However, courses may be run – in accordance with the characteristics of funded courses – by Master Artisans on a private basis, but in that case the students must bear the costs: this is referred to as recognised but unfunded training.

Finally, the Botteghe Scuola may organise and promote courses on an entirely private basis – without any obligation to comply with the requirements of funded courses – and in this case, we are outside

the scope of recognised training. These latter courses are usually shorter and less demanding, and therefore less vocational. Course participants receive certificates of attendance only.

Apprenticeships can also be regarded – at least in the workplace component – as non-formal education: they are permanent employment contracts aimed at training and youth employment, governed by Legislative Decree No. 81 of 15 June 2015 and subsequent amendments (Articles 41–47). The type of apprenticeship we are interested in is the vocational apprenticeship, i.e. an employment contract for the attainment of a professional qualification for contractual purposes through cross-disciplinary and vocational training. Normally, the duration of the contract may not exceed three years, or five years for the craft trades. Young people aged between 18 and 29 (or 17 if they hold a professional qualification) may be hired under this type of apprenticeship in all sectors of activity, whether private or public. Apprenticeships fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies.⁵

Finally, there are also internship programmes in workshops funded by private foundations and/or associations, as well as vocational training centres offering hands-on courses of various kinds: these range from one-year or multi-year courses leading to professional qualifications, to short and summer courses designed to introduce students to the sector, which provide simple certificates of attendance.

3. Good Practices in Craft-Based Non-Formal Learning

Question : cite and describe good practices or examples of non-formal learning experiences in the traditional and heritage crafts sector that exist in your country? Are they active for specific crafts such as textiles, wood, ceramics?

3.1. The Bottega Scuola project in Tuscany

The Bottega Scuola is a craft enterprise that acts as a fully-fledged training agency accredited by the Regional Vocational Training System, and whose training courses may be funded by public resources or recognised under Regional Law 32/2002.

⁵ [DECRETO LEGISLATIVO 15 giugno 2015, n. 81 - Normattiva](#)

The ‘Botteghe Scuola’, established under Article 23 of Regional Law No. 53/2008 ‘Provisions on craftsmanship and the simplification of administrative obligations for craft enterprises’, are enterprises in the artistic and traditional craft sector managed by a “Master Craftsman”, whose qualification is governed by Article 22 of the same law and by Articles 9 and 10 of the Regulations implementing Law No. 53/2008 (approved by Decree of the President of the Regional Council No. 55/R/2009). To become a Training Workshop, a craft enterprise must therefore be run by a Master Craftsman, whose professional status is officially recognised on the basis of experience and skills.

Paragraph 2 of Article 23 of Regional Law No. 53/2008 provides that the Bottega Scuola may carry out training activities within the specific sector of artistic and traditional craftsmanship of which it is an expression, in accordance with the procedures set out in Regional Law No. 32/2002, thereby passing on knowledge and skills.

The training courses run by the Bottega Scuola are aimed at anyone interested in training and/or specialisation in artistic and traditional techniques of excellence.

Paragraph 2 of Article 23 of Regional Law No. 53/2008 provides that the workshop-school may carry out training activities within the specific sector of artistic and traditional craftsmanship that it represents, in accordance with the procedures set out in Regional Law No. 32/2002, thereby passing on knowledge and skills.

The training courses run by the Bottega Scuola are aimed at anyone interested in training and/or specialisation in artistic and traditional techniques of excellence and may lead to the acquisition of a professional qualification or a skills certificate.

The “Bottega Scuola” training courses take place in the workplace, within the craft business, and are therefore defined as “work-based”. Work-based learning facilitates a smoother transition from the training system to the workplace.

The training model underpinning Bottega Scuola represents a radical departure from more traditional forms of teaching: within a Bottega Scuola, learning takes place through practice, working alongside the master craftsman during the day-to-day execution of the work. Knowledge is therefore passed on through one-to-one training, is strongly focused on professional practice, and allows for a high degree of personalisation based on any skills the student may already possess.

Although the Bottega Scuola is a ‘non-formal’ learning environment – that is, one that takes place directly in the workplace – its training programmes have characteristics that are directly linked to the Regional Vocational Training System. The latter sets out the professional, training and certification standards to which training providers, including the Bottega Scuola, must adhere. The Bottega Scuola

courses are in fact aligned with the Regional Register of Professional Roles - <https://www.regione.toscana.it/-/repertorio-regionale-delle-figure-professionali> - referred to in Article 66 ter of the Implementing Regulations of Regional Law 32/2002 and may lead to the award of a professional qualification or a skills certificate.⁶

3.2. Tirocini a Bottega (Workshop Apprenticeships)

Now in its third year, this project is organised by Fondazione CR Firenze and OMA (Osservatorio dei Mestieri d'Arte) with the aim of promoting and funding six extracurricular apprenticeships, each lasting at least one year, to be carried out at small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the artistic craft sector based in Florence and the Metropolitan City.

The call for applications is aimed at craft enterprises that stand out for the high quality of their products and materials, for non-standardised production processes, for the use of traditional techniques, but also for the introduction of innovative technologies, and which represent the products and activities historically characteristic of the region.

The call for applications funds up to two semesters of the internship and provides financial contributions to companies that decide, following the internship, to hire the intern.

Further information can be found at the link for the latest edition of the call for applications.⁷

3.3. Una Scuola un Lavoro. Percorsi di Eccellenza (A School, a Job. Pathways to Excellence)

Now in its fifteenth edition, the project is funded by the Cologni Foundation for the Arts and Crafts with the aim of introducing young talents to the world of high-end artistic craftsmanship and consists of two stages:

- A. Mini Master – a classroom-based training course offered free of charge to all selected participants. The Mini Master involves top-tier educational institutions and is structured around four teaching modules that reflect current themes in the world of artistic craftsmanship: History of Applied Arts, Digital Communication, Micro-enterprise Management, and Design and Personal Branding. It also offers the opportunity to visit leading artisan workshops in Milan, provides insights into intellectual property and relationship

⁶ www.bottegascuola.it

⁷ www.osservatoriomestieridarte.it/2025/Bando_TirociniinBottega.pdf

management, practical information on self-employment, and includes a course on health and safety in the workplace.

- B. Training internship – a practical training programme aimed at young people who have successfully completed studies in the field of artistic craftsmanship. The project offers newly qualified, recent school leavers or recent graduates in this sector the chance to undertake a six-month extracurricular internship in a workshop, working side by side with a master craftsman. These extracurricular placements aim to support young people's career choices by providing direct insight into the world of work and helping them acquire greater professional skills. At the same time, they offer many master artisans the opportunity to train an apprentice who can learn the secrets of the trade and work alongside them.

Each year, the project offers 25 young people the chance to train in a workshop.

Further information can be found on the project website.⁸

3.4 - Scuola della Ceramica di Montelupo (Ceramic School in Montelupo Fiorentino)

The new School of Ceramics is an integral part of the Montelupo Fiorentino Experimental Ceramics Centre, one of the historically most important centres of craftsmanship in the field of ceramics, and was established in 2018, building on and innovating the educational experience of the school founded in 1983. The Ceramics School teaches the art of craftsmanship by combining knowledge of the most ancient traditions with research and technological innovation, working closely with the local production sector; the teaching staff, for example, come from the local production sector and beyond.

The school offers various types of courses depending on the objectives to be achieved:

- Hobby
- Intensive
- Introductory
- Qualifying
- Workshops

⁸ <https://unascuolaunlavoro.it/>

The duration of the courses ranges from 1 day to over 4 weeks: for example, the ‘qualifying’ course consists of 900 hours of tuition and leads to the qualification of ‘ceramic craftsman’.⁹

3.5 - SCHOLA

Founded in 2020, SCHOLA is a Florence-based academy dedicated to craftsmanship education, created in collaboration with leading artisanal institutions such as Scuola del Cuoio and Stefano Berner. It represents a strong example of non-formal learning by combining traditional craft techniques with contemporary design and an immersive, practice-based methodology.

SCHOLA offers intensive, full-time courses (typically 10–20 weeks or around 5 months) which costs generally depend on the programme. The courses are highly practical and include areas such as leather goods and accessories (bag making), bespoke shoemaking, shoe design, sustainable fashion, tailoring-related practices, ceramics, furniture design, and even culinary and other creative disciplines. Each programme covers the full creative process—from design and pattern making to construction and finishing—through continuous hands-on practice.

The courses are designed for adult learners (18+) with a strong motivation but no prior technical skills required, making SCHOLA accessible to beginners, career changers, and creative professionals seeking specialization. The academy attracts a highly international student body, drawn by the opportunity to engage directly with Italian craftsmanship and reinterpret it in a contemporary way.

A key strength of SCHOLA lies in its trainers: courses are taught by well skilled craftspeople - some of them are Master Artisans - and experienced professionals from the craft and design industries, often directly connected to renowned workshops and brands. This ensures the transmission of authentic, high-level skills while bridging education and real-world practice.

Sustainability is also embedded in the approach, with the use of local materials, deadstock, and recycling practices that promote responsible production.¹⁰

⁹ <https://www.scuolaceramica.com/>

¹⁰ <https://www.schola.academy/>

4. Articulation Between Non-Formal and Formal Education

Question : Referring to the examples of non-formal education practices listed in the previous point, say if they complement formal education pathways? Or if they exist because there are no formal education pathways in the sector?

In Italy, the relationship between formal and non-formal education in the field of artistic craftsmanship is largely complementary: the transmission of craft skills can, in fact, take place both through institutionalised pathways and through practical, community-based and professional experiences.

Formal education comprises the pathways recognised by the national education system, which provide: theoretical and art-historical foundations; structured technical knowledge; design and entrepreneurial skills; recognised certifications and qualifications.

Formal education now also tends to incorporate digital skills, marketing and business management, responding to changes in the contemporary craft market.

Within the formal education system, a key role is currently played by vocational tertiary education provided by the ITS (Higher Technical Institutes) – now referred to as Higher Technology Institutes (ITS Academy) under Law No. 99 of 15 July 2022.¹¹

The Higher Technical Institutions System established by the new law lays the foundations for expanding vocational training for technicians with advanced technological and technical skills, with the aim of systematically contributing to measures for economic development and the competitiveness of the production system, gradually bridging the gap between labour supply and demand, which hampers the development of businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, and to ensure, on a continuous basis, the supply of higher-level technicians at post-secondary level in relation to the technological areas considered strategic within the framework of industrial and technological development policies and ecological transition.

The programmes generally last 2 or 3 years following a school-leaving certificate and require at least 30–40% of the total course hours to be spent on work placements. Tutors are from the world of work: up to 50% of tutors come directly from the business and professional sectors. ITS are organised as participatory foundations that bring together schools, universities, training bodies and local businesses and they cover 10 Technological Areas strategic for Made in Italy and innovation. The

¹¹ [LEGGE 15 luglio 2022, n. 99 - Normattiva](#)

sectors relating to the craft industry can be broadly divided into three main categories: 5. Housing and the built environment; 7. Fashion; 9. Technologies for artistic and cultural heritage and activities, and for tourism (sub-category 9.2 Cultural and artistic heritage).

Ministerial Decree 203/2023¹² sets out, in relation to the training programmes of each ITS Academy:

- a) the relevant technological areas;
- b) the relevant national professional figures, in relation to each technological area and any sub-areas into which it is divided at national level;
- c) the minimum standards for technological and technical-professional skills in relation to each professional role and any sub-profiles into which it is divided, classified in terms of macro-skills upon completion;
- d) the diplomas awarded upon completion of the training programmes.

Non-formal education, on the other hand, encompasses all organised activities that facilitate learning without being part of the official school system but which can be integrated with and/or linked to it, such as: apprenticeships in craft workshops; workshops and masterclasses; museums and documentation centres; etc.

Particularly important is the workshop model, where learning takes place through observation, daily practice and the direct master-apprentice relationship. This type of training allows for the acquisition of tacit knowledge and skills that are difficult to convey through theory alone.

In the Italian context, therefore, the two areas are generally not mutually exclusive, but interdependent:

- formal education provides theoretical and methodological tools, as well as qualifications;
- non-formal education enables the acquisition of practical skills, aesthetic sensibility and contextual knowledge.

¹² <https://www.mim.gov.it/-/decreto-ministeriale-n-203-del-20-ottobre-2023>

Many young craftspeople follow a blended pathway: they attend a school or academy and subsequently undertake work placements, apprenticeships or work in workshops. Similarly, many master craftspeople collaborate with schools and educational institutions, helping to bridge the gap between traditional knowledge and formal education.

Here are few examples of the interaction between the formal and non-formal systems:

The internship is a training and career-guidance experience included in the curriculum, designed to integrate academic study with the world of work, thereby promoting a balance between theory and practice, and between theoretical knowledge and practical experience in the workplace. The internship serves an educational and career-guidance purpose because the experience gained helps students gain a clearer understanding of the artistic field in which they wish to pursue their future career and enables them to establish links with the workplace, creating potential opportunities upon completion of their studies. Through the internship, students earn a specific number of CFA credits, depending on the intern's study programme, in accordance with the procedures set out in each training project.

Many art academies and universities specialising in the fields of arts and crafts and fashion enter into agreements with workshops and craft businesses to facilitate these curricular placements, for which the school bears sole responsibility.

School-Work Training Programmes (FSL), formerly known as Transversal Skills Programmes (PCTO) and previously as School-Work Alternation, are designed, implemented, monitored and assessed under the responsibility of the educational institution, on the basis of specific agreements with businesses, or with their respective trade associations, or with chambers of commerce, industry, crafts and agriculture, or with public and private bodies, including those in the third sector, willing to host students for periods of work-based learning, which do not constitute an individual employment relationship (Legislative Decree No. 77 of 15 April 2005).

From the 2018/2019 academic year onwards, FSL projects must be implemented for a total duration of not less than:

- 210 hours in the second year and in the final three years of the course of study at vocational schools;
- 150 hours in the second two-year period and in the final year of the course of study at technical schools;
- 90 hours in the second two-year period and in the fifth year of grammar schools.

5. Governance of Craft Education Policies

Question : How are policies for education in the field of traditional and heritage craft developed at state, regional or local level?

Training in the arts and crafts sector in Italy is organised on a mixed system. It comprises courses at art schools and vocational colleges (specialising in 'Made in Italy'), post-diploma courses at ITS Academies, and a dense network of regional workshop-schools, academies and private foundations offering apprenticeships and highly specialised master's programmes.

This also entails different areas of responsibility: matters relating to the education system fall primarily within the remit of the national government, specifically the Ministry of Education and Merit, whilst matters relating to the training system, including work placements, fall within the remit of the Regions, with responsibilities extending as far down as the provincial level.

Some non-formal education initiatives are covered by inter-ministerial agreements involving the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Enterprise and Made in Italy, and the Ministry of Culture (the latter with particular reference to training in the restoration sector).

The training system is divided into the following main streams:

1. Secondary Education (Upper Secondary Schools) Artistic High Schools: These provide a solid foundation in culture, design and art history. There are specialised streams linked to the applied arts, such as design, fine arts, architecture and the environment, or set design. Vocational Institutes ('Made in Italy' stream): Reorganised by the Ministry of Education and Merit, these institutes combine theoretical study with practical workshops. They aim to promote the techniques, forms and styles characteristic of local craft and manufacturing traditions.

2. Higher Education and Specialisation ITS Academies (Higher Technological Institutes): These offer highly technological and practical two-year post-diploma courses (e.g. Fashion System, New Technologies for Made in Italy), which train professionals working at the intersection of design and high-end manufacturing. Academies of Fine Arts and Regional Bodies: Many academies (such as the

Academy of Fine Arts in Florence) offer first- and second-level academic diploma courses focused on restoration, sculpture and decoration.

3. Practical Training and Workshop Schools: Workshop Schools (Regional Laws): Regions such as: Toscana, Piemonte, Veneto, Marche, etc. have passed legislation to establish registers of ‘Master Artisans’ and officially recognise workshops as places of active training, where young people can learn directly on the job. Foundations and Private Academies: Many prestigious institutions support the arts and crafts through scholarships and training placements in workshops. For example, the Cologni Foundation for the Arts and Crafts organises the ‘Una Scuola, un Lavoro’ project, whilst Milan is home to the Accademia del Teatro alla Scala.

Apprenticeships can also be regarded – at least in the workplace component – as non-formal education: apprenticeships fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies.

As regards training in the field of restoration, there are two different professional roles in Italy that are authorised to work in this sector:

- **Cultural Heritage Restorer** – This is the qualification that authorises the holder to independently direct and manage restoration work on protected heritage assets. To obtain it, a five-year single-cycle course must be completed at a Higher Education School accredited by the Ministry of Culture, or at one of the two ministerial institutes (ICR and OPD). Only those with this qualification may be registered on the National Register of Cultural Heritage Restorers and sign off on restoration projects for the Superintendency.
- **Cultural Heritage Restoration Technician** – This is an operational role working in the sector but under the supervision of a qualified restorer. They are trained through three-year programmes or vocational courses. They may carry out restoration work but cannot independently assume technical responsibility for interventions on protected heritage.

This distinction is not a bureaucratic detail but determines what can be done, on which heritage, and with what level of responsibility.

This entails a different structure for education and training in conservation and restoration:

1. State Higher Education Institutions (Admission via public call for applications and entrance exams) - Opificio delle Pietre Dure (OPD), Florence: One of the world’s leading authorities in restoration which offers single-cycle master’s degree programmes (LMR/02). Institute for Restoration (ICR), Rome: A historic centre of excellence for scientific conservation. La Venaria Reale’ Conservation and Restoration Centre, Turin: Offers advanced specialisation courses and

master's degrees in collaboration with the Polytechnic University of Turin and the University of Turin.

2. Academies of Fine Arts and Private Institutes: Academy of Fine Arts, Bologna / Brera Academy (Milan): Both offer five-year single-cycle degree courses (DASLQ01) leading to qualification as conservators. Institute for Art and Restoration (Palazzo Spinelli), Florence: A historic institution organising professional courses, master's degrees and advanced training programmes.
3. Vocational training centres offering hands-on courses of various kinds: these range from one-year or multi-year courses leading to professional qualifications, to short and summer courses designed to introduce students to the sector, which provide simple certificates of attendance. For example, the CER (European Centre for Restoration), Florence, offers vocational training courses in the restoration of carved wooden objects, paintings and decorated surfaces. Builders' schools offer practical, highly specialised training in restoration, combining theoretical knowledge with hands-on experience on site. The programmes, which are often recognised at regional level, combine traditional conservation techniques with technological innovation to preserve our architectural and historical heritage.

6. Research and Monitoring of Skills Transmission in the Craft Sector

Question : Are there research or monitoring initiatives on non-formal learning in the craft sector and on the transmission of skills and knowledge in the traditional and heritage craft sectors?

In Italy, there are various research, documentation and monitoring initiatives focusing on both non-formal learning in the craft sector and the intergenerational transmission of skills and knowledge in traditional trades and intangible cultural heritage. However, there is no single, systematic national observatory dedicated exclusively to this topic.

Among the monitoring/survey initiatives, the following may be mentioned:

1. The UNESCO framework on intangible cultural heritage

The reference framework is the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage: from this perspective, traditional craftsmanship is considered one of the five major domains

of intangible heritage, and the transmission of knowledge constitutes a central element of safeguarding.

Many Italian dossiers inscribed on UNESCO lists explicitly document non-formal learning methods based on: master-apprentice apprenticeship; family transmission; workshop-based learning; communities of practice; and oral and demonstrative teaching.

Among the most significant examples:

- The knowledge and skills of traditional Cremonese violin-making, where transmission takes place through specialised schools and, above all, through the direct master-apprentice relationship in workshops.
- Traditional bell-ringing, in which transmission continues mainly in an informal manner, within families and bell-ringers' associations.

2. Programmes and observatories in the craft sector

Organisations such as:

- Confartigianato Imprese
- CNA – National Confederation of Crafts and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
- Unioncamere

regularly carry out studies on trades, generational renewal, vocational training and the preservation of traditional skills. Their focus is often on economic and employment issues and many surveys address the loss of know-how and the difficulty of passing on skills to young people. This constitutes a form of monitoring the dynamics of the transmission of craft knowledge.

3. Lists of Master Artisans and training workshops

It is necessary to consult the registers established by the individual Italian regions, as there is not yet a single national register. The procedures and access links vary depending on the region.

For instance, in Tuscany there is a dedicated platform in operation that lists and geolocates Master Artisans and their workshops: visit the Bottega Scuola Toscana portal <https://www.bottegascuola.it/>, or consult the list compiled by Unioncamere Toscana.¹³

4. Foundations and cultural organisations

¹³ <https://www.unioncamere-toscana.it/i-nostri-servizi/crat/>

Some private and cultural organisations carry out research and surveys on schools and training centres for artistic crafts operating throughout the country. However, it is not easy to monitor non-formal activities, as they are, by definition, unstructured.

5. University research and study centres

Several Italian universities conduct research into:

- intangible cultural heritage;
- informal education;
- traditional apprenticeships;
- the transmission of craft knowledge;
- communities of practice and tacit knowledge.

The most common lines of research analyse how skills that are difficult to formalise are transmitted through observation, imitation, participation and shared practice, which are particularly relevant in traditional trades.

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Georgia

1. Legal and Policy Frameworks for Non-Formal Education

Question : Which legal, policy or administrative documents define non-formal education? Have they been adopted at national, regional or local level?

Definition

In Georgia, non-formal education is primarily defined within the framework of vocational education legislation. The Law on Vocational Education of Georgia refers to non-formal (often termed informal) education as: *a component of the lifelong learning system, involving the acquisition of knowledge, skills, responsibility, and autonomy outside formal education systems*.

This definition aligns with European approaches to lifelong learning and recognizes non-formal education as an important pathway for skills development, particularly for adults and those outside formal education systems.

The law also introduces the concept of recognition of prior learning, enabling individuals to validate competencies acquired through non-formal and informal learning.

Legal and Policy Documents

Non-formal education in Georgia is regulated at the national level, and the key documents include:

1. Law on Vocational Education of Georgia: Main legal framework regulating vocational and non-formal education. It defines non-formal/informal education, establishes the system for recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, links non-formal education to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)
2. Vocational Education Strategy 2024–2030. National strategic policy document which emphasizes: the importance of lifelong learning expansion of non-formal education opportunities, upskilling and reskilling of the adult population, Recognizes non-formal education as a complementary pathway to formal education
3. The Law of Georgia “On development of Quality of Education” defines structure and objectives of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), as well as the institutional roles and responsibilities related to the development, management, approval, and monitoring of NQF legislation. It also address the establishment and functioning of the electronic qualifications registry, the procedures and rules governing the recognition of non-formal education, and the role of the classifier of fields of study within the qualifications system.
4. Order of the Minister of Education №188/6. Defines the rules and procedures for recognition of learning outcomes acquired through non-formal education and regulates assessment procedures, certification mechanisms, provides a practical framework for implementation of recognition
5. Government Ordinance №459 establishes conditions for obtaining the right to recognize non-formal education, fees and administrative procedures, applies to institutions authorized to conduct validation
6. National Qualifications Framework (NQF) of Georgia. Provides the structure for classification of qualifications, alignment of formal and non-formal learning outcomes, enables integration of non-formal learning into the formal system through validation.

All the above-mentioned frameworks and regulations are adopted at the national level. There are no specific regional policies, no local-level regulatory frameworks, no sector-specific regulations (e.g. for crafts or cultural heritage)

Key Observations

Georgia has a clear legal basis for defining and recognizing non-formal education

The system is aligned with European lifelong learning principles

However:

implementation remains limited

access to recognition mechanisms is still developing

there is no dedicated policy for non-formal education in specific sectors, including traditional and heritage crafts

2. Non-Formal Learning Pathways and Support Instruments in Heritage Crafts

Question : What non-formal education pathways exist in your country for transmitting traditional and heritage craft skills, and are there legally established subsidies or support mechanisms for these training systems?

In Georgia, non-formal education plays a key role in the transmission of traditional and heritage craft skills, largely complementing and, in some cases, substituting formal education pathways. Available studies indicate a significant share of non-formal education. The fact that according to the existing studies from 2012 and 2022 more than 60% of actors acquired skills through non-formal education, highlighting its practical importance despite the lack of structured support.

Non-formal learning opportunities exist in several forms. The most common include:

- workshop-based courses offered by private studios, usually fee-based and flexible in structure
- Apprenticeships with master craftsmen, often informal and based on direct mentorship
- On-the-job training within craft enterprises
- Short-term courses organised by NGOs, typically within donor-funded projects and often free of charge
- Workshops and courses offered by museums
- Initiatives by religious and community institutions, including the Patriarchate of Georgia
- Municipal art schools, mainly targeting younger learners
- Self-directed learning, including online resources and peer learning
- transmission of knowledge within family

Despite this diversity, these pathways are not systematised and operate independently from each other.

In terms of support mechanisms, there are no specific legal or financial instruments supporting non-formal craft education. There are:

- no dedicated subsidies or voucher schemes
- no tax incentives
- limited access to public funding (except of few public body initiatives)
- Most initiatives rely on project-based funding, private resources, or participant fees, which affects their continuity and accessibility.

3. Good Practices in Craft-Based Non-Formal Learning

Question : cite and describe good practices or examples of non-formal learning experiences in the traditional and heritage crafts sector that exist in your country? Are they active for specific crafts such as textiles, wood, ceramics?

The system of craft-based non-formal learning in Georgia is fragmented and represented by several types of the organisational structure. Here are the main categories and examples

Courses offered by the Public Bodies or agencies. Having the stable state funding these kinds of opportunities are characterised with the stability of implementation over the years. The tuition may be free or with an affordable price. The good examples in this category can be mentioned:

- Summer School of the Open Air Museum (National Museum of Georgia). A recurring initiative providing short-term courses in textiles, woodcarving, and metalwork, with a strong focus on awareness-raising and public engagement.
- Educational Mini-Gallery of Folk Crafts s (Gori). The entity was established as a joint initiative of NGO and local municipality within the EU funded project. After the project's life span, it is fully run by the Tourism Department of Gori Municipality. The Mini-Gallery offers courses for children and adults, linking craft education with tourism and local cultural development.

Courses offered by the Civil Society Organisations. These kinds of courses are mostly project-based and unsustainable. Although they contribute to the safeguarding of craft traditions and engagement of new audiences, in most cases, they are fragmented. The good cases within this segment are:

- Heritage Resource Centre which represents one of the outcomes of the Sustainable Rehabilitation of Heritage Site Programme, implemented (2017-2021) by ICOMOS Georgia and funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway. The Center runs the short courses in traditional building techniques such as Earth Based Mortar Conservation and Application, Wood Conservation etc.
- Adult Education Centres (DVV International Georgia) - A network of centres providing vocational and community-based learning, reaching approximately 12,000 beneficiaries annually, including vulnerable groups.
- From regional initiatives, the MOSAICA studio, located in Zugdidi town, should be mentioned, which represents a hub in Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region uniting traditions, innovation, professional development, and heritage-sensitive commercialisation. Professional development of crafts actors through informal education, such as trainings, master classes, and competence workshops offered by MOSAICA studio, as well as by its partner businesses within its pavilions, is one of their goals. Acting as a mixed service provider MOSAICA overtakes the role of the main developing agency of the crafts industry in the region through engaging along two complementary paths: technical support to crafts actors including skills transfer and creative tourism development. MOSAICA studio consists of diverse functional demo spaces for craft actors and supporters. One will experience wood, metal, ceramic, and textile live facilities and pavilions as well as a guest house and a café concept

Courses offered by the Private companies.

- White Studio - One of the known ceramic companies holds regular masterclasses for people who are interested in the industry or just want to learn this artform, as well as apprentice opportunities to become artisans and run semester programs through their academy to develop the next generation of artists and ceramic makers.
- Estia Handmade Art, founded in 2014, creates handmade household items through a blend of artistic techniques, with a primary focus on ceramic art. The studio also offers workshops and short or long-term courses for children and adults mainly in ceramic, but also in painting, decoupage, felt-making, and other crafts. Its ambition is to unite traditional craftsmanship with modern artistic approaches and techniques.
- Company Kasta is an example of a socially responsible company which on its own expenses runs a crafts training center focused on the long term courses in artistic processing of wood, stone carving and stained glass.

Private educational organizations active in the field of heritage crafts are a novelty for Georgia.

- Kettari Academy is specialized in creative industries. The academy provides courses and state-recognized vocational training programs designed to meet the evolving demands of the field. Recently the Academy introduced two craft courses Intro to Ceramic World and Batik Technology and Management of Craft Workshops.

Another key component is the network of courses and **parish schools of the Patriarchate of Georgia** operating across the country. Their main focus is the preservation and development of ecclesiastical art traditions, including gold and silk-thread embroidery, icon-making in metal and wood, enamel work, and crosses. In parallel, they also support the continuation of traditional national crafts

such as embroidery, enamel art, and felt-making.

Of course these are only some examples of the non-formal education initiatives across the county illustrating the different formats and approaches.

These practices demonstrate that effective non-formal education in crafts is often:

- **practice-oriented**
- **locally embedded**
- **linked to cultural heritage and community development**

4. Articulation Between Non-Formal and Formal Education

Question : Referring to the examples of non-formal education practices listed in the previous point, say if they complement formal education pathways? Or if they exist because there are no formal education pathways in the sector?

Non-formal education in the Georgian craft sector primarily complements formal education, but in certain areas it also compensates for its limitations.

Formal vocational education provides a structured and theoretical basis, but often lacks:

- sufficient hands-on training
- direct engagement with traditional techniques

non-formal education addresses these gaps by offering:

- practical, skills-based learning
- flexible and short-term training formats
- direct interaction with craftsmen and real production environments

In some craft fields where formal education programmes are limited or outdated, non-formal pathways function as the main mechanism for skills transmission.

Georgia's VET legislation and related policy documents have established the legal framework for the

validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNIFL). The procedures were updated in 2019 in line with EU recommendations, enabling recognition of non-formal and informal learning across all levels of vocational qualifications within the National Qualifications Framework.

The VNIFL process includes four stages: submission of application, documentation, assessment, and certification. First, the applicant submits a request and receives consultations from a certified consultant, who helps identify and document prior learning outcomes gained outside formal education. The documented evidence is then assessed against relevant vocational education standards or modules by a specially established commission. Based on the assessment results, the institution may recognize specific learning outcomes, award part of a qualification, or grant a full vocational qualification and corresponding certificate or diploma. The process can only be conducted by institutions authorized by the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (NCEQE). Assessment is based on national VET standards and may lead to the award of a full qualification or part of it. Validation can only be carried out by authorised VET institutions or legal entities delivering recognised vocational programmes. By 2023 there were only nine VET centres authorised to offer validation services and from them only one - College Iberia runs the crafts program particularly artistic processing of wood.

Hence the application of the system of validation of non-formal education in craft sector faces significant problems such as:

- low awareness - the actors are not aware of the possibilities
- administrative barriers - there are too few institutions offering the recognition of non-formal education in the field and hence the limited qualifications
- associated fees - the cost of the procedures depends on the requirements of the assessment but can't be lower than 500 GEL.

Overall, the relationship between the two systems can be described as complementary but weakly integrated.

5. Governance of Craft Education Policies

Question : How are policies for education in the field of traditional and heritage craft developed at state, regional or local level?

In Georgia the research and monitoring of non-formal learning in the craft sector are limited and

unsystematic. Currently, there is:

- no national monitoring system
- no regular data collection on participation or outcomes
- no specific indicators related to craft skills or non-formal education

Most available information comes from:

- project-based studies (e.g. The Heritage crafts in Georgia, Comprehensive Research and Development Strategy of the Sector, Georgian Arts and Culture Center, 2012; Samgrelo-Zemo Svaneti Crafts Sector, Georgian Arts and Culture Center, 2021; Study of Artisan Sectors in Keda, Khulo, Borjomi, Akhalkalaki, TeTritskaro, Kazbegi, Lagodekhi and Dedoplistskaro Municipalities, Georgian Heritage Crafts Association, 2021 etc.)
- international initiatives (e.g. ETF-related analyses), for example European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning, 2023 update, Country Report: Georgia. Analytical and reference document developed by the European Training Foundation which provides an overview of Georgia's validation system, strengths and implementation gaps

While these studies provide useful insights, they do not constitute a continuous evidence base. As a result:

- policymaking is not fully data-driven
- skills gaps and labour market needs are not systematically assessed
- Strengthening research and monitoring mechanisms would be essential for improving the visibility, quality, and sustainability of non-formal education in the craft sector.

6. Research and Monitoring of Skills Transmission in the Craft Sector

Question : Are there research or monitoring initiatives on non-formal learning in the craft sector and on the transmission of skills and knowledge in the traditional and heritage craft sectors?

In Georgia the research and monitoring of non-formal learning in the craft sector are limited and unsystematic.

Currently, there is:

- no national monitoring system
- no regular data collection on participation or outcomes
- no specific indicators related to craft skills or non-formal education

Most available information comes from:

project-based studies (e.g. The Heritage crafts in Georgia, Comprehensive Research and Development Strategy of the Sector, Georgian Arts and Culture Center, 2012; Samgrelo-Zemo Svaneti Crafts Sector, Georgian Arts and Culture Center, 2021; Study of Artisan Sectors in Keda, Khulo, Borjomi, Akhalkalaki, TeTritskaro, Kazbegi, Lagodekhi and Dedoplistskaro Municipalities, Georgian Heritage Crafts Association, 2021 etc.)

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Strengthening research and monitoring mechanisms would be essential for improving the visibility, quality, and sustainability of non-formal education in the craft sector.

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Poland

1. Legal and Policy Frameworks for Non-Formal Education

Question : Which legal, policy or administrative documents define non-formal education? Have they been adopted at national, regional or local level?

Definition:

Non-formal education - education and training provided as part of programmes that do not lead to full qualifications or qualifications awarded on completion of postgraduate studies or qualifications in a profession (Article 2(3) of the Act of 22 December 2015 on the Integrated Qualification System - Journal of Laws of 2018, item 2153). Learning (education) outcomes - knowledge, skills and social competences acquired in the process of learning (Article 2, point 4 of the Act of 22 December 2015 on the Integrated Qualification System).

In Poland non-formal education is defined and regulated by a number of legal, political and administrative documents, both at national, regional and local level. Although formal education is more tightly regulated in Polish legislation, non-formal education also finds its place in the Polish educational system and is recognised as an important part of citizen development. Here are some of the key documents and regulations on non-formal education in Poland:

- **The Education System Act**
<https://www.gov.pl/web/your-europe/education-system-in-poland> - The Act of 7 September 1991 on the educational system, although focusing on formal education, also refers to out-of-school education, which includes various forms of non-formal education, such as courses, training, workshops or other forms of education that are not part of the school system. The law indicates that various organisations and institutions can organise adult education and other forms of education that support the development of people of different ages.,
- **Coordination Point for Polish and European Qualifications Framework - Integrated Qualification System (IAS)** The system was introduced by the Act of 22 December 2015 on the Integrated Qualifications System. The Act on the IQS organises the qualifications system in Poland and provides market entities with the possibility of flexible response to the changing demand for qualifications in the economy. Starting from 2017, the documents issued by schools, district examination committees, chambers of crafts and universities must include a graphic symbol indicating the level of PQF of the given qualification. More information about the IQS <http://www.kwalifikacje.gov.pl/>
<http://www.kwalifikacje.gov.pl/o-zsk/informacja-o-zsk>
- **Law on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteerism**
<https://www.gov.pl/web/your-europe/volunteering-in-poland> - This law regulates the activities of NGOs, including their educational activities. Under this law, NGOs can conduct educational projects that are non-formal in nature, such as workshops, trainings or courses that support

the development of citizens' skills and competences.

- **National Programme for the Development of Education 2021-2030** - The programme emphasises the importance of non-formal education and points to the need for systems to support this type of education.
- **Regional Strategic Programme** in the field of education and social capital of Pomorskie Voivodeship
- **Integrated Skills Strategy 2030** <https://zsu2030.men.gov.pl/>

The Integrated Skills Strategy sets out the aims and objectives of national policy for skills development and therefore addresses a wide range of issues related to the acquisition of new 'abilities to deal with something efficiently' by people of different ages.

At the local and regional level, non-formal education is provided by various institutions, including cultural centres, community centres, public libraries, museums or regional education centres.

2. Non-Formal Learning Pathways and Support Instruments in Heritage Crafts

Question : What non-formal education pathways exist in your country for transmitting traditional and heritage craft skills, and are there legally established subsidies or support mechanisms for these training systems?

In Poland, non-formal education in the traditional crafts and heritage sector is a very important element in the preservation and development of tangible and intangible culture. Although traditional crafts are not always taught within the formal education system, there are many pathways to transfer knowledge and skills, both informally and non-formally.

One of the main ways of learning traditional crafts in Poland is through workshops organised by various institutions, NGOs, associations and also by master craftsmen themselves. These are often short-term courses or intensive workshops that enable participants to learn specific craft techniques, such as weaving, blacksmithing, pottery, woodcarving or folk sculpture.

Craft centres and cultural centres - there are many institutions in Poland that organise workshops, such as Regional Cultural Centres, Folk Universities, Ethnographic Museums or Traditional Craft Centres. They often hold workshops for children and adults to impart craft techniques, both as part of general education and as a form of artistic activity.

Workshops organised by master craftsmen - in many regions of Poland, older craftsmen, often drawing on family traditions, organise workshops that allow younger generations to learn a particular art. Examples include pottery courses in Bolesławiec, workshops for traditional in

Kashubian embroidery, or blacksmithing workshops in Silesia.

Apprenticeships in craft workshops - as part of apprenticeships, students, often young people from vocational schools or art colleges, but also adults take placements in craft workshops where they learn traditional techniques in practice. Often such internships are organised in cooperation with secondary schools or universities, including art colleges such as the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw or the University of Arts in Poznań.

Craft Schools and Technical Secondary Schools - examples include the Craft School in Kraków or the Vocational Technical School in Łódź, where young people gain practical knowledge of traditional trades such as carpenters, joiners, sculptors and textile makers.

Post-graduate courses and studies for adults who wish to broaden their skills in the crafts. Such courses are often held in cultural institutions and universities.

Support from local governments and NGOs - many local governments, especially in regions with a strong craft heritage (e.g. Podhale, Silesia, Wielkopolska, Kashubia), organise grant programmes to support crafts, including educational programmes aimed at youth and adults. These are often funds that support traditional techniques, e.g. embroidery, lace making, pottery.

Culinary Heritage and Crafts Network - various craft initiatives include organisations that promote and certify products and services related to traditional techniques. Such institutions often also offer education for people who want to acquire skills in their chosen craft, for example by organising courses, workshops or training.

Association of Folk Artists - a Polish organization dedicated to protecting, promoting, and managing the rights (like copyright) of traditional folk artists, musicians, and performers, and preserving Polish intangible cultural heritage, recognized by UNESCO as an accredited NGO.

3. Good Practices in Craft-Based Non-Formal Learning

Question : cite and describe good practices or examples of non-formal learning experiences in the traditional and heritage crafts sector that exist in your country? Are they active for specific crafts such as textiles, wood, ceramics?

Kashubian embroidery education

The very characteristic Kashubian embroidery is the most recognisable manifestation of regional folk art. Traditional embroidery is characterised by a wealth of motifs and the use of a seven-colour colour



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structure. The Kashubian embroidery pattern, invented by Teodora Gulgowska in Wdzydze at the beginning of the 20th century, after successive transformations in both its visual and narrative aspects, has now become a symbol of the Kashubian region. Gulgowska, a well-educated painter familiar with the latest trends in art, who studied in Berlin, among other places, drew inspiration for her embroidery patterns from: Kashubian furniture, ceramics, embroidered bonnets, which had already gone out of fashion at the time, liturgical vestments found in the church treasury in Żukowo, and patterns published in German women's magazines. Today, the Kashubian pattern is used not only in the form of embroidery on various textiles. It also decorates ceramics, wooden caskets, furniture and small everyday objects. The decorations differ in the technique used. Workshops are led by master craftsmen and craftswomen, such as those organised by the Association of Folk Artists, The Pomeranian-Kashubian Association or local groups in the Kashubian region. They often take the form of practical classes where participants learn traditional techniques and patterns. An example is the Kashubian Cultural Centre in Wejherowo. An example is the course run at the Community Centre in Koscierzyna.

The 'Master - Apprentice' Scholarship Programme of the National Institute of Culture and Rural Heritage is aimed at folk artists from the Republic of Poland <https://nikidw.edu.pl/en/stypendia/>. The Programme is addressed to both masters with an established position and achievements, and apprentices. According to the Rules of Procedure, the primary objective of the Programme is to rescue local heritage and tradition and ensure the continuity of authentic folk art. The priorities of the Scholarship concern educational projects ensuring the direct transmission of traditional artistic, craft and handicraft skills, carried out within the local community, with particular emphasis on skills in danger of disappearing.

Association for the Promotion of Old Crafts and Culture "WICI" [aka WICI Association] - a non-profit association based in Poland. The main goal of "WICI" is to inform, educate, and promote handicrafts in society. We work to restore the value of craftsmanship and the use of crafts in creative entrepreneurship, design, art, and as a leisure activity that contributes to well-being.

The "WICI" Association was established in 2016 by a group of activists, educators, artists, researchers, craftsmen, and craftswomen. What bonded us was our shared understanding of the value of old crafting techniques and the unique relationship between the maker and the object.

Our aim is to rediscover the past anew: to make the public aware of the time, skills, and knowledge necessary to make a handmade product—to see and understand the differences between mass-produced, handcrafted, and custom-made items. If crafts and handicrafts are appreciated on the market, the work of artisans becomes economically profitable as a full-fledged and sustainable source of income.

4. Articulation Between Non-Formal and Formal Education

Question : Referring to the examples of non-formal education practices listed in the previous point, say if they complement formal education pathways? Or if they exist because there are no formal education pathways in the sector?

Non-formal education in the traditional and heritage craft sector in Poland often plays a complementary role to formal education, but also occurs where formal educational pathways in this field are lacking. Many of the examples of educational practices described above are practical in nature and aimed at imparting craft skills that are not fully covered by formal curricula in the Polish education system. In some cases, non-formal education is the only form of learning available for those interested in traditional crafts.

In many cases, especially in smaller towns or in less popular crafts, formal educational pathways are lacking. In such situations, non-formal education becomes essential, as there are no educational institutions that offer full-fledged formal education in traditional crafts.

schools.

5. Governance of Craft Education Policies

Question : How are policies for education in the field of traditional and heritage craft developed at state, regional or local level?

At the state level, mainly through the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, there are educational programmes and support for initiatives related to the protection and development of traditional crafts and cultural heritage. The Traditional Crafts Support Programmes (e.g. the Culture Programme or the Intangible Heritage Programmes) funds a variety of education and training projects that include traditional crafts. The aim of these programmes is both to preserve traditions and to adapt them to contemporary social and market needs.

Government programme 'Polish Craft Incubator' - The main objective of the programme is to strengthen crafts economic self-government organisations in terms of human and social capital and institutional potential. It aims to implement the statutory activities of these organisations, including those concerning the development of entrepreneurship and dual education.

At the regional (voivodeship) level, education policy on traditional crafts is also important, especially in the context of protecting cultural heritage and supporting local traditions. Voivodeship governments and regional cultural institutions organise programmes to support crafts, including grants for educational projects that may include workshops, training or scholarship programmes for craftsmen. These are often implemented as part of regional programmes, such as the Rural Development Programme (RDP), which funds initiatives related to the preservation of craft traditions in small towns.

6. Research and Monitoring of Skills Transmission in the Craft Sector

Question : Are there research or monitoring initiatives on non-formal learning in the craft sector and on the transmission of skills and knowledge in the traditional and heritage craft sectors?

There are research and monitoring initiatives, although they are not as widespread as in other areas of education. In recent years, however, the topic of non-formal education and skills transfer in the context of traditional crafts has been gaining attention, both among researchers and cultural institutions.

The Central Statistical Office (GUS) - defines non-formal education as organized educational activities outside the formal system (schools, universities), conducted with the participation of a lecturer/instructor, aimed at acquiring knowledge/skills (e.g., courses, training, workshops), but not leading to a formal change in the level of education. GUS regularly publishes studies on the participation of Poles in these forms of learning (e.g., reports from 2022 show that one in five people aged 18-69 participated in them).

Research into craft traditions in the regions of Poland: such research documents traditional craft techniques that are still being passed on in the form of workshops and courses. In some cases, these studies are not only aimed at collecting knowledge, but also at developing educational materials that can support non-formal education.

Monitoring initiatives within museums: museums, like Ethnographic department of NMG, often carry out monitoring activities that analyse how local craftspeople pass on their skills to younger generations, how workshops are structured, what the educational needs are and how the demand for different forms of traditional crafts is changing.

PhD theses on education in traditional crafts: researchers study educational processes in crafts, including the structure of training in workshops, the role of master craftsmen and the impact of non-formal education on heritage preservation. Often these studies focus on analysing the role of tradition in arts and crafts education.

Research in the context of ethnography and folk culture: some of the research is concerned with documenting local traditions of knowledge transmission that take place in the form of training, workshops and apprenticeships. Much of this research is ethnographic in nature.

Monitoring the demand for traditional crafts: initiatives such as the Polish Chamber of Crafts conduct research on the demand for craft services in different regions of Poland and monitor changes in the transmission of skills to younger generations. The results of these studies are often used to develop strategies to support traditional crafts.

There is also the **Integrated Qualifications Register (ZRK)**, which is a public register that collects information on all qualifications included in the Integrated Qualifications System (ZSK), independently of other existing registers and inventories in Poland created for the needs of individual ministries,

industries, environments and institutions.

Sources (Poland) :

The Education System Act

<https://www.gov.pl/web/your-europe/education-system-in-poland->



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II. Full survey results

BRICKS - Building Bridges, Building Skills: Enhancing Non-Formal Craft Education for Sustainable Cultural Transmission

Consolidated Survey Report



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II. Full survey results	96
Consolidated Survey Report	96
Introduction	98
1. Methodological framing	98
2. Consolidated report on the organisations' and companies' responses	100
2.1 - Lifespan of Interviewed MSMEs	101
2.2 - Craft sectors represented in the survey	102
2.3 - Sustainability embedded in the non-formal craft education	104
2.4 - Profile of learners	105
2.5 - Soft & transversal competencies: going beyond craft skills	109
2.6 - Profile of trainers and educators in non-formal craft education	110
2.7 - Additional aids to support the skills' transmission in non-formal craft education paths	112
2.8 - Internships, apprenticeships, assessments of competencies and certification in non-formal craft education	113
2.9 - The costs of non-formal craft education courses	116
2.10 - Collaboration and relationships with territories and stakeholders	117
2.11 - Challenges and threats in the non-formal craft education path	118
3. Consolidated report on the students' and learners' responses	120
3.1 - Composition of the respondents	120
3.2 Craft techniques learned	121
3.3 - Nature and composition of courses attended	122
3.4 - Motivations and professional aims of learners	123
3.5 - Course's costs and financing sources	126
3.6 - Assessments and certifications of competencies gained	126
3.7 - Future perspectives of non-formal crafts education learners	127
4. Final considerations	128
5. Annex 1 - The questionnaire	130
Additional materials (optional)	130



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Introduction

The BRICKS project is conceived as a transnational initiative aimed at strengthening non-formal craft education as a strategic lever for skills development, cultural transmission, and sustainable innovation. Within this framework, the project addresses a key challenge: how to better understand, support, and enhance the ways in which craft knowledge is currently transmitted outside formal education systems, and how this can contribute to contemporary priorities such as employability, sustainability, and the preservation of cultural heritage.

In this context, the survey was designed as a core research tool to map the current landscape of non-formal craft education across partner countries. It forms part of a broader evidence-based approach combining field research (case studies and workshop visits) with quantitative and qualitative data collection at a larger scale. While in-depth case studies provide detailed insight into specific practices, the survey expands the scope of analysis, enabling the project to capture a wider diversity of actors, experiences, and learning models.

1. Methodological framing

The questionnaire was jointly developed and agreed upon among all project partners, ensuring a common analytical framework while allowing adaptation to national contexts. It includes both closed and open questions to gather comparable data and qualitative insights, and was translated and disseminated by partners through their national networks. This report includes references to individual questions with the wording "Q n.".

Artex - in charge of the overall survey coordination - with the active support of all partners, coordinated the data collection process, gathering a total of 117 completed questionnaires. Of these, approximately 80% were filled in by organisations (training providers, workshops, educators), and 20% by learners, ensuring a dual perspective on the non-formal craft education ecosystem. This complementary approach enables a cross-analysis between supply and demand, strengthening the reliability and depth of the findings. Data was collected during 2025, providing a recent and representative snapshot of the sector.

The ultimate goal of this survey, and of the deliverable, is not only to describe existing practices but to build a structured and shared knowledge base that supports the project's strategic objectives. By identifying recurring patterns, strengths, and critical gaps, the analysis contributes to a better understanding of the sector's dynamics, while providing actionable insights to guide future activities. In this sense, the survey acts as a bridge between research and action, informing the development of

tools, capacity-building initiatives, and policy reflections within the BRICKS project, and supporting the repositioning of non-formal craft education as a key driver of inclusive and sustainable development.

At a deeper level, the survey responds to a key need within the project: understanding how craft knowledge is transmitted outside formal education systems, and how this transmission relates to contemporary challenges such as sustainability, employability, and cultural continuity. The survey therefore provides a baseline analysis, making visible both the diversity of practices and the recurring structural patterns that characterise the sector.

The analysis resulting from this work should be understood as more than a simple report. It fulfils three core functions:

- Analytical foundation: it establishes a shared knowledge base for the consortium, aligning partners' understanding of the sector around a coherent framework.
- Interpretative tool: it identifies key trends and underlying tensions, such as the gap between cultural value and economic fragility, or between training provision and certification systems, offering a critical reading of the data.
- Strategic orientation: it provides the basis for the development of subsequent project outputs, translating analysis into actionable insights for innovation, policy reflection, and capacity building.
-

In a broader sense, the survey contributes to repositioning non-formal craft education within a contemporary perspective. It demonstrates that this field is not marginal or purely traditional, but rather can be a driver of sustainable practices, a pathway for professional reintegration and upskilling, and a space for cultural transmission and personal development. By articulating these dimensions through evidence, the survey enables stakeholders to recognise the strategic value of the sector, while also making visible the structural conditions needed to strengthen it.

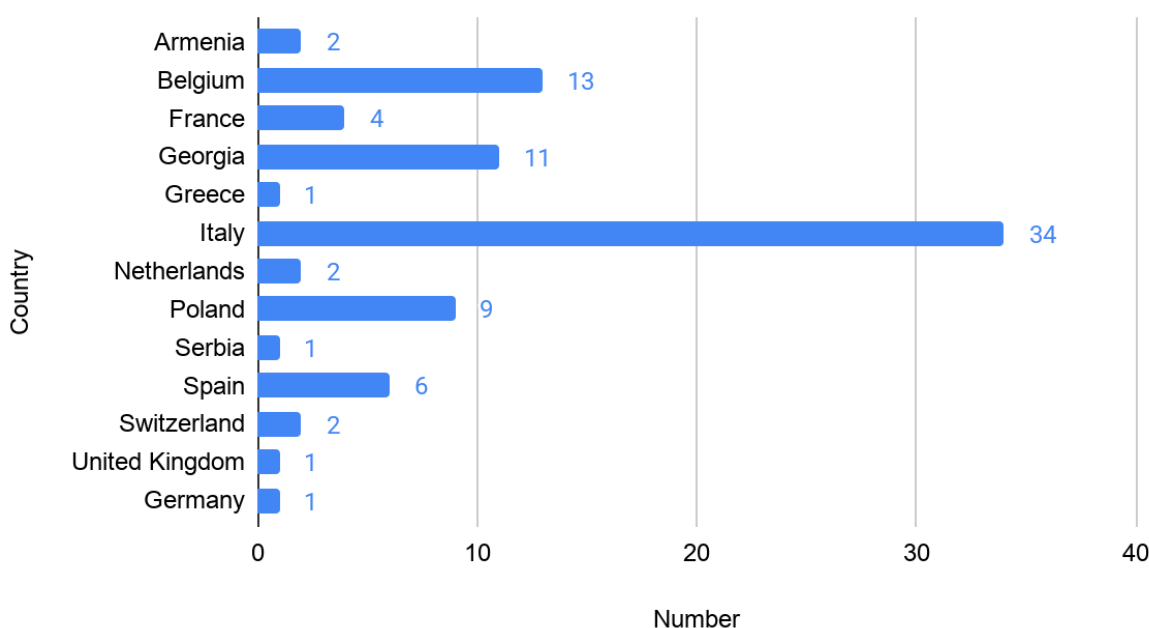
Overall, the present analysis builds the knowledge backbone of the project, and the survey deliverable translates raw data into a coherent and strategic narrative, supporting informed decision-making and guiding the design of future project actions.

2. Consolidated report on the organisations' and companies' responses

The survey collected 87 responses from organisations, ensuring broad and diverse geographical coverage across Europe and neighbouring regions. Contributions were received from 13 countries, reflecting the transnational scope of the analysis and the variety of contexts in which non-formal craft education operates.

The largest share of responses comes from Italy (39.1%), followed by Belgium (14.9%) and Georgia (12.6%), and Poland (10.3%), which are the project partners' countries. A second group includes Spain (6.9%) and France (4.6%), which together account for a smaller but still relevant number of responses. Additional countries— Armenia, the Netherlands, and Switzerland (each 2.3%), along with Greece, Serbia, the United Kingdom, and Germany (each 1.1%) — are represented with more limited participation, yet they help broaden the diversity of perspectives captured.

Countries covered by the survey



Overall, this distribution reflects both a concentration of responses in key partner countries and a wider geographical outreach, enabling a comparative overview of non-formal craft education practices across different national settings.

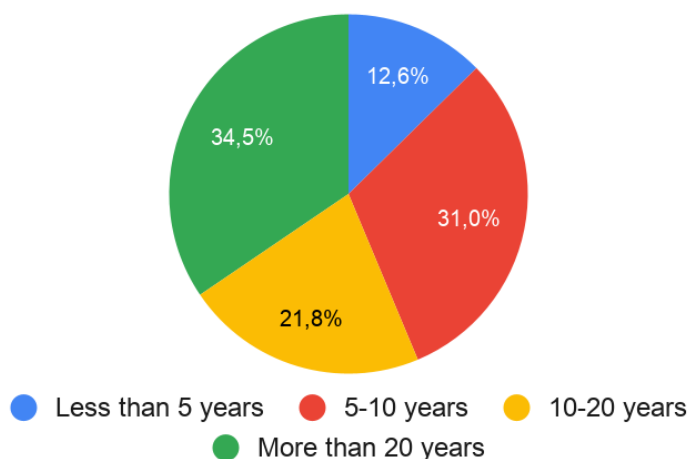
It is important to note that, for several questions, organisations were allowed to select multiple answers; therefore, percentages may exceed 100%. This does not indicate inconsistencies in the data, but rather reflects the complexity and plurality of educational practices, training formats, and challenges within the non-formal craft education ecosystem.

2.1 - Lifespan of Interviewed MSMEs

The distribution of organisations by years of activity (Q n.5) reveals a structurally layered ecosystem, where different generations of actors coexist and interact, each contributing distinct functions to the transmission of craft knowledge. The presence of a significant proportion of long-established organisations (34% operating for more than 20 years) alongside a nearly equivalent share of mid-term actors (31% active for 5–10 years) suggests that non-formal craft education is not a static or declining field, but rather one that combines continuity with gradual renewal.

From a systemic perspective, the weight of organisations with over two decades of experience points to the strong anchoring of craft education in historical practices and accumulated expertise. These actors likely embody the custodianship of traditional knowledge, tacit skills, and pedagogical methods rooted in long-term practice. Their role is crucial not only for preserving techniques but also for ensuring the legitimacy and authenticity of informal training pathways, particularly in sectors closely linked to cultural heritage.

5. How long has your organization been transmitting craft skills ?



At the same time, the substantial share of organisations between 5 and 10 years old indicates the presence of a second generation of actors, emerging in response to contemporary dynamics. These newer organisations may reflect evolving motivations within the craft sector, such as the

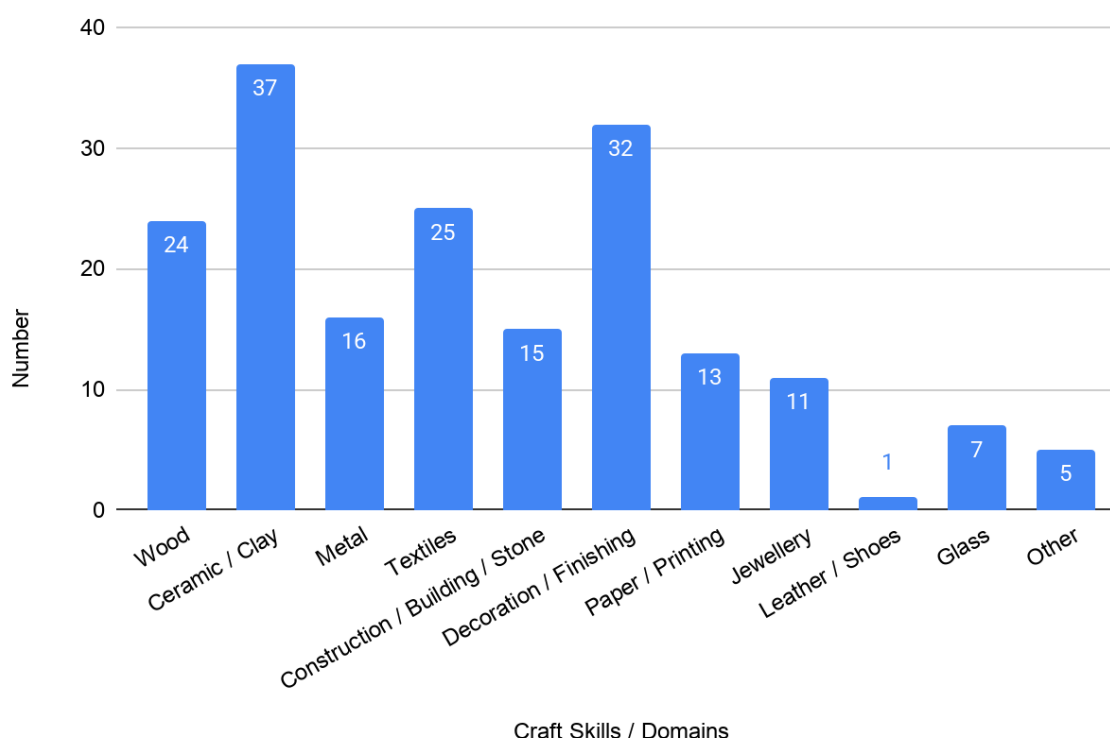
revival of manual professions, the growing interest in sustainable production, or the search for alternative career paths. Their relatively strong presence suggests that non-formal craft education is

experiencing adaptive renewal, driven by changing socio-economic contexts rather than by purely institutional continuity.

2.2 - Craft sectors represented in the survey

The distribution of craft skills within the surveyed organisations (Q n.6) reveals a clear concentration around material-based, heritage-oriented practices, with ceramics, clay work, decorative techniques, restoration, metalwork, textiles, and woodworking emerging as the most prominent domains. These activities are closely linked to the preservation and reinterpretation of cultural heritage, requiring not only technical proficiency but also a deep understanding of historical materials, styles, and practices.

6. Which craft skills, techniques are taught in your organization? (Select all that apply)



In this sense, non-formal education does not merely support craft production—it actively contributes to the continuity of cultural memory, ensuring that traditional techniques remain alive and adaptable within contemporary contexts.

When the organisations were asked to specify the actual domains of craft training they provide (Q n. 7), the wide range of responses detailing the techniques taught by organisations offers a particularly rich illustration of the diversity of non-formal craft education.

At one end of the spectrum, several organisations emphasise vernacular construction techniques closely tied to local ecosystems and sustainable practices. For example, a respondent from Belgium highlights the teaching of *“rammed earth, adobe, wattle-and-daub, clay plasters, cob, earth floors, ceilings etc.”*, pointing to a strong focus on bio-based construction and traditional ecological knowledge. Similarly, organisations working on lime plasters and historical finishes—for instance, from Italy—describe training in *“historical plaster stuccos, lime stuccos, lime and plaster floors, imitation wood, marble and decorative paint.”* These examples demonstrate how non-formal education functions as a custodian of endangered building techniques, often reactivated today through sustainability concerns.

Alongside these, several organisations specialise in highly technical and niche crafts, requiring long processes of skill acquisition. A respondent from Italy refers to *“restoration and tuning of fortepiano¹⁴”*, while another highlights *“dismantling of mosaic panels, restoration and installation.”* These cases illustrate how non-formal settings play a crucial role in maintaining rare, high-level artisanal knowledge, often transmitted through close mentorship and hands-on practice.

Importantly, the dataset also captures the presence of contemporary and experimental practices, pointing to emerging directions within the sector. Responses such as *“3D and AI knitting”* (likely from Western Europe) or *“reuse of plastics, particularly packaging and plastic film”* (Italy) show how some organisations are integrating technological innovation and sustainability-driven experimentation into their teaching. Likewise, references to *“experimental archaeology”* in ceramic production highlight attempts to bridge past and present through research-based approaches.

Another dimension of diversity concerns the purpose and audience of training. While many organisations provide structured, professional-oriented training, others explicitly position their activities differently. A Belgian respondent states: *“We run craft workshops for children and the general public for entertainment, not training for professionals.”*

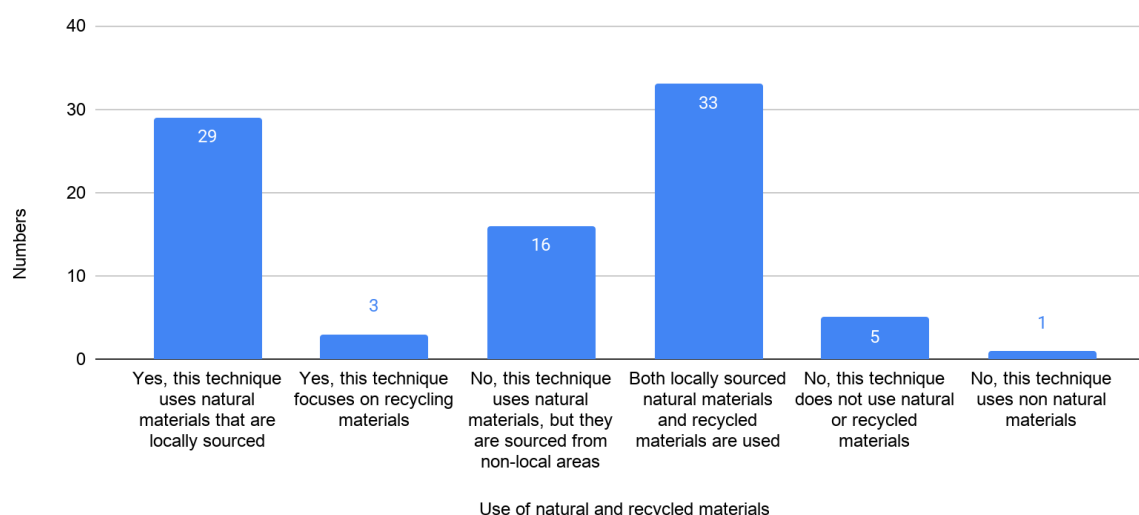
This underscores the multi-layered nature of the sector, which simultaneously encompasses vocational training, cultural participation, and informal learning.

¹⁴ *Fortepiano: an early version of the piano developed in the late 17th and 18th centuries, characterized by a lighter touch and a narrower dynamic range than the modern piano. It was widely used during the Classical period, notably by composers such as Mozart and early Beethoven.*

2.3 - Sustainability embedded in the non-formal craft education

The analysis of material practices across organisations (Q n.8) reveals a strong and clearly structured ecological orientation, while at the same time highlighting the complexity and diversity of how sustainability is actually implemented in practice. Quantitatively, this trend is well established: a large majority of organisations rely on sustainable approaches, with around one third (33%) combining locally sourced natural materials and recycled inputs, and an additional 33% using exclusively locally sourced natural materials. A further 18% use natural materials that are not locally sourced, while approximately 4% focus specifically on recycling practices alone. Only a marginal share—about 7% in total—do not rely on natural or recycled materials.

8. Is this technique using natural materials that are locally sourced? Or recycling materials?



These figures confirm that sustainability is not an isolated feature but a defining structural characteristic of non-formal craft education. However, the qualitative responses reveal that sustainability is not applied uniformly: rather, it takes the form of a situated and context-dependent practice, shaped by geography, material availability, and craft-specific requirements.

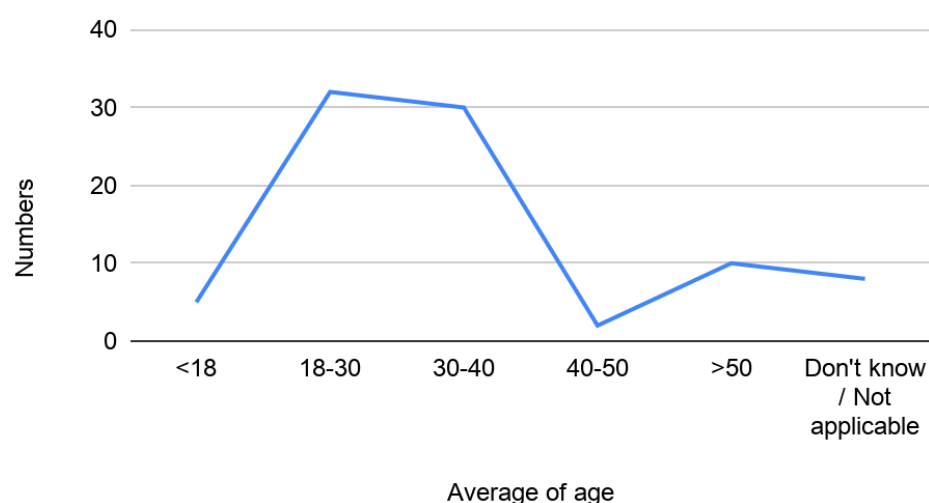
We can say that non-formal craft education functions as a practical laboratory of sustainability, where ecological principles are embedded in everyday practice rather than treated as abstract goals. The widespread use of natural, local, and recycled materials demonstrates a strong alignment with circular economy principles, while the diversity of approaches reveals that sustainability is inherently contextual, adaptive, and negotiated.

Rather than a uniform model, the sector presents a continuum of practices, ranging from fully local and circular systems to hybrid configurations that balance sustainability with technical and economic constraints. This makes non-formal craft education particularly valuable, not only as a means of transmitting skills, but also as a field of experimentation for sustainable production models, grounded in real-world conditions and capable of informing broader transitions toward more resilient and locally embedded economies.

2.4 - Profile of learners

Organisations were asked to describe the demographic and social profile of learners, informing us of their gender, age and motivations they may have to join the courses (Q n. 10, 11,12). Data revealed that for 62% of the respondents, the majority of students/learners are women, for 28% there is a balance between male and female participation, and for 10% the majority are men. Regarding the average age of the learners, responses indicate clearly a majority of adult learners, mostly between 18 and 40 years old.

11. What is the average age of the learners?



The distribution of learner profiles highlights a dual and hybrid nature of demand within non-formal craft education. On one side, a significant share of learners is driven by professional motivations, particularly in the form of upskilling, specialisation, and career transition. The presence of individuals undergoing retraining, seeking better employment, or facing unemployment indicates that craft education is increasingly perceived as a strategic pathway for labour market repositioning, offering an alternative to more conventional professional trajectories. This reflects broader socio-economic

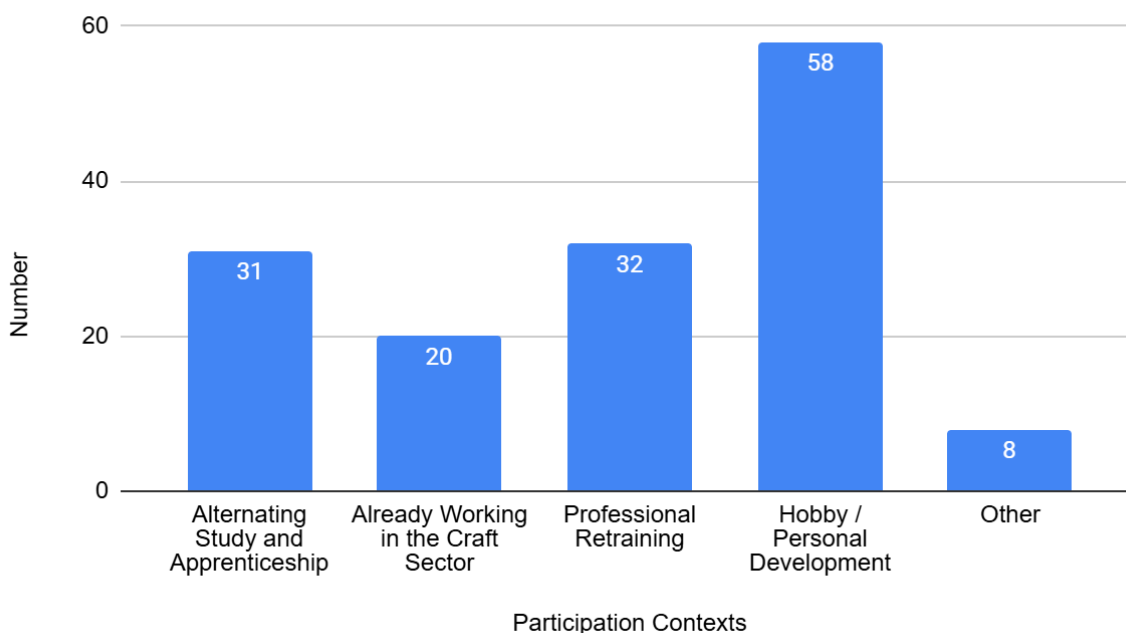
dynamics in which individuals turn to craft skills as a means of securing more meaningful, flexible, or resilient employment opportunities.

At the same time, the equally strong representation of learners motivated by hobby and personal development underscores the role of craft education beyond purely economic purposes. It acts as a space for creativity, well-being, and cultural engagement, attracting participants whose goals are not strictly professional.

The coexistence of these motivations suggests that non-formal craft education functions as a flexible and inclusive environment, accommodating diverse and often evolving trajectories. This plurality is a key strength, but it also points to the need for differentiated support systems capable of addressing both professionalisation pathways and personal learning experiences.

Questions n. 13 and n. 14 asked about the context in which the learner is taking the course, and the skills that participants must have in order to access the training.

13. Under what circumstances do learners most often attend courses in your organization?

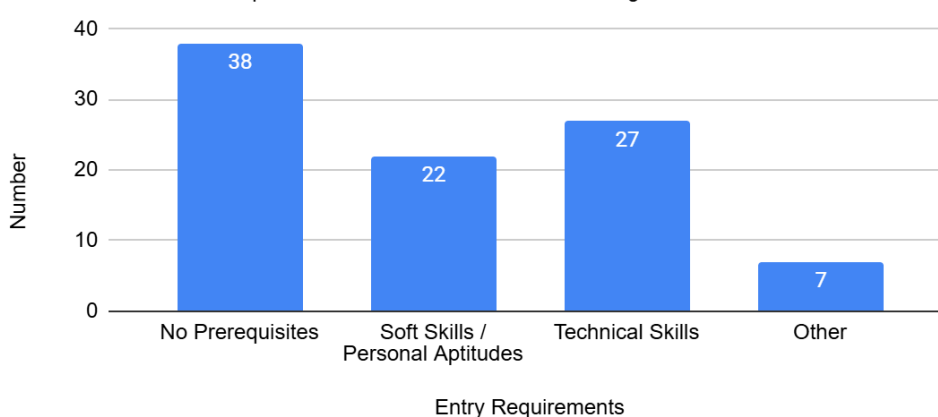


The pedagogical structure emerging reflects a highly accessible, flexible, and practice-oriented learning model, which distinguishes non-formal craft education from more rigid formal systems. Entry requirements are generally low: about 44% of organisations require no prior competencies,

while 25% emphasise soft skills such as motivation, manual dexterity, and passion, and only 31% require specific technical skills.

Participation contexts further illustrate this hybrid pedagogical model and the diversity of learner pathways. While 67% of organisations report participants attending courses for hobby or personal development, a significant share is engaged in professional retraining (37%), apprenticeship-type models combining study and work (36%), or already operating within the craft sector (23%). This distribution confirms that non-formal education does not follow a single trajectory but rather

14. What are the skills required from learners to attend the training?

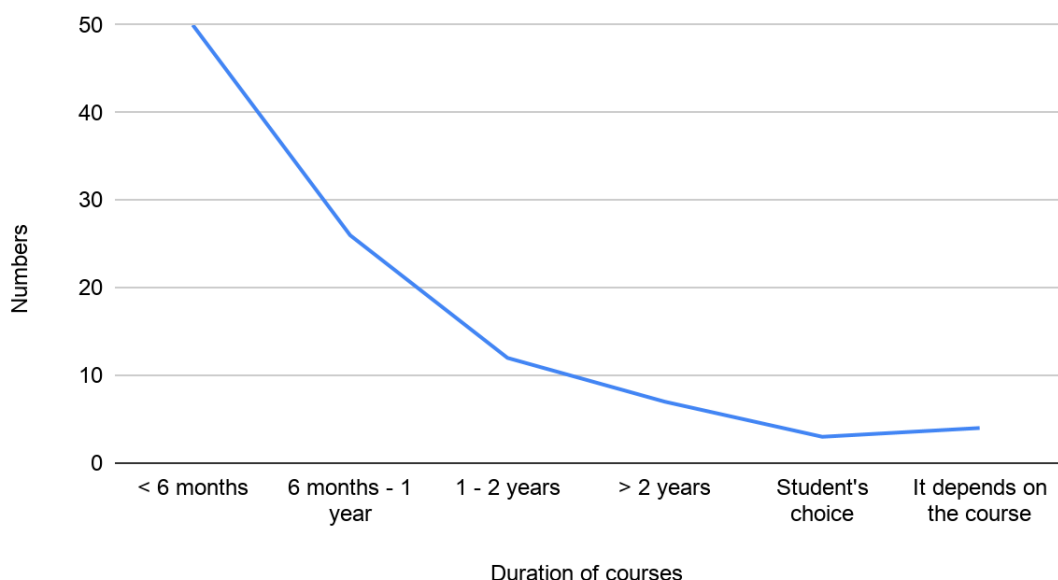


supports a continuum of learning experiences, ranging from introductory exploration to professional consolidation.

Accessibility is further reinforced by the structure of

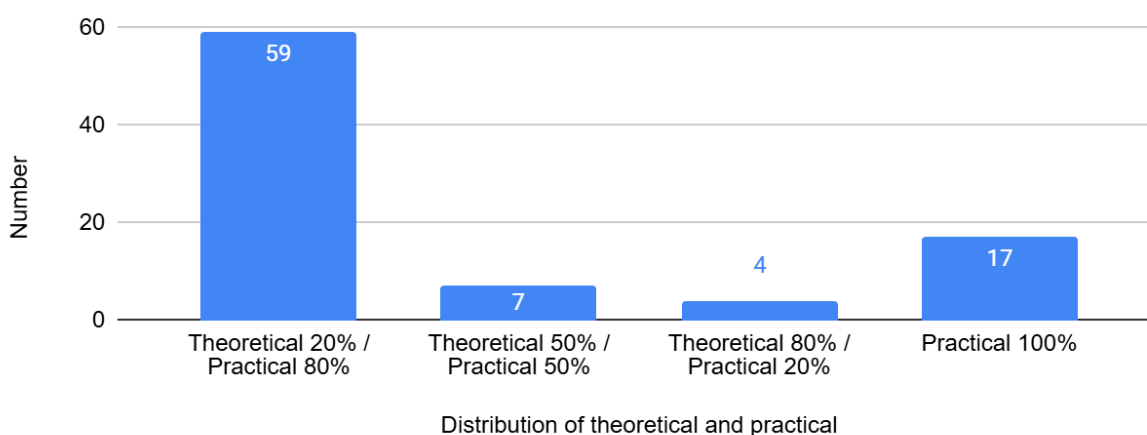
the courses themselves. Most programmes are short-term (under 6 months) and characterised by a high degree of adaptability to learners' needs (Q n. 15).

15. What is the duration of the courses ? (Select all that apply)



At the same time, the pedagogical approach is strongly practice-based (Q n.16), with a clear majority of organisations—approximately 68%— that structure their courses with around 80% practical training and only 20% theoretical input, while an additional 20% of organisations deliver fully practical training with no theoretical component. By contrast, only a small minority adopts a balanced approach (8% with a 50/50 split) or prioritises theory (less than 5%).

16. How are theoretical and practical courses divided? (Choose the closest percentage)



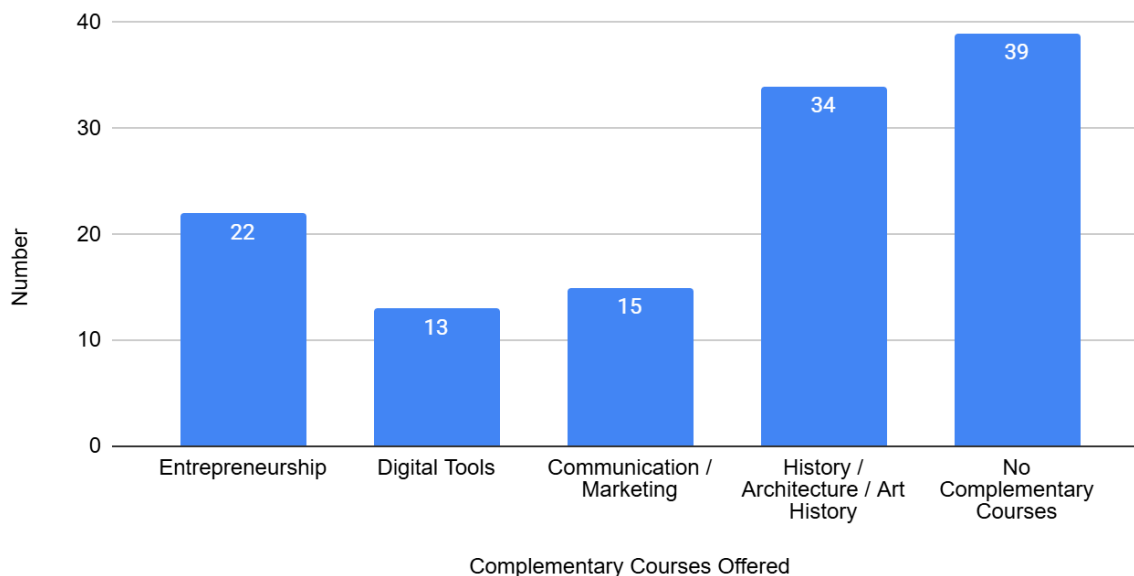
This distribution highlights that non-formal **craft education is fundamentally grounded in experiential learning, where knowledge is acquired through direct engagement with materials, tools, and processes.** The marginal role of theory does not imply its absence, but rather its integration within practice, often transmitted informally through demonstration, repetition, and mentorship. This reinforces the idea that craft skills rely heavily on tacit and embodied knowledge, which cannot be fully codified in abstract or classroom-based formats.

From an interpretative perspective, this strong practical bias positions non-formal education as a complementary system to formal education, effectively addressing a structural gap. While formal institutions tend to prioritise theoretical foundations, non-formal training provides the manual competencies, technical gestures, and process-based understanding that are essential in craft professions. In doing so, it not only enhances employability but also ensures the continuity of skills that depend on hands-on transmission, particularly in heritage and material-based sectors.

2.5 - Soft & transversal competencies: going beyond craft skills

While a significant share of organisations still focuses exclusively on craft skills (around 45%), others integrate complementary dimensions, most notably history, architecture, and art history (39%), reinforcing the cultural and heritage-based nature of the sector. In contrast, skills directly linked to professionalisation—such as entrepreneurship (25%), communication and marketing (17%), and especially digital tools (15%)—are less systematically included. As noted in the Q n.17.

17. In addition to skills-oriented courses, does your organisation offer any of the following? (Select all that apply)



This distribution reveals a structural imbalance: while the cultural context of craft is relatively well developed, the competencies needed to support market integration, business development, and digital innovation remain limited. As a result, an emerging but incomplete hybridisation is taking place, where traditional knowledge is still dominant, and new skill areas are only partially integrated. Strengthening this balance appears essential to better equip learners for both professional sustainability and contemporary creative practices, while preserving the strong heritage foundations of the sector.

2.6 - Profile of trainers and educators in non-formal craft education

The responses concerning the qualification and experience of educators (Q n. 18) reveal a highly diverse yet strongly practice-driven profile, where professional legitimacy is primarily grounded in direct experience in the craft itself rather than in formal teaching credentials alone. A recurring pattern across the answers is that most educators are active practitioners, often teaching the same craft as their main profession. As one respondent simply states, *“Most of the educators have the skill they teach as their job,”* while others confirm that training is delivered by *“craftspeople”* or *“artisans with proven expertise and operational in the field with their own business.”* This highlights a key characteristic of non-formal craft education: teaching is largely embedded within professional practice, ensuring that knowledge transmission remains closely connected to real production processes. Indeed, we may also say this is an additional income opportunity, ensuring business viability.

A major pathway into teaching is through apprenticeship and long-term experiential learning, often requiring many years—if not decades—of practice. Several responses emphasise this strongly, for example:

“It takes at least twenty years of experience... having before been an apprentice with several renowned restorers before you can start your own atelier.”

or

“We retrained... under a master shoemaker,”

and

“They learned the technique from master craftsmen... before becoming trainers.”

This reflects the persistence of traditional master–apprentice transmission models, where skills are acquired progressively through observation, repetition, and mentorship. In some cases, this learning process is embedded within family structures:

“Passing on skills within the family, from generation to generation, starting with childhood,”

or simply

“son of art.”

Such examples highlight the role of intergenerational transmission as a core mechanism for sustaining craft knowledge.

Alongside these traditional pathways, a significant number of educators also possess formal academic backgrounds, particularly in art and design fields. Many respondents refer to qualifications such as *“Graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts”, “MA degree... teaching at the Academy of Arts”, “Royal Academy of Arts.”*

While formal education provides theoretical and design-oriented knowledge, it is often complemented, and sometimes legitimised, by hands-on experience in professional environments. Another important dimension is the presence of self-taught or diversified learning pathways, reflecting the openness and flexibility of the sector. Many educators describe trajectories such as:

“Practical knowledge acquired through experience,”

“Self-taught blacksmith... 25 years’ experience,”

or

“Training with other specialists and self-taught.”

In addition, mobility and international exposure appear in some cases as part of the learning process, through programmes like Erasmus+ or work experiences across countries:

“Specialising in studios... in Milan, Switzerland, Murano...”

These elements indicate that expertise is often built through accumulated and diverse experiences, rather than through a single formal pathway.

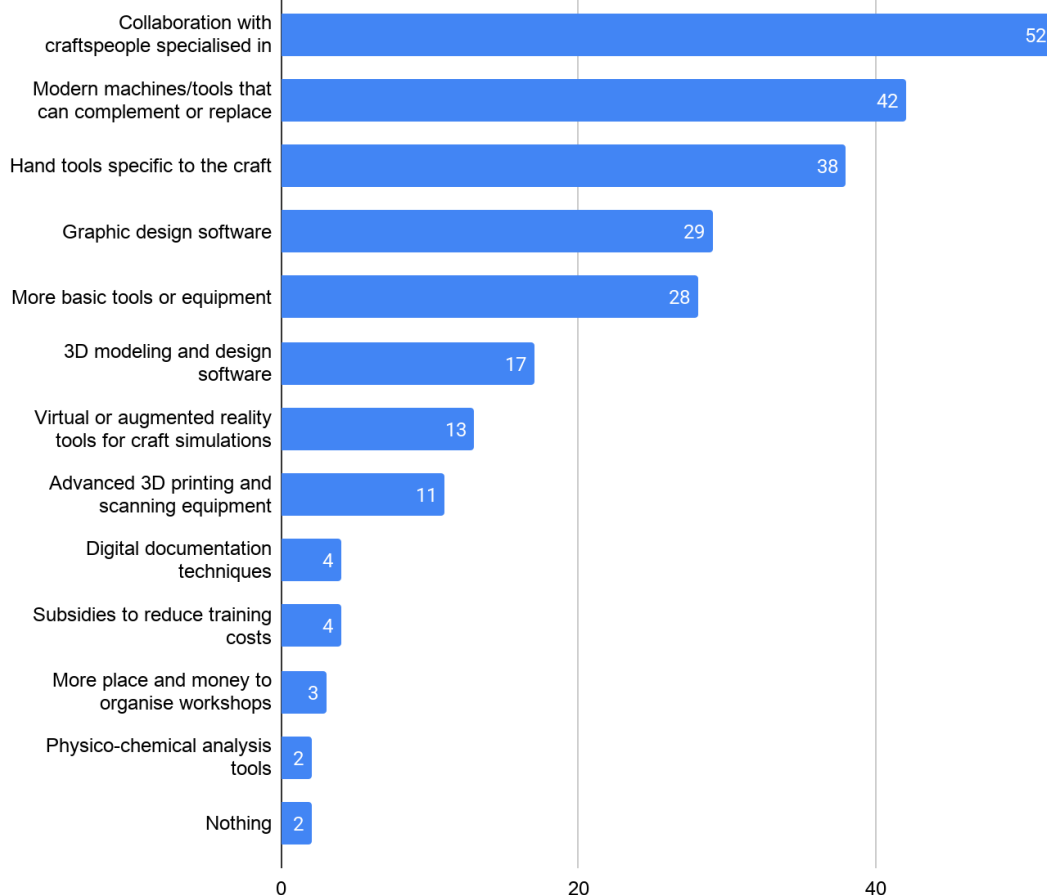
2.7 - Additional aids to support the skills’ transmission in non-formal craft education paths

The survey asked what kind of external aid or support organisations may need to strengthen the transmission (Q n. 19) - percentages may exceed 100% because organisations were allowed to select multiple answers for the question. The most pressing requirement is collaboration with other craftspeople (≈60%), followed by the need for modern machines and tools (≈48%) and specialised hand tools (≈44%). Close behind are requests for basic equipment (≈32%) and graphic design software (≈33%), indicating that both fundamental operational resources and complementary digital skills are considered essential. In contrast, more advanced technologies - such as 3D modelling (≈20%), VR/AR tools (≈15%), or 3D printing (≈13%) - remain secondary, while needs related to infrastructure or funding (each below 5%) appear less frequently in quantitative terms but are often highlighted qualitatively as critical constraints.

This distribution suggests that strengthening the teaching process relies primarily on reinforcing core operational capacities and professional networks, rather than on high-end technological upgrades alone.

As many respondents emphasise, *“collaboration with other craftspeople specialised in other techniques”* is essential to enrich training and broaden knowledge, while the availability of appropriate tools, both traditional and modern, directly conditions the quality of learning: *“hand tools specific to the craft... modern machines that complement traditional techniques.”* At the same time, the growing presence of design and digital tools points to a progressive integration of new competencies, although still uneven.

19. What do you need that may help you to strengthen the teaching process and better support learners? (Select all that apply)

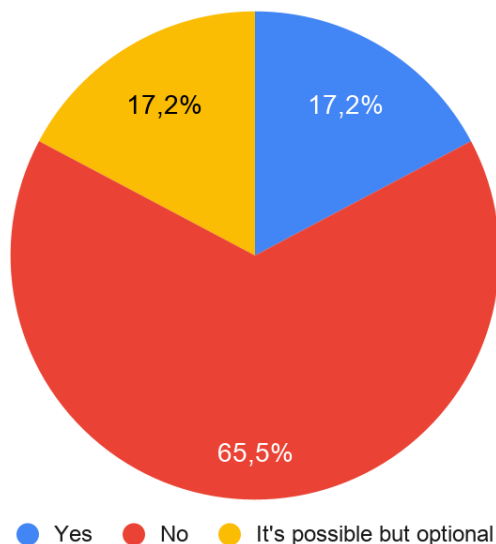


Overall, the data highlight a sector where the priority is to consolidate its material and relational foundations, while gradually incorporating innovation, rather than replacing traditional practices with technological solutions.

2.8 - Internships, apprenticeships, assessments of competencies and certification in non-formal craft education

The data show that internships are not widely integrated into non-formal craft education programmes (Q n.20). Around two-thirds of organisations (65,5%) stated that the educational programme does not include internships in local firms or in other regions/countries, while only around 17% include them as a standard feature, and another 17% provide them as an optional opportunity.

20. Does the educational program include internships in local firms or in other regions / countries?



This indicates a weak connection between training and work-based experience, suggesting that **while practical skills are developed in training settings, structured links to professional environments remain limited. Strengthening internships could significantly improve the transition to employment and sector integration.**



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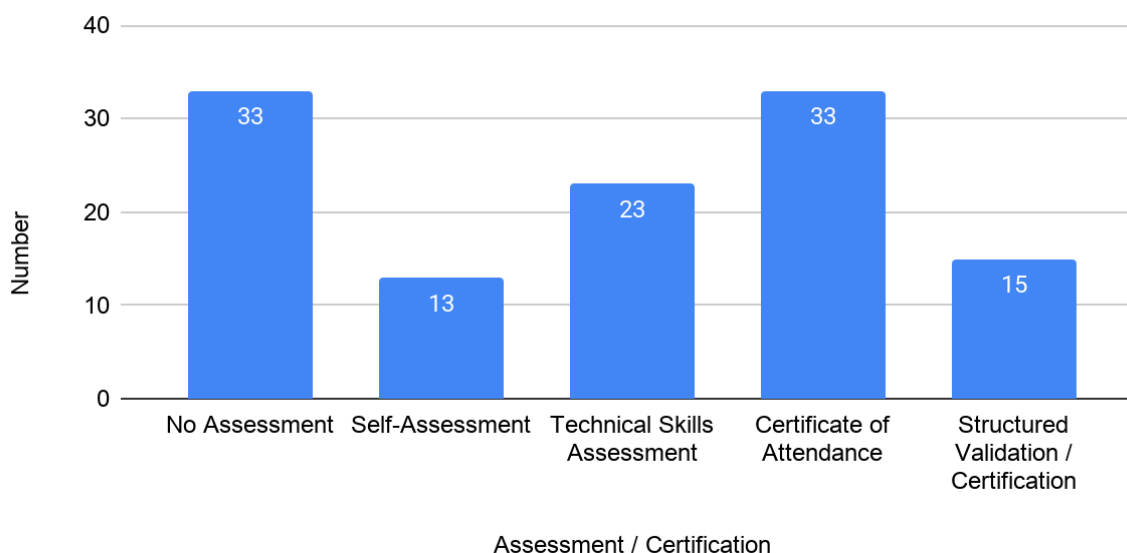


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21. Is there any assessment of acquired skills at the end of the training? And do you deliver a kind of certificate?



Regarding a system of assessment and certification within non-formal craft education (Q n. 21), a significant percentage - respondent are allowed to select more options because realities may forward different kind of trainings with different lengths, targets, aims - share that organisations (around 38%) do not carry out any formal assessment of acquired skills, while others rely on informal or partial methods, such as self-assessment (15%) or technical evaluations (26%). At the same time, certification practices remain limited: although 38% issue a certificate of attendance, only a smaller proportion (17%) provide any form of structured validation or recognised certification.

This distribution reveals a clear imbalance between training delivery and skills recognition. While learning processes are often experiential and effective, their outcomes are only partially formalised, reducing their visibility and transferability in professional contexts. As a result, **non-formal craft education demonstrates strong pedagogical value but lacks consistent frameworks for validating competencies, which may limit learners' ability to leverage their training in the labour market.**

The qualitative responses (Q n. 22) confirm that assessment and certification in non-formal craft education are generally informal, flexible, and not standardised, often relying more on practice-based feedback than on structured evaluation systems. While many organisations provide some form of certificate—typically confirming participation, as in *“we issue certificates upon completion”* or *“learners receive attendance certificates after the course”*—these are rarely linked to formally recognised qualifications. In many cases, assessment takes place through continuous

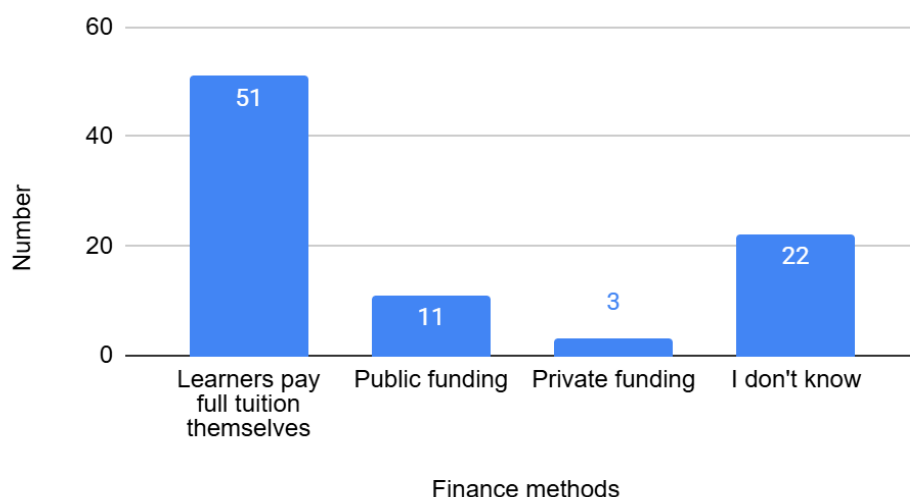
observation, with educators emphasising hands-on progress rather than formal testing: *“progress is assessed on an ongoing basis... the person leaves with a finished object made with their own hands.”* At the same time, several respondents highlight structural limitations, noting that *“official certificates are issued only by accredited programmes”* or *“as I am not a recognised teaching institution, I cannot qualify my students.”*

As a result, the system ensures strong practical learning outcomes but remains fragmented in terms of recognition, often relying on informal validation, references, or reputation rather than widely transferable certification frameworks.

2.9 - The costs of non-formal craft education courses

The data on course costs and financing (Q n. 23-24) reveal a highly heterogeneous and fragmented economic model, closely linked to the diversity of formats, durations, and institutional contexts within non-formal craft education. Training can range from completely free courses—often funded by public institutions, municipalities, or donors (*“All our courses are free of charge,” “the courses were all subsidised by institutions”*)—to very high-cost, intensive programmes, such as *“€10,000 for 5 months”* or *“€1,500–2,000 per week”*. Between these extremes, a wide spectrum of pricing exists, frequently calculated on an hourly or project basis (*“€25 per hour plus materials,” “€100 for 12 hours,” “€60 for a 3-hour workshop”*) or depending on content, duration, and materials (*“depends on the length of the course and raw materials”*). This variety reflects a system that combines accessible entry-level opportunities with specialised, high-investment training, but without a standardised cost structure.

24. How do majority of the learners finance the courses?

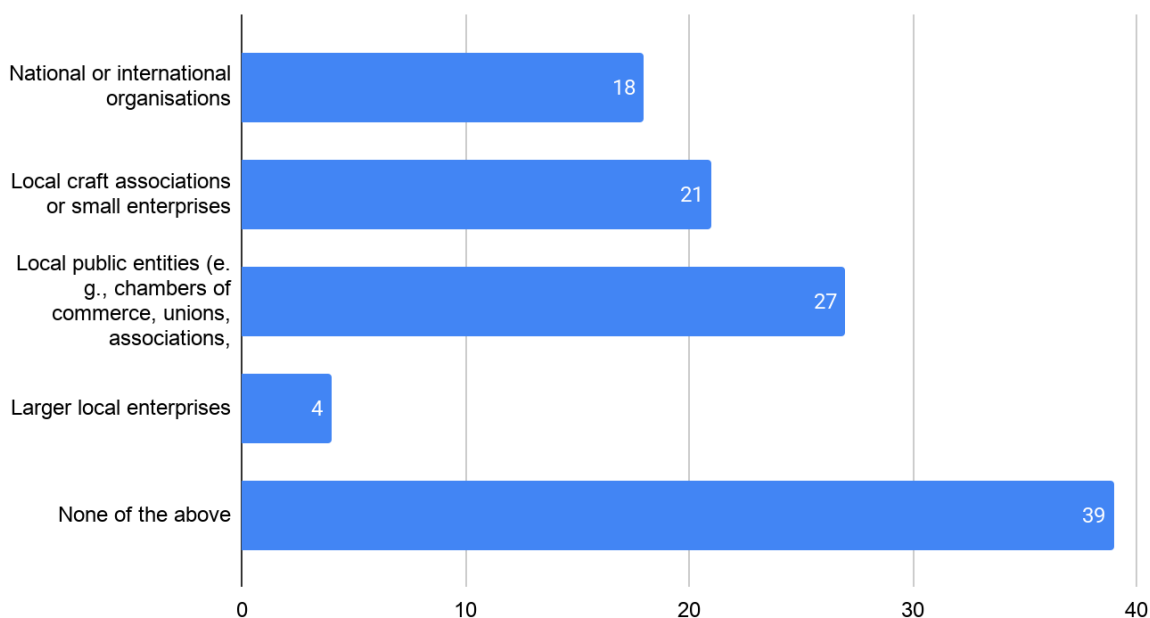


This variability is closely mirrored in how learners finance their participation. In most cases, learners pay the full tuition themselves, confirming that **access to training is largely dependent on individual financial capacity**. However, the presence of public funding schemes and free courses—especially for specific groups such as unemployed participants or through institutional programmes—introduces an important layer of accessibility. Some organisations also report private funding or scholarships, although these appear less frequent. Overall, the system reflects a dual structure: on one side, market-based training sustained by private investment from learners; on the other, publicly supported or subsidised initiatives that aim to broaden access. This duality reinforces both the flexibility and inclusiveness of the sector and highlights potential inequalities in access depending on available funding opportunities.

2.10 - Collaboration and relationships with territories and stakeholders

For what concerns collaboration in the territory and support in the implementation of training, a significant number of respondents indicate that many training providers do not have stable partnerships or institutional support (Q n. 25). Among those who do collaborate, the most frequent relationships are with local public entities (such as municipalities, chambers of commerce, and associations) and, to a lesser extent, small enterprises. These connections underline the strong territorial anchoring of non-formal craft education, where support systems are primarily local and community-based rather than systemic or structured at higher levels.

25. Do you collaborate with or receive support from any of the following? (Select all that apply)



Collaboration with national or international organisations appears more sporadic, while links with larger enterprises are relatively rare, suggesting limited integration with broader economic and industrial networks. Even where collaborations exist, they are often fragmented or project-based rather than long-term strategic partnerships. Overall, **the data points to a sector that is locally embedded but structurally disconnected, where strengthening networks - especially across different scales and actors - could significantly enhance knowledge exchange, resource sharing, and the overall sustainability of training activities.**

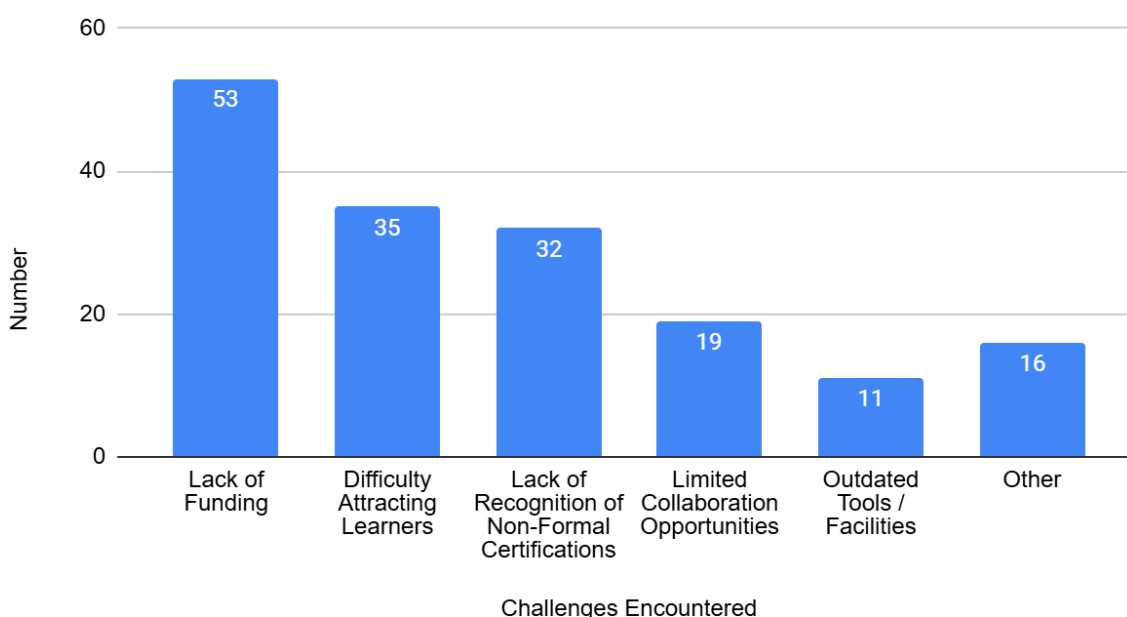
2.11 - Challenges and threats in the non-formal craft education path

Question n. 26 asked about challenges organisations are facing in their journey to transmit the traditional crafts knowledge through courses and training. Data analysis clearly shows that non-formal craft education faces a set of structural and interrelated challenges, with a lack of funding emerging as the most pervasive issue, often combined with difficulty in attracting learners and a lack of recognition of informal certifications. These three elements form a recurring pattern, highlighting a fragile system in which organisations struggle simultaneously with financial sustainability, visibility, and institutional legitimacy. As many respondents underline, interest is highly dependent on affordability: *“when workshops are funded... the interest exceeds our capacity, but when participants*

have to pay, it is difficult to form groups.” This points to a structural tension between demand for craft education and its economic accessibility.

Beyond financial constraints, the data reveal deeper systemic issues, particularly related to generational renewal and cultural perception. Many respondents stress the declining interest of young people, often linked to the perceived lack of economic prospects: *“young people are not attracted to careers that do not bring economic sustainability”,* or *“craft is seen as obsolete or uncompetitive.”* At the same time, there is a strong concern about the loss of knowledge and ageing of master artisans, with some warning that entire skills may disappear: *“the number of specialised restorers will diminish to a quarter... these skills will vanish.”* This is compounded by a lack of institutional support and coordination, as expressed in calls for *“recognition by public organisations”* and *“real support to train new generations.”*

26. What challenges does your organisation face in teaching craft skills informally? (Select all that apply)



Overall, the challenges illustrate a sector caught between high cultural value and low structural support, where financial fragility, weak recognition systems, and limited attractiveness for younger generations risk undermining the continuity of craft knowledge. At the same time, many responses reaffirm a strong personal commitment to transmission, highlighting the need to reposition craft education as both economically viable and culturally relevant to ensure its future.

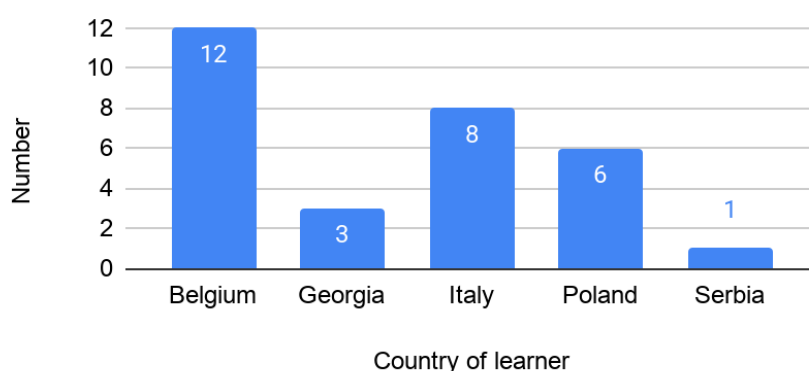
At first glance, the results of Q n.19 and Q n. 26 may seem contradictory, particularly regarding the role of funding. However, this difference can be explained by the distinct focus of each question. Question n.26 explores the structural challenges organisations face in sustaining craft education, where financial constraints emerge as a pervasive and underlying barrier affecting accessibility, visibility, and long-term viability. In contrast, Question n.19 invites respondents to identify practical forms of support that could enhance their day-to-day training activities. In this context, the emphasis shifts toward operational and relational needs, such as collaboration with other craftspeople and access to appropriate tools, which are perceived as more immediate and actionable enablers of skills transmission. Rather than being contradictory, these findings are complementary: they reveal a **sector that is structurally constrained by limited funding, while prioritising collaboration and resource-sharing as key strategies to strengthen practice and resilience within those constraints.**

3. Consolidated report on the students' and learners' responses

This second survey focuses specifically on profiling learners involved in non-formal craft education, providing a complementary perspective to the main analysis focused on organisations. A total of 30 learners responded, offering insight into their backgrounds, motivations, and learning pathways within the craft education ecosystem.

In terms of geographical distribution, the sample shows a diverse but Europe-centred composition,

Countries covered by the survey



with respondents coming mainly from Belgium (12 learners), followed by Italy (8), Poland (6), Georgia (3) and Serbia (1). This distribution reflects both the strong participation of Western European contexts, particularly Belgium and Italy, and the inclusion of Eastern and neighbouring regions, allowing for a comparative

understanding of learner profiles across different cultural and socio-economic environments.

3.1 - Composition of the respondents

The combined analysis of age and gender (Q n. 1-2) provides a clearer picture of the socio-demographic profile of learners engaged in non-formal craft education. The majority of

participants are concentrated in the 30–40 age group (53%), followed by a significant proportion of over-50 learners (37%), while younger participants remain marginal (7% aged 18–30 and 3% aged 40–50). This confirms that the sector mainly attracts individuals in mid-career transition phases or later-life stages, rather than early-career entrants.

This pattern is further reinforced by the strong gender imbalance, with a clear predominance of female participants. Out of the 30 respondents, around 83% are women and 17% men, indicating that non-formal craft education is largely attended by women. This aligns with the broader trend observed in the main survey and suggests that craft activities are often associated with personal development, creativity, and flexible career pathways that may resonate more strongly with female audiences. At the same time, the combination of a female-dominated and mature learner base highlights both a strength—high engagement in lifelong learning—and a challenge, namely the limited participation of younger and more gender-balanced cohorts, which is crucial for ensuring long-term sustainability and renewal in the craft sector.

3.2 Craft techniques learned

The distribution of craft techniques learned by participants (Q n.4) highlights a strong concentration around material-based and heritage-oriented practices, with a clear dominance of ceramics and clay-related techniques.



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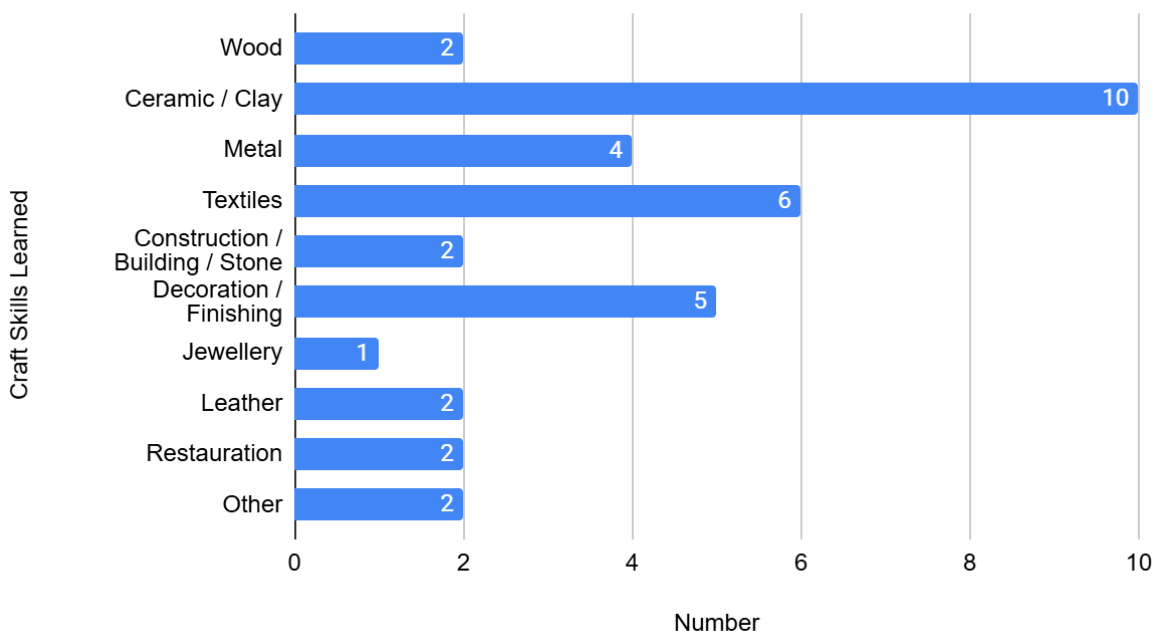


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4. Which craft skills, techniques are you learning/learned ? (Select all that apply)



A large share of respondents report learning activities such as “*ceramic moulding, turning, painting, casting, kintsugi, restoration*” and “*clay work (making tiles, bricks, azulejos)*”, confirming ceramics as the most recurrent and accessible entry point into craft education. Alongside ceramics, there is a significant presence of textile-related practices—including “*sewing, embroidery, lace-making*”—as well as more specialised domains such as metal engraving, gilding, and restoration techniques, indicating a strong link with traditional decorative and heritage crafts.

At the same time, the responses reveal a high degree of diversity and hybridity, ranging from design-oriented practices (“*fashion and pattern making,*” “*bag making*”) to construction and architectural crafts (“*stone working, plastering, surface decoration, furniture restoration*”). Some learners engage in very specialised techniques, such as “*metal engraving, etching, guilloché*” or “*seat upholstery,*” while others combine multiple disciplines, reflecting more holistic and interdisciplinary learning paths. Overall, the data confirm that learner engagement mirrors the broader ecosystem: grounded in traditional, material-based skills, but open to cross-disciplinary experimentation and varied levels of professionalisation, from introductory practices to highly specialised craft domains.

The detailed responses (Q n. 5) confirm that learners are not simply acquiring isolated techniques, but engaging in deep, multi-layered learning processes. In ceramics, the dominant field, learning often covers the full production cycle—from shaping and decoration to technical and theoretical

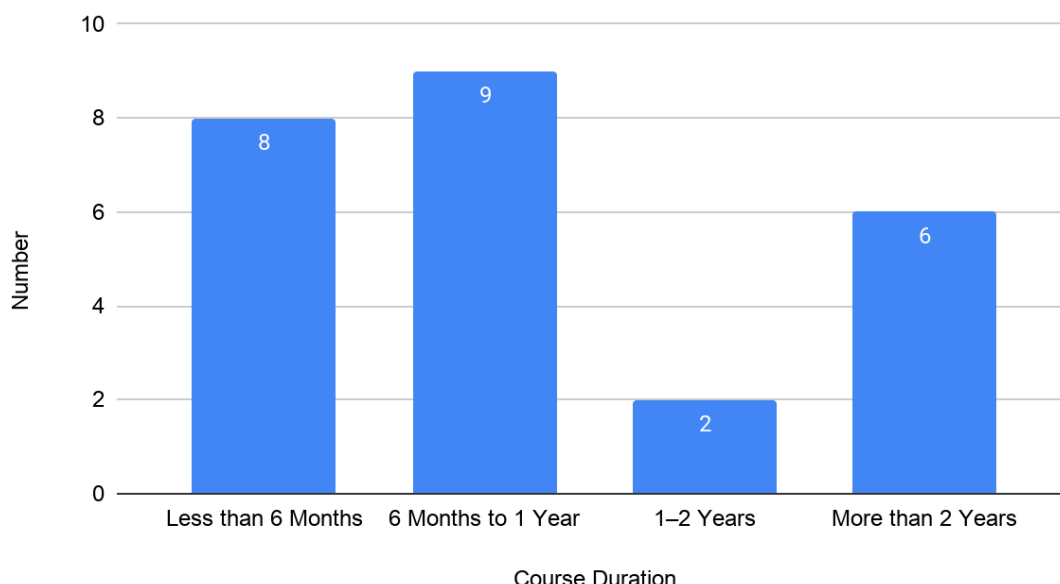
aspects such as chemistry and history (*“turning, casting, decoration... ceramic chemistry”*). This shows that non-formal education supports progressive specialisation and integrated knowledge, rather than basic skill acquisition alone.

At the same time, other areas such as fashion, leather, and textiles reveal similarly holistic approaches, combining design and production (*“moodboard creation, pattern making, assembling”*). The presence of highly specialised practices—such as *“distemper gilding,” “engraving, inlay and chasing,”* or restoration techniques—highlights that the sector also supports advanced and niche expertise. Overall, learners follow hybrid pathways, blending manual skills, creativity, and conceptual thinking, moving between exploratory learning and professional-level specialisation.

3.3 - Nature and composition of courses attended

The duration of courses (Q n. 6) confirms a strong prevalence of short and medium-term learning formats, combined with a significant share of long-term, more intensive pathways. About 30% of learners attend short courses (less than 6 months), often including very brief experiences such as *“15 days”* or modular workshops, highlighting the accessibility and flexibility of non-formal education. The largest group (around 37%) participates in medium-term courses (6 months to 1 year), suggesting a more structured engagement aimed at developing solid competencies over time.

6. What is/was the duration of the course?



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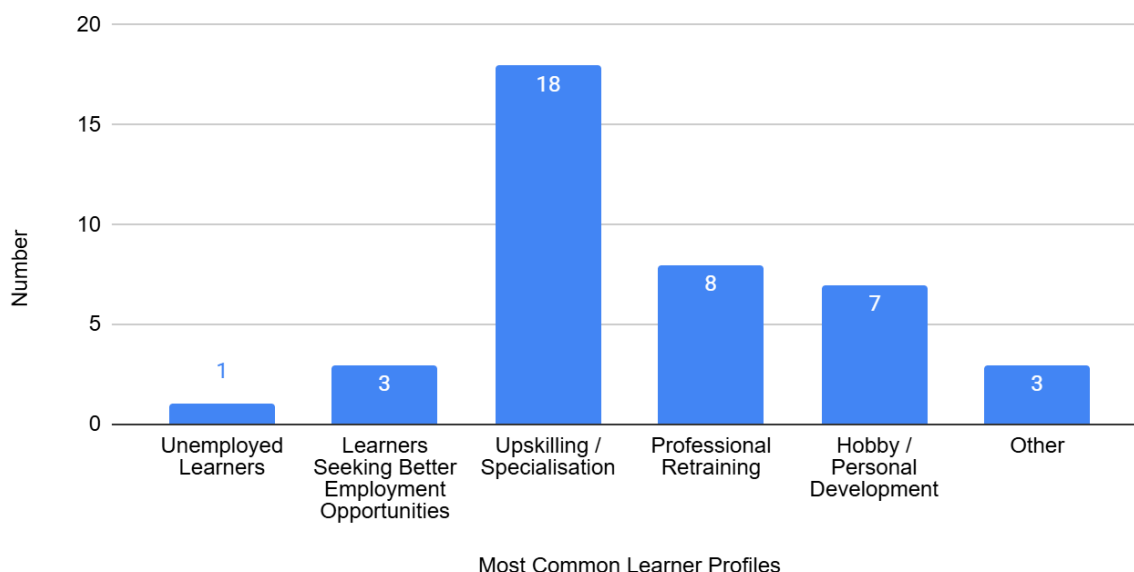
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At the same time, a substantial proportion (around 27%) follows long-term training (more than 2 years or up to 5 years in academy programmes), indicating that non-formal education can also support deep professionalisation pathways. Additional formats, such as *“flexible courses adapted to participants’ needs”*, further confirm the system’s adaptability. Overall, the data shows a multi-layered offer, combining short exploratory experiences with longer, specialised training, capable of responding to both introductory and advanced learning needs.

3.4 - Motivations and professional aims of learners

The responses referred to the motivation that gets learners attending courses (Q n. 7) highlight a dual pattern of participation, confirming that non-formal craft education is attended primarily for personal fulfilment, but also plays a significant role in professional (re)orientation. The most frequent circumstance is clearly a hobby or self-development, which appears in over 55–60% of cases, often as a standalone motivation (*“as a hobby/self-development”*) or combined with others. This confirms that craft learning is widely perceived as a space for creativity, well-being, and personal expression, rather than exclusively as a vocational pathway.

7. Under what circumstances are/were you attending the course/s?



Meanwhile, a high percentage of learners is engaged in professional trajectories, including career change, retraining, or specialisation, representing roughly 40–45% of responses. Many participants combine multiple motivations—for example, *“I specialise and already have a job in the craft sector”* or *“I alternate between study and apprenticeship... while undergoing retraining”*—highlighting the

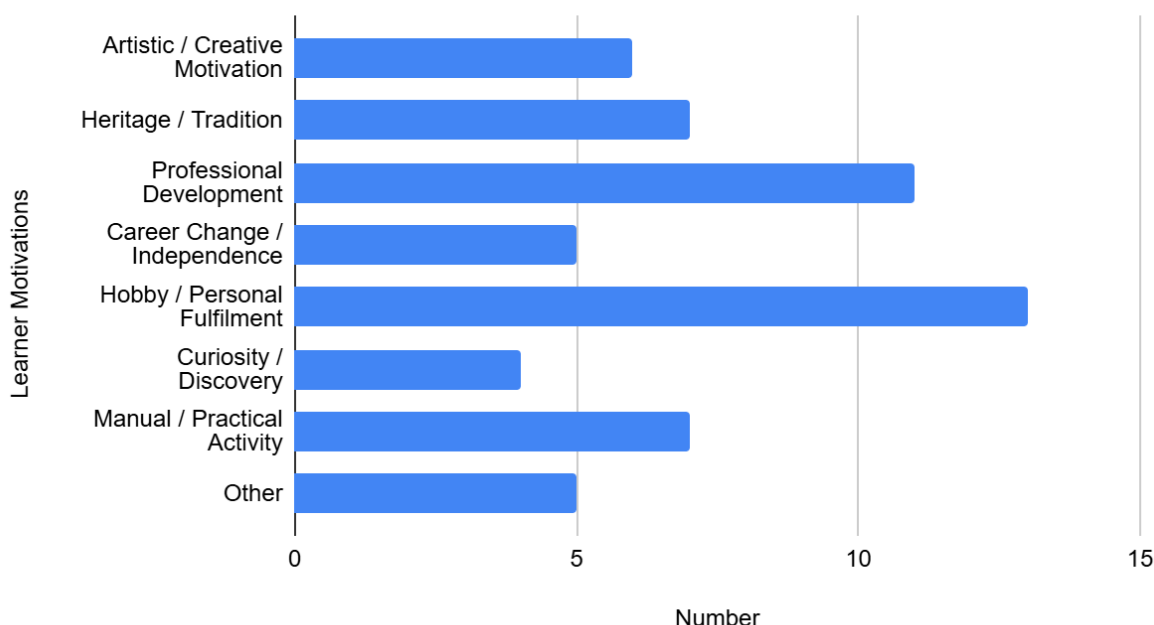
fluidity between learning and working contexts. **This overlap confirms that non-formal craft education operates as a flexible system, supporting both exploratory engagement and concrete professional transitions, often evolving from one into the other.**

The analysis of learner motivations (Q n.8) confirms a strong overlap between personal and professional drivers, with upskilling and specialisation emerging as the most prominent objectives. This motivation appears in approximately 55–60% of responses, often combined with other goals such as career change (*“I want to improve my skills and specialise, I want to reorient my career”*). This highlights that many learners approach craft education as a means of strengthening competencies and building a more structured professional pathway, rather than as a purely exploratory activity.

At the same time, hobby and personal development remain highly significant (around 35–40%), either as a primary motivation (*“I just want to do it as a hobby”*) or combined with skill improvement. Additionally, a notable share of learners—around 30%—express a clear intention to change or reorient their careers, often linked to dissatisfaction with previous employment or the search for more meaningful work. A smaller group (10–15%) is driven by employment needs, including unemployment or the search for better job opportunities. Overall, the data confirm that non-formal craft education functions as a hybrid pathway, where personal interest, professional development, and career transition are deeply interconnected and often evolve over time.

The responses (Q n. 9) reveal that learners’ motivations are deeply personal, value-driven, and often intertwined with professional aspirations.

9. Can you explain your motivation? (Why you decide to attend the course/s?)



While some engage in craft education for well-being, creativity, or as a form of balance—*“a way to escape from professional work”* or *“a passion and a way of life”*—many also link their learning to career development, reorientation, or the search for more meaningful work. In several cases, this involves a conscious shift toward more sustainable, authentic, or heritage-based practices, such as moving away from industrial production to *“slow, precise working... and storytelling through creation.”* At the same time, cultural and identity-related motivations emerge strongly, including the desire to revive traditional techniques, continue family craft traditions, or engage with heritage. Altogether, these motivations reflect **a learning process that goes beyond skills, positioning craft education as a means to redefine one’s relationship to work, creativity, and cultural belonging.**

3.5 - Course’s costs and financing sources

The combined analysis of course costs (Q n.10) and financing (Q n.11) confirms a highly polarised and structurally uneven economic model, where access to non-formal craft education depends largely on available funding opportunities and individual resources. On one side, a significant share of learners attended free or publicly funded courses, supported by NGOs, institutions, or scholarships (*“It was free provided by NGO,” “the course was financed from public funds,” “As I won the scholarship I didn’t pay”*). This group represents roughly 30–35% of respondents, highlighting the crucial role of public support in ensuring accessibility. On the other side, the majority of learners (around 60–65%) report

that they paid the full tuition themselves or with family support, even for high-cost programmes ranging between €5,000 and €9,500, or medium-cost courses between €1,000 and €2,000, as well as modular pricing (“€60 per session,” “50 PLN/hour”).

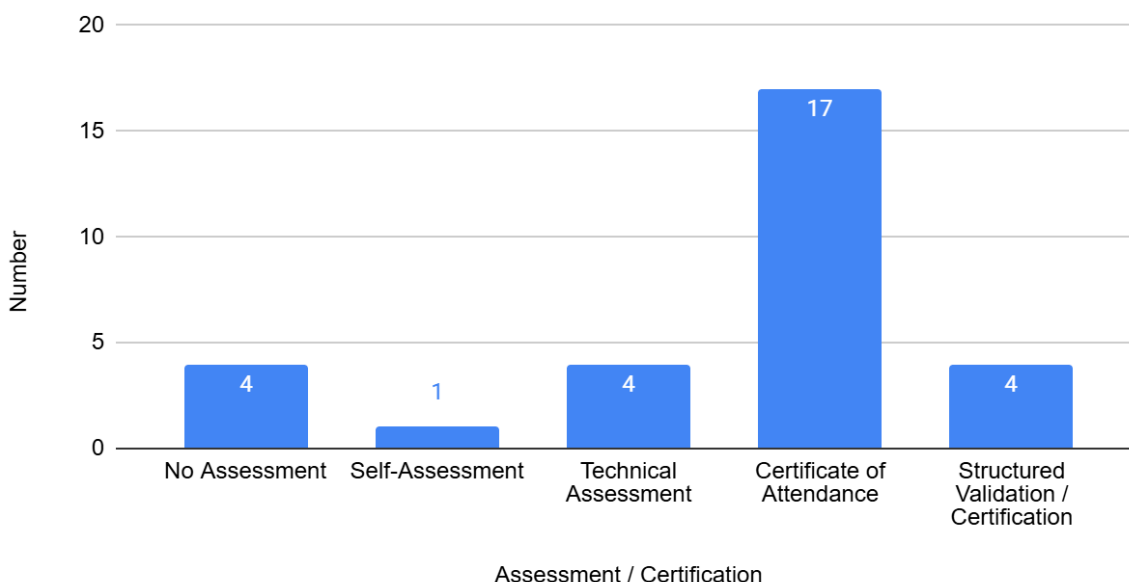
This dual structure creates a system where inclusive, subsidised opportunities coexist with costly, specialised training requiring significant personal investment. In cases where funding is unavailable, learners often rely on self-financed and fragmented pathways over time (*“self-development... from several hundred to several thousand”*), reinforcing inequalities in access and continuity. Private support (e.g. from employers) remains marginal, suggesting limited integration with labour market actors. Overall, while non-formal craft education can be accessible in certain contexts, the data clearly show that cost and financing conditions are decisive factors shaping participation, depth of engagement, and long-term learning trajectories.

3.6 - Assessments and certifications of competencies gained

Assessment and certification remain largely informal and uneven (Q n.12), reinforcing the patterns already identified on the organisational side. The most common outcome is the provision of a certificate of attendance or participation, reported in the majority of cases (around 60–65%), with statements such as *“I received a certification of attendance”* or *“I will receive a certificate of participation.”* These certificates primarily acknowledge presence rather than formally validating competences, confirming a limited level of formal recognition.

At the same time, a smaller but relevant share of learners (around 30%) report some form of skills assessment, either through structured frameworks (*“I had to follow a specific framework with several levels to validate skills”*) or technical evaluations (*“technical skills assessment provided”*). A minority experience no assessment at all or rely on self-assessment, highlighting the variability of practices. Overall, the data confirms a system where learning is often effectively delivered but only partially formalised, with a persistent gap between skills acquisition and recognised certification, which may limit the transferability of competences into the labour market.

12. Did/will the organisation make an assessment of acquired skills at the end of the training? And did/will you receive a kind of certificate?



Anyway, learners generally attribute significant importance to certification (Q n. 13). Around half (47%) consider it “definitely important” for their career or their future plans, while a similarly large share (43%) views it as important “to some extent,” indicating that recognition is valued but not always the main driver. Only a small minority considers it not relevant (10%). This reflects a key tension within non-formal craft education: **although many learners are motivated by personal interests or skill development, there is still a clear expectation for formal recognition, especially among those pursuing professionalisation or career transitions.**

3.7 - Future perspectives of non-formal crafts education learners

The combined analysis of intended (Q n. 14) and actual (Q n. 15) outcomes shows that non-formal craft education supports a wide spectrum of trajectories, with strong continuity between expectations and real use of skills. The most consistent pattern concerns personal use, with around 50–55% of learners planning to use or already using skills for personal projects or hobbies, confirming the central role of craft in creativity, well-being, and self-expression. At the same time, a substantial share (40–45%) engages with clear professional intentions, such as “*starting or improving a craft-related business*” or “*working in a craft-related field*”, and these intentions often translate into concrete outcomes (“*I started/improved my business,*” “*I started working in a craft-related field*”). In addition, a relevant proportion (30–35%) continues training or further education, showing

that learning pathways are often progressive and cumulative, while a smaller group aims at transmission, planning or already *“teaching this profession.”*

Importantly, the data also highlight a degree of uncertainty or gradual transition, with some learners still undecided (*“I don’t know yet”*) or not yet having applied their skills (*“I haven’t used it so far”*).

The final comments from learners (Q n.16) reinforce and deepen the main findings, highlighting a sector characterised by strong personal motivation but significant structural fragilities. Many respondents emphasise the importance of craft as a space for meaning, care, and cultural continuity, describing it as *“a way to slow down,” “a form of meditation,”* or a means to *“keep artisan skills alive in a fast-moving world.”* At the same time, there is a widespread concern about the decline of traditional crafts, the disappearance of training opportunities, and the ageing of skilled practitioners, with remarks such as *“traditional crafts are disappearing”* or *“qualified people are becoming rare.”*

A central issue emerging across responses is access to funding and training opportunities. Learners repeatedly stress that without financial support, participation would be impossible: *“I would never have been able to afford such a specialised course without a scholarship,”* while others highlight the need for *“more accessible funding”* or the difficulty of retraining without support. At the same time, several comments point to structural barriers, including limited training offers, insufficient course duration, or lack of recognition. Despite these challenges, the overall tone remains strongly committed, with many expressing a desire to preserve, transmit, and innovate craft knowledge, and to make it more accessible, especially to younger generations.

4. Final considerations

This survey represents a first, exploratory mapping of non-formal craft education (NFCE) across Europe, providing a valuable—though not exhaustive—snapshot of a sector that remains largely under-documented. While the scale of the study is limited, its strength lies in the combination of quantitative trends and qualitative insights, offering a structured and evidence-based overview of how craft knowledge is currently transmitted outside formal education systems.

Overall, the findings highlight a highly dynamic but structurally fragile ecosystem, characterised by strong cultural value, adaptability, and personal commitment, yet constrained by limited institutional support and economic sustainability. Non-formal craft education emerges as a flexible and inclusive learning environment, capable of accommodating diverse profiles—from hobbyists to professionals in transition—while fostering both personal development and employability. **Its practice-based**

approach, rooted in experiential and embodied knowledge, confirms its essential complementary role to formal education systems.

At the same time, the analysis reveals a set of recurring structural tensions. On the one hand, there is clear demand for craft education, linked to growing interest in sustainability, manual skills, and meaningful work. On the other hand, this demand is often hindered by financial barriers, weak certification frameworks, and limited visibility, which affect both access to training and the professional recognition of acquired skills. The gap between strong pedagogical value and insufficient institutional legitimacy remains one of the sector's most critical challenges.

The survey also points to **key risks for the future, particularly in terms of generational renewal and knowledge continuity. The ageing of master artisans, combined with the limited attractiveness of craft careers for younger generations, threatens the transmission of specialised skills.** This is further compounded by fragmented support systems and the lack of structured pathways linking training, employment, and certification.

At an operational level, **the data suggest that strengthening NFCE does not rely solely on increased funding, but also on reinforcing its material and relational foundations—notably through access to tools, shared resources, and especially collaboration between craftspeople, which emerges as a central driver of innovation, knowledge exchange, and resilience.**

In this perspective, non-formal craft education should be understood not as a marginal or residual field, but as a strategic domain at the intersection of cultural heritage, sustainability, and skills development. The survey provides an initial evidence base to support this repositioning, highlighting the need for more coherent policies, stronger recognition systems, and targeted support measures capable of enhancing both the economic viability and the social relevance of the sector.

Ultimately, this first mapping exercise lays the groundwork for further research and action. By making visible the diversity, challenges, and potential of NFCE in Europe, it contributes to building a shared understanding among stakeholders and to informing future initiatives aimed at ensuring the continuity, accessibility, and evolution of craft knowledge in contemporary societies.

5. Annex 1 - The questionnaire

Link to data evidence:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/surveydata>