

BUILDING BRIDGES, BUILDING SKILLS

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

NATIONAL REPORT, COUNTRY: POLAND



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Building Bridges, Building Skills

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Introduction

This document presents the national findings collected within the framework of the BRICKS: Building Bridges, Building Skills: Enhancing Adults' Non-formal Craft Education for Sustainable Cultural Transmission project. BRICKS is funded by the European Union under the ERASMUS+ 2024 programme (KA220-ADU – Cooperation Partnerships in Adult Education). Its aim is to strengthen the visibility, quality, and recognition of non-formal adult education within the craft and heritage craft sectors across Europe.

Non-formal craft education plays a crucial role in safeguarding traditional knowledge, supporting professional development, and ensuring the transmission of skills to future generations. Yet, this field remains insufficiently structured and often poorly understood within national education frameworks. Through coordinated research and multi-country analysis, BRICKS seeks to bridge this gap and lay the foundations for a more coherent and accessible non-formal learning ecosystem for craftspeople, educators, and organisations.

This national report forms part of a wider comparative study conducted in Belgium, Poland, Georgia, and Italy. It outlines the key characteristics of non-formal craft education at national level, examines existing training and certification models, identifies challenges encountered by practitioners, and gathers insights directly from craft professionals through a dedicated survey.

The BRICKS Project and its European approach

Rationale & needs

The goal of this national report is to document the current state of non-formal adult education in the traditional and heritage craft sector within each partner country. It aims to provide a coherent overview of existing training pathways, legal and policy frameworks, validation mechanisms, challenges, and good practices, complemented by direct insights gathered from craft educators and learners.
The report contributes to the wider comparative study carried out in Belgium, Poland, Georgia, and Italy, forming part of the evidence base that will present the mapping of non-formal education in the partner countries.

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Objectives

- Study the existing non-formal adult education models and challenges in the crafts sector of partner countries.
- Support partner organisations, craft educators, and master craftspeople to expand opportunities, quality, and accessibility of adult non-formal education in heritage craft (HC) and traditional craft (TC).
- Increase the outreach of BRICKS and ensure spill-over effects at national and European levels.

Through this research, BRICKS has produced:

- A consolidated state of the art on non-formal adult craft education in the four partner countries;
- Improved understanding among partners and educators of existing models and potential areas for development;
- Increased awareness of the role and value of non-formal craft education at national and European level.

For the report, the terms *craftsmanship*, *handicraft*, *traditional craftsmanship* (including artistic crafts, fine and applied arts, folk art, and related domains) and *traditional knowledge* are used in line with the project's glossary.

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

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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.

Methodology

The national findings presented in this report are based on a two-step research process conducted by all BRICKS partners using a shared methodological framework to ensure comparability across Belgium, Poland, Georgia, and Italy.

1. Desk Research

Each partner conducted structured desk research using a common template developed within the consortium. The research examined:

- Legal and policy frameworks for non-formal adult education;
- Existing training pathways in traditional and heritage crafts;
- Validation and certification mechanisms;
- Roles of institutions and organisations active in non-formal craft education;
- Examples of good practices and the relationship between formal and non-formal learning.

Sources included national legislation, governmental and regional documents, sector reports, academic literature, and publicly available information from craft and heritage institutions.

2. Survey

A multi-country survey was jointly designed to gather direct insights from:

1. Organisations or individuals providing non-formal craft education, and
2. Learners participating in non-formal craft training.

The questionnaire was disseminated nationally by partners through professional networks, associations, training centres, and online platforms. All responses were collected centrally by Artex S.Cons.R.L. and shared with partners in accordance with GDPR and the project's data management plan. The survey explored training practices, motivations, barriers, skills needs, and expectations regarding certification.

COUNTRY STATE OF ART

1. Legal and Policy Frameworks for Non-Formal Education

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
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

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

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 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 offashion 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 or 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.

The 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

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

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

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.

Survey results

Results from Poland

Overview of the Non-Formal Craft Education Landscape in Poland

A multi-country survey was jointly designed to gather direct insights from: Organisations or individuals providing non-formal craft education, and Learners participating in non-formal craft training. The questionnaire was disseminated nationally by partners through professional networks, associations, training centres, and online platforms. All responses were collected centrally by Artex S.Cons.R.L. and shared with partners in accordance with GDPR and the project's data management plan. The survey explored training practices, motivations, barriers, skills needs, and expectations regarding certification.

The survey results from the BRICKS project provide a snapshot of the contemporary non-formal craft education ecosystem in Poland, particularly among adult learners and independent craft educators. Although the sample is relatively small (11 educational providers and 6 learners), the responses reveal several consistent patterns regarding motivations, teaching models, territorial identity, challenges, and the social role of craft education.

1. A Landscape Rooted in Tradition and Local Identity

Non-formal craft education in Poland is strongly connected to regional heritage, local materials, and traditional techniques. Many organizations explicitly link their work to specific cultural territories such as Kashubia, Wielkopolska, or Cieszyn Silesia.

The most represented disciplines in the survey are:

- basketry and wicker weaving,
- textile crafts,
- ceramics and pottery,
- embroidery,
- traditional decorative arts.

Craft education is frequently embedded in intergenerational transmission. Several educators describe learning "from masters" or through family traditions passed down over generations. One pottery workshop reports continuity across ten generations.

The sector combines preservation with innovation. While many practitioners reconstruct or maintain traditional techniques, others intentionally modernize craft practices and adapt them to contemporary audiences and lifestyles. The organization Serfenta, for example, emphasizes simplifying and recontextualizing traditional basketry through workshops, events, and social media outreach.

2. Dominance of Hobby-Oriented Adult Learning

The survey clearly shows that non-formal craft education in Poland is primarily driven by personal interest, self-development, and leisure rather than direct professional retraining.

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Among educational providers:

- 90,9% identified hobby and self-development as the primary reason participants join courses.
- Only a small minority indicated professional specialization or career transition as the main motivation.

Learner responses confirm this pattern:

- 83,3% participated as a hobby or form of self-development.
- Motivations frequently included passion, relaxation, creativity, and personal fulfillment.

Craft learning therefore functions not only as vocational training but also as:

- a form of wellbeing,
- a social and community-building activity,
- a therapeutic or restorative practice,
- a way of reconnecting with manual creativity.

Several respondents specifically highlighted the emotional and social benefits of participation, especially in ceramics workshops where collective learning and intergenerational exchange play an important role.

3. Strong Feminization of Participation

The landscape is highly feminized both among participants and learners.

- 72,7% of organizations reported that most participants are women.
- Among learners surveyed, 100% was women.

The dominant participant age group appears to be adults over 30, particularly women aged 30–70 in ceramics and textile-related activities.

This suggests that non-formal craft education in Poland currently functions largely as:

- a female-led cultural sphere,
- a community and wellbeing practice,
- a creative alternative to digital and professional overload.

4. Practical, Experience-Based Learning Models

Teaching methods are overwhelmingly practice-oriented:

- 72,7% of respondents described their courses as approximately 80% practical and 20% theoretical.

Entry barriers are intentionally kept low:

- many organizations accept complete beginners,
- formal prerequisites are rare,
- educators emphasize patience, manual engagement, and accessibility.

Learning formats are flexible and diverse:

- short workshops,
- weekend intensives,
- long-term mentoring,
- continuous community workshops,

- project-based activities.

Knowledge transmission relies heavily on:

- master-apprentice relations,
- peer learning,
- informal feedback,
- embodied practice rather than formal assessment.

Certificates exist but are secondary. While 45,5% of organizations provide participation certificates, formal accreditation systems remain weak.

5. Sustainability and Natural Materials

A notable feature of the sector is its strong orientation toward sustainability and natural materials.
Many organizations:

- use locally sourced willow, clay, roots, straw, linen, or natural fibers,
- rely on family farms or regional material ecosystems,
- integrate recycled materials into workshops.

The survey reveals that craft education is closely tied to ecological awareness and material knowledge. Respondents often describe not only techniques but also the origin and lifecycle of materials. This reflects a broader understanding of craft as:

- environmental practice,
- cultural ecology,
- sustainable making.

6. Fragile Economic Conditions

Despite strong cultural value and growing public interest, the sector faces serious structural challenges.
The most commonly identified problems are:

- lack of funding (72,7%),
- difficulty attracting participants for paid courses (54,5%),
- limited institutional cooperation,
- insufficient recognition of non-formal certification.

Multiple respondents stress that:

- participation increases when workshops are publicly funded,
- full-cost participation often becomes inaccessible,
- educators experience burnout and precarity.

Financial models vary widely:

- some activities are subsidized by municipalities,
- others depend entirely on participant fees,
- some operate through grants and cultural projects,
- independent educators frequently combine teaching with freelance artistic work.

The results indicate a sector that is culturally vibrant but economically unstable.

7. Weak Integration with Formal Education and Labour Systems

The survey highlights a significant disconnect between non-formal craft education and formal vocational systems.

Respondents repeatedly mention:

- insufficient support for young people aged 16–20,
- disappearance of traditional craft schools,
- limited opportunities to obtain journeyman or master qualifications,
- weak collaboration with schools and institutions.

Internships and structured apprenticeships are rare:

- 81,8% reported that such opportunities are optional rather than integrated.

This suggests that non-formal craft education currently fills gaps left by:

- declining vocational infrastructure,
- disappearing traditional craft pathways,
- limited public support for manual professions.

8. Digitalization Remains Marginal

Digital tools are not central to the current ecosystem.

Most respondents prioritized:

- manual tools,
- workshop spaces,
- collaboration with craftspeople,
- access to equipment.

Interest in digital technologies such as:

- 3D modeling,
- advanced printing,
- VR,
- digitization tools,

remains limited.

This indicates that the sector still defines authenticity and quality primarily through physical practice and embodied knowledge rather than technological innovation.

Conclusion

The non-formal craft education landscape in Poland is dynamic, culturally rooted, and socially meaningful. It is characterized by:

- strong links to regional heritage,
- intergenerational knowledge transmission,

- women-led participation,
- practice-based learning,
- sustainability-oriented material cultures,
- growing interest in craft as wellbeing and creative self-development.

At the same time, the sector remains structurally fragile due to:

- unstable funding,
- weak institutional recognition,
- declining formal vocational pathways,
- limited support for educators and young apprentices.

The survey suggests that non-formal craft education increasingly serves as both a guardian of endangered traditions and a contemporary response to social needs for creativity, community, slowness, and meaningful manual engagement in modern life.

Survey results - general overview

The Polish survey conducted as part of the BRICKS project presents a distinctive picture of non-formal education in the heritage crafts sector. While Poland has established legal and policy frameworks that recognise non-formal learning and provide mechanisms for the validation of competences, the craft education landscape remains largely driven by local initiatives, museums, cultural institutions, NGOs, and master craftspeople. Non-formal craft education is deeply rooted in regional traditions and local identities, with strong links to areas such as Kashubia, Wielkopolska, and Cieszyn Silesia. The research highlights a sector where the preservation of traditional knowledge goes hand in hand with contemporary reinterpretation, allowing heritage crafts to remain relevant while maintaining their cultural authenticity.

The main trends emerging from the survey reveal a sector centred on practical, workshop-based learning and intergenerational knowledge transmission. Basketry, textile crafts, ceramics, embroidery, and traditional decorative arts are among the most represented disciplines. Learning is frequently based on direct contact with experienced craftspeople, often within family traditions or long-standing workshop practices. At the same time, organisations increasingly seek to modernise traditional crafts through innovative teaching approaches, public events, and digital communication. Unlike other partner countries, many educational providers report that participants primarily join courses for personal fulfilment, creativity, and wellbeing rather than professional retraining, illustrating the important social and cultural functions of craft education alongside its educational role.

The learners who participated in the survey are predominantly adult women, many of whom engage in craft education as a hobby or as a form of personal development rather than with immediate employment objectives. Participants frequently describe craft learning as a source of relaxation, creativity, community

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engagement, and personal satisfaction. Workshop environments are valued not only for the acquisition of practical skills but also for fostering social interaction, intergenerational exchange, and cultural connection. These findings demonstrate that non-formal craft education contributes significantly to individual wellbeing while simultaneously supporting the safeguarding of traditional knowledge.

Craft educators, organisations, and cultural institutions identify several priorities for strengthening the sector. They emphasise the need for stronger cooperation between cultural institutions, schools, NGOs, regional authorities, and craft associations, together with increased support for intergenerational learning initiatives and better links between non-formal education and labour market policies. Respondents also highlight the importance of expanding funding opportunities, improving access to training in rural areas, and reinforcing mentoring, business development, and digital competences for craftspeople. Greater visibility for heritage crafts through festivals, exhibitions, tourism strategies, and public awareness campaigns is seen as essential for attracting new generations and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the sector.

The main challenges identified include the limited availability of long-term funding, uneven access to training opportunities across regions, insufficient recognition of competences acquired through non-formal education, and the need for stronger coordination between national and regional policies. Despite these barriers, the survey reveals an optimistic outlook. Stakeholders advocate for clearer certification pathways, stronger validation of prior learning, increased scholarship and mobility opportunities for young craftspeople, and a better integration of traditional craftsmanship with digital innovation, sustainability, and the creative industries. Overall, the survey portrays a vibrant and culturally rich ecosystem whose continued development depends on stronger policy support, enhanced cooperation, and sustained investment in the transmission of Poland's living craft heritage.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

Priority actions to strengthen non-formal craft education in Poland

- **Strengthen coordination between national and regional authorities** to ensure greater coherence between cultural heritage, education, and economic development policies related to crafts.
- **Expand funding for non-formal craft education programmes** under the Culture Programme and Intangible Heritage initiatives, with a stronger focus on long-term sustainability rather than short-term project funding.
- **Develop a national strategy specifically dedicated to non-formal craft education**, integrating cultural preservation, entrepreneurship, innovation, and vocational skills development.
- **Increase support for intergenerational learning initiatives** that facilitate the transfer of traditional craft knowledge from master craftspeople to younger generations.

- **Enhance the role of the Polish Craft Incubator programme** by providing additional mentoring, digital training, and business development support for craft organisations and individual artisans.
- **Strengthen links between non-formal craft education and labour market policies**, particularly through dual education systems, apprenticeships, and local entrepreneurship programmes.
- **Improve access to non-formal craft education in rural and peripheral regions** by expanding regional grants, mobile workshops, and community-based learning initiatives.
- **Encourage stronger cooperation between voivodeship governments, cultural institutions, schools, NGOs, and craft associations** to create integrated local craft education networks.
- **Introduce systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms** to assess participation, learning outcomes, employment impact, and the sustainability of craft education initiatives.
- **Promote the digitalisation and modernisation of traditional crafts** through training in e-commerce, digital marketing, and contemporary design while maintaining cultural authenticity.
- **Increase scholarship and mobility opportunities for young craftspeople** to participate in workshops, residencies, and exchanges at national and international levels.
- **Support the visibility and social recognition of crafts** by organising public awareness campaigns, festivals, exhibitions, and open workshops linked to regional cultural heritage.
- **Strengthen cooperation between craft education programmes and tourism strategies**, especially in regions where traditional crafts form part of local cultural identity and economic development.
- **Create stronger mechanisms for recognising skills** acquired through non-formal craft education, including certification pathways and validation of prior learning.
- **Encourage innovation in craft education** by combining traditional techniques with sustainable production methods, circular economy principles, and contemporary creative industries.

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.

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