

Cultural Skills research summary

Examining skills gaps and opportunities
in the cultural sector in Turkey







About this report

This research was undertaken by the Cultural Skills team at the British Council, who commissioned freelance researcher Rumeysa Kiger to complete the report content in close consultation with the British Council Arts team in Turkey. This report explores the skills gaps, shortages and opportunities across the cultural sector in Turkey. The research included interviews with 39 experts, including policymakers, British Council colleagues and professionals working in education institutes, cultural institutions and independent organisations. To increase the validity of the study and to gain insight from a broader sample, two round-table sessions were also conducted and an online survey was completed by 310 cultural sector professionals.

Findings from this paper will be used to support the British Council's Cultural Skills and Turkey teams in developing new evidence-based programmes and products that consolidate and complement existing skills activity.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the professionals working in Turkey's cultural scene who have contributed their insights and expertise to this research through one-to-one interviews and round-table meetings, including over 300 individuals who kindly completed an online survey. Their support has been invaluable throughout the course of this research.

Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the British Council or of any organisation mentioned. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this paper; however, the research is subject to uncertainties that are beyond the author's ability to control or estimate precisely. Neither the author nor the British Council assumes any warranty for the accuracy, completeness or use of the findings. Readers are responsible for assessing the relevance and accuracy of the content of this research.

Author: Report written by Rumeysa Kiger based on research conducted by Rumeysa Kiger assisted by Irmak Taner. Executive summary edited by Esra A Aysun, Catherine Sinclair Jones and Erica Roscoe at the British Council.

Foreword

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As the geographical meeting point of Europe and Asia, Turkey is understandably a cultural melting pot in every

sense, from literature and music through to architecture to cuisine. The cultural sector can be used to understand the country's turbulent past as well as acting as a vehicle through which to showcase contemporary values and engage with other countries through cultural exchange.

The Cultural Skills team strengthens cultural relations between the UK and the rest of the world through sharing knowledge and developing mutual benefit. With UK and international partners we build sustainable cultural skills programmes that develop the skills of those practitioners and institutions across the whole of the UK and internationally, supporting the artistic, social and economic benefits of a thriving and dynamic cultural sector.

This research provides an insight into challenges faced by the cultural sector in Turkey in relation to skills provision, including challenges that are shared by the cultural sector in Turkey and elsewhere across the globe, as well challenges which could be overcome through the sharing of international best practice. It highlights where the British Council could add most value and support to the development of infrastructure which could further enhance the cultural gems that Turkey has to offer.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon T Dancey'.

Simon T Dancey
Director, Cultural Skills team

Foreword

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Turkey is the 19th most populated country in the world with approximately 80 million inhabitants.¹ Given its demographics

and cultural diversity, Turkey is among the most stimulating countries for closer examination into its social and cultural life. Research undertaken by Speed in 2016² illustrates that collective life is valued over individual life in Turkey. But do individuals partake in cultural life, and if so, in what forms? What kind of a role does arts and social play?

Cultural sector professionals play a significant role in ensuring the sustainability of social life by contributing to the intellectual universe of young people and taking steps towards building the audience of the future. Sixty per cent of today's students will graduate and move into jobs that do not yet exist. They may need to change career several times and work in multiple jobs at the same time. In this period of uncertainty, the most valuable asset that young professionals might have is *creativity* and the ability to be adaptable, which now lies among the fundamental principles of the modern economy.

In the 21st century, building creative capacity, fostering cultural diversity and creating awareness is tough and critical but at the same time an inevitable task. In order to contribute to the development of societies composed of creative individuals that can think freely, we need to build consensus on the importance of cultural education, support joint initiatives in this regard and generate resources to incorporate this topic into the education system.

This valuable study calls upon the actors involved in the culture and arts scene to lend an ear to the current needs in this field. It invites cultural professionals to assess their contribution to social development and transformation and to adopt a more holistic approach.

I would like to sincerely thank everyone who has contributed to this study and hope that its results will guide our way and shed light on the course of other studies to be conducted in this domain.

Özlem Ece
Director, Cultural Policy Studies,
Istanbul Foundation for Culture
and Arts

- 1 Turkish Statistical Website, Population Projections 2013-2075, Feb 2013, <http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=15844>
- 2 Speed, Türkiye'nin DNA'sı, May 2016, <http://geert-hofstede.com/> See also: Türkiye'yi Anlama Kılavuzu (A Guide to Understanding Turkey). Ipsos KMG, 2016, Microsoft PowerPoint file. According to A Guide to Understanding Turkey, 49 per cent of the society never goes to the cinema; 39 per cent never reads any book; 66 per cent has never been to an event such as a concert, theatre or opera; 81 per cent does not play any musical instrument; 57 per cent does not watch any show or film in video, VCD, DVD format or on online platforms; 47 per cent never reads a magazine; 86 per cent has never been to any hobby class. The most popular activity is watching television for 85% of the people.

Introduction

The report aims to contribute greater understanding of the skills gaps, shortages and opportunities across the cultural sector in Turkey in order to support and inform the design of new programmes.

Anecdotal evidence and preliminary conversations with cultural and creative professionals identified potential opportunities to provide programmes with an impact for the cultural sector in Turkey. As such, the research project had the following objectives:

- identifying skills gaps and shortages across the cultural sector in Turkey
- highlighting how these skills gaps and shortages are being addressed by policymakers, education institutes, cultural institutions and other organisations
- identifying challenges faced by the cultural sector in Turkey
- considering possible risks to the successful development of a cultural skills programme.

The research methodology included desk research, in-depth interviews, focus groups and online surveys. A desk-based literature review was undertaken to guide the development of interview questions and to identify emerging themes. Following on from this, 39 experts from Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir and Bursa took part in semi-structured interviews over four weeks. These experts included policymakers, British Council staff and professionals working in education and cultural institutions, as well as freelance professionals. A mixture of strategic, convenience and snowball sampling was employed to gain access to this pool of experts. To increase the validity of the study and to gain insights from a broader sample, a further 310 people completed an online survey. Last, two round-table discussions were conducted in Istanbul with the Cultural Skills team's target audience (educators and arts professionals) to explore their cultural skills needs in more depth.

Contextual overview

Turkey has a population of over 80 million people³ and is often characterised as the bridge between East and West due to its position across the European and Asian continents. As such, it has been subject to many different influences throughout its history.

Istanbul as the cultural capital and metropolitan city of Turkey has long been rightly acclaimed as the creative hub as well as the economic centre of the country. However, following its highlight as the European Capital of Culture in 2010, the city has since witnessed and continues to be affected by a reduction in EU funding.

In the cultural sphere, many state-subsidised institutions established during the republican era in the early 20th century are increasingly focusing on more local productions and find themselves being challenged by potential privatisation. The institutions of arts and culture established by private foundations run by family corporations and NGOs continue their local and international programming as part of the creative scene in the country.

Around a fifth of the 12 million young people in Turkey aged 15–24 are currently unemployed.⁴ While the unemployment rate is around ten per cent in the labour market, this increases to 29 per cent among university graduates.⁵ There is also a significant gap between universities

and private industry, which creates qualification and skill mismatches.⁶ While 30 per cent of university graduates in Turkey are unemployed, 38 per cent feel that their jobs are completely appropriate for their level of qualification and 30 per cent feel that their skills are not sufficiently used at their current jobs.⁷

There is a growing number of students across the country demanding university education in Turkey. Currently, the number of students studying at university is the highest in the history of the country and, parallel to this, the number of public and private universities, and university departments, is constantly increasing. Correspondingly, undergraduate- and graduate-level education programmes for the cultural sector have also grown in recent years across the sector. Some departments, such as fashion design and culture and arts management programmes, are new compared to other departments offering more traditional art forms such as architecture or visual arts. Most of these face significant problems, however, such as insufficient infrastructure and budget issues.

3 TUIK (2016) Labour Statistics. Available online at: www.turkstat.gov.tr/UstMenu.do?metod=temelist

4 *Ibid.*

5 Esas Sosyal (2016) Youth and Employment Research Summary. Available online at: <http://esassosyal.org/files/arastirmalar/EsasSosyal-Arastirmalari-Ozeti.pdf>

6 Alpaydin, Y (2014) Identifying Higher-Education Level Skill Needs in Labor Markets: The Main Tools Usable for Turkey. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice* 15/4: 945–967.

7 *Ibid.*

One of the key missing elements in the educational field is the lack of inter-disciplinary approaches. Poor quality of education in high schools is also perceived to be a major obstacle by educators. Since the students are all required to take a central national exam as an entry requirement to attain university degrees, the education system focuses on the skills needed to pass the test at a high level, whereas skills such as critical thinking, self-expression and creativity are left aside, posing a significant challenge for the universities trying to prepare these students for careers in the cultural sector.

Although it is not specific to the cultural and creative disciplines, one of the main obstacles of these institutions is the weak co-ordination between the sector and the universities. The needs of the sector are rapidly evolving and programmes

are not up to date, which affects their ability to effectively meet the demands of the labour market.

Internships, on the other hand, which are a very important element linking the universities to the labour market, are compulsory for some sectors (fashion design and architecture) but not for others (visual arts and music). This is partly because there are more university students competing for internships than there are internships available. Internships are found to be beneficial by educators and professionals when the institution pays special attention to the interns and gives them real responsibility. When it comes to the skills development programmes for professionals, opportunities are quite scarce and professionals usually seek educational experiences abroad.



Employment opportunities for graduates of cultural sector-related departments are limited unless they set up their own enterprises. There are around 10,000 students graduating every year from these programmes⁸ and there are not enough positions in the labour market for them. Since the number of graduates is much more than the demand in the market, students fail to secure long-term employment even if they have graduated from quality programmes. Unemployment in general is a very serious issue in the country, but appears particularly acute for young people graduating in cultural disciplines.

While this environment poses challenges to graduates, it has also cultivated a strong entrepreneurial spirit among young creative people, which should be encouraged, developed and nurtured to enable this cohort to realise its potential.

There are widespread grievances about the 'new generation' of employees, due to a lack of communication between young people and employers about their respective expectations. Entry-level

employees are considered to be very impatient, accused of not being prepared for work, asking for unreasonable salaries and changing jobs easily.

Since most of the private companies and NGOs in the cultural sector have a capacity to employ only a limited number of staff, regardless of their size, their employees have to cover multiple roles at once, leading to some skills being prioritised over others. Most of the skills gaps identified during the research are related to this aspect of the industry. Furthermore, it becomes a challenge for many professionals to cultivate their skills due to the intensity of their schedules. Only a very small number of institutions have the ability to outsource work to freelancers for skills that their staff members do not have. There are a number of talented individuals with specialised skills sets available, but the sector struggles to make use of these resources due to budget limitations. This report delves into these challenges in further detail and provides recommendations to address these concerns.

⁸ TUIK (2013) Culture Statistics. Available online at: www.tuik.gov.tr/Kitap.do?metod=KitapDetay&KT_ID=5&KITAP_ID=42

Key findings

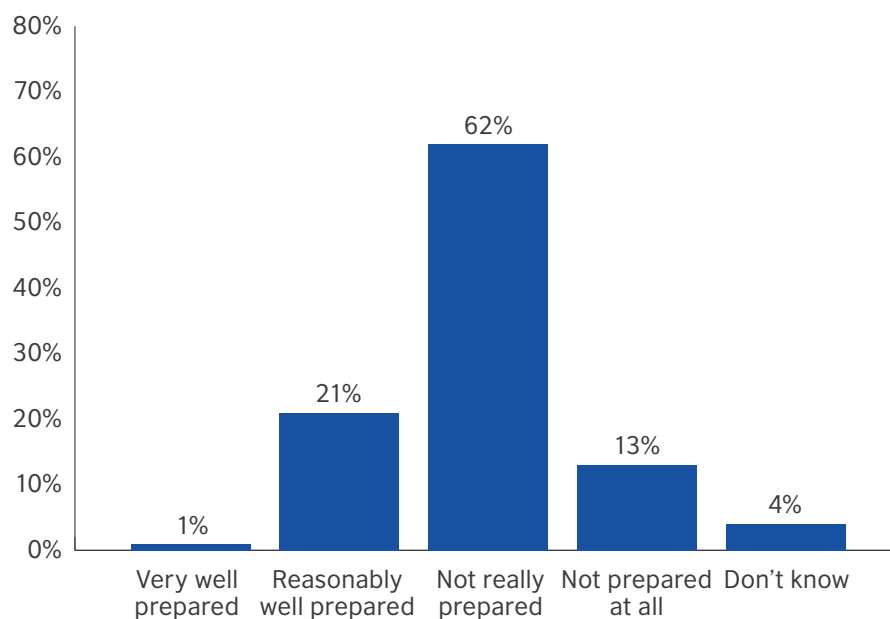
In line with many other fields in Turkey, there is a lack of co-ordination between the cultural and creative sector and universities, which creates a significant challenge.

Since the expectations of the sector from graduates constantly change and the universities are not equipped to meet these demands, the two sides find themselves increasingly at odds with one another. This is partly because of the bureaucracy required to solve these problems and partly due to a mutual lack of awareness about job opportunities and needs of the sector. For instance, in spite of the fact that the film sector needs good producers, fundraisers and sound engineers, most of the film students aspire to become directors or scriptwriters. Hence the schools end up not offering students the opportunity to become skilled in less popular or easily recognisable

professions. Most of the students studying arts and cultural management programmes want to work in museums and become curators or critics, while distancing themselves from areas such as marketing, funding or project management: precisely the roles and responsibilities that cultural institutions need in order to truly flourish.

When we asked participants of our online survey how prepared school and university graduates are for work in the cultural sector, 62 per cent stated they are not really prepared, while only 21 per cent believe that they are reasonably well prepared.

How well prepared are school and university graduates for work in the cultural sector?



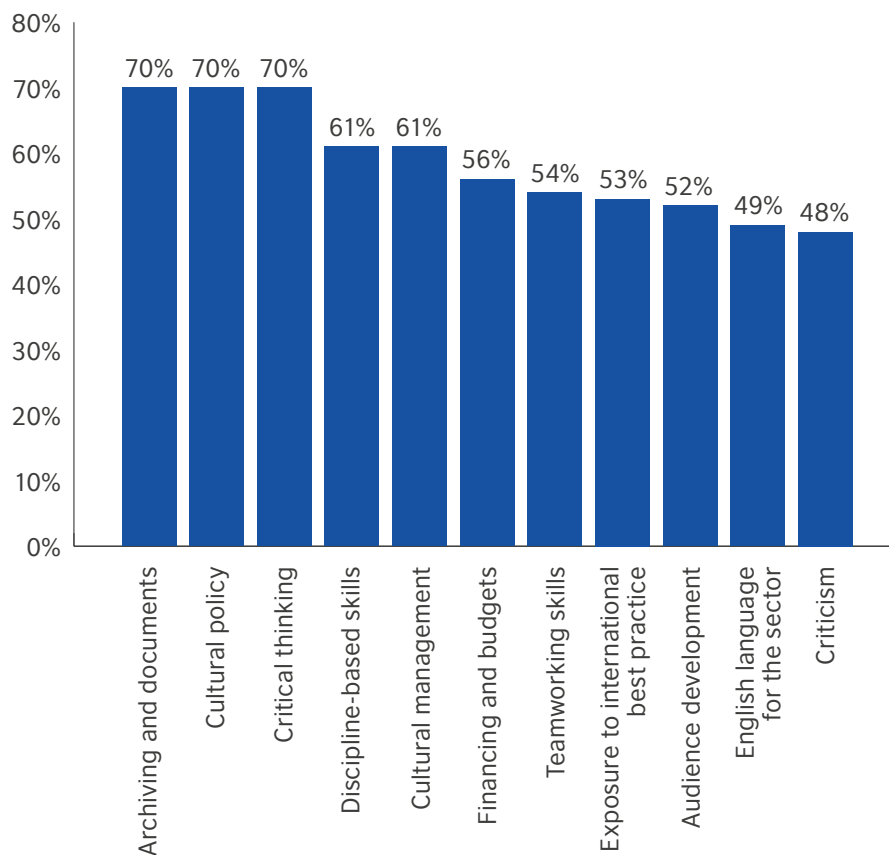
Sample = 306

Respondents to the research indicated that internships could really help to bridge this gap. Architecture departments already invest in successful internship programmes and present a good model for the rest of the sector. However, internships are not mandatory for many other fields, such as visual arts. Generally speaking, securing an internship placement for a student is hard since there are more people competing for internship placements than there are placements available.

The shortage of available internships is usually due to budget and resources.

In order to understand the skills need of Turkey's cultural sector, our online survey participants were asked to name the core skills (if any) that professionals and young people working in the field lacked most. The graph below illustrates the skills gaps cited by 250 professionals, educators and students of the cultural sector who participated in the online survey.

What kind of qualifications, skills or experience are missing from the cultural sector?



Sample = 250



Responses reveal that Turkey's cultural sector suffers from skills gaps such as archiving and documentation, cultural policy and critical thinking. Discipline-based skills, cultural management skills, and financing and budget skills are also identified as lacking, while skills including teamworking, exposure to international best practice, audience development, English for the sector and criticism are also mentioned. These findings were further corroborated during interviews and round-table discussions that also revealed that cultural management, cultural policy, criticism and various discipline-based skills were also perceived to be insufficient. The top five underdeveloped skills are explored in more detail below.

Archiving and documentation

The largest proportion of interviews, round-table discussions and survey respondents cite archiving and documentation skills as the greatest skills gap in the sector. Research participants emphasise that all cultural institutions need to improve their archiving skills. This gap is not sector-specific: record keeping and recording legacy outcomes are underdeveloped skills sets across many other fields in Turkey. With a few notable exceptions, archiving and record keeping are challenges

for institutions and individuals in the sector in both public and private institutions. As explained by one participant: 'Even an artist does not know how many paintings he/she has created or sold in the past year when he/she is asked, because there is no record of it'. Respondents give numerous examples of not being able to find critical documents (such as a copy of a previously printed book by the institution) in the fields of cinema, performing arts, design, literature and publishing.

Nonetheless, although there is a high awareness of the archiving and documentation skill gaps in the sector (70 per cent of online survey participants highlighted this as a need), most of the individuals and institutions do not view this area as a priority because they have developed ways to address these gaps themselves; there are other skills needs which are perceived to be significantly more pressing.

Cultural policy

Developing the cultural policy skills of cultural professionals, working in both public and private institutions, was of critical concern to nearly every person that we consulted. In addition to this, 70 per cent of survey respondents cited these skills as the most prevalent gap in the sector.

Critical thinking

Of all the soft skills we explored (including problem solving, leadership, teamwork and creativity), critical thinking was identified as the greatest skills gap for established professionals and new graduates by 70 per cent of participants in our online survey. This gap is mainly attributed to the style of teaching across Turkey, which places an emphasis on memorising information and techniques to pass multiple-choice exams rather than cultivating creativity and critical thinking.

Discipline-based skills

In the cinema, theatre, animation and gaming sectors, *creative writing skills* are recognised as an area for development by the majority of our research participants. Professionals working in cinema point out that creative writing and production expertise are the two most important skills gaps in film in Turkey. The animation and gaming sector enjoys a strong reputation for technical skills, but could also benefit from more creative and gripping storytelling.

Another common gap across the sectors is *production skills*. Visual arts professionals would like to see more investment in the development of exhibition production skills, and

a clearer differentiation between the respective responsibilities of a curator and producer.

Conservation and restoration skills gaps, both in public and private sectors of the cultural field, are also cited as a crucial need affecting the sector. Paper, wood and fine arts restoration, which require a high level of competence, were specifically mentioned as areas that lacked people with the requisite skills to complete high-quality work. However, this is an area in which cultural institutions are beginning to invest and provide links between budding local experts and international organisations. Sabancı and Pera Museums both pay special attention to high-quality conservation and restoration skills and actively contribute to the training of a small number of experts in the field by providing them with grants to study at renowned overseas universities.

The *skills of junior, senior and managing editors of publishing houses* could benefit from similar overseas exposure according to our interviewees. The research findings suggest that publishing professionals are not currently motivated to follow emerging international trends or to generate innovative ways to expand and enhance the possibilities within the sector.

Cultural management

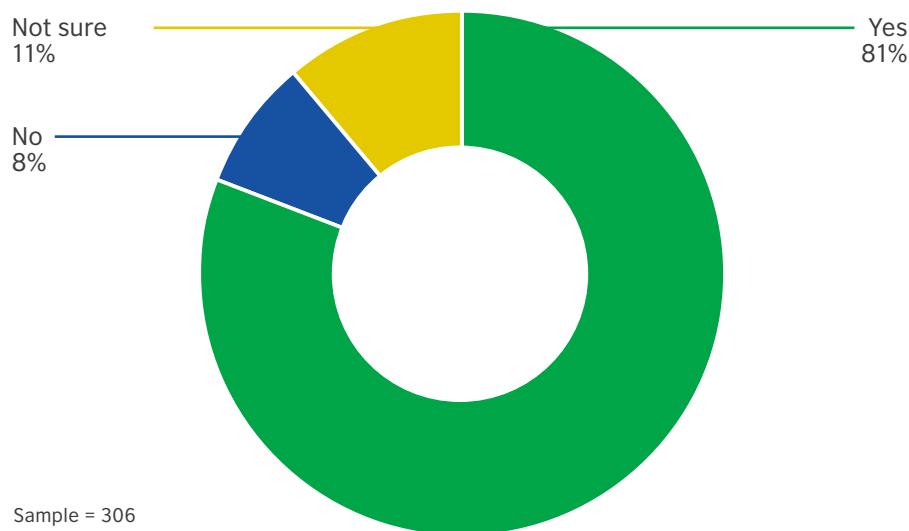
A number of institutions have been set up in the last 20 years offering undergraduate and graduate levels of cultural management education.⁹ While this has been a welcome development, there is still more to be done to equip professionals with the cultural management skills that would allow the sector to fully flourish.

Both the graduates of the cultural management programmes and the managers within the sector stress that private sector institutions,

regardless of their size, either are not aware of the concept of a 'cultural manager' as a different expertise from artistic production, or do not have the resources to employ skilled cultural managers. One of the reasons for this is that the true diversity of roles that are offered within the cultural sector are not properly introduced to students while they are at university.

The research found that more than 81 per cent of survey respondents believe that Turkey's cultural sector suffers from a skills shortage.

Does the cultural sector in Turkey suffer from a shortage of suitably qualified, skilled or experienced professionals in certain roles?



⁹ According to Turkey's Higher Education Information Management System, these programmes include Arts Management in İstanbul Kültür University, Art and Design Management in Okan University, Arts Management at Yeditepe University, Culture and Arts Management at İstanbul Bilgi University, Cultural Heritage Management in Giresun University, Museum Management in Ankara University, Museum Management in İzmir Dokuz Eylül University, Museum Management at İstanbul University, Museum Management at Mimar Sinan University of Fine Arts, Museum and Cultural Heritage Management at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Museum Management in Yıldız Technical University, Performance Arts Management in Beykent University, Management of Performance Arts at İstanbul Bilgi University and Performance Arts Management in Nişantaşı University.

However, lack of funds was cited by numerous research respondents as the core reason behind many unfilled vacancies, rather than an absence of suitably skilled candidates in the labour market. When the respondents were asked whether they think the cultural sector in Turkey suffers from a shortage of high-quality skills providers for certain skills, they cited long lists similar to the skills gaps in the sector. However, when they were asked whether they would employ a skilled person who would address this gap, most of the time the answer was: 'Unfortunately, no. We cannot employ any other person due to our tight budget.' While this is the case with the private sector and NGOs, respondents from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism also cite a shortage of professionals to work in museums and libraries; however, they also cannot employ more people due to regulations around opening new positions.

Among the professions where a skilled individual can actually be employed, marketing and digital skills were stated as the most sought-after skills of all. Shortages are regularly observed in these two fields, and most of the time professionals who have a solid career in marketing or digital are easily employed. However, the language and the codes of the cultural sector are distinctive and the professionals we approached were concerned about the challenges of finding people who could combine cultural skills with digital expertise. Conversely, young professionals with a cultural sector-related education and an interest in marketing and digital skills complained that the sector is not really giving them a chance but looking for people from other non-arts areas with prior experience in large-scale corporations.

Conclusion

There is a great deal of technical expertise within the Turkish cultural sector, and our research reveals a strong appetite from professionals within the sector to address the various cultural skills gaps that we identified and discussed. There is also a strong entrepreneurial spirit in Turkey, which should be embraced and harnessed within the cultural sector to enable it to innovate in creative ways that do not require significant financial resources, as limited budgets are a challenge across the sector.

One of the critical challenges that face the Turkish cultural scene is audience development and outreach, with evidence that arts and culture is not a mainstream area of interest for wider Turkish society. Indeed, data from the Turkish National Institute reveals that watching television is the main channel for consumption of cultural material.¹⁰ Art, and in particular contemporary art, is perceived as an elite pursuit, an attitude which will need to be changed if the majority of society is to embrace the cultural scene in Turkey and help it to flourish.

Private cultural institutions, founded by philanthropist-family-run and corporate foundations, are well connected to global networks and are valuable channels for introducing international opportunities and perspectives to cultural professionals in Turkey. Public cultural institutions, on the other hand, tend to reflect the national cultural policy of preserving traditional cultural heritage and conservative values, which leads to an increasing divergence between the existing private and public arts spheres in the country. Furthermore, the growing number of Syrian refugees and the ongoing political

and social problems of the country have shifted the priority away from cultural support to human-rights-related issues and aid. Turkish cultural and tourism sectors have also been significantly affected by the recent terrorist attacks in urban areas. These tragic events, while challenging, pose opportunities to the sector to engage with audiences in new and innovative ways outside of traditional spaces. Exploring the power of digital and online platforms, and strengthening these skills within the sector, could increase audience diversity, reach and engagement, and complement the global trends towards more interactive, online creative content. By increasing audience numbers, cultural institutions could generate more resources and budget, which would address another significant pressure faced by the sector. There are a number of organisations that provide private funding to the arts with grants and scholarships, but these opportunities are not always readily accessible because there is no central space in which to advertise them, or adequate training for how to apply. In the public sphere, there is a shortage of available funds to support visual and performing arts, music, architecture, design

¹⁰ TUIK (2013) Culture Statistics. Available online at: www.tuik.gov.tr/Kitap.do?metod=KitapDetay&KT_ID=5&KITAP_ID=42

and crafts. There are more public funds available for cinema, literature and gaming industries, although these are far from comprehensive. Increased audience numbers would enable the cultural sector in Turkey to become fully sustainable and address concerns about the number of grants and the income gap.

Turkey does have tax-benefit laws for the arts.¹¹ However, there is a lack of clarity around these which has hampered the efforts of existing and potential sponsoring organisations' efforts to increase their investment in the cultural sector. By addressing the existing bureaucratic complications around these laws in Turkey, the full potential of philanthropic arts and cultural institutions in Turkey could be reached, which could make a significant difference to the future of the sector.

Educational institutions have a critical role to play for the development of the next generation of cultural professionals and future leaders. Improving the infrastructure in these institutions would drastically improve the ability to create sustainable skills development programmes. A major challenge

for both educational institutions and the job market is the mismatch between the number of students graduating from cultural sector degrees and the relative shortage of corresponding job opportunities. As a consequence, most of these young graduates cannot find jobs to use their skills in the sector. Since the field is still attractive, however, most of the active professionals are highly motivated to work in unpaid positions such as internships or volunteering roles and are comfortable working in a fiercely competitive environment.

There is only a very limited amount of data available in the sector for the industry professionals to draw upon the guide and shape their work. Data derived from the online survey reveals that Turkey's cultural sector suffers from skills gaps such as archiving and documentation, cultural policy and critical thinking. Discipline-based skills, cultural management skills, financing and budget skills are also identified as underdeveloped. The sector would benefit from more investment in team-working, more exposure to international best practice and a higher quality of written and spoken English.

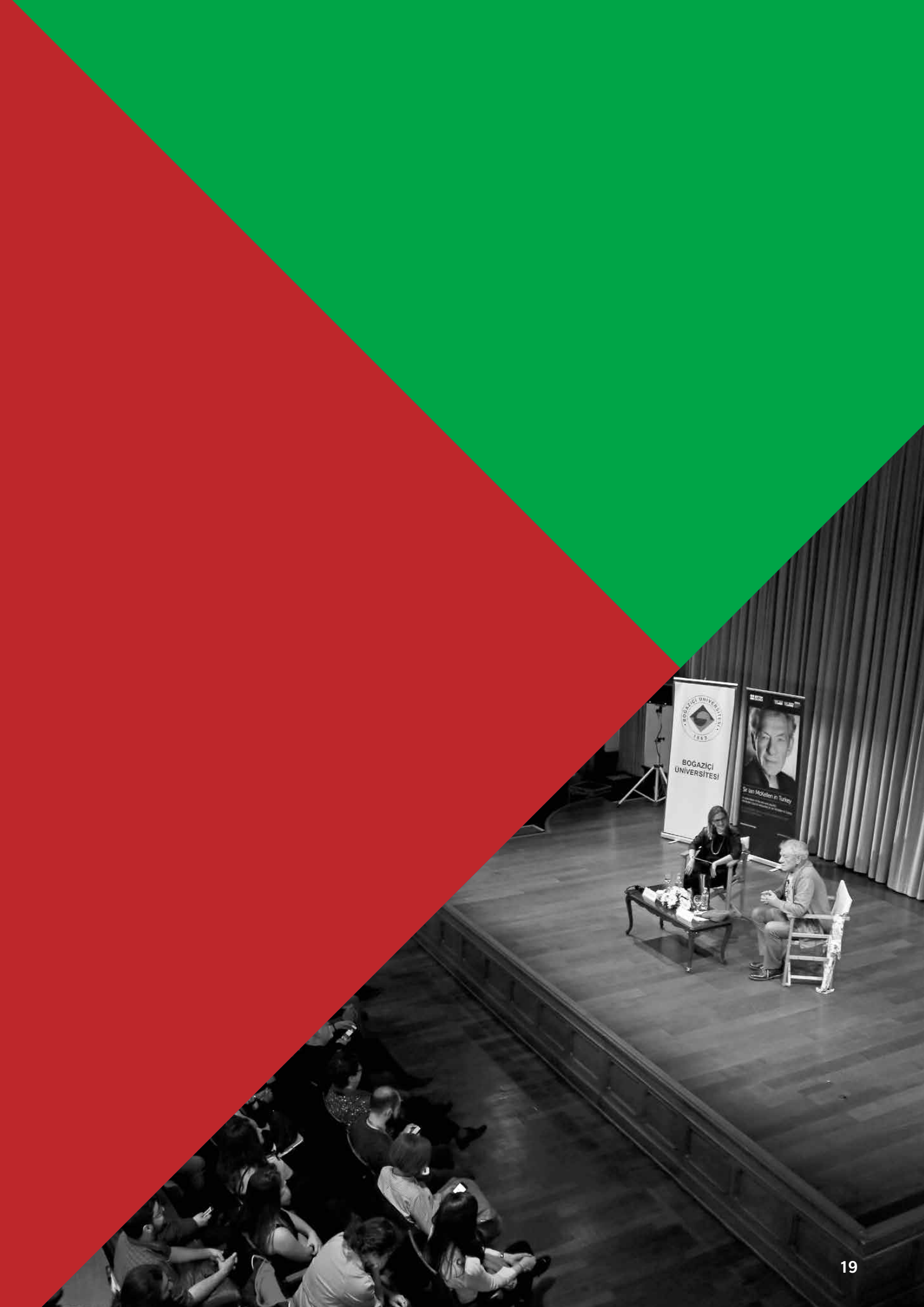
11 mevzuat.gov.tr (2004) Law no. 5225 on Encouraging Cultural Investments and Ventures. Available online at: www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.5225.pdf

Since funding opportunities are fairly limited and cultural institutions are increasingly encouraged to seek out innovative models of management, financing and marketing, professionals in the sector are eager to participate in courses related to cultural management, cultural policy and project management. Mid-level professionals are particularly enthusiastic about taking courses on planning, goal-setting, budgeting, time management and strategic planning. A significant number of participants also highlighted that senior and middle managers would greatly benefit from secondments to other institutions in the UK to develop these skills, rather than via a standard training course.

For university students and new graduates, discipline-based skills and entrepreneurial skills are becoming increasingly important, together with cultural management skills. While cultural management, project management, and entrepreneurial and marketing skills are needed by everyone in the sector, young people are in more urgent need of discipline-based digital and technical skills.

The cultural sector in Turkey faces a set of significant challenges. However, there is an appetite to address these skills gaps, increase exposure to international best practice and to harness new and innovative ways of working to transform these challenges into opportunities.





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Sir Ian Mollison in Turkey

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