



All CCS and Cross-sectoral Advocacy Initiatives All Europe Countries

Culture Action Europe | On the value of STEAM and arts education

A joint response to the Horizon Europe Coordination and Support Action Calls 2023.

Signatory organisations [representing](#) the diversity of the cultural field in Europe and the higher arts education fields, are particularly alarmed by the framing of STEAM education, research, and innovation presented by the European Commission in the Horizon Work Programme 2023–2024 Coordination and the Support Action Calls HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ERA-01 and HORIZON-CL2-2023-HERITAGE-01-08.

By choosing to reinterpret the STEAM (Science Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) concept almost exclusively as a means to bridge the gender gap within the STEM fields, this framing undermines the original *raison d'être* of STEAM — its inherent potential to promote creativity and innovation.

Problematic elements in the Horizon Europe calls:

- The call unreasonably focuses almost exclusively on STEAM as a means to increase the participation of women in STEM disciplines. The result is a STEM-centred narrative about closing the gender gap and how this relates to competitiveness and innovation.
- As representatives of higher arts education and the cultural sector the organisations cannot agree with the reductive narrative of STEAM proposed here. By instrumentalising the arts as a tool for the benefit of STEM, this narrative delegitimises the STEAM concept and reinforces outdated gender stereotypes.
- This reductive and concerning narrative already seems to be gaining credence. If widely adopted, it would have damaging consequences for the cultural and higher arts education fields and beyond. Thus, the need to re-establish a vision of STEAM that truly values the role of artistic disciplines, as previously recognised not only by the signatories of this paper but also by the European Commission.

What STEAM should do

STEAM should be used to valorise the potential of the arts and of arts education. More attention should also be given to

understanding how including arts professionals in interdisciplinary teams can increase and unlock creative, imaginative, and innovative potential.

The organisations ask you on behalf of your network or organisation to join the here undersigned networks, ELIA, AEC, CAE, and EMC, urging the European Commission, especially the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation:

- to engage in dialogue with the higher arts education sector and cultural and creative sectors and industries (CCSIs) in order to adopt a more holistic view on STEAM and interdisciplinarity, to be integrated in future Horizon Europe Work Programmes and other strategic plans and policies;
- to be an advocate, through its policies and funding, for the importance of creativity and other transversal skills provided by arts education;
- to reconsider the narratives and focus areas presented in calls HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ERA-01, HORIZON-CL2-2023-HERITAGE-01-08, and related documents;
- to come up with alternative strategies to address the gender gap in STEM.

Sign [here](#).