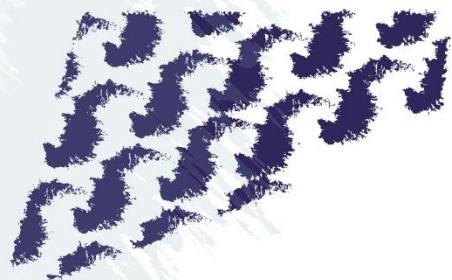


CULTURE is YOU



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# Content Unit 1: Culture and YOU



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# 1 Culture and YOU

## 1.1 Introduction

Imagine that you and a group of people have landed on a deserted island where no one has ever been before. The first thing you will probably do is explore the island and then discuss what you need to do to survive - for example, gather fruit, catch fish, find sources of drinking water, and build tools and huts. But how do you catch fish? Who will fetch the water? How do you spend your free time? What do you do if there is a fight? In time, you will make rules to help you live together peacefully. You will develop a **culture of living together**.

**Culture is important in many aspects of life**, for each individual and for the community, because self-development, identity formation and self-definition are strongly influenced by culture. The development of morals and values shapes the personality of each individual. Cultural influences can act at any time, consciously or unconsciously. Through the consumption of culture, you begin to identify with things and groups. You express yourself through culture. In this module, you will learn the common understanding of culture. Basically, culture includes everything that has been created or shaped by people and the way people live together. Cultural assets are not only “things”, but can also be intangible, such as festivals, customs and craft techniques.

**In this module you will learn about:**

- the term culture
- cultural expressions in values, traditions and in our relationships
- the term cultural property
- tangible and intangible cultural assets and their differences
- the organisation UNESCO and its activities
- different cultural expressions and some examples
- the importance of culture for living together
- actions in your environment that are culturally shaped
- the importance of culture for society
- the importance of cultural participation

## 1.2 Culture – what is it actually?

Culture - what is it? When you hear the word culture, what do you think of first? Think about how you would explain the term culture to a friend. When people hear the word culture, they might think of art, painting, music, or something similar. Of course, these are aspects of culture, but they are only a small part of the complex cultural reality.

Let's take a closer look at the concept of culture in this chapter. Culture can be described as a way of **life expressed by a group of people**. It includes everything that has been shaped, processed, changed and created by people in some way. People belonging to a particular group usually share a common set of values and beliefs, as well as cultural elements such as languages, rituals, food and architecture.

### Remember

The word "culture" comes from the Latin word "colere", which means to cultivate, to nurture, to train, and originally referred to the cultivation and tilling of the soil (Latin: agriculture) in order to adapt it to human needs.

There are many definitions for the term culture. Culture is:

- ... the implicit knowledge of the world
- ... the habits of a community
- ... a form of collective identity
- ... materially and immaterially created by human beings
- There is the often used term "narrow" culture that refers to culture in the narrow sense, so-called "high culture", including literature, art or science
- The "expanded" concept of culture also encompasses the whole of human life, be it language, religion, ethics, technology or educational systems.

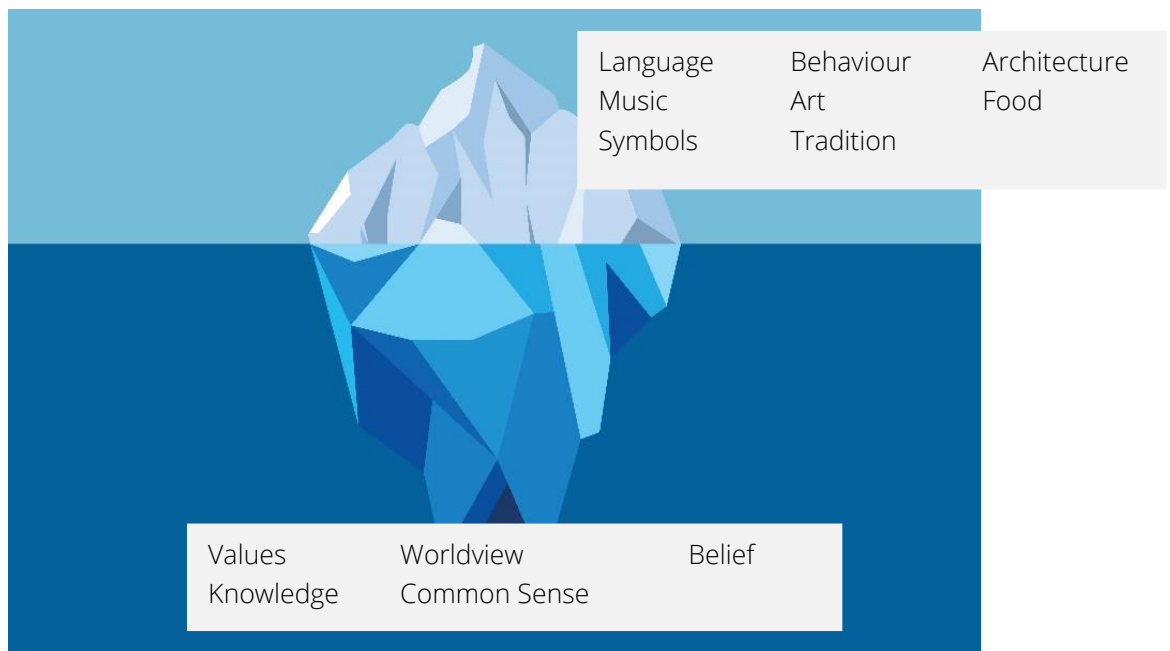
As you have just noticed, the word culture is used differently, and different disciplines define culture differently. But there is no right or wrong definition. Perspective is important!

In this module we will use the definition of **UNESCO**, which explains culture in the following words:

### Definition

UNESCO defines culture as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, that encompasses, not only art and literature, but lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions, and beliefs. (UNESCO, 2011).

If you take a closer look at culture, it can be compared to an iceberg. You can only see a small part of it. What we realize above the water surface is diverse: behaviour, traditions, language, role models, and a lot more. What we do not recognize, but what is important for the understanding of culture are the values, the worldview, and the basic attitudes of people. All this together forms what we call culture.



### Example

Now imagine that two icebergs of two countries meet each other. In a sense, each person carries his or her own iceberg. What happens now when people from different cultures come together? When two people from different cultures meet, they tend to judge the behaviour of their counterparts based on their own values and attitudes.

Have you ever thought about what culture means and how it is expressed? Think about your daily life. In what situations can you recognise culture around you?

**Everyone belongs to a culture in some way.** Culture can be seen everywhere around us because culture is art, values, knowledge, customs, and habits in our lives. Very often we do

not think about it because it is **a habit formed by the society, we live in**. It becomes visible through cultural expressions. Cultural expressions are those expressions that result from the creativity of individuals, groups, and societies. These expressions can be "seen" in a variety of ways. They can be found in values, traditions, attitudes to work, family, music, symbols or literature. In this context, it is important that all cultures are respected.

### Example

An example of a cultural expression in Spain is the Spanish siesta. This is a short nap taken in the afternoon after lunch. Historically, the siesta was taken at the hottest time of the day so that people who worked in agriculture could avoid the midday sun. The siesta is also common in urbanised Spain. It is an interesting part of Spanish history, and you will also find smaller shops and businesses that close during the siesta.

Whether it is works of art, architecture, handicrafts or intangible traditions, rituals and traditional knowledge, cultural property helps us to relate to the past and it is important to relate to the present.

### Definition

Cultural property means property which, on religious or secular grounds, is specifically designated by each State as being of importance for archaeology, prehistory, history, literature, art or science. (UNESCO)

Cultural property is part of humanity's cultural heritage and is associated with diverse accumulated knowledge, experiences, practices, ways of life and cultural and indigenous identity. When a cultural property is destroyed, a source of knowledge and identity is also damaged. Cultural property can include cultural landscapes, works of art, historic buildings or library collections.

### Example

In the following you will find examples of the cultural heritage of some countries:

**Austria:** Historic Centre of the City of Graz.

**Czech Republic:** Historic Centre of Prague

**Spain:** Alhambra (Ancient palace, fortress and citadel located in Granada)

**Poland:** Historic Centre of Kraków

So far you have heard the term UNESCO many times. Let's look at this organisation and what it does. **UNESCO stands for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation** and was founded on 16 November 1945. The organisation has over 50 field offices around the world and its headquarters are in Paris.

### Important

UNESCO's mission is to contribute to the building of a culture of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication, and information. (UNESCO)

One of UNESCO's aims is **to promote education worldwide** but also to ensure that countries share information with each other so that we can learn more about and understand other cultures. Another of UNESCO's tasks is **to award the title of World Heritage Site**. The aim is **to protect outstanding buildings, natural landscapes and customs**. The aim is to make it clear that world heritage belongs to all of humanity. UNESCO also works to preserve cultural heritage.

### Hint

On the UNESCO website, you can find a list of all the World Heritage Sites.  
<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>.

As you saw in the iceberg example, cultural heritage can be tangible or intangible. **Cultural heritage is a collection of a culture's assets that are preserved from one generation to the next**. This heritage can be tangible, such as food, art, clothing, or architecture, or intangible, such as values, beliefs, music, or respect. Therefore, tangible cultural heritage is physical, while intangible cultural heritage is abstract and exists in the minds of people within culture.

### 1.3 How is culture noticeable?

Flamenco	Pizza and Pasta
Wiener Schnitzel	Siesta
Hamburger	Fish and Chips
Oktoberfest (Beer Festival)	

When you read the words written above, do you associate each word with a particular country? Why is that? All these words are cultural expressions of a particular country. Let's look at some examples of cultural expressions.

#### Example

**Flamenco:** This is a cultural expression of folk art in Spain, which has been included by UNESCO in the intangible world cultural heritage.

**Dinner time in Spain:** If you have ever been to Spain, you might have realized that dinner is taken very late. Before 9 p.m. you will rarely see locals in the restaurants. It is common, especially in the big cities, to have an after-work drink in a tapas bar, where you can have small snacks with your cocktail, wine, or beer.

**Wiener Schnitzel:** This is one of the most famous specialities of Viennese cuisine and is considered one of the favourite dishes of the Austrian population.

**Classical music:** Austria is very connected with classical music, and one of the most famous classical composers is Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

**Verbuňk Dance:** This is an improvised male folklore dance from the Slovácko region in the Czech Republic, which is not bound to a precise choreography, but whose form of expression is left entirely to the dancer. This dance is widespread in the southeastern part of Moravia, more precisely in the Slovácko ethnographic region, and is so special that it has been included in the UNESCO list of intangible cultural heritage since 2005.

**Polish Pierogi:** In Poland, the cuisine is very traditional. Polish cuisine uses vast amounts of spices and is based mainly on meat, bread, mushrooms, vegetables, beet, pickles, sauerkraut and sausages. A very famous dish in Polish cuisine is Polish pierogi.

As you can see, different cultural expressions can be very diverse. Cultural expressions can include music, dance, art, behavior, ceremonies, crafts, etc. These expressions result from the creativity of individuals, groups and society. Some of the above cultural expressions may not be familiar to you. So, let's take a deep dive into cultural expressions in everyday life to

get a better understanding. You can perceive culture in everyday life such as fashion, food, festivals, music, traditions or family life. Our daily lives are influenced by these cultural norms. Before you read on, think about practical examples in your country of origin and how culture is expressed in everyday life.

### Example

**Clothes:** Clothes can be an expression of a cultural direction. Different cultures have their own traditional clothes, for example, the “Dirndl” in Austria. What is the impact of the social meaning of clothing?

- With clothes you can distance yourself from “other people’s specific groups”
- It can be connected to religious beliefs.
- Clothing is an element of traditional culture.
- In daily life you can see a different style in different cultures. This might be a distinct taste, certain values or diverse behaviour.

**Food:** An obvious example of culture in everyday life is food. There is a strong link between culture and food, influenced by the traditions of particular countries. Geographical location and seasonality also play a role in how culture influences food choices. Gastronomic culture can be seen in the way food is prepared and consumed. How does culture influence food choices? Food culture is very important and is also protected by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage. For example, the Sacher cake in Austria or the Neapolitan pizza in Italy.

**Music:** Beloved music enriches the cultural background of someone’s everyday life. Music affects culture by developing new genres or building bridges between different lifestyles and cultures.

**Events:** In every country, you can find various events like festivals or shows, which are an excellent possibility to preserve and carry on traditions.

**Knowledge:** Culture itself conveys legacies from generation to generation, each distinct in its own manner.

**Lifestyle:** Culture has been responsible for specific guiding principles which govern society. For example, these days, health has become an essential part of the lifestyle and a modern healthy lifestyle includes cultural aspects like sports, proper nutrition or cultural activity.

In everyday life, there are many opportunities to engage with culture. Maybe after a long day, you just want to relax and watch TV. Then you have for example the following opportunity.



### Hint

On YouTube, you can watch the documentary „Zu Tisch“, which was filmed in various locations around the world. The camera team visits people in different regions and accompanies them in their daily lives. In addition to the preparation of a number of typical regional dishes, the production or procurement of the ingredients is also shown. You will get a glimpse into the everyday cultural life of these people, and the film aims to give you an idea of what food means to the people of these regions.

Here is the link to the documentary: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3obale\\_7gtM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3obale_7gtM)

Have you ever wondered why culture never ceases to exist? The first transmission occurs when the child is born into a family that already lives in its own culture. The individual unconsciously absorbs the culture of his environment. The habits, the regularly recurring routines of the day, the week and the year also shape the lives of people. As it was shown culture is something which has been developing over many centuries and therefore it is transmitted from person to person. Yet there are different ways in which culture can be passed on.

### Important

There are three types of cultural transmission:

**Vertical transmission:** When culture is passed down from one generation to another, for example when it is transmitted from adults to children.

**Horizontal transmission:** When culture is passed between individuals of the same generation, such as classmates.

**Oblique transmission:** When culture is passed from nonparental members of the older generation, such as teachers.

Through cultural transmission, our accumulated knowledge and wisdom can be passed further to future generations. It allows us to transmit our history, our art, our literature, our science etc. It is necessary for the survival and vitality of civilizations.

## 1.4 How does culture affect society?

Have you ever thought about questions such as: "Who am I?", "Who are you?" or "Who are we? The way we answer these questions shapes how we think about ourselves and the people around us. Our answers to these questions are influenced by the society in which we live. So, it is important to take a closer look at how culture influences society.

When do you think we start to learn our culture, to learn the ways of our society? The answer is just after birth and it is called socialisation. It involves much more than just schooling. Our culture shapes the way we work and play and influences our values. It is shaped by culture and what we think is right or wrong. The choices we make can also influence others and shape our society.

### Example

Imagine you meet a stranger on the street. How would you describe this person? What labels would you use? For example, you see a man walking down the street, well-dressed in a suit and carrying a briefcase, and you might describe him as a successful, hard-working man who also seems rather snooty. We know that each person is different in many ways, but when we meet them, we tend to rely on generalisations to describe them. And the labels we use are provided by our society, through its culture, customs, institutions and so on. These labels are rooted in our beliefs about race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, economic class, and so on. Often our beliefs about these categories are so strong that we do not see the unique identities of other people.

Surely you have heard the term society in context with culture. Do you think culture and society are linked? Do they have certain aspects in common or do they influence each other?

Society and culture are closely connected. Culture considers different aspects of society like language, history, technology, and norms, while society involves people who share a common culture. Within culture, people understand themselves and associate with social norms.

Apart from living together with different cultures, culture has also an important aspect on the society you live in. Culture offers values for living together.

### Important

#### Importance of culture for living together:

- Societies provide support in difficult times and individuals receive a sense of belonging. Participants of a social group often help each other by giving various forms of support to individuals within the group.
- Members of a society are interested in achieving a common goal, which offers benefits for the whole society. For example, a social group can work together to fight against issues like racism, gender inequality or poverty.
- A society offers individuals a framework of working together to improve the lives of people.

What do you think could be a prerequisite for cultural participation? Contribute to culture, **cultural education** is an important part. How can it be explained?

When you think about yourself, do you think you are engaging yourself with culture in your daily life? Note some things you do in your free time and think about how this could be connected to culture.

Maybe you wrote down something like music, movies, books, computer games, art, comics, etc. So, you are probably dealing with culture in your everyday life more often than you thought. All these terms are part of our culture. What else can be cultural education and how can you integrate it more in your daily life? In the following you will get some ideas:

### Hint

Cultural education also means trying out new things in a cultural aspect. This might be:

- organize a festival in a youth center
- join a theatre group
- join a language course
- learn a traditional handicraft

Trying new things can help you find out what you are good at and what new things you like. You might discover that you like working with a film camera or that you like being on stage. Arts education is where you meet other people, engage with art and culture and put your own ideas into practice. It helps you to develop yourself and broaden your horizons.

## Culture and YOU - How does culture affect society?

Besides the cultural behavior of their parents, young people also need cultural education to encounter culture. Why is cultural education so important?

### **Support of cultural and social diversity**

Cultural education enables people of different backgrounds and ages to meet each other and encourages openness to the new and unfamiliar. It promotes the development of one's own cultural identity and contributes to self-confidence. Cultural education processes have enormous potential for developing strategies for social inclusion and cultural diversity.

### **It allows participation**

Focusing on the strength of each individual, it opens up opportunities for everyone to participate in culture and education and thus in society.

### **It teaches media skills and helps to shape the digital transformation**

Today, cultural education is often also connected to media education. In dealing with digital and traditional media, individuals learn skills such as symbolic and visual language, perceptual and expressive skills, and linguistic competency. This is very important for your personal development and network society.

### **Broaden horizons and recognize global connections**

Cultural education offers the opportunity to engage with critically and creatively one's own self-image, with cultural heritage and with the political and social situation in Europe and the world. This allows you to help shape the forms of global coexistence.

## 1.5 Culture – why again?

As you have heard, culture is very important for society. Therefore, it is important that people participate in culture. But what does cultural participation mean? Cultural participation encompasses different ways and forms in which people access or create cultural goods and experiences. It can be divided into active and passive cultural participation. Here are two examples.

### Example

Peter is interested in the digital world and uploads a lot of clips to TikTok. He also likes to draw comics and has an Instagram account for that.

Maria has loved going to the theatre since she was a child and is also a fan of classical music, which she listens to a lot.

Which of these examples do you think represents active cultural participation and which passive?

When we talk about active cultural participation, people contribute directly and explicitly to the creation of cultural experiences, for example by playing a musical instrument, playing in a band, drawing, or writing. Passive cultural participation involves people consuming cultural content created by someone else. This could be listening to music, reading a book, going to a show, or visiting an exhibition. So, in our example above, Peter is actively participating in cultural creation, while Mary is passively consuming it. There are many benefits to cultural participation:

**Social inclusion:** Access to cultural opportunities promotes social inclusion. The fact is that access to cultural opportunities depends on a number of factors, such as the local availability of cultural institutions, education or ethnicity. Promoting cultural participation can be very effective in terms of social inclusion. Cultural participation contributes to social cohesion and is an important driver for integration in our societies. Engagement with art and culture provides access to history, traditions and cultural values in Europe and the world.

**Personal Well-being:** Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic with its social distancing the importance of art and culture became apparent. It is remarkable how it influences personal well-being.

**Cultural enterprise:** An intensive involvement in culture advances a prosperous social setting for the cultural enterprise. It promotes production, which leads to new jobs and innovation.

**Confronting societal challenges:** Cultural involvement and the development of a feeling for culture are continuously increasing.

**Social support for culture:** Cultural participation facilitates the financial situation in regard to sustainability in the artistic and cultural sectors.

## 1.6 Summary

In this unit you have taken a deep dive into culture from a number of perspectives. You have learned that there are many definitions of what culture is, but many agree that culture **includes everything that is created and shaped by people.** #

Aspects of culture can be visible, such as music or food, while many aspects are invisible, such as values or beliefs. You know that culture is **part of our everyday lives**, expressed in things like traditions, art or family relationships. In order to preserve our knowledge and identity, cultural assets must be protected.

The main organisation for culture is **UNESCO**. UNESCO has different tasks and goals, and some of them include the protection of cultural property. You have also learnt that cultural transmission can be vertical, horizontal or diagonal to ensure that all the accumulated knowledge is passed from person to person.

In our daily lives, cultural participation and education are very important and bring many benefits. Therefore, it is important that you reflect on yourself, where and how you practice culture in your everyday life and find ways to intensify it. For example, which cultural institution in your area could you join? This will broaden your horizons and bring you other benefits, such as social participation or developing your creative skills.

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