

Creativity and Imagination as Cultural Values Among European Publics: An Intergenerational Perspective

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It is widely recognized that creative intelligence is becoming one of the most desirable personal skills of the future. Creativity, however, operates not only at the individual level but also at the collective one: the socio-cultural environment can both foster and inhibit creativity by shaping specific perceptions of the world and directing creative activity towards specific domains. Therefore, substantial scholarly attention should be paid to social and cultural preconditions of creativity. Drawing on the data from the *European Values Study*, the article analyzes the attitudes of European societies towards the importance of imagination, examines the dynamics of these attitudes between 1990 and 2021, and explores their socio-demographic differentiation. The analysis reveals that the emphasis on imagination varies considerably across European countries and demographic groups, which means that cultural preconditions for the realization of creative potential are unevenly distributed. At the same time, the findings demonstrate that some significant shifts are occurring due to generational replacement in European societies.

Keywords: imagination, creativity, creative class, social generations, European Values Study.

Introduction

Technological advances in recent decades have fundamentally transformed the ways people live their daily lives, work, and communicate. Today, it is no longer the mere possession of knowledge but rather the ability to use it appropriately that has become one of the most important human skills. Consequently, creativity, understood as the capacity to generate new, surprising and valuable ideas or artefacts,¹ has gained significance not only for those employed in the so-called “creative” professions but also for an expanding range of individuals across diverse occupational fields. Creative intelligence is thus emerging as a key human asset and one the most desirable skills, as it enables individuals to compete with technologies that lack imagination, the capacity to dream, value-based orientation, and emotional competence.² Creative intelligence, grounded in a refined imagination, allows individuals to imagine what does not exist, to formulate hypotheses, to solve problems and pose new ones, and to see new possibilities.³

- 1 Margaret A. Boden, *The Creative Mind: Myths and Mechanisms* (Routledge, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203508527>.
- 2 It should be noted that the question of the machine creativity has long occupied scholars and remains unresolved: some believe that the algorithms used by AI can be considered creative by human standards (Galit Wellner, “Posthuman Imagination: From Modernity to Augmented Reality,” *Journal of Posthuman Studies* 2, no. 1 (2018): 45–66, <https://doi.org/10.5325/jpoststud.2.1.0045>; Arthur I. Miller, *The Artist in the Machine: The World of AI-Powered Creativity* (The MIT Press, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/11585.001.0001>), while others argue that algorithm-based processes should be understood as generation rather than creation in the strict sense, since creativity involves intention and meaning, which artificial intelligence lacks (Aaron Hertzmann, “Can Computers Create Art?,” *Arts* 7, no. 2 (2018): 18, <https://doi.org/10.3390/arts7020018>). Margaret A. Boden (2004) addresses the issue of intriguing relations between creativity and computers by distinguishing between three types of creativity—combinational, exploratory, and transformational—and associating them with different degrees of computational potential. Reaching consensus on this matter, however, remains difficult, not least because the very notion of creativity is socially, culturally, ideologically, and technologically conditioned; see Andreas Reckwitz, *The Invention of Creativity: Modern Society and the Culture of the New* (Polity Press, 2017). Moreover, attempts to formalize “artificial creativity” based on a specific notion of creativity may themselves reshape the very concept they seek to model; see Jan Løhmann Stephensen, “Artificial Creativity: Beyond the Human, or beyond Definition?,” *Transformations* 36 (2022): 19–37.
- 3 Although creativity and imagination are distinct concepts, they are closely linked. Imagination is the capacity to form mental images that do not exist in direct sensory perception, to explore various perspectives, and to envision alternative realities beyond the known world. Creativity, on the other hand, is the capacity to generate new ideas and original solutions to problems by channeling imaginative insight into tangible forms—whether

Although research on creativity started in the field of psychology, focusing primarily on individual personality and motivational factors,⁴ the topic has gradually attracted the attention of other disciplines as well, including sociology and economics. These fields emphasize the social and cultural conditions that foster or inhibit creativity.⁵ Creativity is typically

through artistic expression, scientific experimentation or entrepreneurship. In this sense, imagination functions as a source of creativity, allowing to break free from conventional thinking, to challenge norms and to envisage new possibilities; see Robert Audi, “Creativity, Imagination and Intellectual Virtue,” and Jason Baehr, “Intellectual Creativity,” both in *Creativity and Philosophy*, ed. Berys Gaut and Matthew Kieran (Routledge, 2018). This relationship has been empirically confirmed; see Mari Angeles González et al., “Mental Imagery and Creative Thinking,” *The Journal of Psychology* 131, no. 4 (1997): 357–64, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223989709603521>). Once associated primarily with childish playfulness or fiction, the creation of fantasies and visions that have little relevance to the real world, imagination is increasingly seen as a productivity-enhancing quality relevant across professions and as a crucial human capacity for future generations, particularly because—unlike routine work or analytical thinking—it resists full automation. It is linked to the uniquely human capacity to create something qualitatively new, not based on deductive assumptions, and is guided by values and emotional intelligence.

- 4 Joy Paul Guilford, “Creativity,” *American Psychologist* 5, no. 9 (1950): 444–54, <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0063487>; Morris I. Stein, “Creativity and Culture,” *The Journal of Psychology* 36, no. 2 (1953): 311–22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223980.1953.9712897>; Robert S. Albert, ed., *Genius and Eminence: The Social Psychology of Creativity and Exceptional Achievement* (Pergamon Press, 1983); Ravenna Helson, “In Search of the Creative Personality,” *Creativity Research Journal* 9, no. 4 (1996): 295–306, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326934crj0904_1; Gregory J. Feist, “The Function of Personality in Creativity: The Nature and Nurture of the Creative Personality,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Creativity*, ed. James C. Kaufman and Robert J. Sternberg, *Cambridge Handbooks in Psychology* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511763205.009>; Mark Runco, “Personal Creativity and Culture,” in *Creativity: When East Meets West*, ed. Sing Lau et al. (World Scientific Publishing, 2004), https://doi.org/10.1142/9789812567192_0002.
- 5 Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds: 25th Anniversary Edition, Updated and Expanded* (University of California Press, 2008); Teresa M. Amabile et al., “Social Influences on Creativity: Evaluation, Coaction, and Surveillance,” *Creativity Research Journal* 3, no. 1 (1990): 6–21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10400419009534330>; Todd Lubart, “Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Creativity,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Creativity*, ed. James C. Kaufman and Robert J. Sternberg (Cambridge University Press, 2010), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511763205.017>; Todd Lubart et al., “Cultural Perspectives on Creativity,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Creativity*, ed. James C. Kaufman and Robert J. Sternberg (Cambridge University Press, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316979839.022>; Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention* (HarperCollins Publishers, 1997); Randall Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains* (Princeton University Press, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400851744>; Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class—and How It’s Transforming Work, Leisure, Community*

defined in broad terms as the ability to produce something qualitatively new. John Howkins,⁶ for example, describes creativity as a difficult-to-define, contingent, and inherently subjective phenomenon, whose essence lies in the use of existing ideas to create new ones. He identifies three essential conditions for creativity to flourish—personality, originality and meaning—while also emphasizing that creativity is not solely a personal experience, as many forms of creative expression are more effectively realized within group contexts.⁷ The understanding of the cultural conditioning of imagination can be traced back to the socio-cultural theory developed by Lev S. Vygotsky at the beginning of the twentieth century, who considered imagination as a culturally constructed form of creative thinking that manifests in various forms, ranging from dreams and artistic creativity to scientific innovation. Although the imagination enables individuals to move beyond direct cognition, it is nourished by experiences of the social and cultural world, which provide the substance for the imaginative process.⁸ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi⁹ adds a further dimension to the study of creativity, describing it as the result of the interaction of three elements: culture, the individual who introduces innovation into the symbolic cultural field, and the legitimizing environment composed of symbolic capital experts. He

and Everyday Life (Basic Books, 2002); Dean Keith Simonton, "Creative Cultures, Nations, and Civilizations: Strategies and Results," in *Group Creativity: Innovation Through Collaboration*, ed. Paul B. Paulus and Bernard A. Nijstad (Oxford University Press, 2003), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195147308.003.0014>; Runco, "Personal Creativity and Culture"; R. Keith Sawyer, *Explaining Creativity: The Science of Human Innovation* (Oxford University Press, 2012); Sven Hemlin et al., "Creative Knowledge Environments," *Creativity Research Journal* 20, no. 2 (2008): 196–210, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10400410802060018>; Luciana Lazzeretti, ed., *Creative Industries and Innovation in Europe: Concepts, Measures and Comparative Case Studies* (Routledge, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203112571>; Xavier Greffe, "From Culture to Creativity and the Creative Economy: A New Agenda for Cultural Economics," *City, Culture and Society* 7, no. 2 (2016): 71–74, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ccs.2015.12.008>; Reckwitz, *The Invention of Creativity: Modern Society and the Culture of the New*; Silvia Cerisola, *Cultural Heritage, Creativity and Economic Development* (Edward Elgar, 2019).

- 6 John Howkins, *Creative Ecologies: Where Thinking Is a Proper Job* (Transaction Publishers, 2009).
- 7 John Howkins, *The Creative Economy: How People Make Money from Ideas* (Penguin Books, 2007).
- 8 Lev Semenovich Vygotsky, "Imagination and Creativity in Childhood," *Journal of Russian & East European Psychology* 42, no. 1 (2004): 7–97.
- 9 Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*.

points out that the social environment defines both the concept of creativity, the ways in which it is cultivated, and ultimately the standards by which it is evaluated. While acknowledging the importance of individual personality traits, Csikszentmihalyi stresses that various environmental factors—such as living conditions, the creative milieu, and favorable circumstances—are too important for creativity to be studied solely as a personal attribute. Similarly, Randall Collins¹⁰ emphasizes the social nature of creative acts, focusing on the role of direct interpersonal relationships and everyday interaction rituals in the creative process itself, as well as the importance of social environments for recognition and assessment. The cultural nature of creativity is also highlighted by Todd I. Lubart,¹¹ who argues that socio-cultural contexts can both foster and inhibit creativity by shaping specific ways of perceiving the world and directing creative activity towards certain domains and social groups. Charles Leadbeater,¹² in turn, draws attention to the new opportunities for creative collaboration, enabled by digital technologies, which create platforms and foster a culture where unprecedented numbers of people can share information and develop their ideas. Creativity and imagination thus operate not only at the individual but also at the collective level: they can be shared, stimulated, and cultivated, and may develop as collective or communal qualities. They are becoming as important as knowledge and information management; however, unlike knowledge, imagination or creativity cannot be taught directly. Rather, they require stimulation, encouragement, cultivation, and recognition of their value.¹³

Scientific research on creativity has also been marked by a recurring debate on its potential as a decisive economic driver in post-industrial societies, particularly in relation to its role as an engine of innovation. Richard Florida¹⁴ introduced the concept of the “creative class,” arguing that a creative ethos has become increasingly prevalent in contemporary societies, with approximately one third of the workforce engaged in various forms of creative occupations (encompassing not only artistic production but also a wide range of professional activities driven by creativity

10 Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*.

11 Lubart, “Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Creativity.”

12 Charles Leadbeater, *We-Think: Mass Innovation, Not Mass Production* (Profile Books, 2009).

13 Audi, “Creativity, Imagination and Intellectual Virtue.”

14 Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class—and How It’s Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*.

and innovation). This development is associated with a broad syndrome of changing life choices, including shifts in values, attitudes, lifestyles, aesthetic preferences, personal relationships, time allocation, and work organization. Creativity in contemporary culture is thus acquiring the status of both an intrinsic and an instrumental value, through which achievements in various spheres of human life are evaluated. Creativity is valued not only for its contribution to technological progress and economic growth, but also for its role in personal development, cultural enrichment, education, and the promotion of positive social change.

Objective and method of the study

Since creativity can develop as a collective and communal quality, substantial scholarly attention should be devoted to the social and cultural preconditions that shape it. With regard to the impact of cultural and social environment on creativity, important factors include the cultural attitudes, values, beliefs, and customs prevailing in a society, which influence how individuals perceive the world and guide their behavior.¹⁵ Given the potential of creativity to function as a significant factor of the competitive potential of future societies, the question arises as to how different European societies perceive the importance of imagination as a human quality that can be stimulated, nurtured, and developed. The objective of this article is therefore to answer the following questions: (1) whether there is a significant variance in the valuation of imagination across European countries and how these attitudes have evolved over time in different regions; (2) which socio-demographic variables exert the most significant impact on these attitudes and how they are related to the emergence of a creative class; (3) whether significant intergenerational differences can be observed in this respect.

The analysis is based on data from *European Values Study*¹⁶ (EVS), drawing on the four most recent waves. This dataset provides a valuable

15 Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations* (SAGE Publications, 2001); Vlad Petre Glăveanu, ed., *The Palgrave Handbook of Creativity and Culture Research* (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-46344-9>; Letty Y.-Y. Kwan et al., "Culture, Creativity, and Innovation," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 49, no. 2 (2018): 165–70, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022117753306>.

16 For more information on the study, see <https://europeanvaluesstudy.eu/>. The data used in this study are publicly available via the GESIS data archive: *EVS Trend File 1981–2017*. GESIS, Cologne. ZA7503 Data File, version 3.0.0, <https://doi.org/10.4232/1.14021>.

source of longitudinal evidence for investigating public attitudes towards the importance of fostering children's imagination and for tracing the dynamics of these attitudes from a comparative European perspective. The first wave of the survey comprising both Western and Eastern European countries was conducted in 1990 and has since been repeated at approximately nine-year intervals. The following analysis includes only those twenty-one European countries that participated in all four EVS waves conducted after 1990: Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden (Romania was excluded from the analysis as an outlier due to atypical dynamics in attitudes toward imagination). Compared to other representative comparative longitudinal value studies, this study covers the longest time span—almost 30 years—which is of crucial importance for the study of value orientations across social generations. Taken together, the four EVS waves conducted during this period include respondents born between 1920 and 2003. Owing to natural population change, older generations were gradually replaced by younger ones: the 1990–1993 EVS wave covered respondents born up to 1975 ($N = 27,091$), the 1999–2001 wave those born up to 1983 ($N = 26,407$), the 2008–2010 wave those born up to 1993 ($N = 32,365$), and the 2017–2021 wave those born up to 2003 ($N = 36,169$).

In the EVS questionnaire, respondents were asked, among other things, the following question: *“Here is a list of qualities which children can be encouraged to learn at home. Which five would you say are the most desirable for a child to have?”* Respondents were presented a list of eleven qualities to be fostered at home. In addition to imagination, the list included good manners, independence, hard work, a sense of responsibility, tolerance and respect for others, thrift (saving money and things), determination (perseverance), religious faith, unselfishness, and obedience. The answer to this question constitutes the main dependent variable in the subsequent analysis.

The list of individual-level control variables is based on Richard Florida's¹⁷ conception of the creative class and limited by the variables available in the EVS dataset: age, income, educational attainment, occupational

17 Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class—and How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*.

profile, and urbanization of the habitat. Some of the independent variables are included in the analysis from the EVT data files without transformation: survey wave (1990–1993, 1999–2001, 2008–2010, 2017–2021), income groups (deciles), and size of town in which the interview was conducted (under 5,000, 5,000–20,000, 20,000–100,000, 100,000–500,000, 500,000 and more inhabitants). Other independent variables were transformed for the research purposes. The age variable was transformed by dividing respondents into six age groups (15–24, 25–34, 35–44, 45–54, 55–64, and 65 and over) and distinguishing six birth cohorts (born before 1943; 1943–1959; 1960–1969; 1970–1979; 1980–1989; and after 1989). Educational attainment was categorized into five levels (primary or lower, lower secondary, upper secondary, post-secondary non tertiary, and tertiary education). An occupational profile variable was created using ISCO classification of occupations by grouping respondents into two categories: (1) those employed in knowledge- and creativity-driven professions, and (2) those employed in other professions, including white-collar, service, blue-collar or agricultural occupations.

To address the objectives of the study, different statistical analysis methods were employed, including descriptive statistics, Kendall's τ correlation analysis, and the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis (H) test to examine variance between groups of respondents. All analyses were carried out using *IBM SPSS Statistics* software.

The dynamics of assessing imagination as an important human quality

The analysis of EVS data reveals that, across the four survey waves including both Western European and post-communist Eastern European countries, the importance of imagination has varied more or less significantly in all countries. A comparison of European societies according to the importance of imagination in the 1990–1993 EVS wave reveals a very clear divide between Western European countries and those of Eastern Europe shaped by a post-communist legacy: in the former, the perceived importance of imagination is considerably higher, and the gap between the two groups is substantial (see Table 1). This divergence may plausibly be

attributed to the specific characteristics of communist regimes, which were based on command policies and the depreciation of individuality. Evidence for this interpretation can be found in culturally proximate countries such as Finland and Estonia, which nonetheless exhibited sharply divergent levels of support for the view that imagination should be fostered. Previous studies based on EVS data have likewise confirmed that intercultural differences are associated not only with a country's experience of communist rule but also with its level of economic development (measured by GDP per capita), dominant religious denomination, and the prevalence of self-expression values. Among these factors, religious denomination emerges as the most decisive, with Protestant countries emphasizing more strongly imagination as a quality to be cultivated.¹⁸ This axis of cultural differences is also clearly

Table 1.

Importance of imagination across European countries in 1990–2021 (the share of respondents who have mentioned imagination as an important children's quality to be fostered at home), in *EVS 2022*.

Vaizduotės svarba Europos šalyse 1990–2021 m. (respondentų, paminėjusių vaizduotę kaip svarbią vaikų savybę, kurią reikia ugdyti namuose, dalis)

Region	Country	EVS wave				TOTAL
		1990–1993	1999–2001	2008–2010	2017–2021	
Western Europe	Iceland	49,4%	18,3%	19,5%	32,8%	29,6%
	Spain	42,3%	33,0%	21,1%	35,5%	34,5%
	Sweden	40,4%	40,9%	37,8%	41,8%	40,2%
	Denmark	37,2%	36,9%	32,0%	34,8%	34,9%
	Germany	31,1%	28,2%	27,1%	25,9%	28,5%
	Finland	26,6%	29,2%	24,9%	30,6%	28,0%
	Austria	24,3%	22,5%	21,5%	20,7%	22,2%
	Netherlands	23,1%	32,4%	22,9%	28,4%	26,8%
	France	22,7%	17,6%	16,3%	22,3%	19,6%
	Portugal	18,1%	16,2%	9,8%	14,5%	14,3%
	Great Britain	17,3%	38,3%	29,9%	33,4%	29,2%
	Italy	17,1%	12,5%	12,1%	19,4%	15,6%
Eastern Europe	Bulgaria	16,3%	19,0%	25,2%	20,1%	20,6%
	Estonia	12,8%	11,2%	10,1%	15,4%	12,3%
	Latvia	11,4%	7,1%	19,2%	15,6%	14,1%
	Poland	9,9%	12,3%	23,1%	16,3%	16,1%
	Slovenia	9,8%	12,4%	6,3%	11,5%	9,8%
	Hungary	9,4%	10,8%	16,3%	15,8%	13,7%
	Slovakia	7,6%	2,6%	9,8%	12,3%	8,2%
	Lithuania	6,3%	5,3%	6,5%	15,9%	8,9%
	Czech Republic	4,5%	7,0%	17,5%	25,1%	12,5%

18 Slavica Maksić and Zoran Pavlović, "Nurturing Child Imagination in the Contemporary World: Perspectives from Different Nations," *Conference Book, XI Annual International Conference of BCES—Education in One World: Perspectives from Different Nations*, 2013, 216–22.

reflected in Table 1. Economically advanced countries with a Protestant tradition and high levels of self-expression values—such as Iceland, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Finland, and Netherlands—consistently occupy the highest positions.

Interestingly, in Western European countries where the importance attributed to imagination was already quite high in the 1990–1993 EVS wave, it has risen only moderately over the period under investigation (for example, in Sweden, Finland, and the Netherlands) or even decreased (in Spain, Denmark, Iceland, and Germany) with different fluctuations in between. Meanwhile, a rising emphasis on imagination constitutes the dominant trend across all Eastern European countries. Following the radical transformations in the political and economic systems in the region, data from the 2017–2021 EVS reveal noticeable shifts in the relative positioning of countries: societies in several Eastern European countries (such as the Czech Republic and Bulgaria) now surpass some Western European societies (including Portugal or Italy) in acknowledging the importance of fostering children's imagination.

To obtain a more comprehensive picture, it is necessary to examine not only the variation in the emphasis placed on the development of imagination in different societies, but also the variation in its relative standing among other children's qualities to be fostered at home. From this perspective, the divide between Western and Eastern European countries appears less pronounced (see Table 2) than in the previous comparison. Countries such as Iceland, Italy, Portugal, and Great Britain ranked imagination as the least important of the eleven listed qualities in the 1990–1993 EVS wave; however, populations in some other Western European countries positioned imagination considerably higher—ranking it sixth, fifth, or even fourth among desirable children's qualities. It is noteworthy that no change in the rating score of imagination occurred between the first and the second waves of the survey. In subsequent waves, however, the prevailing trend in most countries—both Western and Eastern European—has been towards a growing emphasis on imagination. The most notable exception is Spain, where the importance attributed to imagination declined substantially in

the 2008–2010 and 2017–2021 EVS waves compared to earlier periods. Despite these significant changes, imagination remains less strongly emphasized in Eastern European countries, while societies in the most economically advanced European countries—particularly the Scandinavian states—continue to assign greater importance to this quality.

Table 2.

The relative importance of imagination (rating) among other children's qualities to be fostered at home across European countries in 1990–2021, in EVS 2022.

Vaizduotės (vertinimo) santykinė svarba tarp kitų vaikų savybių, kurias reikia ugdyti namuose, Europos šalyse 1990–2021 m.

	EVS wave			
	1990–1993	1999–2001	2008–2010	2017–2021
Spain	4	4	8	7
Sweden	5	5	6	5
Denmark	6	6	6	6
Germany	7	7	7	8
Austria	8	8	7	7
Netherlands	8	8	8	7
Finland	10	10	7	6
France	10	10	10	10
Bulgaria	10	10	9	8
Estonia	10	10	10	9
Latvia	10	10	10	9
Poland	10	10	10	11
Iceland	11	11	9	8
Italy	11	11	11	10
Portugal	11	11	11	10
Great Britain	11	11	9	8
Czech Republic	11	11	10	10
Hungary	11	11	11	10
Lithuania	11	11	11	9
Slovakia	11	11	11	11
Slovenia	11	11	11	10

Creativity and imagination as human resources

Creativity and imagination are increasingly recognized as essential human resources; however, awareness of their importance varies not only across societies but also across social groups within the same society. Which

dividing lines could be expected to be the most salient? First and foremost, imagination as a value is likely to be more strongly emphasized within those segments of society that may be described as belonging to the *creative class*. Richard Florida,¹⁹ who popularized this concept, does not explicitly identify the socio-demographic characteristics of individuals belonging to this social category, yet several key features can be inferred from his work: these are educated, tolerant, open to change, innovative, and entrepreneurial individuals working in knowledge- and creativity-driven professions, who also tend to value an aesthetically stimulating environment. Florida assigns an exceptionally broad range of occupations to the creative class, extending beyond artistic professions to include workers in science, technology, and knowledge-based fields—such as engineers, lawyers, entrepreneurs, doctors, educators—effectively encompassing most occupational groups except civil servants, blue-collar, service, and agricultural workers. He himself acknowledges, however, that such a broad definition is contentious. Another socio-demographic characteristic associated by Florida with the creative class is urban residence, as cities function as hubs of culture and art, design, technology, research and innovation, as well as a vibrant social and cultural life that fosters creativity and provides an environment that is favorable to the creative class.

Beyond characteristics associated with the creative class, previous empirical studies have shown that age is also related to creativity. The importance of creativity rises rapidly during youth, reaching a peak around the age of forty, and subsequently declines. This trajectory, however, varies depending on the field of creativity: in some domains, attributes such as courage, vigor, flexibility, and nonconformity are more highly valued, whereas in others accumulated expertise play a more decisive role.²⁰

In this context, the following hypotheses can be formulated and tested on the basis of EVS data:

- 19 Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class—and How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*.
- 20 Dean K. Simonton, "Age and Outstanding Achievement: What Do We Know after a Century of Research?," *Psychological Bulletin* 104, no. 2 (1988): 251–67, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.104.2.251>; Dean K. Simonton, "Age and Literary Creativity: A Cross-Cultural and Transhistorical Survey," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 6, no. 3 (1975): 259–77, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002202217563001>; Jock Abra, "Changes in Creativity with Age: Data, Explanations, and Further Predictions," *The International Journal of Aging & Human Development* 28, no. 2 (1989): 105–26, <https://doi.org/10.2190/E0YT-K1YQ-3T2T-Y3EQ>.

H1: People in knowledge- and creativity-driven professions tend to emphasize imagination more than people in white-collar, service, blue-collar, or agricultural occupations.

H2: Individuals with higher levels of education, higher incomes, and those living in more urbanized areas tend to value imagination more highly.

H3: Younger people tend to place more emphasis on imagination than those aged forty or older.

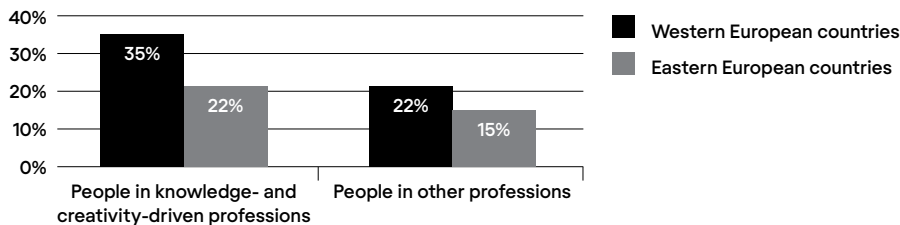
To test these hypotheses, an analysis was conducted to examine the influence of educational attainment, occupational profile, income, type of residence, and age on the perceived importance of fostering imagination. The analysis was performed separately for Western and Eastern European countries, taking into account the previously detected significant differences between these two groups regarding the value attributed to imagination and trying to identify the underlying drivers of these differences. Another reason for making such a division was the variation in the prevalence of people working in creative professions: according to 2017–2021 EVS data, in Western European countries their proportion was 47%, compared to 33% in Eastern European countries.

Focusing first on the occupational profile of respondents (knowledge- and creativity-driven professions *versus* other occupations), the 2017–2021 EVS wave data confirm that it significantly influences the cultural value attributed to imagination. This effect is particularly pronounced in Western European societies (Kendall $\tau = .144$, $p < .001$, $N = 12,235$), but remains weaker, though still statistically significant, in Eastern European countries (Kendall $\tau = .083$, $p < .001$, $N = 6,517$). Across both occupational groups, Westerners attach greater importance to imagination than Easterners. This suggests that the emphasis on imagination is shaped not only by the prevalence of people working in creative professions but also by broader societal value orientations—specifically, differences in the degree to which societies prioritize self-expression values (see Chart 1).

Chart 1.

Importance of imagination across occupational groups in Western and Eastern European countries in 2017–2021 EVS wave (the share of respondents who have mentioned imagination as an important children quality to be fostered at home), in EVS 2022

Vaizduotės svarba tarp Vakarų ir Rytų Europos šalių profesinių grupių 2017–2021 m. EVS apklausoje (respondentų, paminėjusių vaizduotę kaip svarbią vaiko savybę, kurią reikia ugdyti namuose, dalis)

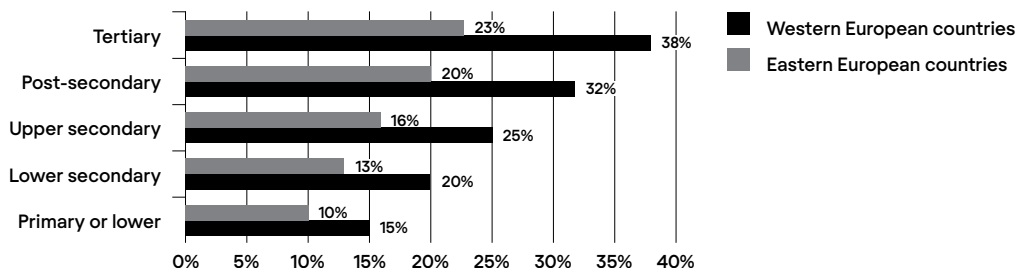


Likewise, educational attainment of respondents differentiates cultural value attributed to imagination, as the proportion of individuals emphasizing the importance of imagination among the most educated is more than twice as high as among the least educated (see Chart 2). This pattern is especially pronounced in Western European societies (Kendall $\tau = .170$, $p < .001$, $N = 21,619$), whereas in Eastern European countries the relation is much weaker, although still statistically significant (Kendall $\tau = .088$, $p < .001$, $N = 13,800$).²¹ It is noteworthy that perceptions of the importance

Chart 2.

Importance of imagination across educational groups in Western and Eastern European countries in 2017–2021 EVS wave (the share of respondents who have mentioned imagination as an important children quality to be fostered at home), in EVS 2022

Vaizduotės svarba tarp Vakarų ir Rytų Europos šalių švietimo grupių 2017–2021 m. EVS apklausoje (respondentų, paminėjusių vaizduotę kaip svarbią vaiko savybę, kurią reikia ugdyti namuose, dalis)



²¹ It would be important to analyze the significance attached to fostering imagination not only in relation to the education level of the respondents but also to their educational profile; however, such information is not available in the EVS dataset.

of imagination vary considerably between Western and Eastern Europeans across all educational attainment levels.

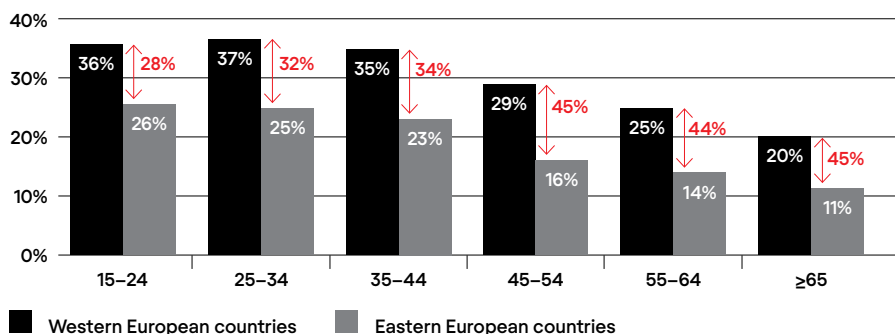
The data confirm a moderate importance of the respondents' financial situation on their assessments of imagination. Individuals from higher-income households value imagination slightly more than those from lower-income households, although the correlations, while statistically significant, are weak (for Western European countries, Kendall $\tau = .075$, $p < .001$, $N = 17,988$; for Eastern European countries, Kendall $\tau = .098$, $p < .001$, $N = 11,511$). Similarly, respondents living in urbanized areas tend to place more emphasis on imagination, though the relationship between the variables is again weak, although statistically significant (for Western European countries, Kendall $\tau = .101$, $p < .001$, $N = 16,006$; for Eastern European countries, Kendall $\tau = .089$, $p < .001$, $N = 13,856$). Taken together, these data partially support Hypotheses H1 and H2 suggesting that emphasis on imagination is associated with certain social groups linked to the concept of creative class—primarily defined by income, urbanization, educational attainment, and occupational profile. It should be noted that these hypotheses find stronger empirical support in Western European societies than in Eastern European ones.

Regarding the influence of age on the emphasis placed on imagination, there is a statistically significant covariation of these variables in both Western and Eastern European countries (respectively, Kendall $\tau = -.124$, $p < .001$, $N = 21,733$; and Kendall $\tau = -.125$, $p < .001$, $N = 13,782$). Younger people are more likely to emphasize importance of imagination, with a notable threshold in the evaluations observed after the age of forty-five (see Chart 3). These findings are consistent with Hypothesis H3. Significant differences remain between Western and Eastern European respondents across all age groups; however, the discrepancy is smaller among the assessments of younger people than among those aged forty-five and over. This may indicate a gradual cultural convergence between the two groups of countries in terms of valuing creativity (to be addressed in more detail in the following section).

Chart 3.

Importance of imagination across age groups in Western and Eastern European countries in 2017–2021 EVS wave (the share of respondents who have mentioned imagination as an important children quality to be fostered at home), in EVS 2022

Vaizduotės svarba tarp Vakarų ir Rytų Europos šalių atskirų amžiaus grupių 2017–2021 m. EVS apklausoje (respondentų, paminėjusių vaizduotę kaip svarbią vaiko savybę, kurią reikia ugdyti namuose, dalis)



A central question, however, is whether the stronger emphasis on imagination is primarily an age-related phenomenon tied to life-cycle stages, or whether it reflects a broader cultural shift elevating creativity as a cultural value throughout society? More explicitly, the relationship between age and the importance attributed to imagination at the societal level could be due to an ageing effect, generational replacement, or a profound cultural shift affecting all age groups and generations. The longitudinal nature of the EVS data allows us to disentangle these effects and address the question: is the observed positive dynamics in the valuation of imagination driven by a rising appreciation of imagination in each generation over time, or is it primarily due to the values of younger generations entering the population?²²

22 It should be noted that all socio-demographic characteristics examined in this study may also be identified as distinguishing features of social generations, insofar as representatives of younger generations typically are better educated, more likely to live in urban areas, and more frequently employed in creative occupations.

Generational differences in the valuation of the importance of imagination

In this article, the concept of generations is primarily grounded in the theory of generations formulated by Karl Mannheim²³ and partially by Neil Howe and William Strauss,²⁴ which stresses that a generation is not merely a theoretically constructed demographic category defined by birth years, but a real social phenomenon: individuals who came of age, were socialized, and matured in the same historical period and similar social and cultural environments. With their common experiences of historical events and social, economic, political, cultural, and technological processes, members of the same generation share similar fundamental value attitudes, modes of thinking, and patterns of behavior, despite the multitude of individual factors influencing their socialization. While some scholars argue that generations are a global phenomenon, driven by enabling or traumatic events and experiences on a worldwide scale,²⁵ other studies highlight the importance of considering the specific historical experiences of different regions and the possible implications this may have on the consolidation of generations, suggesting that generational formation varies across national contexts.²⁶

This underscores the complexity of intercultural empirical comparisons of generations. To address this challenge, the following analysis identifies six birth cohorts within the EVS sample, without assigning specific

- 23 Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. Paul Kecskemeti (London, 1952).
- 24 Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Generations: The History of America's Future 1584 to 2069* (William Morrow & Company, 1991); Neil Howe and William Strauss, *The Fourth Turning: An American Prophecy* (Broadway Books, 1997); Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (Vintage Books, 2000).
- 25 June Edmunds and Bryan S. Turner, "Global Generations: Social Change in the Twentieth Century," *The British Journal of Sociology* 56, no. 4 (2005): 559–77, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-4446.2005.00083.x>.
- 26 Juan Díez-Nicolás, "Values and Generations in Spain," in *Changing Values, Persisting Cultures* (Brill, 2008), <https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004162341.i-390.89>; Raili Nugin et al., *Generations in Estonia: Contemporary Perspectives on Turbulent Times* (University of Tartu Press, 2016), https://doi.org/10.26530/OAPEN_606515; Manuela Caballero and Artemio Baigorri, "Glocalising the Theory of Generations: The Case of Spain," *Time & Society* 28, no. 1 (2019): 333–57, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0961463X18783374>; Christian Scholz, "The Generations Z in Europe: An Introduction," in *Generations Z in Europe*, ed. Christian Scholz and Anne Rennig (Emerald Publishing Limited, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-78973-491-120191001>.

generational labels, as such labels may differ across countries or regions and denote distinct cultural entities: (1) generation born before 1943; (2) generation born 1943–1959; (3) generation born 1960–1969; (4) generation born 1970–1979; (5) generation born 1980–1989; (6) generation born after 1989. It must be underlined that these groups are best understood as generational cohorts that may exhibit certain shared generational features, rather than as social generations in the strict Mannheimian sense.²⁷ For the sake of simplicity, however, throughout the remainder of this article the term *generations* will be used to refer to these generational cohorts.

After tentatively differentiating generations, it becomes possible to examine whether they differ significantly in valuing imagination as a human quality. According to post-materialist theory, contemporary societies are undergoing profound cultural change through generational replacement, characterized by a shift in preference from traditional norms and authority toward the emancipation of an individual, who highly values autonomy, quality of life, and self-expression.²⁸ Based on this perspective, the following hypotheses can be formulated to explore the effects of ageing, generational replacement, and broader cultural shifts on attitudes related to the importance of fostering imagination:

H4: Each successive younger generation tends to emphasize imagination more than older generations.

H5^a: The valuation of imagination within each generation gradually diminishes as individuals age.

Alternative hypothesis:

H5^b: The valuation of imagination within each generation remains substantially undiminished as individuals age.

Focusing on Hypothesis H4, data presented in Chart 4 clearly show that generational differences are an important factor in attitudes towards the importance of fostering imagination as each younger generation places stronger emphasis on imagination than its predecessors (Kendall $\tau = .112$, $p < .001$, $N = 120,040$). This finding applies equally to Western and Eastern

27 One of the key criteria for defining generations in Mannheim's sense is generational consciousness, which is not the case with the above identified categories.

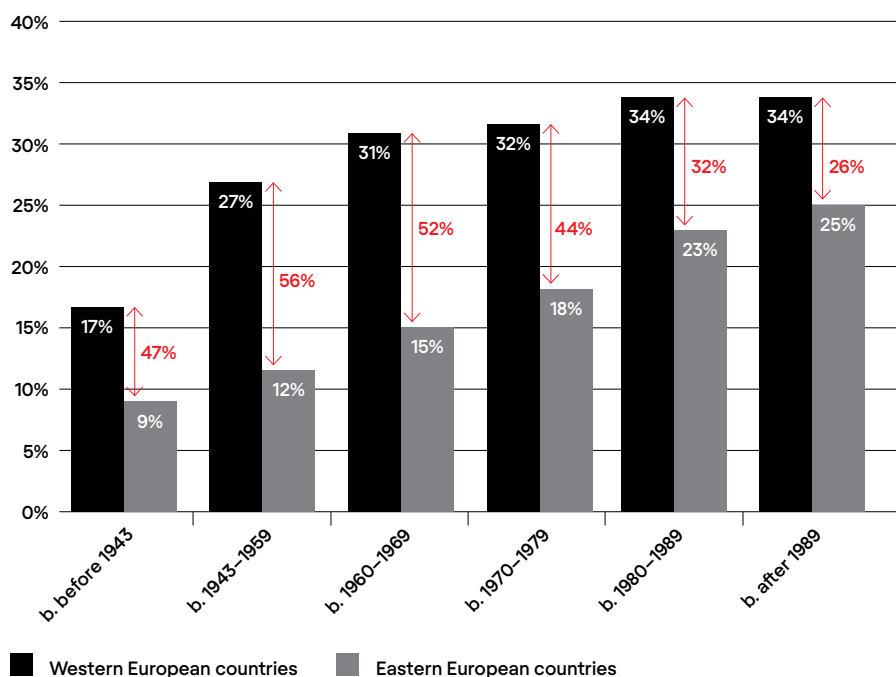
28 Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511790881>.

European societies. However, differences between Western and Eastern European countries remain significant within each generation, with Westerners consistently placing greater value on imagination. These results are consistent with the assumptions of post-materialist theory and support Hypothesis H4. An equally noteworthy observation is that the gap between the Western and Eastern European attitudes narrows with each successive younger generation. Because these results are based on repeated surveys spanning 1990–2021 rather than a single survey, they demonstrate gradual cultural convergence between Western and Eastern European countries in recognizing the importance of fostering imagination and creativity.

Chart 4.

Importance of imagination across social generations in Western and Eastern European countries in all four EVS waves (the share of respondents who have mentioned imagination as an important children quality to be fostered at home), in EVS 2022

Vaizduotės svarba tarp Vakarų ir Rytų Europos šalių skirtingų socialinių kartų keturioje EVS apklausoje (respondentų, paminėjusių vaizduotę kaip svarbią vaiko savybę, kurią reikia ugdyti namuose, dalis)



Turning to Hypothesis H5 and delving deeper into the intergenerational comparison, two alternative scenarios can be considered. First, if the observed increase in the importance of imagination in European societies is primarily a consequence of generational replacement, then the appreciation of imagination within each generation should gradually decrease as its members age, consistent with the known effects of ageing on this perception (H5^a). Conversely, if the valuation of imagination within each generation remains substantially undiminished as their representatives grow older, this would suggest that the observed increase in the importance of imagination reflects not only generational replacement but also a broader societal culture shift (H5^b). To disentangle these two effects, a clear distinction should be made between the influence of generational membership and the impact of ageing on the emphasis placed on imagination. This requires comparing the range of variation in attitudes across different generations at the same age, alongside the range of variation within each generation as its members progress through different life stages. The analysis of these patterns and the results of the H-test presented in Table 3 lead to two major conclusions: (1) emphasis on imagination decreases with age among older generations; however, this pattern does not apply to the youngest generations born after 1970, who have not yet reached the later life stages; (2) differences between representatives of different generations at ages 15–24 or 25–34 are statistically significant but do not follow a consistent pattern; by contrast, among older age groups, the valuation of imagination consistently increases in successive generations.

Table 3.

Cross-generational assessments of the importance of imagination at different ages in Europe, 1990–2017 (the share of respondents who have mentioned imagination as an important children quality to be fostered at home), in *EVS 2022*

Skirtingų kartų vaizduotės svarbos vertinimai tarp atskirų amžiaus grupių Europoje 1990–2017 m. (respondentų, paminėjusių vaizduotę kaip svarbią vaiko savybę, kurią reikia ugdyti namuose, dalis)

Age group	Generation b. before 1943	Generation b. 1943–1959	Generation b. 1960–1969	Generation b. 1970–1979	Generation b. 1980–1989	Generation b. after 1989	H-test results for every age group
15–24	–	–	31,7%	25,0%	24,9%	30,7%	p = 0,000 H(3) = 62,536 N = 13,382

25–34	–	29,7%	27,2%	25,2%	30,8%	29,6%	p = 0,000 H(4) = 47,555 N = 20,387
35–44	–	22,6%	23,1%	28,1%	30,4%	–	p = 0,000 H(3) = 98,566 N = 22,134
45–54	17,6%	18,9%	23,0%	24,7%	–	–	p = 0,000 H(3) = 78,580 N = 21,154
55–64	13,1%	19,9%	19,9%	–	–	–	p = 0,000 H(2) = 147,288 N = 19,687
≥65	12,6%	19,0%	–	–	–	–	p = 0,000 H(1) = 161,384 N = 23,270
H-test results for every genera- tion	p = 0,000, H(2) = 56,788, N = 26,567	p = 0,000, H(4) = 164,128, N = 37,437	p = 0,000, H(4) = 130,799, N = 23,303	p = 0,000, H(3) = 18,950, N = 17,270	p = 0,000, H(2) = 39,222, N = 10,516	p = 0,426, H(1) = 0,633, N = 4,921	

Even more intriguing patterns emerge when the analysis is conducted separately for Western and Eastern European societies. In Western Europe, the distribution of responses closely mirrors that of the overall survey sample (see Table 4). This means that in this group of countries the empirical evidence aligns more closely with Hypothesis H5^a: the growing emphasis on imagination at the societal level appears to result primarily from generational replacement.

Table 4.

Cross-generational assessments of the importance of imagination at different ages in twelve Western European countries, 1990–2017 (the share of respondents who have mentioned imagination as an important children quality to be fostered at home), in EVS 2022

Skirtingų kartų vaizduotės svarbos vertinimai tarp atskirų amžiaus grupių dvylikoje Vakarų Europos šalių 1990–2017 m. (respondentų, paminėjusių vaizduotę kaip svarbią vaiko savybę, kurią reikia ugdyti namuose, dalis)

Age group	Generation b. before 1943	Generation b. 1943–1959	Generation b. 1960–1969	Generation b. 1970–1979	Generation b. 1980–1989	Generation b. after 1989	H-test results for every age group
15–24	–	–	39,7%	33,3%	28,4%	34,3%	p = 0,000 H(3) = 48,027 N = 7,605
25–34	–	39,0%	36,2%	31,0%	36,1%	33,2%	p = 0,000 H(4) = 35,240 N = 12,078
35–44	–	31,5%	28,7%	32,5%	35,2%	–	p = 0,000 H(3) = 21,380 N = 12,852
45–54	24,1%	25,4%	27,4%	29,2%	–	–	p = 0,002 H(3) = 15,271 N = 12,299
55–64	17,7%	23,5%	24,1%	–	–	–	p = 0,000 H(2) = 54,908 N = 11,468
≥65	14,7%	23,1%	–	–	–	–	p = 0,000 H(1) = 148,139 N = 13,721
H-test results for every generation	p = 0,000, H(2) = 109,138, N = 15,505	p = 0,000, H(4) = 231,372, N = 21,666	p = 0,000, H(4) = 168,665, N = 14,201	p = 0,045, H(3) = 8,065, N = 10,054	p = 0,000, H(2) = 29,672, N = 5,698	p = 0,531, H(1) = 0,393, N = 2,899	

Speaking of Eastern Europe, however, two distinct patterns are revealed: (1) the emphasis on imagination within each generation does not change substantially as individuals age (and this applies to all generations); (2) across all age groups, the valuation of imagination strengthens significantly with each successive generation (see Table 5). The first pattern is especially noteworthy, given that, as discussed previously, people typically place less emphasis on imagination as they age. These findings support Hypothesis H5b and suggest that the increasing emphasis on imagination in Eastern European societies is driven by two factors simultaneously: a profound cultural shift towards the heightened emphasis on imagination across society as a whole (as older generations do not reduce their valuation of imagination with age, contrary to what would be expected in a culturally stable environment) and generational replacement, with younger cohorts placing increasingly greater importance on imagination.

Table 5.

Cross-generational assessments of the importance of imagination at different ages in nine Eastern European countries, 1990–2017 (the share of respondents who have mentioned imagination as an important children quality to be fostered at home), in *EVS 2022*

Skirtingų kartų vaizduotės svarbos vertinimai devyniose Rytų Europos šalyse 1990–2017 m. (respondentų, paminėjusių vaizduotę kaip svarbią vaiko savybę, kurią reikia ugdyti namuose, dalis)

Age group	Generation b. before 1943	Generation b. 1943–1959	Generation b. 1960–1969	Generation b. 1970–1979	Generation b. 1980–1989	Generation b. after 1989	H-test results for every age group
15–24	–	–	14,0%	14,0%	21,8%	25,4%	p = 0,000 H(3) = 85,818 N = 5,777
25–34	–	13,4%	12,9%	17,8%	23,5%	24,4%	p = 0,000 H(4) = 116,300 N = 8,309
35–44	–	10,7%	15,5%	21,5%	23,9%	–	p = 0,000 H(3) = 168,247 N = 9,282
45–54	7,0%	11,4%	15,8%	17,7%	–	–	p = 0,000 H(3) = 83,028 N = 8,855

55–64	6,6%	14,8%	14,1%	–	–	–	p = 0,000 H(2) = 119,420 N = 8,219
≥65	9,9%	12,5%	–	–	–	–	p = 0,000 H(1) = 13,582 N = 9,549
H-test results for every genera- tion	p = 0,000, H(2) = 33,216, N = 11,062	p = 0,000, H(4) = 37,505, N = 15,771	p = 0,034, H(4) = 10,392, N = 9,102	p = 0,000, H(3) = 38,591, N = 7,216	p = 0,332, H(2) = 2,203, N = 4,818	p = 0,624, H(1) = 0,240, N = 2,022	

To summarize, these data imply that while the observed increase in the emphasis on the importance of imagination in Western European societies is largely attributable to generational replacement, in Eastern European societies, both generational replacement and a broader cultural shift towards valuing imagination contribute to this change across society as a whole.

Conclusions

Creativity and imagination are uniquely human qualities that resist high-tech automation and are increasingly important in contemporary societies because of their role in fostering innovation and adaptability in a rapidly changing environment. It is now widely recognized that while integral to the human experience, a well-developed imagination is also crucial for society: it empowers individuals to envision new ideas, concepts, and possibilities, stimulates alternative approaches to challenges, and can lead to breakthroughs across diverse fields, including art, culture, science, technology, and business. The growing importance of creativity and imagination also reflects broader cultural transformations, linked to a strengthening orientation towards self-expression values and the emergence of a creative class. These trends are confirmed also by the EVS data. At the same time, their analysis reveals clear cultural differences across European countries: the importance of imagination as a trait to be fostered in children is

more emphasized in Western European societies than in Eastern European countries with a post-communist legacy. The cultural value attributed to the imagination varies considerably between Western and Eastern Europeans across all socio-demographic characteristics considered in the analysis. However, the data also show that the gap between Western and Eastern European societies regarding the valuation of imagination as an important human quality is gradually narrowing. In Western European societies, the overall increase in the importance attributed to imagination appears largely driven by generational replacement, with younger generations placing greater emphasis on imagination; meanwhile in Eastern European societies, the shift is occurring both through generational replacement and a profound cultural transformation that elevates imagination across society as a whole, accelerating the pace of change. Despite these converging trends, the gap between the two groups of countries remains considerable for the time being.

Regarding imagination and creativity as attributes of the creative class, empirical evidence from the EVS at least partially supports the assumptions of creative class theory. Age, educational attainment, occupational profile, urbanization of residence, and income all emerge as significant socio-demographic indicators related to the recognition of the importance of imagination, with age and educational attainment being the most important. However, the hypothesis of a consolidated creative class composed of individuals in knowledge- and creativity-driven professions who share a distinctive creative ethos appears more compelling in Western than in Eastern European societies. A stronger creative class can enhance societal advancement by fostering innovation, cross-disciplinary cooperation, economic development, cultural diversity, and greater attention to quality-of-life concerns, whether social, political, or environmental. At the same time, because the development of individual creativity depends heavily on the cultural and social environment in which a person is socialized, disparities in the development of creative potential emerge across countries and societal groups. These disparities may reinforce new social divides, both in terms of regional imbalances between creative hubs and the peripheries

and in the marginalization of individuals who lack specific skills or access to creative training.

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Santrauka

Kūrybiškumas ir vaizduotė kaip kultūrinės vertybės Europos visuomenėse: skirtingų kartų perspektyva

Aida Savicka

Reikšminiai žodžiai: vaizduotė, kūrybiškumas, kūrybinė klasė, socialinės kartos, Europos vertybių tyrimas.

Kūrybinis intelektas vis dažniau laikomas viena svarbiausių ateities asmeninių kompetencijų. Tačiau kūrybiškumas veikia ne tik individualiu, bet ir kolektyviniu lygmeniu, nes sociokultūrinė aplinka gali jį tiek skatinti, tiek riboti, formuodama tam tikras pasaulėžiūras ir nukreipdama kūrybines praktikas į konkrečias veiklos sritis. Šiame procese esmini vaidmenį atlieka kultūrinės nuostatos, vertybės, įsitikinimai ir tradicijos, kurios daro įtaką visuomenės suvokimams ir orientuoja individualų elgesį. Todėl socialinių ir kultūrinių kūrybiškumo prielaidų tyrimas tampa reikšminga mokslinių tyrimų sritimi.

Pripažįstant kūrybiškumą kaip vieną iš pagrindinių ateities visuomenių konkurencinio potencialo dimensijų, šiame straipsnyje analizuojama, kaip skirtingos Europos visuomenės suvokia vaizduotę kaip žmogaus gebėjimą, kurį galima ugdyti ir plėtoti. Remiantis Europos vertybių tyrimo duomenimis, nagrinėjamos visuomenės nuostatos dėl vaizduotės svarbos, analizuojama jų kaita 1990–2021 m. laikotarpiu ir vertinami socialiniai bei demografiniai skirtumai tarp gyventojų grupių. Gauti rezultatai rodo augantį vaizduotės ir kūrybiškumo pripažinimą visuomenėje analizuojamu laikotarpiu, atspindintį galias kultūrines transformacijas, susijusias su saviraiškos vertybių stiprėjimu šiuolaikinėje Europoje. Vis dėlto vaizduotei teikiama svarba reikšmingai skiriasi tarp šalių ir socialinių grupių, apibrėžiamų pagal amžių, išsilavinimą, profesinį statusą, urbanizacijos lygį ir pajamas. Šie skirtumai atskleidžia struktūrines nelygybes kultūrinėse prielaidose, kurios lemia žmonių galimybes visapusiškai realizuoti savo kūrybinių potencialą. Vakarų Europos šalys nuosekliai labiau akcentuoja vaizduotės ugdymą vaikystėje, palyginti su Rytų Europos visuomenėmis, kurių kultūroje ryškų pėdsaką paliko posocialistinė patirtis. Be to, reikšmingi skirtumai pasireiškia ir visose analizuotose

socialinėse bei demografinėse kategorijose. Tuo pačiu metu ilgalaikiai duomenys rodo, kad nuostatų atotrūkis tarp Vakarų ir Rytų Europos palaipsniui mažėja dėl skirtingų nuostatų kaitos mechanizmų šiuose regionuose. Vakarų Europoje poslinkį didesnio vaizduotės vertinimo link pirmiausia lemia kartų kaita, kai kiekviena jaunesnė kohorta vaizduotę vertina vis labiau. Rytų Europoje kultūriniai pokyčiai vyksta tiek dėl kartų kaitos, tiek dėl to, kad visuomenė labiau vertina vaizduotę kaip svarbią savybę, todėl permainos šiame regione spartesnės.

Apibendrinant, atliktas tyrimas leidžia teigti, kad vaizduotė yra kintanti kultūrinė vertybė, kurios reikšmė Europoje nuolat auga, nors ir nevienodai įvairiuose regionuose bei socialinėse grupėse. Ši dinamika išryškina kultūrinio konteksto ir kūrybinio potencialo sąveikos svarbą ir leidžia daryti prielaidą, kad visuomenės, kurios labiau pripažįsta vaizduotės ir kūrybiškumo svarbą ir skiria didesnę dėmesį joms ugdyti, bus geriau pasirengusios spręsti ateities iššūkius.