

**Cultural Well-being:  
Cross-sectorial Collaboration between the Cultural and Health  
Sectors in North Italy.**

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#### ABSTRACT

Despite scientific evidence supporting the benefits of cultural engagement for human well-being, the cultural and health sectors have traditionally operated independently. A shift occurred in 2018 when the European Commission realised the New Agenda for Culture emphasizing the capacity of culture to create social cohesion and health improvements. This marked a change for the cultural sector which promoted initiatives across Europe to bridge the cultural and health sectors. The importance of this milestone document of EU cultural policy has been highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which made clear and urgent the need to implement innovative approaches to achieve community well-being. In North Italy, new projects that are following the New European Agenda for Culture objectives by developing a systematic collaboration between the cultural and health sectors have taken place. This thesis enquires which are the strategies delineated and challenges encountered by the cultural sector in North Italy to foster collaboration with the health sector in view of the objectives outlined in the New European Agenda for Culture (2018). Moreover, the study explores how the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic influenced this process and which is the future perspective of this interdisciplinary collaboration development in North Italy. To answer these questions, this research will analyse the case study of the Piedmont Region by conducting a content analysis of official documents and reports involved in the case, semi-structured interviews with experts actively involved in the case, and desk research. As a result, this study shows that not only the release of the New European Agenda of Culture (2018) has been a key event for the cross-sectorial collaboration development in Piedmont, but also the release of the WHO Report n. 67, a scoping review composed of the studies about the effects of culture on health, in 2019 have notably influenced the case analysed. Moreover, this research illustrates how the COVID-19 crisis played as a leverage for change, exposing the fragilities of the system and exacerbating the need of a change both in the conception of health and the role of culture on it. To schematize the strategies and challenges that characterize the process of interdisciplinary implementation, it will be applied a conceptual framework of two conceptual categories proposed by the researcher: Increase Awareness and Cross-sectorial collaboration. The strategies and challenges that characterize the “increase awareness” process are divided into four levels: policy,

community, health sector, and cultural sector level. The strategies and challenges that characterized the cross-sectorial collaboration implementation process are divided into organizational and individual professional levels. Finally, the study illustrates the future perspective of the culture and health collaboration implementation, these comprehend the development of a new field characterized by new professional figures, new opportunities for the cultural sectors and a holistic perception of the concept of health.

**Keywords:** culture, culture and health, cultural policy, cross-sectorial collaboration, Italy

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## **1. Introduction**

Starting from the second half of the 20th century, a great deal of research has been conducted regarding the effects of art on human health. Over the years, this field of research has found positive results, reaching the general conclusion that contact with the arts and culture is beneficial to human health and well-being (Ulrich, 1984; Stuckey & Nobel, 2010; Samoray, 2006). Despite the positive results that have emerged from scientific research, the cultural and health sectors have operated mostly independently. In fact, on the one hand, the development of the health sector in recent decades has focused mainly on clinical trials and developing new technologies; on the other hand, the cultural sector, despite its great importance in the community, has always been perceived mostly as a field devoted to leisure, limited to museums, galleries, and cultural institutions (Macnaughton, 2007).

However, in recent years this trend seems to have taken a different direction when in May 2018 the European Commission Published the New Agenda for Culture that, to address social-economic challenges and crisis, recognizes the vital role of culture in foresting human health and wellbeing (CE, 2018). In other words, the European Commission considers it necessary to engage with the power of culture to improve individual and community's life, as research affirms that access to culture is one of the most crucial factors influencing psychological well-being and health, surpassed only by the absence of disease (Sacco et al., 2011). To abolish social and financial barriers to cultural participation that make art and culture perceived as a sector isolated from others, the new European cultural policy aims to promote sectorial interdisciplinary and cultural cross-overs with other fields, such as the health sector, by supporting the reintegration of culture into the daily lives of the citizens (CE, 2018). Additionally, in 2019 the World Health Organization (WHO) released a report with an analysis of the global evidence on the impacts of the arts in improving health and well-being (Fancourt & Finn, 2019) thus increasing awareness and scientific evidence on the topic. As a result of this new direction taken by the European cultural policy, numerous initiatives In Europe have taken place. These projects aim to establish a mutually beneficial collaboration between the Cultural and Health sectors as indicated in the New Culture Agenda for Europe.

The new policy became even more important and necessary during the difficult time that the world faced with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020. It was at this time that the need to find new ways to increase community cohesion and welfare was most intensely felt

and numerous initiatives aimed at uniting culture in the health care sector took shape. The promotion of interdisciplinary and collaboration between different sectors promoted by the New European Agenda for Culture is a contemporary topic with great potential for development, indeed, a big part of experimentation in this regard has begun in the same period of the pandemic crisis. For this reason, it is crucial to analyse how cultural entities are collaborating with the health system to implement and realize this new concept of cross-sectorial collaboration between culture and health sectors introduced by the new European cultural policy. Among the Member States that have taken considerable initiatives in this regard, there is Italy, particularly the North area in the Piedmont Region. Here, the Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation in Turin funded the project started in 2020 "Cultural Wellbeing Lab – CWLAB" with the aim to foster the development, from a systemic perspective, of a laboratory that gives impetus to the creation of an accomplished model of cultural welfare, by using cultural participation as a means to achieve community health and well-being. To achieve this mission, the foundation collaborated with the Cultural Welfare Centre an association established in 2020 to develop and support interdisciplinary and cross-sectorial research between culture, health, and well-being and put them into practice. Moreover, also other institutions in the area such as Hangar Piemonte, a cultural transformation agency of the territory operated to achieve this mission. Moreover, some experts involved in the case of Piedmont collaborated in the Culture for Health project, an initiative involving local and regional actions in Europe aimed at raising awareness of the crucial impact of culture on enhancing health well-being<sup>1</sup>; and in the Voices of Culture project, a structured dialogue organised to exchange ideas and discussion between the cultural sector within the European Union that allows civil society representatives from the cultural sector to submit advices on the European Commission <sup>2</sup>.

This new cultural cross-over policy introduced by the European Commission opens opportunities for the cultural sector and has the potential to revolutionize the concept of health bringing improvements in community welfare. This could be fundamental to recover from the pandemic crisis and open new perspectives for the future.

To explore this phenomenon, this thesis enquires which are the strategies delineated and challenges encountered by the cultural sector in North Italy to foster collaboration with the health sector in view of the objectives outlined in the New European Agenda for Culture (2018). Moreover, to get a deeper insight into the case, the study explores how the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic influenced this process and which are the future perspectives of this interdisciplinary collaboration development in North Italy.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cultureforhealth.eu/about-the-project/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://voicesofculture.eu/>

To answer these research questions, this research will analyse the case study of Piedmont considering the institutions mentioned above and the project with which they collaborated with. To conduct the research, it will be done a document analysis of the reports and official documents released by the institutions involved and semi-structured interviews of experts in the field who are working actively in the case.

## **2. Setting the context**

This section focused on setting the context by giving definitions of the two sectors involved, the Culture and Health sectors, the policies that characterized them, both at a local and European level and the research on the interaction between these two fields. Additionally, this section will give an overview of policy influences on the implementation of culture and health sectors collaboration at the European level, and it will illustrate the conceptual framework that will be applied to schematize the data gathered from the analysis.

### **2.1. Defining the cultural sector and cultural policy**

To understand how the concept of interdisciplinarity between culture and health, it is important to define the concept of the cultural sector and cultural policy. Daniel Throsby (2008) highlighted this necessity by noticing that despite the concept of cultural industries is being widely used in literature, policy making, and everyday life, no single definition has ever been determined. The debate that characterises the definition of the cultural sector and its subcategories leads to different ways in which it is conceived and, consequently, applied to cultural policy analysis (Throsby, 2008). Indeed, multiple models defines the cultural sector that show differences in what is considered a cultural industry.

In the Throsby model (2008), these different definitions are unified in a unique model of the cultural sector. The model (Figure 1) is divided into four tiers, the first is the Core creative arts which includes Literature, Music, Performing Arts and visual arts; the second is Other core cultural



industries with films, museums, galleries, libraries, and photography; the third tiers represents the Wider cultural industries with heritage services, publishing and print media, sound recording, television and radio, video and computer games; and finally, the last tiers indicates the Related industries with advertising, architecture, design and fashion.

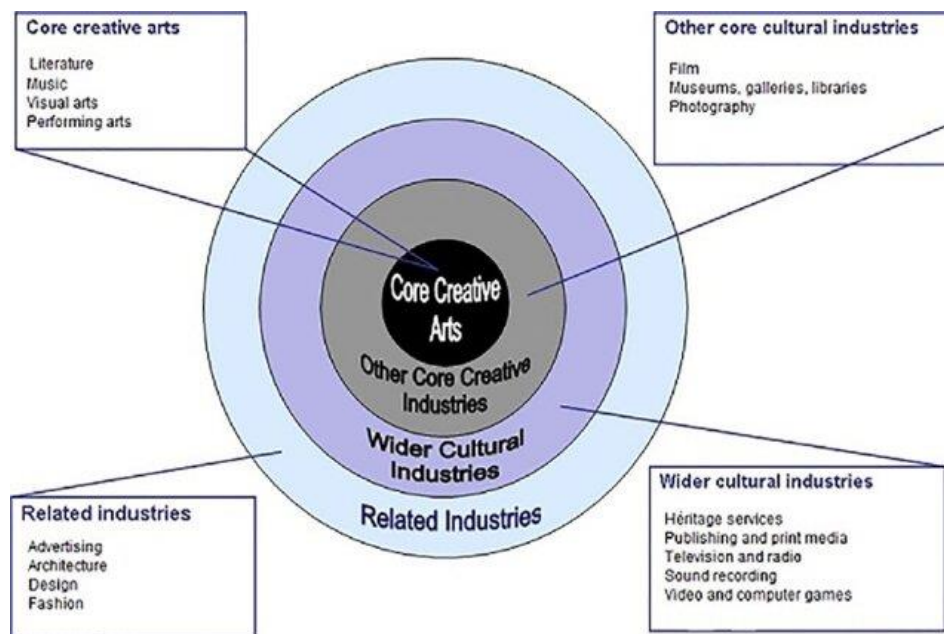


Figure 1 - Throsby model. Source: Throsby D., 2008

In this model, culture and creativity are the principal characteristics that separate the cultural sector from others, highlighting the distinction between cultural value and economic value; these attributes reinforce the cultural orientation of cultural policies, diminish the risk of perceiving cultural policy as a mere economy policy (Throsby, 2008). This study adopts Throsby’s definition of the cultural sector.

Given the definition of culture, it is considered appropriate to give an overview of the meaning of cultural policy and its implications. Indeed, the concept of cultural policy is one of the protagonists of this research as it is aimed at analysing how it is applied in practice in North Italy. As a cultural policy is a public policy applied to the arts and culture, it is relevant to define the latter. In a few words, public policy is “anything a government chooses to do or not to do” (Dye, 2005, p. 1). In other terms, a public policy is the way by which the government acts in order to achieve goals or face a problem related to a specific situation where it has the power of action (Jenkins, 1978). The government is the principal actor in the determination of a public policy; indeed, it has the authoritative decisional power over citizens (Howlett & Cashore, 2020). At the

same time, it is important to take into consideration that private businesses and other institutions play a crucial role in achieving the goals of a public policy and they often substantially influence the government policies definition themselves (Howlett & Cashore, 2020).

Taking into consideration the definition of public policy and applying it to the definition of the cultural sector, it can be affirmed that a cultural policy is composed of the government's decisions, activities, and strategies related to the field of the arts, heritage, and humanities (Schuster, 2003). These decisions are mainly aimed at promoting the participation, consumption, production, dissemination, and marketing of the arts (Rentschler, 2002). The importance of cultural policy and its functions is well described by Mulcahy (2006) who affirms that "in a system of mixed funding, public culture can nurture the arts groups and cultural activities that contribute to individual self-worth and community definition, even if counting for less in the economic bottom-line. At root, a cultural policy is about creating public spheres that are not dependent on profit motives nor validated by commercial values. As political democracy is dependent on the existence of civil society and socioeconomic pluralism, cultural policy stands as an essential public commitment in realizing these fundamental preconditions." (p. 329). Cultural policies, considered with the definition that associates their creation with the government activity, derive from the idea of democratization of culture which is privileging forms of cultural initiative and activities that are considered a public good to promote a more participatory approach when it comes the definition of cultural initiatives (Mulcahy, 2006).

However, even if the main reasons given by the government behind the support to the culture and the culture sector are related to the enrichment of human potential and essential for a meaningful life (Cummings and Katz, 1987), the demonstrations of the usefulness of cultural policy focused mainly on the economic aspect, highlighting how investing in culture brings to financial advantages in other areas (Mulchay, 2006). This consideration is reducing the role of culture to an ancillary economic tool thus creating a controversy between the reason why the government invests in cultural policies and the effective application of it, which is mainly centred on analysing the economic benefits, indeed "economic utility may tell us how valuable the arts are as goods, but not why they are good things" (Mulcahy, 2006, p. 326). Consequently, with the focus on cultural utilitarianism from an economic point of view, the understanding of the role of cultural policies to preserve, transmit, build the community, and contribute to its general welfare can be compromised (Mulchay, 2006). In conclusion, given the central role of culture in human life, cultural policies should be considered as one of the main factors that contribute to the general welfare of the community. As the case study of this research is located in Italy, which is an EU Member State, the following sub-paragraphs, it will be seen an overview of cultural policies in Europe and Italy.

### **2.2.1. European Cultural Policies**

The European Union is a political and economic union between 27 European countries which are called “Member States” and comprehend the state of Italy. Culture was not officially included in the European Community’s jurisdiction when it was founded in 1958, indeed, the earliest initiatives with the aim to include and give importance to culture within the European Community objectives were made in the seventies but the justification of this inclusion has been made in economic terms (Barnett, 2001).

Culture has been officially recognized as an area within the Community’s jurisdiction in the occasion of the Treaty on European Union stipulated in 1992 in Maastricht (Barnett, 2001). Indeed, Article 128 of the Treaty grants legal authority to the European Community over cultural matters by declaring: “The Community shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore” (Article 128:1).

It is fundamental to acknowledge that the cultural action was not intended to establish a unique European cultural strategy that all the Member States must mandatorily follow, indeed, the Article 128 specifically prohibits the uniformity of legislation for cultural issues as the idea of subsidiary was applied also implemented this area of action (Barnett, 2001). As a result, the main responsibility for cultural policy was assigned to the individual state, and the European Union activity was intended to complement the policies of member states, principally functioning as a tool to promote trade and cooperation by encouraging cross-national cultural projects that complemented and enhance actions organized at the national level, fostering interaction between them (Council of Ministers, 1992; Barnett, 2001). It was following the adoption of the European Agenda for Culture in a Globalising World by the European Commission in 2007 that the EU took a major step toward improving the coordination of cultural policy making (Primorac et al., 2017). In the European Agenda for Culture (2007) the European Commission enhances the key role culture has in human life and in social, economic, and political field, highlighting its crucial part in the European Integration process (CE, 2007). The European Agenda for Culture of 2007 introduced an initial idea of inter-sectoral collaboration between culture and other sectors, but these are mainly areas relatively adjacent to the culture one and the focus is on the use of culture for economic development (CE, 2007).

After the 2007 Agenda of Culture, the New Agenda for Culture was released by the European Commission in 2018 and it aims to use culture and education to create unified communities and provide an appealing vision of the European Union, as the integration of the full potential of culture has the capacity to create a more inclusive and equitable union, while promoting innovation, creativity sustainable employment and economic development (CE, 2018). The New Agenda of Culture has been developed in a different context with respect to the Agenda of 2007, indeed, it highlights the fact that Europe is dealing with increasing social inequality, diverse populations, populism following a devastating financial crisis (CE, 2018). The European Commission sees in the culture a solution to this crisis and radical change in society as it is considered the most influential component in fostering a sense of community and, therefore, the purpose of the new cultural policy is to increase the cultural participation of the citizens within the community; all this using an innovate approach within a comprehensive perspective, promoting collaboration among cultural sectors and other policy fields (CE, 2018). The New Agenda for Culture focuses on three main objectives, the first one is the most important for the purpose of this research, indeed, it is related to the social dimensions, and it aims to utilise culture and cultural diversity to promote social cohesion and wellbeing. The strategy to achieve this objective introduces the innovative concept of cultural cross-overs, the collaboration between the cultural field and other fields such as health and well-being (CE, 2018). In this way, the European Commission recognizes the important role that cultural participation has in improving health and well-being relying on some research that demonstrates that cultural accessibility is the second most significant factor influencing psychological well-being, after the absence of disease (Sacco et al., 2011; CE, 2018). The second objective focuses on the economic dimension and it aims to support creativity based on culture in education and innovation, and for jobs and development while the third objective aims to implement and foster international cultural relations (CE, 2018). The influence that the first objective of the New European Agenda for Culture (2018), which introduces the concept of cross-sectorial collaboration between culture and the health sector, had on the implementation of new institutions and collaborations in North Italy will be one of the main topics of this research.

### **2.2.2. Cultural policies in Italy**

To understand how the cultural policies are developed and implemented in Italy, it is necessary to give an overview of the structure of its government. Since the establishment of the Constitution in

1947, the responsibility for the country's administration is owned by the Ministerial Cabinet (Gordon; 1995). Currently, Italy is divided into 20 regions for administrative purposes; among these regions, 5 are autonomous and have a special statute due to their strong cultural identity (Gordon; 1995). According to the Constitution, the regions have administration and policy responsibilities that encompass several sectors such as healthcare, infrastructure development and, culture; indeed, the central government's role was limited to areas of unquestionable national importance (Gordon; 1995).

The cultural policies in Italy are under the responsibility of different institutions at the national and the regional level. The most important institution at the former level is The Ministry of Culture which has responsibility for all aspects of cultural heritage including museums, libraries, archives, visual arts, performing arts, film, cultural institutions, and copyright (ACCPT, 2020). On the other hand, there are the institutions at regional level, indeed, all the twenty Italian Regions possess legislative rights and specialized administrative governing bodies to administrate the cultural sector (ACCPT, 2020). In other words, the State establishes fundamental principles for the current legislation for the development of cultural and environmental resources, and, by employing the vertical subsidiarity model, Italian regions undertake distinct actions in numerous areas of cultural policy (ACCPT, 2020). In general, the public sector has traditionally been the primary resource of funding for the implementation of cultural policies but, due to significant limitations on the national budget, public authorities at all levels of government have actively promoted the participation of both the non-profit private sector and the marketplace in various cultural areas (ACCPT, 2022). Indeed, several influential non-profit organisations and entities with public participation contribute serving as advocates to policymakers, pushing for reforms and innovation within the cultural sector (ACCPT, 2020). One of the objectives of the Italian cultural policy is the socioeconomic impacts of the culture and it is currently a commonly discussed topic, in particular, the role of cultural heritage and the arts in improving health and well-being is increasingly recognised as a significant topic within the cultural sector (ACCPT, 2020). The primary reasons are around promoting active aging, fostering the development of soft skills in youngsters, ensuring the participation of migrants, and expanding the range of activities available for individuals affected by diseases (ACCPT, 2020). In particular, the third sector plays a significant role in connecting arts and culture with social issues (ACCPT, 2020).

### **2.3. Defining the Health sector in Europe and Italy**

Parallel to what has been done for the cultural sector, it is important to define the concept of health and the health sector.

Health is defined by the constitution of the World Health Organisation (1948) as “ a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (p.1), this definition highlights how a human being’s state of health is influenced by the society, thus indicating that not only the individual health has impact on one’s general state of well-being, but also the social and cultural context are central determinants of it. The same concept was remarked on the same period by Henry E. Sigerist (1970) who affirms that health is not given only by the absence of illnesses but is determined by the provision of decent living standards, education, rest and recreation in order to give to the individual a happy attitude toward life with its challenges.

As this research focuses on North Italy, it is appropriate to give contextual information regarding the functioning of the health system both at the European and national levels. Europe does not have a comprehensive health system, but each member state has a different one, indeed, given the differences between the political, historical, cultural, and socio-economic traditions, making the acceptance of a unique health policy difficult (Jakubowski & Busse, 1998). The differences among the strategies employed by the member states for their health care system open the opportunity to learn from each other by observing the strengths and the weaknesses of each system (Jakubowski & Busse, 1998), for this reason, it is fundamental to observe and study which and how new initiative with a high innovative potential are being implemented by a member state. In general, even if the European countries show differences, they share the common purpose of ensuring adequate access to health care and efficiently satisfying the healthcare needs of the populations (Gutiérrez Hernández & Abásolo Alessón, 2021).

At a national level, it can be observed that the Italian National Health Service is mainly a public health system that provides universal access to health care by delivering free services. The system is funded by taxes, and it is extremely decentralized (Jakubowski & Busse, 1998). Indeed, after a reform in 1992-93, the system has been regionalized, meaning that the jurisdiction over the majority of healthcare issues, such as its implementation, planning, financing and, monitoring, has been transferred from the central government to the 21 Italian regions (Jommi et al., 2001; Jakubowski & Busse, 1998). Moreover, a reform in 1999-2000 ulteriorly increased the regional autonomy by replacing the government taxes to fund the health system with regional taxation (Jommi et al., 2001). This characteristic makes the Italian health care system particularly fragmented with a huge gap in the level of health services provision between the north and south of the country, which is at a disadvantage (Jakubowski & Busse, 1998). The Italian situation regarding the health care system is therefore similar to the European one as each region is independent and

has control over its health system. Therefore, even in this context, the initiatives of a single region can inspire other regions or even directly inspire other Member States.

#### **2.4. The Covid-19 crisis in North Italy.**

It is important to give an overview of how the global crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced the Italian context. The most affected area of Italy, where the highest of cases and deaths occurred has been the North (Sanfelici, 2020). The crisis allowed exposing underlying structural issues and it has highlighted the significance of expediting the implementation of global policy frameworks (Djalante et al., 2020). Indeed, they can assist in coordinating a comprehensive effort to establish robust institutions, generate employment opportunities, guarantee universal access to education and healthcare, and integrate the communities (Sanfelici, 2020). Nevertheless, it is essential to implement these ideas in a cultural context that truly enables them to direct behaviour. According to Ozerdem (2003), catastrophes and their consequences stem from unresolved development difficulties but at the same time they might present new chances for change. Indeed, there is a correlation between the COVID-19 crisis and social development, and utilising a community social development approach can facilitate the identification of potential paths for achieving a cultural transformation (Sanfelici, 2020). This opens the opportunity to surpass a persisting approach of intervention in crisis management, acknowledging that social and institutional transformation must accompany economic progress, as the acquisition of knowledge through community engagement is essential for informing the development of governmental policies and collective initiatives aimed at mitigating socioeconomic disparities (Sanfelici, 2020). The stringent restrictions have significantly impacted the quality of life of Italian citizens' deteriorating considerably their mental health as they are strictly correlated (Veronese, 2023). However, the cultural and creative sectors and industries have played a vital role in the unique circumstances resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic (EC, 2021). The crisis has served to highlight the significance of culture in relation to individuals' well-being and mental health (EC, 2021). Indeed, the participation and engagement within the cultural and creative industries in innovative virtual settings have enabled people to deal with the repercussions of the lockdown and social alienation and thus benefit from the culture.

#### **2.5. The interaction between the Cultural and Health sectors.**

The combination of the cultural and sanitary sectors is an interesting and contradictory topic. Indeed, on one hand, there is the medicine that, particularly in the Western world, belongs to the scientific and objective world; on the other, there is art and culture, where subjectivity and emotions are in the foreground and difficult to measure. Despite this apparent belonging to two different worlds, the intersection and collaboration of these two disciplines have a strong potential for maintaining and improving human well-being. The research in this field started to be more consistent from the mid-twentieth century. In this period, researchers such as the philosopher John Dewey began to investigate why culture in modern society is perceived as a separate world bound in museums and galleries, distant from the daily lives of citizens. In his work *Art as Experience* (1958), the author highlights how in ancient times culture was part of the community's daily life as it was fundamental to human well-being and that its distancing from society in modern times is the result of a political process. The researcher highlights how the isolation of the cultural sector of the other sectors negatively affects the life of the community making it necessary to engage with art and culture in various settings, emphasizing cultural integration into the daily life of the community and, consequently, incorporating art into hospitals lead to perceiving hospitals as integral components of the broader "artworld system".

According to Sacco (2017), in recent times there has been increasing attention on the connection between art, culture and human health and wellbeing. Originally, this relationship was seen more as a curiosity but, subsequently, it has progressively developed into a more consistent body of research, clinical practice, and policy exploration. Indeed, cultural activity proved to be capable of preventing even serious chronic diseases, ensuring greater longevity, and mitigating the negative effects of chronic stress on the general state of health (Grossi, 2017). Numerous studies have shown that the presence of art in hospitals or facilities dedicated to social and health care is indeed beneficial for patients (Ulrich; 1984; Stuckey & Nobel, 2010). This research opens an important opportunity for the determination of new health and cultural policies (Stuckey & Nobel, 2010).

A report made for the English NHS from the Department of Health about the collaboration between Arts and Health highlighted the importance of considering Arts as an element integral to health, healthcare provision, and healthcare environments. As a result, the combination of arts and health can benefit numerous priorities and goals regarding health, thus contributing to the achieving the realization of other Government initiatives. This brings to the necessity to foster the initiatives and collaboration between the art and health sectors with also others key contributors (Stuckey & Nobel, 2010). The presence of culture in the health sector is not related just to the medical outcome of the patients, but it also plays a role in establishing an environment that fosters feelings of safety,



social interaction, connection to the external world, and support for patient identity. As a result, culture represents an expanded dimension of healthcare (Nielsen et al., 2017).

Although research in this area has been more developed in Anglo-Saxon and Nordic countries, Italy has also carried out various research and experimentations on the topic even if they were mainly characterized by a lack of coordination and discontinuity (Cicerchia and Seia, 2023). An important key event took place in September 2017, when it was published in Italy the first volume that argued this topic. The issue is entitled “Culture, Health, wellbeing”, edited by Carla Brodo and Pierluigi Sacco, and is part of the journal “Economics of Culture” (Cicerchia & Seia, 2023). The volume is composed of cultural scholars’ contributions regarding the introduction of the cultural wellbeing concept (Cicerchia & Seia, 2023). In the volume it is illustrated the definition of “Cultural Welfare”, which is an incorporation of the processes of cultural production and dissemination into a welfare system, integrating them into social and health services that should provide citizens with support to address health, ageing, disability, and social integration challenges (Sacco, 2017). In 2020, the Treccani Atlas of Culture included “Cultural Welfare” as one of its key headwords (Cicerchia & Seia, 2023). Recently, in 2023, it has been released a second edition of this volume named “Culture, well-being and Health” edited by Annalisa Cicerchia and Caterina Seia composed by the contributions of 36 experts on the relationship between culture and health and its implementation. The future perspectives of these volumes are to foster the dissemination of knowledge and experimentation about this emerging field in order to facilitate the integration of cultural welfare in future cultural policies (Sacco, 2017).

In Italy, the initiatives that rose in the new millennium with the aim to put into practice the concept of integration of culture in human health are various. To cite some examples, there is *Dance Well – Movement research for Parkinson* a project started in 2013 in the Lombardian region with the aim to integrate dance and its benefits into the treatment for Parkinson’s patients and the rest of the community to enhance the general wellbeing of participants (Carnelli & Casarotto 2023). Another example is the project *Nati con la Cultura* (Born with Culture), promoted by Medicina a Misura di Donna Foundation in collaboration with Sant’Anna di Torino Hospital and Palazzo Madama Museum in 2014 to foster culture participation since the first years of the life of newborns in order to enhance wellbeing<sup>3</sup>. The former two institutions promoted also the *Vitamine Jazz* (Jazz Vitamins) project which supports the organization of jazz performances in the Hospital environment creating a proper alliance between culture and health<sup>4</sup>. As will be discussed in more detail later, the

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.naticonlacultura.it/>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.medicinamisuradidonna.it/images/Invito\\_Vitamine\\_Jazz.pdf](https://www.medicinamisuradidonna.it/images/Invito_Vitamine_Jazz.pdf)

case study of this thesis focuses precisely on some of the initiatives that arose in North Italy after the release of the New European Agenda for Culture (CE, 2018).

## 2.6. Policy influences on the implementation of Culture and Health sectors collaboration at the European level.

Defined the culture and health sectors, this section will provide an overview of the main policy documents at the European level that influenced the implementation of the cross-sectorial collaboration between them (Figure 2). The documents illustrated by the following scheme are positioned in a temporal line starting from 2014 and concluding in 2022. The argumentation is based on the temporality of the documents.



Figure 2

The documents<sup>5</sup> depicted by the scheme are official documents released by international authorities such as the European Union, the United Nations and the World Health Organization.

<sup>5</sup> Fancourt D, Finn S. (2019) What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review. *Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe*; (Health Evidence Network (HEN) synthesis report 67).  
European Commission. (2018). A New European Agenda for Culture 167 final.

The argumentation of this paragraph will follow the chronological order of the document's releases. Subsequently, in Chapter 4 it will be seen at a more empirical level which are the most relevant documents that influenced the actors considered in the case study of this research.

One of the first official documents that implicitly cite the collaboration between culture and other sectors is the Work Plan of Culture 2015-2018, released by the European Union Council in 2014. The Work Plan states as a priority the implementation of an "Accessible and inclusive culture" which seeks to promote the role of culture in enhancing social inclusion exploring how public policies can promote and facilitate collaboration between cultural organisations and other sectors, such as healthcare, social care, and prison service (EU Council, 2014).

In 2015 the United Nations released the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development as a strategic plan for addressing the needs of individuals, the environment, and economic wellbeing and aims to achieve global peace within a broader context of liberty. In order to reach these objectives, the Agenda delineated 17 objectives which comprehend the third goal "Ensure Healthy lives and promote well-being at all ages". The Agenda 2030 has been mentioned as one of the guides of the initiative *Preparatory Action – Bottom-up Policy Development for Culture & Well-being in the EU* (CE, 2020), where it explained that the European Commission has pledged to assist Member States in achieving sustainable development objectives outlined in the Agenda 2030 with a specific focus on the third goal (EC, 2020). In addition, the same goal has been mentioned in the Call promoted by Voices of Culture *The role of Cultural and Creative Sectors in improving Mental health of the Youth* (Cicerchia, 2022).

Subsequently, the New European Agenda for Culture (2018) has been released by the European Commission. According to Sacco (2018), this Agenda has been the first policy document issued by the European Union where the policy recommendation of fostering cross-sectorial collaboration between culture and health sector is explicit. For this reason, the release of this Agenda is a key event that will shape future European policies (Sacco, 2018). Indeed, the Agenda (2018) recognises the crucial role culture plays in contributing to the health and well-being of the individual and the community. More precisely, after attesting to the positive influence on health and community's well-being, the European Commission includes in its objectives "Support research on cultural cross-overs to assess impacts in different fields including health and well-being" (EC, 2018, p.3) which is

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European Commission (2020) Preparatory action - Bottom-up Policy Development for Culture & Well-being in the EU. European Union.

European Union. (2014). Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on a Work Plan for Culture (2015-2018). *Official Journal of European Union*.

European Union. (2018) Council conclusions on the Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022. *Official Journal of European Union*.

European Union. (2018) Council conclusions on the Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026. *Official Journal of European Union*.

UN General Assembly. (2015) Transforming our world: the 2030 *Agenda* for Sustainable Development, A/RES/70/1.

considered a “highly innovative principle” (Sacco, 2018, p.4). This factor gives this policy document extreme importance and centrality in the case analysed in this study. The New European Agenda for Culture has been mentioned in the multi-annual Work Plan for Culture 2019- 2022 released by the European Union Council in 2018. Moreover, the Agenda has been mentioned in the report *From Social Inclusion to Social Cohesion – The Role of Culture Policy* (European Union, 2019) created by the 2017-2019 Working Group of EU Member States experts on fostering the contribution of culture to social inclusion. Finally, the Agenda is cited in the European Call *Preparatory Action – Bottom-up Policy Developments for Culture and Well-being in the EU*, released by the European Commission in 2020.

Right after the release of the New Agenda for Culture (2018), the Member States defined their cultural policy priorities creating multi-annual Work Plans for Culture which are endorsed as the EU Council conclusion on the Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022 (EU, 2018). Among these priorities, it can be found “Cohesion and Well-being” which claims the importance of access to culture to enhance personal empowerment, foster democratic awareness, and build social cohesiveness through interactions with others (EU, 2018).

The following year the WHO Regional Office for Europe released *What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review* (Francourt D., & Finn S, 2019). This report consists of an extensive scoping review that explores the influence of art and culture on the general health and well-being of the individual and the community. The conclusions of the scoping review state the evidence for the potential benefits of the arts in contributing to fundamental factors that impact health and provide several policy considerations for members of the WHO European Region to facilitate the creation of long-term policies that promote enhanced collaboration between the health and arts sectors as the implementation of these policies would be mutually advantageous for the arts, health and social care of global scale (Francourt D., & Finn S, 2019). This report has been indicated as a robust body of evidence of the winning collaboration between culture and health in European Call *Preparatory Action – Bottom-up Policy Developments for Culture and Well-being in the EU*, released by the European Commission in 2020. Furthermore, the WHO Scoping Review (2019) has inspired the *CultureForHealth Report. Culture’s contribution to health and well-being. A report on evidence and policy recommendations for Europe.* released by Culture for Health in 2022 (Zbranca et al., 2022). The WHO report is mentioned to highlight the scientific evidence of the role of culture in enhancing health also in the *Brainstorming Report Youth, Mental Health and Culture* released by Voices of Culture in 2023 and in the discussion paper *The Role of Cultural and Creative Sectors in Improving Mental Health of the Youth* written by Annalisa Cicerchia in 2022.

In 2020, after the release of the WHO scoping review, the European Commission released the Call *Preparatory Action – Bottom-up Policy Developments for Culture & Well-being in the EU* (EC, 2020). The call aims to promote the sharing of knowledge, experience, and success stories within the EU regarding the impact of culture on health and well-being. The action aims to conduct small-scale pilot projects on the ground to explore ways of collaborating across different sectors in order to improve the welfare of individuals and communities, promoting the establishment of synergies with existing policies and programs at EU level, but also national or local levels (EC, 2020). The project Culture for Health is formulated within the framework of this Call, and it aims to establish rules for the future work of EU policymakers in relation to an emerging interdisciplinary field.

Finally, in 2022 was released by the Council of European Union the Work Plan for Culture 2013-2016 which illustrates one of the priorities “Culture for the people: enhancing cultural participation and the role of culture in society” (EU Council, 2022). The objective illustrates that cultural engagement not only promotes general well-being and quality of life but also contributes to the improvement of health and well-being at both individual and community levels (EU Council, 2022).

## **2.7. Conceptual framework to schematize the Culture and Health collaboration process: increase awareness and cross-sectorial collaboration.**

In this section, I propose a schematization of data with the aim of contributing to the systematization of a phenomenon that is still in process. This is an extremely recent and evolving topic, and no single and comprehensive strategy has been yet outlined to achieve interdisciplinarity across sectors. As a result, the bodies that are being actively involved have highlighted the need for a defined *modus operandi* that can be applied locally and nationally to the institutions.

As it will be further explained in the methodology chapter, to identify and schematically illustrate the strategies delineated and the challenges encountered in the implementation of interdisciplinarity between sectors, I define two conceptual categories with the aim of schematizing and mapping the data gathered during the content analysis of documents, reports, and interviews. These two conceptual categories are “Increase awareness” and “Cross-sectorial collaboration”. The delineation of these two particular categories can be explained by the fact that to achieve a solid and systematic change from the traditional configuration of sectors, a high level of awareness about the role of culture in human well-being is necessary. Once this level is reached, the effective

implementation of cross-sectoral collaboration between sectors that traditionally operated independently is facilitated.

As a result, I propose a schematic visualization of data (Figure 3) that illustrates the strategies delineated and challenges encountered during the process of increasing the awareness of the role of culture in health and a specular scheme regarding the strategies delineated and challenges encountered during cross-sectoral collaboration implementation.



*Figure 3: Schematization of strategies delineated and challenges encountered during the process of interdisciplinarity implementation between the culture and health sectors.*

As it is possible to observe from the scheme (Figure 3) the two conceptual categories, namely “Increase Awareness” and “Cross-sectorial collaboration” present different levels.

The first category “Increase Awareness” is divided into four levels. The first one is to increase awareness at a policy level which can be explained by the fact that for the integration of cross-sectorial collaboration more systematically and comprehensively is it crucial that the concept of interdisciplinarity is integrated into the national and local political authorities’ policy plans as well as in the public and private institutions ones. The second level refers to the community, to bring an effective change, the role of culture in health must be well recognized by the citizens. The third level regards the health sector and its workers, indeed, to be effectively integrated into the sanitary plans, the impact of culture on health must be accepted and recognized as complementary, and not superfluous, to traditional medical treatment. Finally, the last level regards the cultural sector and its workers as it is important also for them to recognize the potentiality of collaborating with other sectors.

The second category “Cross-sectorial collaboration” is divided into two levels. The first one refers to the cultural and health organizations intended as an organic actor with certain organizational cultures and structures that need to find an effective way to collaborate. The second level regards the individual professionals belonging to the two sectors.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Strategy**

As this study focuses on a phenomenon that is currently evolving and being implemented, it has been decided to apply a qualitative approach. The reason behind this choice is that in contrast to the utilisation of a scientific framework in quantitative research, the emphasis of this study is placed on comprehending the social realm by analysing how the actors of this phenomenon view it and are acting, setting as objective the deeper understanding of the evolving process (Byrman, 2021). Moreover, quality research encompasses a variety of research methods and data sources that vary significantly from one another (Byrman, 2012). This is particularly suitable for this research as it will be applied a triangulation approach, thus there will be used different research method and the data will be gathered from different sources (Byrman, 2012).

#### **3.2 Research Design**

The research is conducted by analysing the case study of Piedmont, a region in Northwestern Italy where several initiatives have taken shape in order to support the development of cross-sectorial collaboration between culture and health sectors aimed by the European Commission. The institutions and initiatives comprehended in the case study are: Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation and the project started in 2020 "Cultural Wellbeing Lab – CWLAB" , the Cultural Welfare Centre, Hangar Piemonte, Culture for Health project, and Voices of Culture project. The case study will be furtherly presented in more detail in the empirical part starting with Chapter 4, *Culture and Health Collaboration in North Italy: The case of Piedmont*.

Swanborn (2010, p.9) defines the case study as the ‘study of a phenomenon or a process as it develops within one case’ and it is a methodological approach that has been frequently employed in policy research (Broughton Micova, 2019). Case studies are in-depth investigations of a specific situation that can be conducted at many levels such as micro-level, meso-level, and macro-level

(Swanborn, 2010). In general, policy research mostly examines cases studies at the meso and macro-level with a focus on organisations or nations where policy is formulated and executed (Broughton Micova, 2019). The investigation of the case study of this research is positioned at the meso-level, as it aims to explore the behaviour of various organisations but considers also influences coming from a macro-level such as European policies.

### **3.3 Research Method**

Cases studied typically involve the use of mixed methods in their research (Broughton Micova, 2019). Indeed, the methods used in this research are Document Analysis, Expert Interviews and, Desk Research. This approach is called triangulation, and it aims to increase the credibility strength, and interpretative potential of a study by decreasing the research biases and incorporating diverse viewpoints (Byrman, 2012). As this case study concerning the collaboration between the cultural and health sectors in the Piedmont region is extremely current and in full development, it is considered appropriate to collect data from different sources in order to obtain the most complete picture possible.

The use of documents as primary sources of data is considered a reliable source of factual information on policy processes as they are written by active participants in the phenomenon, and they are seen as objective statements of facts (Karppinen & Moe, 2012). Document analysis is a versatile approach that can be adjusted to the specific types of documents pertinent to a particular case (Broughton Micova, 2019). As Byrman (2012) explains, official documents from the State, including the European Union, are a valuable source of knowledge as they contain information of potential interest. Furthermore, also organizations generate a multitude of documents that have been extensively utilised in research, such as project reports, mission statements, press releases, and public relations materials in paper form and online available to the public for unrestricted use (Byrman, 2012) and useful for research.

Similarly to the research of Herzog and Karppinen (2014), the document analysis will be complemented by semi-structured interviews with experts involved in the case study. The purpose is to gain an in-depth understanding of their individual viewpoint (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021), exploring from an internal point of view the implementation process of cross-sectorial collaboration between Culture and Health. The objective is to complement the information gathered from the document analysis and gain a deeper understanding of the case study. As Kvale (2006) explains, the primary objective of conducting semi-structured qualitative interviews is to acquire firsthand



insights into the experience of the interviews. Therefore, by knowing their perspective it is possible to obtain a dependable description of the phenomena under study. It is possible to find the interview structure in APPENDIX A.

### 3.4 Data sampling

Due to its reliance on pre-existing sources, document analysis typically necessitates more emphasis on data selection rather than data gathering (Bowen, 2009). As anticipated, the aim of this study is to identify the strategies delineated and challenges encountered in the cross-sectorial collaboration development between Culture and Health in Northwestern Italy in view of the objectives outlined by the New European Agenda of Culture (2018). As a result, the sampling strategy adopted for this research is the analysis of official documents and reports (Figure 1) released after the publication of the New European Agenda of Culture (2018) by the cultural sector institutions described in the case study. The sample comprehends reports and policy documents (Table 1) of Culture for Health, a project co-funded by the European Union started in 2022, with the aim to grow awareness about the impact of culture on wellbeing and Voices of Culture, a structured dialogue between the European Commission and the cultural sector, started in 2015, that in 2022 and 2023 focused its work on the relationship between Culture and mental health of the youth. These documents have been chosen also because experts involved in the case of Piedmont, one of them is Luisella Carnelli, actively collaborated with these projects. Moreover, these initiatives released many official reports during the time frame under analysis and they focused their research on the European countries, giving an overview of the phenomenon and influencing the institutions at a local level. All the documents analysed are being published in the time frame that goes from 2018 until the end of 2023.

Document Name	Authors	Publisher	Year
Partecipazione culturale, benessere psicologico e salute: verso un nuovo modello di community welfare a base culturale. (translated: Cultural participation, psychological well-being and	Sacco P.	Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation	2018

health: toward a new model of culturally based community welfare )			
Culture: a Resource of Health. The Foundation of an Interdisciplinary Centre of Expertise.	-	Cultural Welfare Center	2020
Cultura e Salute. Verso un nuovo Welfare Culturale. Report. (Translated: Culture and Health. Toward a new Cultural Welfare)	Seia C. et al.	Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation	2020
CultureForHealth Report. Culture's contribution to health and well-being. A report on evidence and policy recommendations for Europe.	Zbranca et al.	CultureForHealth. Culture Action Europe.	2022
Voices of Culture. The role of cultural and creative sectors in improving mental health of the young.	Cicerchia A.	Voices of Culture	2022
Cultural Wellbeing lab -Projects reports	-	Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation	2023
CultureForHealth Mapping: An overview of Programmes, Initiatives and Projects on Culture for Well-being and Health.	Cacovean & Pop.	CultureForHealth. Culture Action Europe.	2023
Compendium of sustainable culture-based solutions for well-being and health. A guide for practitioners.	Damaso et al.	CultureForHealth. Culture Action Europe.	2023
Compendium of sustainable culture-based solutions for well being and health. CultureForHealth.	Zbranca & Cacovean	CultureForHealth. Culture Action Europe.	2023
Youth Mental Health and Culture. Brainstorming report.	Cicerchia et al.	Voices of Culture	2023

*Table 1 – Document Analysis sampling- Illustrated in chronological order*

In case studies, participants are typically key informants who are directly related to the specific case rather than individuals chosen at random to represent a larger community (Broughton Micova, 2019). In this research, it has been decided to interview experts in the field. Meuser & Nagel (2009) define an expert as someone responsible for the creation, execution, or control of solutions,

strategies, or policies of a phenomenon. Moreover, an expert is someone who possesses exclusive knowledge about specific decision-making processes. Therefore, interviewing experts is a precious source of internal knowledge for this study as it allows us to understand which strategies, challenges, and future perspectives characterize the development of interdisciplinary collaboration in Piedmont from an internal point of view of expertise. The interviewees have been identified starting with the presidents of the institutions analysed and the project collaborators (see Table 2). The entry point to identify the possible interviewees started with a screening of official documents and reports in the field to visualize the contributors, authors, and collaborators, subsequently, it has been applied the snowballing method to enlarge the group of experts (Van Audenhove & Karen Donders; 2019). The interviews took place online and the average duration has been of 45 minutes each. The data gathering time frame has been from April 4<sup>th</sup> 2024 to April 9<sup>th</sup> 2024, with an exception for the Cultural Welfare Center Director C. Seia who has been interviewed May 15<sup>th</sup> 2024. The interviews have been carried out in Italian, subsequently transcribed in Italian and the parts included in the following analysis translated in English.

Interviewee	Profession	Institution
Catterina Seia	Director	Cultural Welfare Center, collaborated with Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation and co-founder of Medicina a Misura di Donna Foundation
Luisella Carnelli	Cultural Researcher and consultant	Fitzcarraldo Foundation, collaborated with Compagnia di San Paolo Foudnation and Voices of Culture
Mara Loro	Director	Hangar Piemonte
Sandra Aloia	Head of the department 'Partecipazione Attiva' (Active Participation)	Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation

*Table 2 – Interviewee sample*

The secondary data have been collected from the content of the official websites of the institutions included in the case study (see Table 3).

Institution	Website
Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation	<a href="https://www.compagniadisanpaolo.it/it/">https://www.compagniadisanpaolo.it/it/</a>
Cultural Welfare Center	<a href="https://culturalwelfare.center/">https://culturalwelfare.center/</a>
Hangar Piemonte	<a href="https://www.hangarpiemonte.it/">https://www.hangarpiemonte.it/</a>

*Table 3 – Secondary Data sources*

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

This study will apply qualitative content analysis as it can be employed for analysing various types of texts (Puppis, 2019) which in our case are official documents and reports, and interview transcripts. In qualitative content analysis texts are perceived as a ‘window into human experience’ (Ryan & Bernard, 2000, p. 769) and not as a mere object of analysis (Van den Bluck et al., 2019). The choice of this analysis method is driven by the fact that it represents a systematic way to analyse a vast amount of written data (Puppis, 2019), which is particularly adaptable with this data is collected from different sources like in this case. Moreover, this method facilitates the construction of codes through both deductive (theory-driven) and inductive (data-driven) approaches (Puppis, 2019). As explained by Puppis (2019), a multitude of researchers using content analysis combine deductive and inductive coding. In particular, the main categories are usually deductively created while the subcategories are developed with an inductive modality (Puppis, 2019). The main categories represent the specific areas of interest for the researcher, while the subcategories provide ‘what is said in the material these main with respect to these main categories’ (Schreier, 2014, p. 174, Puppis, 2019).

This research will follow this coding mixed method. As anticipated, this research aims to identify the strategies delineated and challenges encountered by the cultural sector in North Italy in fostering interdisciplinary collaboration between the culture and health sectors given the objectives outlined in the New European Agenda for Culture (2018) and the COVID-19 crisis. Therefore, as these elements are the specific areas of interest of this study, the main categories: Strategies delineated, Challenges encountered, European Policy Influence, COVID-19 influence, and Future Perspectives, have been previously deductively defined. To identify what the material analysed says about these main categories, the data have been analysed defining the codes and the subsequent subcategories with an inductive approach. In the APPENDIX B, it is possible to visualize the coding table.

The phenomenon analysed is extremely recent and in continuous evolution, therefore, there is a lack of literature and references about it. As a result, the data gathered are extremely vast and, in order to schematically report them and map the results, I defined a conceptual framework. Indeed, as Broughton Micova (2019, p. 74) explains: ‘Theory and concepts can help the researcher overcome the potential messiness of case study research’. Precisely, I decided to schematize the data gathered in the Strategies Delineated and the Challenges Encountered main categories into two conceptual categories. These two conceptual categories are respectively “Increase Awareness” and “Cross-sectorial collaboration”. In other words, it will be seen the strategies and challenges that characterize the process of increasing awareness concerning the impact of culture on health, and the strategies and challenges that characterize the cross-sectorial collaboration implementation. The reasoning behind this decision is driven by the fact that the phenomenon analysed is new and in full development. Consequently, increasing awareness about it is a driving factor for its practical implementation. As Byrman (2012) explains, it is important to acknowledge that the concepts are intended to offer guidance on the phenomenon, but they do not intend to be fixed categories.

### **3.6. Quality of the research and limitations**

Case studies offer a high degree of specificity regarding a particular phenomenon, but its potential for generalisation is severely limited (Broughton Micova, 2019). This research aims to study the case of Piedmont in order to produce propositions that might subsequently be examined in other similar cases and may inspire other researchers to take a different perspective of the case (Broughton Micova, 2019). In general, it is important to highlight that the case study analysed in this research does not include all the intuitions and projects that have been implemented in North Italy on this topic, indeed, there is a wide ecosystem of organizations that is working on it which can be a great source for further research. Moreover, even if concepts are widely used in qualitative research, it has been claimed that they prioritize the shared characteristics among the phenomenon rather than their differences and this would put predetermined frameworks on the social world (Byrman, 2012). In this research, the application of a conceptual framework has the purpose of schematically reporting the findings and it opens the possibility for future scholars to adopt and modify to put it in relation to different cases or research questions (Byrman, 2012).

#### **4. Culture and health collaboration in North Italy: the case study of Piedmont considering policy and pandemic influences on it.**

Having outlined the context and explained the methodology applied to this thesis, the empirical part of this study begins in this chapter. In this section, the case study of this thesis and the influence of cultural policies and COVID-19 on it will be explored.

As already mentioned before, the case study will focus on the Piedmont region, in North Italy, where the experimentation about interdisciplinarity development has a solid basis. Starting from 2018, after the release of the New Agenda of Culture, various initiatives, and new organizations regarding the implementation of the cross-sectorial collaboration between culture and health took place. Since different institutions are involved, it is appropriate to give an overview of their activity and missions.

Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo is a foundation established in Turin in 1563 for philanthropic purposes. Since 2020, the Foundation has developed a strategic plan based on the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations, acknowledging it as a political framework (Aloia et al., 2023). This framework is expressed in three department divisions: Culture, People and Planet. As one of the goals for sustainable development aims to guarantee health and wellbeing for everyone and the WHO report of 2019 highlights the role of culture in improving health, the cultural department of the Foundation focused on fostering the connection between Culture and Health, a project that started in 2017 (Aloia et al., 2023). The Foundation operates in accordance with the constitutional principle of subsidiarity, identifying initiatives that can generate substantial long-term impact and supporting them, prioritizing the evaluation of the impact of these projects. In 2018, the researcher Pierluigi Sacco realised for Compagnia di San Paolo the position paper *Cultural participation, psychological well-being and health: toward a new model of culturally based community welfare* where there are outlined ten strategic guidelines for a multi-year foundation strategy (Aloia et al., 2023). Subsequently, the Foundation supported the establishment of the Cultural Welfare Center in 2020 starting a strategic alliance with it. The Cultural Welfare Center is a recently born institution that aims to contribute to the development, dissemination, and promotion of the concept of Cultural Welfare, which integrates culture and health with a holistic approach. Another institution included in the case study is Medicina a Misura di Donna Foundation, an organization established in 2009 that operates with the aim to assess healthcare by considering the viewpoint and needs of women and humanise the medical environments. Finally, Hangar Piemonte, which is a cultural transformation agency for the Piedmont region established in 2014, promotes culture as a catalyst for transformation and territorial development.

In particular, Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation funded and promoted the “Cultural Wellbeing Lab (CWLAB)” a three-year project started in 2020 devoted to capacity building, design, testing, evaluation, consolidation, and dissemination of some models and protocols of intervention in the creation of cultural cross-overs with the health and social sectors. The project included has been done in collaboration with Cultural Welfare Center, Medicina a Misura di Donna, Dors Piemonte and Italia Non-Profit and it started with an experimental phase from 2021 to the end of 2022 where 4 field projects were put into practice and numerous conferences were held in order to create a network to achieve the objective of foster interdisciplinarity between culture and health. Given the collaboration of various entities aimed at interdisciplinarity and collaboration between Cultural and Health sectors, in the Piedmont region it is developing an ecosystem with a common purpose in continuous evolution. Moreover, as anticipated, some experts involved in the case of Piedmont, such as Luisella Carnelli e Annalisa Cicerchia, collaborated with the Culture for Health project, an initiative involving local and regional actions in Europe aimed at raising awareness of the crucial impact of culture on enhancing health well-being<sup>6</sup>; and in the Voices of Culture project, a structured dialogue organised to exchange ideas and discussion between the cultural sector within the European Union that allows civil society representatives from the cultural sector to submit advices on the European Commission <sup>7</sup>. These projects started in the time frame considered for the analysis.

As a result, this case study is useful in understanding how cultural, social, and dedicated health agencies are acting to create the new concept of cultural interdisciplinarity and cultural welfare. All the initiatives are extremely timely as they began to operate in concomitance with the released New European Agenda of Culture in 2018 and the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is important to highlight that these institutions collaborate with other organizations, indeed, as anticipated, there is an ecosystem of actors that are working together to implement various projects on this topic. However, the case study will focus on the institutions mentioned above to prevent the research from becoming too general and dispersive.

#### **4.1 Policy influences on the case study.**

In the following paragraphs it will be illustrated how the *New European Agenda of Culture* (2018) and the WHO report *What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review* (2019) influenced the actors and institutions involved in the case study of this research.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.cultureforhealth.eu/about-the-project/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://voicesofculture.eu/>

In the Piedmont context, the *New European Agenda for Culture* (2018) has a considerable impact on the implementation of cross-sectorial collaboration between culture and health. Indeed, after the release of the Agenda in May 2018, Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation published in December of the same year a position paper written by the researcher Pierluigi Sacco (2018). In the paper, the researcher argues the importance of an interdisciplinary approach between culture and health areas and justifies the institution's operationalisation in this sense (Sacco, 2018). Indeed, according to Sacco, the culture-wellness-health crossover is one of the pillars of the new European cultural policy and represents a clear indication of Europe's intention to invest significant resources in promoting scientific research and experimentation in this field (Sacco, 2018). The initiatives implemented by Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo have roots in the premises and recommendations exposed by Pierluigi Sacco (2018), which are in turn highly influenced by the *New European Agenda of Culture* (2018).

Following this influence, in the statement paper *Culture: a Resource for Health. The Foundation of an Interdisciplinary Centre of Expertise* released in 2020 by the Cultural Welfare Center (CCW), the New Agenda (2018), and the objectives introduced by it are mentioned with the aim of justifying the establishment of this new institution. In this regard, the director of the CCW Catterina Seia explains:

“The Agenda for Culture, which came out in 2018, for me was one of the most revolutionary cultural policy documents. Everything else follows from it.”

As anticipated in the previous paragraph, the other official document that had a noticeable impact in the case analysed is the WHO report *What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review* released in 2019. Indeed, the WHO report has been mentioned in the CCW statement (2020), which it is indicated as fundamental scientific evidence of the impact of culture on the dimensions of health and well-being. Moreover, the CCW provides an Italian-translated version of the report as it is considered a crucial source of information and awareness about the topic. In this regard, the director of the CCW C. Seia said:

“The first translation we did was the big WHO research, the report released in 2019. If we had not translated it into Italian, we had not pushed into debates in every context, certainly it



would have had a generative force, but it would have taken longer. The translation and massive dissemination were really the turning point”.

The considerations of the WHO report (2019) are present as a guide also in the report *Culture and Health. Towards a new Cultural Welfare* (2020) wanted and supported by Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo and realized by Fondazione Medicina a Misura di Donna, Cultural Welfare Center, Dors and Italia Non-Profit, written on the occasion for the implementation of the Well-impact project (Seia et al., 2020).

During the interview with the Cultural Researcher Luisella Carnelli, when it has been asked when was there a representative moment in which the European Union became aware of the need of the implementation of the intersection between health and culture, answered:

“For sure the launch of the call for a scoping review research proposal, which is a research process that in a way should systematize, that's the watershed. The trigger for that initiative was that in 2019 the WHO scoping review was published, it is the one that collected more than 1,000 studies, in which it was highlighted that the beneficial effects of culture”.

To conclude, it has been seen how the *New European Agenda for Culture* (2018) influenced the implementation of cross-sectorial collaboration at a European level and at a local Level. The results show that it has been a key document in this phenomenon at both levels. However, the New Agenda (2018) is not the only key document in this context, indeed, also the *What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review* released by WHO in 2019 had a noticeable impact on the institutions and policies at the European and local levels. Indeed, it provided solid scientific evidence about the role of culture on health, giving to the initiatives on this topic a solid basis to rely on.

#### **4.2 The influence of COVID-19 on the implementation of Culture and Health sector collaboration in North Italy.**

**The influence of COVID-19**  
**The pandemic has been a leverage for change**  
**at two levels:**

- **Recognition of the importance of well-being and the role of culture in improving it.**
- **Change at organisational-managerial level: willingness to collaborate, digitalization**

*Figure 4*

In the *Culture's contribution to health and well-being. A report on evidence and policy recommendations for Europe* (Zbranca et al., 2022) is highlighted the need for new solutions and approaches as our society faces severe challenges exacerbated by the pandemic. As a solution, in the report it is proposed the incorporation of culture into existing health toolkits (Zbranca et al., 2022). In this way, the discipline of culture for health and well-being explores novel opportunities offering fresh prospects for artists and cultural practitioners to enhance their work in new settings, broadening their reach and strengthening the industry (Zbranca et al., 2022). Also, in the *Voices of Culture Brainstorming* report it is seen how the role of leverage for change of the pandemic as the cultural sector and their actors reacted to the crisis by relocating their resources in order to find new effective ways to contribute to better mental health of the community (Grasso et al., 2023).

At a local level, the crisis due to the Covid-19 pandemic had a high impact on the actors analysed. For example, the Cultural Welfare Center (2020) highlights in its establishment statement how the pandemic has brought attention to the significant role that culture and art play in promoting mental well-being and fostering social cohesion. This attention is expressed by the CCW by forming strategic partnerships to revitalise the nation by engaging both public and private entities, approaching the issue from a multidisciplinary, multilevel, and inter-sectorial standpoint as the institution aims to contribute to the creation of a novel type of social well-being through the promotion of Art and Culture (CCW, 2020). In general, the COVID-19 pandemic had the role of increasing the sensibility on the meaning of health and its determinants, in particular, culture. The

pandemic highlighted individual and community vulnerabilities and led people and organisations to redefine their priorities.

In this regard, the director of the CCW C. Seia said:

“The crises absolutely cause us to have more sensitivity on the phenomena. [...] by the time the pandemic was declared, we had the absolute certainty of how we were pioneering these issues engaged for more than two decades almost as a pleasant curiosity, on absolutely ancillary issues such as the relationship between culture and health and, I would add, even decorative.”

Always talking about the role of Covid-19 in this process, the head of the department “Partecipazione Attiva” of Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo, Sandra Aloia, explained:

“In my opinion we suffered the most because we thought we had arrived at a definition of salutogenesis, that is health understood as physical, mental and social health. And then when there was the pandemic, in a moment all this definition that is from the WHO of 48, health became having nothing from the clinical point of view [...]. The pandemic brought the focus back to the fact that health to a whole. So right after that then there was an acceleration. However, while we were in the pandemic, actually, there was a bit of a denial of this definition of health”.

On this topic, the director of Hangar Piemonte argued:

“The role of covid in my opinion has been important insofar as it has put all people on an equal footing. It has scaled back a little bit, let's say precisely these egoriferous views and made people understand the importance of collaboration and also made it clear how we are going to be facing some big challenges w of how we need to systemize. [...] it has given a little bit of a downsizing with respect to priorities in life, it has made us feel more vulnerable”.

Moreover, in the interview with the director of Hangar Piedmont M. Loro it has been highlighted how the crisis forced organisation to change their *modus operandi* by integrating digitalisation as a structuring part:

“The covid left an important legacy which is that of digital literacy, which actually was important because it made it clear that it was possible to build systems not necessarily territorial, but systems based on sharing interest [...] that is the fact that you can actually build around narratives and then common challenges of temporary communities that share the challenge and are willing to systematize to respond to common goals and I think this is an added value. Before let's say the digital era[...] it was not possible, not so much to contemplate as a tool even for an exchange, a comparison. Instead now we do it very naturally”.

The significance of digital acceleration has been mentioned by Seia et al. (2020) in the report *Culture and Health. Towards a new Cultural Welfare*. According to the researchers, digitalisation served in the era of COVID-19 as a valuable tool to counteract the effects of physical distancing and strengthen connections that are at risk of deteriorating. This involves creating and adapting communication contexts that enable meaningful experiences and interactions, not only for individuals with illnesses but also for organisations and the overall well-being of society (Seia, 2020).

## **5. Findings**

This chapter will illustrate the strategies delineated and the challenges encountered during the implementation of culture and health interdisciplinarity in North Italy. The argumentation will follow the scheme described in the sub-chapter 2.7 *Conceptual framework to schematize the Culture and Health collaboration process: increase awareness and cross-sectorial collaboration*.

### **5.1 Increase Awareness on culture and health collaboration: strategies delineated and challenges encountered.**

In this paragraph it will be described the strategies outlined and the challenges encountered during the process of raising the awareness of the role of culture in health and well-being. The

argumentation will follow the scheme illustrated by Figure 5, thus it will start from the strategies and challenges detected in increasing the awareness at a policy level and conclude with the strategies and challenges detected in increasing the awareness at the cultural sector level. For each level, there will be exposed firstly the strategies delineated and subsequently the challenges encountered. For the sake of clarity, each level will be augmented in a sub-paragraph.

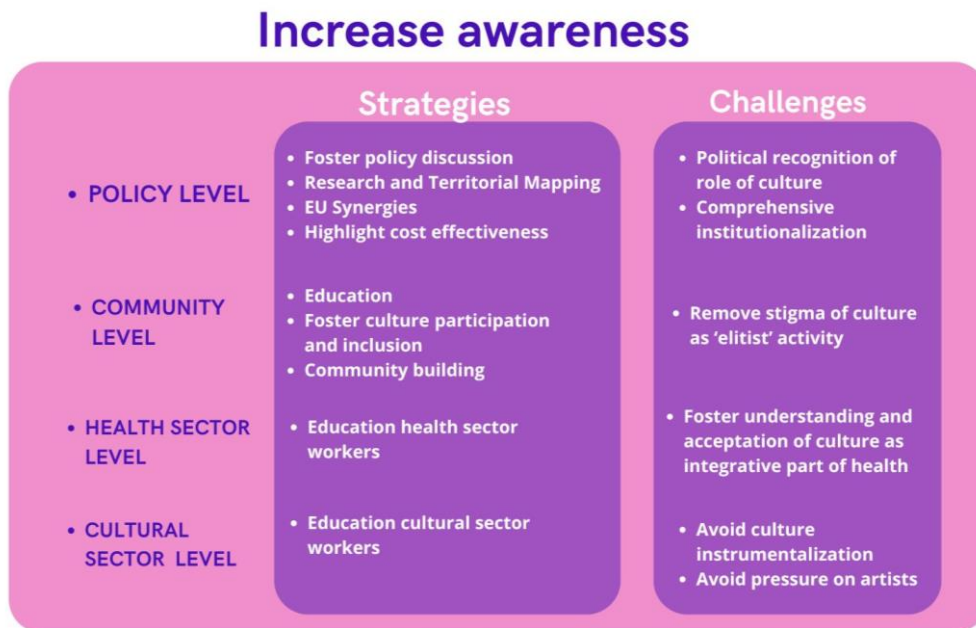


Figure 5: Strategies and challenges to increase awareness at four levels.

### 5.1.1 Increase Awareness at policy level.

As anticipated above, to increase awareness about the role of culture and its impact on individual and community health and wellbeing, it is fundamental to integrate this concept into the policies of national and international political authorities and institutions.

One of the strategies delineated to achieve this goal is fostering policy discussion.

At a European level, an effective example is the European Commission's Structured Dialogue platform Voices of Culture organised in October 2022 in a Brussels two-day brainstorming session aimed at gathering insight, experiences, and recommendations on the impact of art and culture on health from 53 selected civil society organisations that represented 23 European countries. In the report that followed the Brainstorming session, it is enhanced how the

international exchange of information plays a crucial role in developing credibility and expertise, thus increasing awareness, on this topic (Wolf Perez, 2023).

Moreover, to make the dissemination of information on this topic more effective, the project Culture for Health suggests supporting the establishment of a specialised platform that facilitates policy discussion and the sharing of expertise which could be operated by EU Member States and specialised authoritarian institutions in this sense (Zbranca et al., 2022).

At a local level, in the statement paper of the Cultural Welfare Center (2020), the institution declared its commitment to establishing a dialogue fostering the interaction among professionals, scholars, government officials, and the public about the impact of culture on health (CCW. 2020). To facilitate the dissemination of information and foster policy discussion, the digitalisation which is expressed using online platforms is a great resource. Indeed, the institutions analysed in this research use their websites or popular online platforms to share their initiatives, knowledge, and information about the relationship between culture and health. For example, Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo organises and publishes on Youtube numerous webinars where experts coming from different fields discuss the topic. This strategy is widely used also by Hangar Piemonte and the Cultural Welfare Center.

Another strategy implemented to increase awareness at a policy level is territorial mapping, which has been introduced by the European Call *Preparatory Action – Bottom-up Policy Developments for Culture & Well-being in the EU* (2020). Indeed, the Call exhorts the respondents to identify, map and analyse the most significant existing practices in the territories considered and identify a strategy for the dissemination of the results (EC, 2020). Culture for Health project provided an effective answer to this call by releasing in 2023 the report *CultureForHealth Mapping: An Overview of Programmes, Initiatives and Projects on Culture for Well-being and Health* (Cacovean & Pop, 2023). The importance of territorial mapping is explained also by Sacco (2018), who argues that given the acknowledgment of certain territorial best practices, it would be advisable to proceed with spreading awareness about them through local and national media channels in order to increase awareness on the topic (Sacco, 2018). A territorial mapping has been implemented at a local level by Fondazione San Paolo in collaboration with Fondazione Medicina a Misura di Donna, Cultural Welfare Center, Dors and Italia Non-Profit in 2020. The results of the research are illustrated in the report *Culture and Health. Towards a new Cultural Welfare*. (Seia et al., 2020). Even though the research is not comprehensive, it effectively captures the cultural professionals, civic activity, and extensive legacy in the territory, becoming good evidence that can influence policymaking (Seia et al., 2020) In this regard, the head of the department Partecipazione Attiva of Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo, Sandra Aloia, explained:

“We want to support the policy and since the policy from this point of view doesn't have a policy, what has been a little bit our work from four years ago was as follows. First of all we created a mapping that we [...] of self-reporting of practices, entities, skills, people who were dealing precisely with the relationship between culture and health. Then we launched a three-year program that we called CW-Lab, which basically had two objectives, one, to bring to the territories our mission [...], so solicit the health, educational, social and cultural worlds [...] to get around a table and have a day of both training but also a workshop, so that they would be ready then to field other types of planning”.

In recent days, the same actors will launch a second mapping in the same local territory. The CCW (2024) gives the justification behind this operation explaining that over the last five years, awareness of the transformative potential of culture as a health resource has been consolidated and the policy framework at the European level is moving toward a growing recognition of the relationships of these two sectors. The head of the department Participation Attiva of Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo, S.Aloia talked about the new mapping project:

“The ones we are working on now is the mapping update, because now, four years later, we know that the territory is much more ready to respond to that kind of demand on mapping. There is greater maturity of even the institutions, not just the third sector, in responding to that kind of mapping and so we want to first start by seeing what comes out of that kind of representation and then we will see”.

Also the Cultural Researcher L. Carnelli highlighted the importance of territorial mapping in increasing awareness:

“Simply in Piedmont we found ourselves starting to develop a consciousness, an awareness of the role that art and culture can have thanks also to the activity carried out by CCW, started this mapping project through candidacy, [...] Now we are in the second edition of mapping. Many of these projects then are, converge and are contained within what is the collection of projects from the scoping reviews.”

Another strategy that can foster awareness at a policy level, is to support synergies with other policy programmes and European Calls. In this regard, the Culture for Health project suggests that to maximise the multidimensional impact of culture on health, it is required that art and cultural programs are embedded in existing European programs and actions (Zabranca et al., 2022).

Finally, raising awareness about the cost-effectiveness of culture integration in the health strategy is considered another strategy to foster the integration of culture in health policies. According to Sacco (2018), the potential of culture to address the financial challenges commonly associated with social and health policies may be of interest to local governments seeking innovative positioning and broader perspectives beyond the usual political agendas (Sacco, 2018).

Raising awareness of the role of culture in health also brings various challenges. According to Sacco (2018), this topic was not given much attention in policy discussion and was a very obscure area of international research. Indeed, the legislators have not fully yet acknowledged the crucial and comprehensive role that culture and art play in our society (Costa & Lewis, 2023).

Moreover, there exists a substantial disparity between the extensive body of research indicating the impact of culture on health and a limited amount of research showing that policymakers take this evidence into account showing that international confrontation regarding this topic is not yet to be in a systematic manner (Zbranca et al., 2022).

These challenges are highlighted also at a local level, Seia et al. (2020) express the urge need of establish an institutional and social policy framework to support and guide the emerging cross-sectorial collaboration system in Italy.

Another challenge is changing the perception of the importance of the role of culture in policymaking. Indeed, culture is often perceived as an additional bonus in policy terms (Seia et al., 2020). Moreover, contacting bureaucrats can be an intricate challenge, indeed, if there is no clear social demand and cultural wellbeing cannot be given high priority on the political agenda since it lacks recognisable representation (Sacco, 2018).

In this regard, the Director of Hangar Piemonte Mara Loro and the Cultural Researcher L. Carnelli said:

M. Loro: “Then the first one (challenge) of institutional character is that there is a need for institutional recognition of this direction of development, not only at the European level, but also at the national and regional level. There is so much interest on this, but there is still not actively let's say a regulatory framework that invites development, let's say that invites that incentivizes strategic cross-sectorial development.”



L. Carnelli: “there is also a question of awareness of the role and effects that cultural participation or that certain cultural activities can generate [...]. Making certain interventions systemic is not easy, it takes a totality of resources, it takes planning that can afford gradual and incremental implementation, it also needs the support not only of the health and cultural world, but also of the social welfare world and in some cases support from the administration.”

### **5.1.2 Increase Awareness at community level.**

To systematically integrate culture in cross-sectorial collaboration with the health sectors, it is crucial that the community is aware of and recognises its role in changing the individual and society’s wellbeing.

A strategy to increase awareness at a community level is to ensure all the citizens, comprehending minorities, access to culture, particularly through active and creative involvement, for example, co-creation of projects (Doherty, 2023). This concept is highlighted also by the Culture for Health project which encourages the implementation of participatory arts projects and other cultural activities that promote the inclusion and integration of the community (Zbranca et al., 2022). For example, cultural institutions such as museums and libraries could be reconceptualized as spaces that promote cultural wellbeing by functioning as gateways for facilitating broad access to social, educational, or health services (Zbranca et al., 2022).

Another central strategy to increase awareness at a community level is providing education on the topic. In this regard, Hangar Piemonte launched in 2022 the project Educare alla Bellezza (in English: Educating to Beauty) with the aim to intercept cultural projects capable of responding to the needs of primary and secondary schools in the Piedmont region in the field of educational innovation and well-being. In this regard, the Director of Hangar Piemonte M. Loro explains:

“We are developing this project that is called Educare alla Bellezza [...]. The project is dedicated to construction of a cultural and artistic proposal dedicated to the well-being of people who work in school settings, so teachers, parents and pupils. And these proposals then were included within all the health promotion catalogues of all the local health boards in the region. What does this mean? That within these catalogues there is the culture and health section [...]. All projects that you normally encounter because you refer to cultural institutions, in this case, thanks to the collaboration with the region and the health sector, we

talk about projects that teachers receive within the health promotion catalogues that they receive every year in September”.

Also, the project DanceWell, supported by the European Commission and implemented by the CityHall of Bassano del Grappa and other collaborators, with the aim to provide dance lessons to Parkinson’s patients is inclusive toward all the citizens. The Cultural Researcher L. Carnelli explains:

“The project [...] has to be for free and that is no small thing and it has to be characterized precisely by a composition of a fairly heterogeneous group, in the sense that aimed at people with Parkinson's, but not only them and the purpose is exquisitely and exclusively artistic”.

One of the main challenges in increasing the awareness of this topic at a community level is to remove the barriers that create the perception of culture as an ‘elitist’ and ‘superfluous’ activity in which not all members of the community are included. Indeed, it is important to highlight that culture can be integrated into the daily life of everybody, without the need to go to the theater of art exhibitions.

In this regard, when it has been asked which is the average level of awareness in this sense of a Piedmont citizen, the head of the department Participation Attiva of Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo, S. Aloia, explained:

“There is no awareness, although when you point it out to them about certain things, they make the link, there is the click. [...] So there yes, culture can be a tool that gets people out of the house. That is, I don't even think that if you get out of the house you have to go to the theatre, etc. It's one of the many things that a person can do in their free time”.

### **5.1.3 Increase Awareness at Health Sector level.**

According to Sacco (2018), to increase awareness about the topic at a health sector level, it is necessary to design a specific program to provide information and support medical professionals which could be sponsored by local and national medical orders. Moreover, it is suggested the creation of orientation workshops that bring together researchers, and cultural and health professionals and are led by specialists in the field (Sacco, 2018). This concept is similarly exposed by Seia et al. (2020), indeed, the researchers suggest that in order to launch a course on the culture

and health issues among universities and hospitals, it may be appropriate to set up a pilot course in a medical department of a university in the northwestern Italy which should be accompanied by scientific conferences and incorporated into the training programs for the health operators (Seia et al., 2020). In this regard, the Cultural Welfare Center established a school with the aim of generating a constructive dialogue about culture and well-being between people, organisations, communities, and territories in order to foster the integration of intersectoral and multidisciplinary perspectives. On the CCW official website, it is explained that the school responds to an educational need for which there are currently no structural educational proposals, addressing these educative offers to different factors, including professionals and practitioners in the social, health and cultural fields. The main challenge in this context is to obtain understanding and openness from the medical sector about the role of culture in enhancing health. Indeed, culture may be perceived as a superficial factor to human health and therefore, neglected. As the head of the department Participation Attiva of Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo, S. Aloia, said:

“I had already found myself at tables, of culture and health, where I then looked around and saw only portion of my field, that is cultural. It was culture and health is because the medical part is missing, because the medical part obviously sees this as something, like say more the little bow ‘the cherry on the cake’”.

Also, Sacco (2018) explains that the primary issue that must be resolved before taking any forward steps is the accreditation of cultural wellbeing-related projects for the health professionals.

#### **5.1.4 Increase Awareness at Cultural Sector level.**

The cultural sector generally has a great awareness of their potential and role in society. Nevertheless, it is still important to inform organisations and individuals working in this field about the possibilities of collaborating with other sectors in order to open new horizons and opportunities for the cultural area. In the Culture for Health final report, it is highlighted how it is imperative to enhance the understanding of the scientifically supported health advantages of cultural interventions among individuals responsible for overseeing cultural venues. Indeed, this systematic collaboration would have also an effect on the cultural sector as it would increase awareness by highlighting culture as a catalyst for change and enabling cultural operators to better understand the potential of their work. Finally, it would contribute to defining the various roles that artists and cultural workers can play in society, thus improving their status.

In this regard, the head of the department Participation Attiva of Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation, S. Aloia, explained:

“Even for the world of culture as it is understood in Italy, that is, a very niche world, where culture is understood in a very little formal way compared to what culture really is. There has come a need to create bridges between this culture in the narrow sense and all the other worlds”.

The strategy to achieve this awareness is the education of cultural sector workers, which is similar to the one illustrated in the sub-paragraph regarding the health sector workers.

In this context, the challenge is to prevent culture from being instrumentalized, i.e. seen as a mere means to achieve a certain health outcome. In this regard, Sacco (2018) highlights the importance of preventing this phenomenon from being seen and felt as a way of using cultural experience for specific reasons. Indeed, culture should not be justified or accepted by society just based on its capacity to create economic or social advantages, but rather as a fundamental human expression with inherent worth (Sacco, 2018). Viewing culture as a tool to attain advantages in separate areas such as health, it is likely to diminish its influence (Zabranca et al., 2022). Another challenge is to prevent the artists from pressure given by the uncertainty of cultural project outcomes. Talking about the role of artists, the Cultural Researcher L. Carnelli explained:

“The artist alone, cannot be burdened with the responsibility of the caring dynamic, but must be focused on the delivery, on the realization of the dynamic of participation, of practice, of process, of mediation and whatnot”.

To conclude, in this paragraph, it has been seen the strategies delineated and challenges encountered in the increasing awareness process that is a conceptual part of the interdisciplinary implementation between culture and health. On a policy level, the strategies delineated comprehends foster policy discussion, support research and territorial mapping, create synergies with EU programs and highlight the cost-effectiveness of this phenomenon, while the challenges are fostering the recognition of the role of culture to political authorities and institutionalising a comprehensive policy framework of this topic. On a community level, the strategies delineated comprehend education and fostering cultural participation and inclusion while the main challenge is to remove the stigma of culture as an ‘elitist’ activity. On a Health sector level, the strategies outlined are

focused on the education of the medical workers, while the challenge is to foster the understanding and acceptance of culture as an integrative part of human health. Finally, on a Cultural sector level, the strategy to increase awareness is focused on the education of cultural workers, while the challenges are avoiding cultural instrumentalization and pressure on artists.

**5.2. Cross-sectorial collaboration between culture and health implementation: strategies delineated and challenges encountered.**

In parallel to what has been done in the previous section, in this paragraph it will be described the strategies delineated and challenges encountered in the second conceptual category predefined, namely the implementation of cross-sectorial collaboration between culture and health (Figure 6).

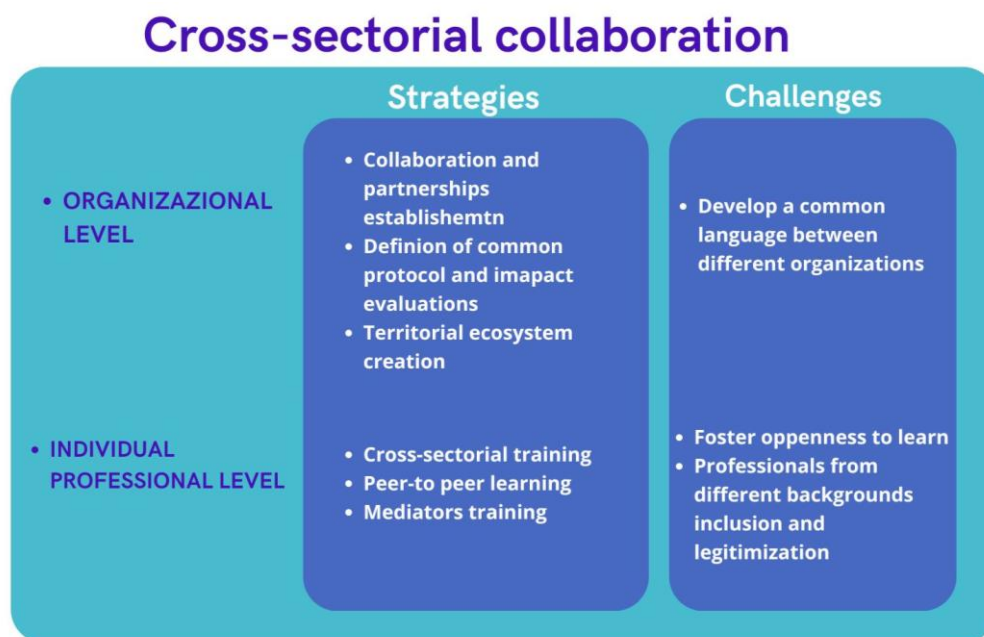


Figure 6: strategies and challenges to implement cross-sectorial collaboration at two levels.

**5.2.1. Cross-sectorial collaboration at organizational level.**

As can be deduced from the name of the conceptual category, one of the main strategies delineated is the development of partnership and systemic collaboration among different institutions belonging to different fields. According to Seia et al., (2020), one of the first strategies to implement is

facilitating collaboration and knowledge exchange among organisations from different sectors. Indeed, collaborating with other organisations enables them to “fill a gap” that was the primary emphasis of their cooperating partner (Zabranca et al., 2022). For example, when a cultural organisation offers creative content and collaborate with a healthcare organisation to have a more comprehensive approach to healthcare (Zabranca et al., 2022). To operate, all the institutions analysed in the study collaborates with other actors. In this regard, the Director of Hangar Piemonte M. Loro and the head of the department Partecipazione Attiva of Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo, S. Aloia, explained:

M. Loro: “We are working with Confcooperative and culture and sports to do this experimentation with respect to corporate welfare, then we work with Milano Bicocca department Riccardo Massa department for higher education. We also work a lot with Dors Piemonte and Piemonte dal Vivo foundation”.

S. Aloia: “Another one of the things that we have done in the past years [...] to find entities on the ground that are specialized with respect to a certain issue. And one of the things that we do is that if we strengthen, that entity, then somehow we give it the legs to work better on the topic that we hold dear, so for example in this perspective we have guaranteed for three years, actually four years a support for the establishment of the CCW (Cultural Welfare Center), So when we learned from Caterina, because we still collaborated with her as the Medicina a Misura di Donna foundation scale that was the entity that she was using previously on the topic”.

An example of experimentation and implementation of a systematic cross-sectorial collaboration is the Cultural Wellbeing Lab project (CW-LAB). The project, as it is possible to see from its official website, is supported by Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo, aim to establish a laboratory in Italy’s Northwest that will facilitate the development of a comprehensive model of systemic collaboration between culture and the health sector. The project was initiated in 2020 and it involved the establishment of an interdisciplinary Scientific Committee and 4 design hubs that comprised several key participants from different domains, such as health, culture public administration and social sector (CW-LAB, 2023).

The CW-LAB project highlighted the importance of a comprehensive impact evaluation model, protocols and good practices. The development of these elements is another strategy important to implement. As Seia et al. (2020) argued, a key element in building effective

collaboration is to construct a shared methodology for assessing the impact of different projects. Indeed, according to Sacco (2018), is crucial that during the experimental phase common evaluation models and protocols are developed by means of ongoing discussion among researchers. The head of the department Partecipazione Attiva of Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo, S. Aloia, explains:

“And so creating blanket projects with rules like from the very beginning there has to be the health part and the cultural part, from the very beginning we have to think about impact assessment, from the very beginning there has to be a stakeholder who is the one who makes the project go from experimentation to system. Because we can pay for the experimentation, but it cannot be a banking foundation to make that project become systemic as we do not have that capacity. And so we created these four poly-projects”.

Just as it is important the establishment of common protocols, the co-design of projects between different actors is a crucial resource for interdisciplinarity implementation. For example, about the project Educare alla Bellezza (Educate to Beauty) implemented by Hangar Piemonte, its Director M. Loro explained:

“We began to open an interlocution in particular with teachers with respect to how precisely the language of art of culture could represent a value and make sense for the school context. From there, then we shared this question not only with teachers, but also with other actors, in particular with Dora Piemonte and with the University of Milan Bicocca, which helped us to read this value and therefore culture as a tool for working on the well-being of people, but also to work on the issues of educational innovation, so how to bring the body back to the centre of learning processes”.

To implement systematic collaboration, a central strategy is to foster the development of networks and experimental poles that link actors belonging to different fields. According to Seia et al., (2018), the establishment of the territorial ecosystem is important for sustainable development. In this regard, one of the objectives of the CCW is the creation of a dialogue and exchange ecosystem between different actors such as practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and citizens (CCW, 2020). Sacco (2018) explains that finding experimental poles willing to pursue a set number of different

types of clinical trials is especially important for the establishment of a territorial ecosystem. In this regard, the Hangar Piemonte Director M. Loro said:

“Now there is the need for a regulation that can bring together with the expertise that all these actors bring in order to work on network building right now”.

The biggest challenge that is encountered in implementing cross-sectorial collaboration between organisations belonging to different sectors is the development of a common language. Indeed, the healthcare field has a well-established tradition of structured evaluation using rigorous methodologies (Seia et al., 2020). On the other hand, the cultural sector faces challenges in evaluation processes due to the difficulty in identifying reliable indicators for cultural impact (Seia et al., 2020). According to Sacco (2018), both sides defensibly retreat into their respective domains of expertise, making it difficult to build equal-level partnerships. In this regard, the Hangar Piemonte Director M. Loro and CCW Director C. Seia said:

M.Loro: “there are language barriers between different contexts, everyone speaks, let's say more or less their own language and everyone thinks they are indispensable, there is this cultural challenge that gives an egosystemic vision instead of an ecosystemic vision which is not easy, it's very difficult because it's both an individual and collective epochal challenge and so we are there right now, it's still we haven't made this transition”.

C. Seia: “It is difficult to mediate in an egotistical society, where there are egosystems. To go from egosystems where so many are always in conflict, to ecosystems”.

### **5.2.2. Cross-sectorial collaboration at individual professional level.**

Education and cross-sectorial training promotion are the main strategies to create professionals that have skills from different sectors and can compose the basis for cross-sectorial collaboration.

According to Zbranca et al. (2022), the promotion of collaborative training based on equal participation from cultural, social, and health professionals and students is a fundamental part of cross-sectorial collaboration capacity building. The trainings should be designed in relation to the different professional backgrounds, for example, they should include programs that teach strategies for addressing the psychological health and general welfare of participants in cultural activities for



cultural workers (Zbranca et al., 2022) and courses about cultural wellbeing should be included in optional courses for medical professionals and in medical degree programs (Seia et al., 2020).

One of the most important results of cross-sectorial training is the creation of professional figures who can mediate between these two sectors, facilitating the collaboration between actors from different fields. Indeed, according to Sacco (2018), this training opens to the possibility of a progressive development of new professional figures who would operate as intermediaries between the cultural and healing spheres, covering specific functions and skills that the cultural and medical professionals are unable to cover on the basis of their specific training.

In this regard, the director of Hangar Piemonte M. Loro and the Cultural Researcher I. Carnelli said:

M. Loro: “Absolutely you need a mediating figure, the ideal with an interdisciplinary expertise, so related to art rather than pedagogy, art, business. The ideal is these hybrid figures who have different skills and who can do activities just in mediation, in translation. Because then it's really just translating, because really there would be many more possibilities for interaction between different contexts, but the problem is that we just don't understand each other”.

L. Carnelli: “ they are beginning to develop pathways and processes in this direction, for example the Master's program that CCW does [...] there is a need for figures who are able to interpret the needs of the performers on the one hand and still be able to relate to the medical world and also understand the language, understand at least minimally the language and be able to relate it to the needs of the social system as well, certainly are crucial”.

As we anticipated above, the Cultural Welfare Center established a school with different educational proposals, including a Master, to achieve this goals. Its Director, C. Seia said:

“The CCW school was not born first out of need for expertise, and it was also born out of this effort in bringing together such diverse subjects, i.e., theme mix classrooms from the world of health care, social work of third sector education culture [...] is a very strong choice that comes from our action of building widespread skills and supporting a cultural change that led us in 2021 to create the CCW School, which to date I have trained in different capacities more than 3000 people, one of our most significant activities that accompanied then with advocacy activities”.

The challenge that characterizes this implementation is fostering the openness to learn from professionals who traditionally work in two different fields of expertise. Indeed, introducing cultural interventions into healthcare facilities may encounter resistance from medical professionals who doubt the effectiveness of such cross-sectoral training (Zabranca et al., 2022). The presence of diverse experts needs to surpass hierarchies and legitimize various roles as valuable contributions (Carnelli, 2022).

To summarize, it has been seen the strategies delineated and challenges encountered in implementing cross-sectorial collaboration between sectors. At an organizational level, the strategies comprehend the establishment of collaborations and partnerships, the definition of common impact evaluation, protocols and good practices and the creation of territorial ecosystems and networks, while the main challenge is to define a common language between organizations that traditionally worked in two different sectors. At an individual professional level, the strategies are focused on cross-sectorial education, peer-to-peer learning, and training with the direction of creating mediators, while the main challenges are to foster openness to learn and ensure the legitimization of each professional figure involved.

### **5.3 Future perspectives**

In the following paragraph it will be briefly illustrated some future perspectives regarding the implementation of interdisciplinarity between culture and the health sector:

- From experimentation to institutional consolidation: according to Sacco (2018) the future perspectives include the transition from the phase of experimentation to a phase of progressive institutional consolidation. Indeed, with the systemic implementation of the coordination among the various efforts and a gradual alignment towards a set of standardised protocols, It is possible to establish a shared foundation for future development.
- New opportunities for the cultural field: supporting this cross-sectorial collaboration could increase future development opportunities for the cultural sector by promoting capacity-building activities and generating new sources of funding. Moreover, it offers new prospects for artists and cultural operators to enlarge and differentiate their expertise and areas of practice (Zbranca et al., 2022).
- A new perception of the concept of Health: the perception of Health could shift from the mere absence of disease and focus on treatment to a holistic concept that considers health

promotion and prevention central factors of health, comprehending all the human life spheres such as culture, sport and more. The new perception would focus more on health promotion and prevention and not just on medical treatment (Damaso, 2023).

- The emersion of a new field: the connection between culture and health sectors has the capacity to give rise to a new interdisciplinary field that will require the presence of new professional figures.

## **6. Conclusions**

This thesis investigated the case study of Piedmont, aiming at answering which are the strategies delineated and challenges encountered by the cultural sector in North Italy to foster collaboration with the health sector in view of the objectives outlined in the New European Agenda for Culture (2018). Moreover, the study explored how the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic influenced this process and which are the future perspectives of this interdisciplinary collaboration development.

This research is intended to further raise awareness about the recent European cultural policies with their innovative direction for the cultural sector and how the traditional arrangement of sector division is going through a changing process. Academic relevance can be found in the fact that, by analysing a case study aimed at illustrating how the process of cross-sectorial collaboration between culture and health sectors is developing in a specific area, is possible to visualize a practical example of how cultural policies and environment conditions, such as the pandemic, are influencing the implementation of this process, obtaining interesting insights for cultural policy research. Moreover, through the proposal of a conceptual framework to schematize a process in full development, this study aims to contribute to the research in this emerging field, giving the possibilities for other researcher to take insight from the conceptual schematization illustrated.

Additionally, social relevance has been supported since through the analysis of the strategies, challenges, and future perspective that the cultural sector in Piedmont is facing, other policymakers and organisations in the rest of Italy and Europe can gain awareness about the phenomenon and

apply the experience gained from this case study to their contexts, contributing to the creation and systematization of this new, potentially revolutionary, field.

This research wants to contribute to raising awareness of how the concept of culture is shifting from “leisure activity” to an essential pillar for human health and its prevention, opening new opportunities for the culture and health sectors which can bring positive outcomes to the economy and the community wellbeing of a country.

The study highlighted how the New European Agenda of Culture (2018) represents a key document for the process of interdisciplinary development between the culture and other sectors. Indeed, the explicit recognition by the European Union of the crucial role of culture in enhancing human health and wellbeing opened the door for many initiatives in these terms, giving the institutions with the aim to operate on this topic a policy justification and support at the international level.

An interesting result is the fact that the attention to the topic and its importance has been further emphasised by the release of the WHO report *What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being?* in 2019 (Fancourt & Finn, 2019), which gave solid scientific evidence of the culture beneficial effects on health. The release of these two official documents, followed by the European Call *Preparatory Action – Bottom-up Policy Developments for Culture and Well-being in the EU* released in 2020, in a very narrow time frame gave a considerable boost to the development of this phenomenon. Indeed, although the importance of culture and its beneficial effects on human life and wellbeing was already evident given the numerous research on this issue, the initiatives in these terms were not explicitly comprehended in the European cultural policies. With the emergence of cultural policies augmenting the inter-sectorial collaboration between culture and health, initiatives that were already operating on this phenomenon acquired a higher degree of consideration and new initiatives are more incentivised to operate, especially in countries that are at a lower level of development than the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian worlds, such as Italy.

In the study it has been seen how the arrival of the pandemic crisis and its consequences on human wellbeing exacerbated the urge to integrate a different approach to the concept of health, making evident how health is not the absence of disease but a holistic concept that comprehends various sphere of life, comprising culture. According to Ozerdem (2003), catastrophes and their consequences stem from unresolved development difficulties but at the same time they might present new chances for change. While the pandemic has brought the world to a high crisis state, it has played the crucial role of a lever for change. Indeed, according to Djalante (2020), the crisis allowed exposing underlying structural issues and it has highlighted the significance of expediting

the implementation of global policy frameworks. Once these fragilities have been exposed, some traditionally developed organizational systems collapsed, giving way to the possibility of building new systems, new fields, and new concepts of collaboration between them.

There is a correlation between the COVID-19 crisis and social development, and utilising a community social development approach can facilitate the identification of potential paths for achieving a cultural transformation (Sanfelici, 2020). In our case, it is showed how the pandemic crisis has a crucial role in the development of new initiatives aimed at bringing a cultural transformation.

The research question of this thesis has been answered following the conceptual framework illustrated in the sub-chapter 2.7 where the process of cross-sectorial collaboration construction between the culture and health sectors with its strategies and challenges have been divided into two parts. The first part of the process is to increase awareness about the topic. Indeed, when a process of change requires the reconceptualization of traditionally established concepts, such as the concept of health and wellbeing, the role of culture on them, and the division of sectors, in order to build a system based on these new concepts it is fundamental to foster a high level of awareness on the topic at various levels. The levels visualized in this thesis are four, namely policy, community, health sector and cultural sector levels. The second part of the process is the effective cross-sectorial collaboration implementation between organizations and professionals belonging to different fields.

The strategies and challenges identified in the increasing awareness about the topic are the following. On a policy level, support research and territorial mapping, create synergies with EU programs and highlight the cost-effectiveness of this phenomenon. The challenges are fostering the recognition of the role of culture in political authorities and institutionalising a comprehensive policy framework on this topic. This “highlight cost-effectiveness” strategy can be connected to the fact that, according to Mulchay (2006), the demonstration of the usefulness of cultural policy often focuses mainly on the economic aspect, highlighting how investing in culture brings to financial advantages in other areas. This concept reduces the role of culture to an ancillary economic tool thus creating a controversy between the reason why the government invests in cultural policies and the effective application of it. In this regard, avoiding culture instrumentalization is one of the challenges encountered in the increasing awareness process.

In addition, ss Howlett & Cashore (2020) explained, private businesses and other institutions play a crucial role in achieving the goals of a public policy and they often substantially influence the government policies definition themselves. Indeed, several influential non-profit organisations and entities with public participation contribute serving as advocates to policymakers, pushing for reforms and innovation within the cultural sector (ACCPT, 2022). In this case, the strategies

delineated by the private institutions in Piedmont to increase awareness at a policy level, show how their activity is fundamental to influence the local policymaking.

On a community level, the strategies delineated comprehend education and fostering culture participation and inclusion while the main challenge is to remove the stigma of culture as an ‘elitist’ activity. On a Health sector level, the strategies outlined are focused on the education of the medical workers, while the challenge is to foster the understanding and acceptance of culture as an integrative part of human health. Finally, on a Cultural sector level, the strategy to increase awareness is focused on the education of cultural workers, while the challenges are avoiding culture instrumentalization and pressure on artists.

At the same time, the strategies and challenges identified in implementing cross-sectorial are the following. At an organizational level, the strategies comprehend the establishment of collaborations and partnerships, the definition of common impact evaluation, protocols and good practices and the creation of territorial ecosystem and networks, while the main challenge is to define a common language between organizations that traditionally worked in two different sectors. At an individual professional level, the strategies are focused on cross-sectorial education, peer to peer learning and training with the direction of creating mediators, while the main challenges are to foster openness to learn and ensure the legitimization of each professional figure involved.

Finally, this study identified various future perspectives regarding the development of an interdisciplinary system between culture and health. These comprehend the institutionalisation of this systemic collaboration, new opportunities for the cultural sector, a new more holistic perception of the concept of health, and the emersion of a new field characterized by new professional figures.

As the phenomenon analysed is extremely recent and relevant, it is fundamental to increase the body of research about it. Further research could be conducted analysing other case studies at a micro-level or doing comparative case study research between different contexts in Europe. In this case, it could be possible to research the ecosystem composed of all the institutions that are collaborating to implement cross-sectorial collaboration in Piedmont, which can be subsequently extended to the entire region and the nation. Moreover, it could be conducted research about the economic aspects and outcomes of this interdisciplinarity and about the potential rise of new professional figures that mediate the two sectors and the creation of a new proper field.

To conclude, as Dewey (1958) highlights, in ancient times culture was part of the community’s daily life as it was fundamental to human well-being. The current isolation, caused by a modern political process, of the cultural sector from the other sectors negatively affects the life of the community. For this reason, it is now more important than ever to reintegrate culture into the daily life of the individual and the community. Indeed, the new European policies and the awareness left

by the pandemic crisis have created a favourable context for this cultural transformation process and it is crucial to collaborate to make it concrete.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Interview Structure**

Translation in English:

#### **Introductory questions**

- What is your profession and how would you describe it?
- In your opinion, when did the topic of the relationship between culture and well-being start to be particularly relevant? What are the reasons behind this?

#### **Strategies delineated and challenges encountered**

- In your view, what are the objectives of [Institution X] in this regard and what strategies are currently implemented to achieve them?
- If there are any, which are the entities with which main collaborations have been established through which this strategy is being implemented?
- In your opinion, what are the main challenges that have been or are being encountered in the implementation of the cultural well-being connect?

#### **Covid-19 influence**

- In your opinion, to what extent has the Covid-19 pandemic influenced this?

#### **European policies influences**

- To what extent has the European Union's recent stance with the release of the New European Agenda for Culture (2018) regarding collaboration between the cultural sector and health influenced this process of change?
- How has the territorial context of Northern Italy, specifically Piedmont, influenced and contributed to the emergence and development of cultural welfare?

#### **Future perspectives**

- What are the perspectives for the future regarding the development of cultural welfare and collaboration between the cultural sector and health at the regional level?

#### Italian Version

- Di cosa si occupa e come descriverebbe la sua figura professionale?
- Secondo la sua opinione, quando il tema del rapporto tra cultura e well-being è iniziato ad essere particolarmente rilevante? Quali sono le motivazioni?
- Secondo il suo punto di vista, quali sono gli obiettivi di [Istituzione X] a tal riguardo e quali sono le strategie implementate correntemente per raggiungerli?
- Secondo lei, quali sono le sfide principali che sono state o si stanno riscontrando nella implementazione del concetto di well-being culturale?
- Secondo la sua opinione, fino a che punto la pandemia da Covid-19 ha influito in questo contesto?
- Fino a che punto la recente presa di posizione dell'unione europea riguardo la collaborazione tra settore culturale e salute ha influenzato questo processo di cambiamento? (Cultural Agenda 2018)
- Come il contesto territoriale del North Italia, precisamente Piemonte ha influito e contribuito alla nascita e sviluppo del welfare culturale?
- Quali sono le prospettive per il futuro riguardo lo sviluppo di welfare culturale e la collaborazione tra settore culturale e sanitario? A livello regionale e nazionale

#### **Appendix B** **Coding Table**

<b>Main Categories</b>	<b>Sub-Categories</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Strategies Delineated</b>	Foster Policy Discussion	International dialogue
		Political-administrative authorities
		Policymakers
		Policy recommendations
		Local authorities
		International authorities
	Territorial mapping	Territorial expertise
		Territorial capacity evaluation
		Territories inclusion
		Mapping
	Highlight cost-effectiveness	Budget saving
		Long-term investment
		Cost-effective
	EU synergies	EU programmes
		Systemic EU Integration
	Education	Knowledge exchange
		Dissemination
		Language transaltion
		School
		University
	Community building	Active citizenship
		Art engagement
		Art participation
		Community inclusion
		Minorities
		Patients' engagement
	Health sector	Caregivers education
Workshops		

		Culture Courses
	Cultural sector	Cultural workers Opportunities
		Cultural sector expansion
	Partnerships development	Collaboration
		Cross-sectoriality
		Co-design
		Co-funding
		Organizational synergies
		Complementarity
	Common protocols definitions	Impact evaluation
		Protocols
		Good practices
		Systematization
	Ecosystem Creation	Network creation
		Connectivity
	Cross-sectorial training	Peer learning
		Skills developing
		Professionals
		Health sectors workers
		Cultural sector workers
Hybrid Professionals		
Mediators		

<b>Challenges Encountered</b>	Institutionalisation	Lack of administrative support
		Policy agenda priorities
		Difficult authorities' access
		Fragmentation
		Culture credibility
	Remove Culture "Superfluous"	Cultural barriers



	Stigma	Community exclusion
		Art and culture perception
	Culture legitimization in the Health sector culture integration	Role of culture in health recognition
		Medical workers reluctance
		Traditional medical background
	Avoid Culture instrumentalization	Culture as a mean
		Instrumentalization
		Result-oriented
	Avoid pressure on artists	Artistic Freedom
		Role of Artists
		Pressure
	Develop common language	Linguistic differences
		Lack of common language
		Lack of communication
		Hierarchies
	Foster Openness to learn	Openness
Trust		
<b>European policy influences</b>		New European Agenda for Culture 2018
		WHO scoping review 2019
		Work Plan for Culture Europe
		Agenda 2030 UN
		Preparatory action Europe
		European policy
<b>COVID-19 influences</b>	Recognition of the importance of wellbeing and the role of culture on it.	Covid-19
		Global crisis
		Change
		Belief disruption
		Isolation
		Culture reconsideration

	Organizational structure change	Health reconsideration
		Digitalisation
		Organisation fragility
		Uncertainty
		New managerial approach
<b>Future Perspectives</b>		Systemic consolidation
		Future
		Objectives
		Systemic implementation
		New field
		New Professional figures
		Integrated collaboration
		Territorial implementation
		Different culture and health perception
		Holistic approach