

# Culture compass FOR EUROPE

Communication from the Commission  
to the European Parliament, the Council, the  
European Economic and Social Committee  
and the Committee of the Regions



## A Culture Compass for Europe

### 1. Introduction

Europe is a vibrant hub of cultural diversity, renowned for its languages, cultural heritage, artistic expressions, and creative innovations. Europe has more UNESCO World Heritage Sites of cultural, natural or mixed importance than any other region in the world. It is the home of linguistic diversity, with more than 24 EU official languages and over 60 regional or minority languages. This cultural richness is a testament to Europe's shared history and memory, and a driving force shaping its future, fostering a European sense of belonging and strengthening European values, as attested by 87% of citizens who view culture and cultural heritage as key to feeling more European<sup>1</sup>.

In Europe, cultural diversity is celebrated, safeguarded and continuously reimagined. It provides fertile ground for artists and cultural professionals to create, innovate and push boundaries. Europe's cultural legacy and vibrancy foster exchange, dialogue, and mutual understanding across communities and generations.

Cultural activities and engagement with Europe's rich cultural heritage are vital to our European way of life. Evidence shows that societies with higher cultural participation are more open, tolerant, democratic, and economically robust<sup>2</sup>, and that cultural consumption is effective in countering hate<sup>3</sup>. Participation in cultural activities is also shown to increase the likelihood to vote, volunteer, and participate in community activities<sup>4</sup>. It contributes to social and territorial cohesion and resilience, and to better health and well-being. 87% of Europeans agree that participating in cultural activities or attending artistic events improves their emotional or physical well-being.

Moreover, Europe's cultural and creative sectors and industries are key to boost innovation and competitiveness, create jobs, promote sustainable tourism, and make our regions and cities more attractive. The more than 2 million enterprises which make up the cultural and creative industries in the EU, generate around EUR 199 billion in value added and employ 7.9 million people across Europe<sup>5</sup>.

Internationally, Europe's vibrant cultural landscape is a source of soft power and a reputational asset. It facilitates the establishment of mutually beneficial international partnerships, enhances global engagement, and supports the EU enlargement process.

At the same time, culture's strategic importance for Europe is underestimated and yet to be fully valorised. In an era of rapid and complex change, geopolitical tensions, foreign information manipulation and interference, antidemocratic movements, the climate crisis, technological shifts and the digital transition, Europe must recognise and harness culture's potential to confront these pressing issues.

Cultural and creative sectors and industries face specific challenges, including threats to artistic freedom, precarious working conditions, inequalities in access to culture, rising global competition, and AI-related intellectual property rights issues. Equally, by leveraging new

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<sup>1</sup> [Europeans' attitudes towards culture - May 2025 - Eurobarometer survey](#)

<sup>2</sup> Extended collection of evidence can be found on the study [Culture and democracy, the evidence - Publications Office of the EU](#)

<sup>3</sup> Idem.

<sup>4</sup> Idem.

<sup>5</sup> Figures for 2024. Source: [Culture statistics - cultural employment - Statistics Explained - Eurostat](#)

technologies, these sectors can further enhance their creative production and their innovation potential, but also the accessibility of culture and audience engagement.

Despite significant progress over the past years through the European Agendas for Culture<sup>6</sup> and the Work Plans for Culture<sup>7</sup>, the EU still lacks a future-proof strategic framework to consistently include and elevate culture's role in policy making. This is why President von der Leyen's Political Guidelines, "Europe's Choice", started by stressing the importance of Europe's cultural diversity and heritage for Europe's future. Equally, the European Council's Strategic Agenda<sup>8</sup> recognised the need to promote cultural diversity and heritage, while the European Parliament<sup>9</sup>, the Council<sup>10</sup>, and stakeholders have stressed the importance of an EU strategic framework for culture.

In response to these calls, the Commission presents a **Culture Compass for Europe**, **establishing a vision and identifying flagship initiatives**. Recognising the potential of culture to unite, the Compass is also accompanied by a draft Joint Declaration to be agreed by **the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission**. For the EU to thrive, it must place culture at the heart of its political vision, and its social and economic strategy. The Culture Compass will also serve as the strategic anchor for culture within the 2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)<sup>11</sup>.

## 2. The vision: Europe for Culture, Culture for Europe

The Culture Compass is designed to make the most of the potential of culture for individuals, societies and territories, and to ensure culture is central to European unity, diversity and excellence. It is based on **a strategic vision** in which Europe stands up for culture and culture stands for Europe:

**"Europe for Culture"**: Europe's rich cultural landscape is integral to the Union's identity and development. Everyone has the right to create and participate in culture, to enjoy the fundamental freedom of artistic expression, and to take part freely in the creation and enjoyment of culture. The Culture Compass aims at embedding culture as a key dimension within all relevant strategies and policies, and their corresponding funding tools. This recognises culture's intrinsic, societal, civic and economic value and its role as a fundamental public good. Through tailored policies and investment, the Culture Compass will help the cultural sectors to thrive, innovate, and compete globally. While designed to be transversal, it recognises and values the specific characteristics of individual cultural sectors.

**"Culture for Europe"**: The EU will leverage Europe's rich cultural diversity, cultural heritage and creativity to strengthen democratic resilience, enhance social, economic and territorial cohesion, boost people's well-being, and enhance Europe's competitiveness and innovation potential. The Culture Compass aims at promoting and elevating culture as an expression of Europe's history and shared values, while serving as a powerful catalyst for

<sup>6</sup> Most recent: [Communication from the Commission on A New European Agenda for Culture \(COM/2018/267\)](#)

<sup>7</sup> Most recent: [Council Resolution on the EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026 \(2022/C 466/01\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Strategic agenda 2024-2029](#)

<sup>9</sup> European Parliament resolution of 14 December 2022 on the implementation of the New European Agenda for Culture and the EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations (2022/2047(INI))

<sup>10</sup> See footnote 8.

<sup>11</sup> The European Commission's proposal for the Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2034, presented on 16 July 2025, enables EU funding for culture from several instruments. [EUR-Lex - 52025DC0570R\(01\) - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

societal resilience. Through culture, the EU can strengthen its role as a global leader in culture and creativity, rooted in mutual understanding, with actions anchored in EU values.

In line with this vision, the Culture Compass will guide EU policies towards **four key directions**, supported by horizontal actions to mobilise investment in European culture:

- 1) An EU that upholds and **strengthens European values and cultural rights**;
- 2) An EU that **empowers artists and cultural professionals, and supports people**;
- 3) An EU that draws on culture and cultural heritage to become more **competitive, resilient and cohesive**;
- 4) An EU that **champions international cultural relations and partnerships**.

The EU will need greater political commitment and new policy tools to deliver on the Culture Compass. This is why the Commission will:

- Propose an interinstitutional **Joint Declaration** to be agreed **between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission** titled ‘Europe for Culture – Culture for Europe’, which will outline and reaffirm the political commitment to key principles for cultural policy in Europe;
- Periodically publish a **Report on the State of Culture in the EU** to provide insights into the European cultural landscape and assess progress regarding the development of the cultural and creative ecosystem, including specific emphasis on artistic freedom;
- Set up an **EU structured dialogue** with cultural and creative stakeholders to discuss the State of Culture Report and progress on delivering on the key directions of the Culture Compass. This dialogue will serve as a platform for exchange, co-creation, and policy alignment;
- To support the State of Culture Report, establish an **EU cultural data hub** to collect and analyse cultural data and information, monitor trends and developments, and pool best practices.<sup>12</sup> The Commission will also cooperate with EU Member States and their statistical offices, as well as with relevant international organisations, to continue improving EU cultural statistics and support evidence-based policy making.

### **3. An EU that upholds and strengthens European values and cultural rights**

Democracy, freedom, diversity and equality are mutually reinforcing values, and the EU and its Member States share responsibility for upholding them. The freedom to create and to participate in culture without barriers are enshrined in article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>13</sup> and article 13 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union<sup>14</sup>. They are essential to help empower individuals and communities to freely express themselves, engage in dialogue, celebrate cultural diversity, advance the arts, preserve cultural heritage, and imagine the future. They are core principles of the Culture Compass.

#### **3.1. Safeguarding artistic freedom**

Culture and creativity only thrive if freedom of creative expression is ensured. Safeguarding this freedom must be the cornerstone of any democratic and open society and is a strong indicator of a society’s democratic health. In the EU, protecting the freedom of artists and cultural workers to create without censorship or intimidation and to express their views on

<sup>12</sup> Data on the audiovisual sector will continue to be provided by the European Audiovisual Observatory and the Commission’s European Media Outlook Report.

<sup>13</sup> [Universal Declaration of Human Rights | United Nations](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union](#)

issues of public interest is a collective responsibility. Yet, reports continue to emerge<sup>15</sup> alleging undue interference which affect the independence of cultural institutions, the use of so-called morality laws, censorship or intimidation of artists, and even self-censorship.

With democracy and civil society under pressure worldwide, such instances must be documented, closely monitored, and measures must be taken to offer ‘safe havens’ for artists at risk, and displaced artists<sup>16</sup>. Member States and EU institutions should ensure that their policies, legal frameworks and administrative practices support free artistic creation, expression and circulation. Europe should act to protect artistic freedom and increase awareness to promote it.

This is why the Commission will systematically include a **specific focus on artists' experiences in relation to artistic freedom** in its future report on the State of Culture in the EU. It will also help **safeguard artistic freedom** through current and future EU policies and programmes, notably in the proposed future **AgoraEU**, as part of the next EU long-term budget. Safeguarding artistic freedom is also a relevant part of the broader democratic fabric of our societies, and the European Democracy Shield aims to protect and promote democracy and societal resilience in the long run.

### 3.2. Promoting cultural and linguistic diversity

Cultural and linguistic diversity are at the core of the European project and embody the EU’s ‘United in diversity’ motto. The commitment to preserving this is a pre-requisite of European cultural sovereignty and democratic culture. This is why the EU is a signatory of the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions<sup>17</sup> in its own right.

The EU actively protects, develops and promotes cultural and linguistic diversity through its policies and programmes, and as set out in President von der Leyen’s Political Guidelines, will continue to work on safeguarding the rights of persons belonging to minorities in Europe. From 2021 to 2024, Creative Europe has supported 670 transnational cultural partnerships; 554 films were released in cinemas across Europe, with 37.9 million people having accessed European audiovisual works from other European countries<sup>18</sup>.

The five EU Cultural Prizes<sup>19</sup> play an important role in increasing the visibility of Europe’s cultural sectors by recognising and promoting their diversity and excellence. To build on this, the Commission will propose a **new EU Prize for Performing Arts to celebrate artistic excellence** while strengthening skills, market access and professional networks across the European performing arts ecosystem.

Through the **European Day of Languages**<sup>20</sup>, the EU celebrates linguistic diversity as an embodiment of Europe’s rich cultural heritage and a cornerstone of democracy. The **promotion of language learning and linguistic diversity is one of the specific objectives of Erasmus+**<sup>21</sup>. In the field of culture, audiovisual and emerging media (e.g. video games or extended reality), Creative Europe has a legacy of promoting the diversity and circulation of European content and widening audiences.

<sup>15</sup> [Council of Europe, 2023. Free to Create: Artistic Freedom in Europe](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Council conclusions on at-risk and displaced artists 2023/C 185/09](#)

<sup>17</sup> [2005 Convention on Diversity of Cultural Expressions | Diversity of Cultural Expressions](#)

<sup>18</sup> The programme’s Media strand has also supported the development of more than 300 games or immersive content titles, many of which received prestigious awards.

<sup>19</sup> Funded under Creative Europe’s Culture Strand: European Heritage Awards/Europa Nostra Awards; Music Moves Europe Talent Awards, the EU Prize for Contemporary Architecture – Mies van der Rohe Award, the EU Prize for Literature, and the recent Simone Veil Prize – an EU prize for Jewish Cultural Heritage.

<sup>20</sup> [European Day of Languages | European Commission](#), a joint initiative with the Council of Europe.

<sup>21</sup> [Examples of projects supporting regional and minority languages: compilation of projects co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme and Creative Europe.](#)

Actively promoting content online '*Made in Europe*' is essential for digital audiences to discover and appreciate its richness and diversity. Significant progress has been made through regulatory and policy measures. For example, the 2018 revision of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD)<sup>22</sup> strengthened the visibility and prominence of European audiovisual content on 'video on demand' (VOD), securing at least a 30% share of European works in their catalogues, and requiring broadcasters to secure a majority proportion of their transmission time for European works. Harnessing big data and artificial intelligence (AI) can further boost the discoverability of diverse European content, as outlined in the Apply AI Strategy<sup>23</sup>.

Moreover, Horizon Europe-funded research and innovation are strengthening the cultural and creative sectors' resilience, driving sustainable growth, and using technology and collaboration to preserve and enrich Europe's cultural and linguistic diversity.

The Commission will continue safeguarding and enhancing Europe's rich array of cultural and linguistic expressions. It will harness the full potential of research, innovation and technology to support this. It will deepen **research and support investment on discoverability of diverse online cultural content created in Europe**, following the publication of the study on the same topic<sup>24</sup>, to foster its consumption within and outside the EU, with a special focus on online European music and literary content.

### 3.3. Widening participation in and access to culture

Cultural participation and access to cultural activities are essential to promote active citizenship, and are a fundamental pillar of any democratic and inclusive society.

Some Member States have already introduced Culture passes designed to enhance cultural access, especially for young people. EU funding, notably under **Creative Europe, has also promoted access to culture in various ways**, for instance, by supporting Cinema passes in theatres belonging to the Europa cinemas network in several EU countries through the MEDIA strand. Initiatives such as the **European Heritage Days<sup>25</sup> or the DiscoverEU Culture Route<sup>26</sup>** have expanded opportunities to explore Europe's vast cultural heritage.

However, there is progress still to be made. 51% of Europeans did not engage in any artistic activities, either individually or as part of a group, within the last 12 months<sup>27,28</sup>. This is why the Commission will further enhance young people's access to cultural heritage across Europe by (i) establishing a **voluntary framework for the mutual recognition of culture and cultural heritage passes for young people issued at national level**, (ii) promoting the **DiscoverEU Culture Route** among young people, and (iii) **increasing the cultural offer** within the existing **EU youth discount card** under Erasmus+.

There are a number of other factors that affect participation, from socio-economic status, to disability, ethnicity, gender, age, and geographic location<sup>29</sup>. To broaden and improve the quality of participation in culture, the EU and its Member States should assess how policies, such as those related to science, health, environment, education, training and social cohesion can foster engagement in culture. Europe will continue leading the way and creating equal opportunities

<sup>22</sup> Directive (EU) 2018/1808

<sup>23</sup> COM(2025) 723

<sup>24</sup> Study referred to in the EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026 (OJ C466, 7.12.2022).

<sup>25</sup> [European Heritage Days | European Heritage Days](#), co-funded by the EU and the Council of Europe.

<sup>26</sup> [The DiscoverEU Culture Route | European Youth Portal](#) inspires young people to tailor their travel according to culture and cultural heritage sites. DiscoverEU is funded under Erasmus+.

<sup>27</sup> [Culture statistics - cultural participation - Statistics Explained - Eurostat](#)

<sup>28</sup> [Europeans' attitudes towards culture - May 2025 - Eurobarometer survey](#)

<sup>29</sup> [Culture statistics - cultural participation - Statistics Explained - Eurostat](#)

through sustained investment, and inclusive and accessible design of cultural infrastructure and programmes. In this spirit, the Commission will prepare a Report to support Member States in **increasing the participation of and support to persons with disabilities in culture**.

## 4. An EU that empowers artists and cultural professionals, and supports people

Cultural life flourishes when societies create the conditions that allow individuals and artists to experiment and push boundaries. This requires fair working conditions for artists and cultural professionals, safe working environments free of violence of any kind, and adequate education, training and skills. At the same time, it is essential to address the realities faced by young people, including emerging artists, to build a culturally rich Europe that truly values its people. The EU must promote arts education, and inclusive and safe access to culture for children, young people and under-represented groups.

### 4.1. Ensuring decent working conditions

Many cultural workers continue to encounter difficulties in benefiting from equivalent rights and protections in practice.

In 2024, there were 7.9 million people employed in the cultural and creative sectors across the EU, representing 3.8% of EU total employment. However, there is a great level of variety in workforce composition and employment types<sup>30</sup>. Freelance work and self-employment are more common than in other sectors, with almost one-third of cultural workers across the EU being self-employed, more than double the overall EU average<sup>31</sup>. The duration of work contracts tends to be shorter and less stable compared to those in more traditional employment sectors. The proportion of those who enjoy a permanent contract is 15.2 percentage points lower than the general labour market<sup>32</sup>. Artists and writers are also less likely to have just one job<sup>33</sup> and over half of audiovisual creators (directors, screenwriters, etc.) experience long periods without paid work<sup>34</sup>. Available data and inspection findings show significant levels of undeclared work in the sectors<sup>35</sup>.

The working conditions in the field of culture are often precarious<sup>36</sup>, and artists and cultural professionals are often excluded from or only partially covered by social protection. Poor working conditions are also among the factors that have negative impacts on professionals' mental health. Professionals with disabilities continue to face numerous barriers that prevent them from developing their work on an equal footing with others. The cultural sectors also exhibit a persisting gender gap in earnings, with a higher share of women than men earning low wages<sup>37</sup>.

In the past years, important developments took place in the Member States with several countries adopting artists' status legislation or other specific measures to support artists, such

<sup>30</sup> [Culture statistics - cultural employment - Statistics Explained - Eurostat](#)

<sup>31</sup> Idem.

<sup>32</sup> Idem.

<sup>33</sup> Idem.

<sup>34</sup> [The status of artists and cultural and creative professionals in Europe - European Audiovisual Observatory](#)

<sup>35</sup> [Employment characteristics and undeclared work in the cultural and creative sectors - European Labour Authority](#)

<sup>36</sup> According to a [survey carried out by Panteia in 2024](#), 68% of artists and CCS professionals surveyed work more than one job, and 71% lack access to sufficient social protection; in particular freelance and self-employed artists.

<sup>37</sup> Data for 2022. According to [Eurostat data](#), in 2022, while the EU registered the lowest gender gap in cultural employment in the last decade, this balance is not reflected in earnings. [Culture statistics - gender equality - Statistics Explained - Eurostat](#)

as developing policies and charters on their pay and working conditions. At EU level, the Commission supported different studies, expert groups and workshops with the active engagement of Member States<sup>38</sup>, involving the culture side as well as the employment and social affairs side, stakeholders, social partners, and the European Parliament<sup>39</sup>.

It is important to step up action at EU level to improve artists' working conditions. The Commission will propose an **EU Artists Charter, to outline fundamental principles, guidance, and commitments for fair working conditions** in the sectors, and increase compliance and accountability, particularly by recipients of EU funding for culture. It will organise an **EU high-level exchange with stakeholders and social partners**, and the outcomes will also contribute to the design of the charter.

In addition, to improve artists' working conditions, they must have a clear understanding of their rights, including the legal and contractual frameworks governing their work. To this effect, the Commission supported the **launch of the 'This Is How We Work' online tool on the Creatives Unite platform** which offers insights into legal and policy frameworks that shape artists' status, social security, and labour relations<sup>40</sup>. It will also partner with the **Creators Learn Intellectual Property initiative**, developed by the World Intellectual Property Organization, which offers support to creative professionals on intellectual property issues.

#### 4.2. Facilitating cross-border mobility in culture

Cross-border collaboration and mobility are central both to artists' careers and to developing a European cultural space fostering connections and dialogue between creative professionals and with citizens. It also serves as a catalyst for competitiveness and accessing new markets, allows cultural and creative works to circulate more freely across borders and reach wider audiences, and stimulates growth and scale of Europe's creative economy.

Support for cross-border cooperation has been at the heart of Creative Europe with over 22 000 professionals gaining international experience from 2014-2020. With the launch of the **Culture Moves Europe mobility scheme**,<sup>41</sup> mobility opportunities have expanded. From 2022 to 2025, the scheme already supported over 6 000 artists and cultural professionals from 40 countries, and created more than 280 artist residencies that welcomed over 1 000 individual artists.

However, several barriers continue to limit the full realisation of these benefits. Cultural organisations, artists and professionals face costly administrative challenges that hinder cross-border mobility. For instance, artists wishing to tour across Europe must navigate obstacles stemming from rules related to varying employment and social security provisions, potential double taxation, and the complexities of cross-border provision of services. Visas and work permits for non-EU nationals, often pose further hindrances to circulation and raises costs.

With the upcoming **Fair Labour Mobility Package**, the Commission will propose initiatives that will modernise, simplify and digitalise the rules and procedures in labour mobility and free movement. These initiatives, such as the **European Social Security Pass**, will directly benefit those participating in cross-border mobility in culture. Sustained **EU investment in mobility is essential**, including **enhancing support for Culture Moves Europe**.

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<sup>38</sup> [The status and working conditions of artists and cultural and creative professionals - Publications Office of the EU: Mapping cultural and creative sector working conditions in the EU](#)

<sup>39</sup> The European Parliament has been a main advocate for an [EU framework for the social and professional situation of artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors C/2024/4208](#).

<sup>40</sup> [This is how we work - Mapping cultural and creative sector working conditions in the EU \(creativesunite.eu\)](#)

<sup>41</sup> [Culture Moves Europe - Culture and Creativity](#)

### **4.3. Giving youth a voice within cultural governance structures while nurturing young and emerging talent**

Young people play a crucial role in shaping present and future culture. Their viewpoints challenge traditional practices and expand the horizons of artistic expression, essential for the evolution and renewal of creativity.

Young people must be recognised as integral members of the cultural community. Investment in youth-led and community-owned creative spaces should be a major part of strategies to develop cultural infrastructure. Giving young people a substantial role in policymaking processes empowers them to assert their cultural rights.

The Commission will continue to support meaningful youth participation in EU policymaking through its established instruments. In addition, it will establish a **Youth Cultural Ambassadors network** to discuss culture policy matters. Through the upcoming **Intergenerational Fairness Strategy**, the Commission plans - **through heritage and linguistic preservation and culture-led innovation** - to promote **intergenerational learning**.

Cultural policymaking across Europe should also focus more on young and emerging artists and young cultural professionals. The Commission will continue to support and encourage targeted approaches, including through the **Platform scheme** under Creative Europe's culture strand, and dedicated **internship programmes under Erasmus+**.

### **4.4. Providing culture and arts education**

Culture and education are deeply interlinked. Educational engagement is fundamental for cultural institutions, and the arts play an essential role in education and human development from an early age<sup>42</sup>. Integrating culture and arts education into formal, non-formal and informal education and training - as core components - cultivates a sense of agency, enhances creative expression, academic attainment, critical thinking, and well-being of learners. Erasmus+ has promoted numerous projects on culture and arts education, including cooperation with museums and libraries.

Participation in cultural activities is closely linked to civic engagement and helps people develop confidence, empathy, tolerance and communication skills. The Commission will develop a **peer-learning project to strengthen pupils' civic engagement and sense of democratic citizenship** through culture, both within and around schools.

Formal education and lifelong learning should leverage culture to develop essential creative skills, including skills critical for the EU to close the innovation gap and prepare young people for a rapidly changing economy and the future job market. Arts education and training can also create wider ripple effects by inspiring schools and families to visit cultural institutions, museums, theatres, and libraries and to use them as creative learning spaces. However, arts and cultural education at school often has low status, is insufficiently resourced, located at the periphery of policy in some Member States, and frequently cut in times of budget constraints.

The provision of arts and cultural education must be strengthened and its quality improved. The Commission will **promote stronger cross-sector cooperation between culture and education policies**. It will foster partnerships among artists, cultural institutions, community cultural organisations, schools and non-formal education providers, and it will encourage grassroots arts and cultural education projects.

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<sup>42</sup> [Council Recommendation on blended learning approaches for high-quality and inclusive primary and secondary education \(2021/C 504/03\)](#)

Through its **Union of Skills, the Commission is tackling the significant decline in book reading**. It will leverage on recent Member States' expert work and on reading promotion initiatives like **the European Authors Day**<sup>43</sup>, **also capitalising on the important role of libraries** and using their expertise. The **EU Literacy Coalition**, announced for 2026, will contribute to this crucial objective.<sup>44</sup>

#### 4.5. Enhancing health and well-being through culture

Cultural practices enhance individual, community and societal health, well-being and quality of life. Integrating culture and health initiatives has proven effective in strengthening community bonds, emotional and physical resilience, boosting mental health, and combating loneliness<sup>45</sup>, which can help address children and youth's mental health challenges.

The Commission's 2023 comprehensive approach to mental health<sup>46</sup> took a first step by recognising that arts and culture policies improve individual and societal mental health and well-being, and support mental health resilience. It identified social prescribing of cultural activities in primary care settings as one innovative approach in this regard. EU funded projects on this topic have provided further knowledge<sup>47</sup>, identified best practices, and helped raise public awareness.

The 2025 policy recommendations by EU Member States' culture and health experts<sup>48</sup> called for bold measures like establishing cross-sectoral strategies, securing sustainable funding to advancing research and ensuring equitable access. The Commission, with the support of experts, will develop **EU guidelines on culture, health and well-being** for policy makers and stakeholders. It will also continue encouraging regular exchanges of good practices in this field, supporting cross-border collaboration through Creative Europe.

### 5. An EU that draws on culture and cultural heritage to be more competitive, resilient and cohesive

The cultural and creative sectors and industries are among Europe's most dynamic economic sectors boosting innovation and competitiveness, creating jobs, and improving the attractiveness of our cities and regions. Digital tech start-ups are very active in the cultural and creative industries<sup>49</sup>. Culture also generates important growth spillovers in other sectors. For instance, cultural tourism accounts for 40% of all European tourism<sup>50</sup>.

Europe's cultural and creative production still has untapped potential both within the EU's Single Market and globally. To harness their potential and contribution to the EU competitiveness, the cultural and creative sectors and industries must be supported throughout the transitions they face. This must be done in a way that ensures the promotion of diversity,

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<sup>43</sup> [European Authors Day - Culture and Creativity](#)

<sup>44</sup> The European Literacy Coalition was announced in the [Action Plan on Basic Skills](#), European Commission, March 2025.

<sup>45</sup> [What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review](#), WHO, 2019.

<sup>46</sup> [A comprehensive approach to mental health - European Commission](#)

<sup>47</sup> Like the CultureForHealth project.

<sup>48</sup> European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *Culture and health – Time to act*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2025, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/0432398>

<sup>49</sup> Of all industrial ecosystems, the cultural and creative industries attract one of the highest shares of tech start-ups, together with health and mobility. More info: [European Commission, 'Annual Single Market and Competitiveness Report', 2024](#)

<sup>50</sup> [United Nations World Tourism Organisation \(UNWTO, 'Report on Tourism and Culture Synergies', 2018](#). Furthermore, in a 2021 report, according to (UNWTO), locations featured in popular film or television productions experience an average rise of 25% to 40% in visitors' arrivals

the protection of creators' rights, the upholding of adequate ethical standards, and the safeguarding of cultural heritage, including digital heritage.

In addition to transversal measures applicable across sectors, individual sectors encounter specific challenges and needs that the Commission will continue to address through sectoral initiatives, proven cooperation formats<sup>51</sup>, and funding streams<sup>52</sup> that are consistent with overarching policy goals.

### **5.1. Harnessing digital tech and AI in the cultural and creative sectors and industries**

Cultural and creative sectors and industries are benefitting from and being transformed by digital technologies. AI in particular is changing the way culture is created, accessed, and experienced. It offers new opportunities for innovation and audience engagement, including supporting cultural heritage through restoration, reconstruction, preservation, adaptive reuse for virtual productions, and enhanced user engagement. At the same time, AI also raises new challenges, notably concerning copyright and the unauthorised use of copyright protected content in the training of generative AI models, ethical use, cultural diversity, job displacement, fair remuneration of creators and skills needs. Additionally, attention to issues like the proliferation of AI-generated content, access to data and funding, and dependency on non-EU technology is crucial. AI uptake across the cultural and creative sectors remains uneven<sup>53</sup>, also raising the need of cultivating advanced skills.

A forward-looking and enabling regulatory environment is essential for Europe's cultural and creative sectors and industries. The EU has been developing a regulatory framework<sup>54</sup> that supports creators and other sectoral players investing in creation and creative talents by protecting creative content, supporting fair remuneration, and setting standards for trustworthy and human-centric AI.

The 2019 Directive on copyright in the Digital Single Market<sup>55</sup> contributes to support innovation while allowing creators to control the use of their content. The AI Act aims to ensure, among other things, AI development and deployment that respects creators' rights, in compliance with the copyright directive. The Commission will continue to facilitate the implementation of the AI Act's copyright-related aspects, and transparency requirements for AI generated content as well as the effective implementation of the text and data mining exceptions<sup>56</sup>. A clear EU positioning on the application of international rules for royalty payments is also needed.

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<sup>51</sup> For example, the [Expert group on cultural heritage](#), [The European Film Forum](#) or the [Music Moves Europe](#) initiative.

<sup>52</sup> For example, Creative Europe's Media strand covering the audiovisual sector or targeted funding provided to the Performing Arts (Perform Europe) under Creative Europe's Culture strand.

<sup>53</sup> 51% of video game companies, 39% of audiovisual companies, and 35% of news media companies have adopted AI-based solutions. The 2025 European Media Industry Outlook report | Shaping Europe's digital future.

<sup>54</sup> This includes notably [Directive \(EU\) 2019/790](#), [Directive \(EU\) 2018/1808](#), [Regulation \(EU\) 2022/2065](#), [Regulation \(EU\) 2022/1925](#), [Regulation \(EU\) 2024/1689](#) and [Regulation \(EU\) 2024/1083](#)

<sup>55</sup> Directive (EU) 2019/790 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on copyright and related rights in the Digital Single Market and amending Directives 96/9/EC and 2001/29/EC.

<sup>56</sup> The Commission has facilitated the drawing-up of a Code of Practice to detail General-Purpose AI (GPAI) rules which was approved as adequate for providers to rely on to demonstrate compliance with their obligation under the AI Act. It also adopted a template for GPAI model providers to summarise content used to train their models. A study on the feasibility of a registry of opt-outs under the Text and Data Mining (TDM) exception is ongoing and another study is planned to help assess the rules in the Directive on copyright in the digital single market, including the TDM exception. Furthermore, the Commission has launched a process to draw-up a new Code of Practice for the transparency of AI generated content in line with Article 50 AI Act.

The Apply AI Strategy<sup>57</sup> will support the uptake of AI in the cultural, creative and media sectors for specific use cases, such as virtual production, interactive and immersive media, the discoverability of cultural content (particularly music and literacy content), and 3D digital twins of cultural sites and artifacts. The Apply AI Strategy also announces the launch of a study on legal challenges related to AI-generated outputs and technological solutions to prevent and mitigate the risks of copyright infringing AI content. In addition, the Commission will review the 2019 DSM Copyright Directive and continue to monitor market and technological developments and will examine the possible need for further improvements of the copyright legal framework to address the challenges raised by market and technological developments.

To support this work, the Commission plans to develop a **new AI strategy for cultural and creative sectors**, and take their specific needs into account in its future digital policies so that Europe is able to leverage its cultural richness and human creativity in tandem with technological advances.

Digital education, literacy and skills are essential to engage critically and creatively with digital cultural environments. The Union of Skills consolidates the central role of education and training in enhancing the EU's competitiveness and sovereignty. Building on the achievements of the Digital Education Action Plan, a 2030 Roadmap on the future of digital education and skills will contribute to broadening and deepening digital skills for creativity, immersive experiences and artistic innovation, digitisation, media literacy, cybersecurity awareness, and multilingual digital access. The Commission will provide access to practical AI literacy trainings and support the training of multidisciplinary profiles for more digital-intense sectors in need of AI sectoral talent, including the cultural, creative and media sectors.

Harnessing the digital transformation also entails further unlocking the innovative potential of its cultural sectors, notably through EU projects funded through Horizon Europe or the work of higher education institutions in bridging knowledge gaps and promoting entrepreneurship.

## 5.2. Promoting culture-led regional, territorial and local development

Cultural opportunities and infrastructure must be available equitably across Member States, regions and territories, including in peripheral, rural, islands, coastal and remote areas, and the EU outermost regions, that face challenges like depopulation, ageing demographics, geographical barriers, and fewer and poorer services. However, some 38% of Europeans in rural areas view distance from cultural venues as a barrier to access<sup>58</sup>.

Addressing these gaps is essential to fully unlock culture's societal potential and supporting the effective right to stay. This requires cultural policies and investment measures that are **embedded in broader integrated territorial development plans and specifically tailored to local needs. Cultural tourism also plays a crucial role in preserving and promoting Europe's cultural heritage.**

In this regard, EU Cohesion Policy has a central role. From 2021 to 2027, more than EUR 5 billion has been allocated to direct investments in culture and cultural heritage across regions and territories, supporting over 24000 culture, cultural heritage and tourism sites<sup>59</sup>. Complementing this, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) also provides support to culture in rural areas. This support helps strengthen the role of culture in socio-economic and territorial

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<sup>57</sup> COM(2025) 723 final.

<sup>58</sup> [Special Eurobarometer 562 on Europeans' attitudes towards culture](#)

<sup>59</sup> Data on EU allocations for culture and cultural heritage under the European Regional Development Fund (including under its European Territorial Cooperation - Interreg strand) was extracted on 8 September 2025. The figures only reflect the direct allocations.

development. The Commission continues encouraging work to ensure further progress in this field in collaboration with national, regional and local authorities, and relevant stakeholders.

Looking ahead, **the EU Sustainable Tourism Strategy<sup>60</sup>** will further promote sustainable cultural tourism as a catalyst for heritage protection, social cohesion, environmental sustainability, and economic competitiveness across Europe. Additionally, the Commission is working on developing a peer-learning project to **expand opportunities for cultural and creative professionals in rural areas**, with the goal of **enhancing regional attractiveness and retaining young people**. Furthermore, **the New European Bauhaus Facility 2025-2027 will also fund projects aiming to revitalise** neighbourhoods through sustainable, inclusive and quality design.

The revitalising role of culture is equally evident in urban contexts. Over the past 40 years, the **European Capitals of Culture (ECoC)<sup>61</sup>** has successfully stimulated the cultural offer in host cities. This has enhanced cultural vibrancy, fuelled economic growth, and strengthened community ties in cities across Europe. Building on this success, the Commission remains committed to advancing the initiative and will propose **a new legal base to continue the action and strengthen ECoC beyond 2033**.

### **5.3. Safeguarding, protecting and promoting cultural heritage, while strengthening cohesion and resilience**

Promoting, preserving and protecting cultural heritage, including its digital dimension, remains a core priority of EU policy making and funding, supported through initiatives such as the European Heritage Label, the European Heritage Days, the European Heritage Awards/Europa Nostra Awards, and the European Heritage Hub. Building on these achievements, the Commission will **renew and strengthen the European Heritage Label** to ensure its continued relevance.

The Commission **supports the digitisation and digital transformation of the cultural heritage sector** through initiatives like Europeana, which now includes over 65 million digital items<sup>62</sup>, and the Cultural Heritage Cloud<sup>63</sup> or the **Common European Data Space for Cultural Heritage<sup>64</sup>**. These actions improve access to high-quality data (including 3D), foster reuse across sectors, and accelerate the uptake of emerging technologies through training and upskilling opportunities. The Commission will continue its supportive actions in this field.

Heritage faces multiple risks: human-made disasters, such as armed conflicts, climate change and environmental degradation, and natural hazards<sup>65</sup>, as demonstrated by the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, recent wildfires, earthquakes and floods across Europe. It is therefore urgent to create and implement crisis preparedness and risk management plans, cooperation mechanisms and procedures in the field of culture and heritage.

In line with the EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026 and the EU Preparedness union strategy<sup>66</sup>, the EU is enhancing cooperation and preparedness through mechanisms such as the EU Civil

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<sup>60</sup> [EU tourism strategy](#)

<sup>61</sup> [European Capitals of Culture - Culture and Creativity](#)

<sup>62</sup> [Metis Statistics Dashboard](#)

<sup>63</sup> [The Cultural Heritage Cloud - European Commission](#)

<sup>64</sup> [The Common European Data Space for Cultural Heritage](#)

<sup>65</sup> [Council Conclusions on EU Approach to Cultural Heritage in conflicts and crisis and Council Conclusions on risk management in the area of cultural heritage 2020/C 186/01](#)

<sup>66</sup> [Preparedness - European Commission](#)

Protection Mechanism and initiatives such as PROCULTHER<sup>67</sup>, and the ICCROM-led<sup>68</sup> READY project<sup>69</sup> which strengthen Member States' capacities to effectively manage the risks for heritage of disasters, climate-related extreme events and conflicts. Groundbreaking research is being supported in this area through the Horizon Europe Programme, and the Commission has accumulated practical experience while supporting Ukraine's cultural heritage and artists. The Commission will continue collaborating with Member States to ensure the preservation and continued access to valuable digital heritage (including digital-born heritage) in the face of risks and improving the preservation of digital cultural heritage outside national borders, of increasing importance in the face of increased natural, cyber and other threats.

Combating trafficking in cultural goods is also central to protecting cultural heritage and collective memory. Crimes such as theft, illegal excavation, looting and forgery, have a direct impact on communities' identities, cohesion and resilience, particularly in crisis and conflict zones, and can be lucrative for organised crime, some conflict parties or terrorists. Cultural goods can be attractive for related crimes such as money laundering, sanctions or tax evasion, putting them at risk.

The EU Action Plan against Trafficking in Cultural Goods<sup>70</sup>, the EU regulation on the introduction and the import of cultural goods<sup>71</sup>, the anti-money laundering directive<sup>72</sup> and several EU-funded research projects<sup>73</sup> have provided a solid framework for ongoing and future coordinated action in this field. The Commission also collaborates with the International Council of Museums on prevention, research, investigation and museum security, including the refurbishment of its International Observatory on Illicit Traffic in Cultural Goods, and established dialogue with the art market to exchange information and promote ethical practices<sup>74</sup>.

Going forward, the Commission will continue supporting the improvement of traceability of cultural goods, supporting due diligence and the employment of innovative technologies, and mobilise all stakeholders to better protect cultural heritage and fight heritage related crimes.

#### **5.4. Creative pathways addressing climate change and environmental sustainability**

The cultural sectors should be further mobilised to drive climate and biodiversity action, while cultural actors should be empowered to lead the green transition. The Commission will keep promoting the dialogue between cultural and environmental stakeholders, including by organising a **workshop on the role of culture and the arts for sustainable living**.

Promoting a shared culture of architecture and design and investing in a high-quality living environment for everyone through initiatives like the **New European Bauhaus** remains important. To harness the transformative power of arts and culture for creativity and innovation, the Commission will adopt a **Communication and a proposal for a Council Recommendation on the future of the NEB** and will seek to further support culture through related initiatives.

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<sup>67</sup> [PROCULTHER – Protecting Cultural Heritage from the Consequences of Disasters](#)

<sup>68</sup> ICCROM stands for International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property.

<sup>69</sup> [READY- Resilience for Heritage in the Face of Disasters, Climate Risks and Complex Emergencies](#)

<sup>70</sup> [COM\(2022\) 800 Communication from the Commission on the EU Action Plan against Trafficking in Cultural Goods](#)

<sup>71</sup> [Regulation \(EU\) 2019/880](#)

<sup>72</sup> [Directive \(EU\) 2024/1640](#)

<sup>73</sup> [Innovations for combatting trafficking in cultural goods - Publications Office of the EU](#)

<sup>74</sup> [Subgroup on Art Market \(E03650/2\) - Register of Commission expert groups and other similar entities](#)

The cultural sectors need to tackle issues such as energy efficiency, which in the case of heritage should be balanced with respect for its integrity. Practical tools and initiatives should be further promoted, such as the MEDIA carbon calculator for European audiovisual productions currently developed with support from Creative Europe's MEDIA strand<sup>75</sup> or the Go Green Project for heritage conservation, funded by Horizon Europe<sup>76</sup>.

Building on the progress made, EU support for the cultural sectors' greening efforts will continue. One example is the planned launch of an ambitious new **European R&I Partnership for Resilient Cultural Heritage**, co-funded by Horizon Europe and complementing a cluster of ongoing R&I actions. This will invest in research and innovation to enhance the preservation of Europe's cultural heritage and to contribute to climate neutrality by advancing traditional and innovative practices, techniques and materials identified through cultural heritage research. The Commission will also continue advocating for the full integration of **culture and cultural heritage in the international climate adaptation agenda** through relevant coordination mechanisms and international fora.

## 6. An EU that champions international cultural relations and partnerships

Preserving peace, preventing conflicts, and strengthening international security are part of the Union's *raison d'être* and one of its key external action objectives. Culture contributes to these efforts as an enabler of peace, a catalyst for sustainable development, and a bridge between people.

In the current fragile geopolitical landscape, with foreign information manipulation and interference, culture is increasingly becoming a strategic domain of influence. On the global scale, some countries are actively using culture to shape perceptions and identities to legitimise political objectives. To remain resilient and credible, the EU must acknowledge and respond to this reality by reinforcing its value-driven approach in its international cultural relations, by leveraging its own rich cultural diversity as a strategic asset that strengthens external action, fosters societal resilience, stability, reconciliation and contributes to our collective security.

There is growing expectation from the EU's Member States, partners, and international organisations for the EU to act with greater consistency and ambition in the cultural field on the global stage and in multilateral contexts. The EU's added value lies in being more than the sum of its parts, as is also demonstrated by its presence in major cultural and public diplomacy events in partner countries.

### 6.1. Embedding culture strategically in EU external action

By developing the external dimension of the Culture Compass, the EU can protect and promote cultural diversity, strengthen its global role, and deliver tangible benefits for societies worldwide. Achieving this requires political will, coordinated action, and a shared commitment to making culture an integral part of and strategic resource for Europe's engagement with the world. The EU Delegations have an important role in this regard.

Drawing from experiences such as the 'Team Europe for Cultural Heritage in Ukraine' package and the Team Europe approach on 'Strengthening African-European Museum Partnerships', these models should be applied more systematically, including in regions facing natural disasters, armed conflict, or economic instability. The Cultural Relations Platform (CRP) introduced a renewed approach by putting engagement at its core, based on co-owned dialogue, co-creation and sustainable partnerships. The European Spaces of Culture project has shown

<sup>75</sup> [A common carbon emissions calculator for the European audiovisual sector: towards an environmentally conscious future](#).

<sup>76</sup> [GoGreen project](#)

that co-created, locally rooted cultural initiatives can strengthen mutual understanding and generate lasting impact. To sustain these efforts, the Commission will **launch a new phase of the CRP globally**. It will also continue its close **cooperation with the EU National Institutes for Culture network** to further international cultural relations.

For the value of culture to be recognised as a key strategic pillar of EU external action, the EU will reinforce the systematic and strategic integration of culture into its external policies and programmes, including through its Global Gateway strategy. Relevant instruments, such as the NDICI-Global Europe<sup>77</sup> should be mobilised consistently.

To maximise impact, international cultural relations policies and actions should enhance and encourage cross-sectoral collaboration between culture and foreign affairs at local, regional and national levels, and with stakeholders. Multi-level and cross-sectoral collaboration ensure that cultural action reflects both policy priorities and the needs of communities on the ground. In this spirit, the Commission and HRVP, will propose to update the **EU Strategy on international cultural relations** (2016 Joint Communication<sup>78</sup>).

## **6.2. Scaling up cultural cooperation in enlargement and integration processes, as well as in relations with neighbouring countries and regions**

Cultural cooperation plays a vital role in bringing EU candidate countries and potential candidates closer to the EU. Aligning their cultural policies with EU standards, fostering professional exchanges, and preserving and contributing to cultural diversity, can help them strengthen their integration pathways. EU programmes such as Creative Europe, EU4Culture<sup>79</sup>, the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)<sup>80</sup>, and TAIEX<sup>81</sup> have already demonstrated their value in supporting candidate countries' and potential candidates' cultural sectors and promoting a greater sense of belonging and shared European identity. These initiatives generate quality jobs, stimulate sustainable growth, and foster mutual understanding between partner countries and Member States. This type of support should continue in advancing the enlargement process. Youth participation will also be actively promoted in the enlargement region, building on successful initiatives, including Youth Labs.

The Commission will continue to strengthen the Policy Dialogue on Culture with candidate countries, potential candidates and neighbouring countries, in close cooperation with EU Member States. It will also launch a new phase of the **EU4Culture Programme** in the Eastern Neighbourhood region. Beyond technical cooperation, cultural exchanges offer opportunities for dialogue and exchange and a powerful narrative, presenting EU membership not only as a legal and economic process, but as a shared cultural project. Youth participation will also be actively promoted in the enlargement region, building on successful initiatives, including Youth Labs.

Furthermore, closer cooperation on culture will also benefit the Union's relations with neighbouring countries and beyond. For example, the southern Mediterranean's rich tangible

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<sup>77</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/947 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 June 2021 establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe, amending and repealing Decision No 466/2014/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Regulation (EU) 2017/1601 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 480/2009; [Official Journal L 209/2021](#)

<sup>78</sup> [Joint Communication Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations \(JOIN/2016/029\)](#)

<sup>79</sup> [EU project page - EU NEIGHBOURS east](#)

<sup>80</sup> Several projects have been funded through the [EU's Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance \(IPA\)](#), for instance in the Western Balkans, aiming to improve cultural cooperation as a driver of reconciliation and good neighbourly relations, supporting long-term regional stability and mutual understanding.

<sup>81</sup> [TAIEX - European Commission](#)

and intangible heritage provides a strong basis for future cooperation through culture, sustainable cultural tourism, and heritage-based development. The new Pact for the Mediterranean<sup>82</sup> provides opportunities to position cultural heritage and creative industries at the heart of dialogue and cooperation and coordination initiatives. In the context of the Pact, the Commission will launch a new **Euro-Med initiative for culture, sport and tourism**.

In addition, building on the experience in the Creative Europe programme, the Commission proposed the continued possibility for third countries to participate in the AgoraEU programme.

### **6.3. Strengthening multilateralism through culture**

Fostering multilateralism through culture remains essential for the EU to strengthen its role as a global actor, advance intercultural dialogue, and build partnerships that contribute to peace, mutual respect and prosperity worldwide. Through its active participation in multilateral fora such as UNESCO (including in the context of Mondiacult<sup>83</sup>), the G7 and the G20, the EU helps shape international cultural policies, and ensures consistency in policy across sectors. The EU should lead in translating these commitments into concrete action and contribute to the advancement of the role of culture in the post-2030 sustainable development agenda, by continuing to promote evidence-based approaches.

## **7. European Culture: a strategic investment**

Supporting the vision and ambitious policy goals of the Culture Compass for Europe requires more systematic mobilisation of existing and forthcoming funding instruments at every level, in parallel with private investment and philanthropy.

### **7.1. Continuous dedicated funding**

Continued and dedicated EU financial support for Europe's cultural and creative sectors and industries will be secured through Creative Europe and the proposed AgoraEU programme for 2028-2034, which brings together culture, media, values and rights by building on the successes of the current Creative Europe and CERV programmes. In line with its proposal, the Commission aims to build on the legacy and successes of Creative Europe and has proposed doubling the budget for culture. The Commission will pay special attention to simplification, including through the greater use of cascading grants and financing not linked to costs and lump sums, which should allow for greater efficiency, and making it more accessible.

### **7.2. Mainstreaming across EU financial instruments**

Current EU funding for culture from a range of programmes has been crucial in fostering education, research, innovation, digitalisation, dynamism of SMEs, active citizenship, and cultural action with non-EU countries<sup>84</sup>. The **CulturEU funding** guide helped stakeholders navigate and understand how the various EU funding instruments approach and fund culture<sup>85</sup>. The Commission **will update it to reflect funding opportunities for culture in the next EU budget**.

For the **next MFF, the Commission proposed to support culture under relevant EU instruments**, including the European Competitiveness Fund, Horizon Europe, the National and Regional Partnership Plans, and the Global Europe instrument. To support this, the Commission will develop **guidelines on strategic investment in culture**, aligned with the key directions of the Culture Compass.

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<sup>82</sup> [Joint communication on the Pact for the Mediterranean - Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf](#)

<sup>83</sup> UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development

<sup>84</sup> Such as Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, Digital Europe, InvestEU, CERV and NDICI.

<sup>85</sup> [CulturEU Funding Guide - Culture and Creativity](#)

### 7.3. Leveraging private funding

Exploring innovative mechanisms for cultural and creative sectors and industries' financing is crucial to ensure their long-term sustainability. **Collaboration between the public and private sectors is strongly encouraged** to expand funding sources for culture, such as complementing grants with **market instruments, incorporating novel financing approaches, including philanthropy and public-private-partnerships**, tailored to the specific needs of the sectors.

The Commission, together with the European Investment Fund (EIF), has developed innovative financial instruments as an alternative to traditional grant funding. These aim to leverage financial markets, both in equity and lending, to the benefit of media and other cultural and creative industries. To further strengthen the diversity and competitiveness of the cultural sectors, and building on the good results in the field of media of the InvestEU guarantees and with the Cultural and Creative Sectors Guarantee Facility<sup>86</sup> and the equity investment tool MediaInvest<sup>87</sup>, the Commission will explore new **financial tools to mobilise private capital and facilitate investment into cultural and creative sectors**, including start-ups and businesses, to increase their capacities to create and innovate.

## 8. Conclusions and way forward

The Culture Compass for Europe sets out an ambitious and strengthened EU policy framework for culture. Its forward-looking actions are supported by three overarching policy tools for its implementation: a periodic Report on the State of Culture in the EU, an EU structured dialogue on culture, and an EU cultural data hub.

Advancing the strategic orientation of this Culture Compass requires strengthened political commitment and investment in culture. This is the spirit in which the draft Joint Declaration titled 'Europe for Culture – Culture for Europe' is proposed today. The Commission invites the European Parliament and the Council to consider the draft with a view to reaching a jointly agreed text and co-signing the Declaration as a signal of common intent.

The Commission will also work with other public institutions, cultural stakeholders, civil society actors, relevant organisations and everyone else concerned to actively engage in reaching the high aspirations of the Culture Compass for Europe.

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<sup>86</sup> [Cultural and Creative Sectors Guarantee Facility \(CCS GF\)](#), initially funded by Creative Europe until 2020, then by InvestEU since 2021, and implemented through an effective collaboration between the Commission and the European Investment Fund.

<sup>87</sup> [MediaInvest - Boosting investment in the European audiovisual sector | Shaping Europe's digital future](#)

## ANNEX 1: FLAGSHIP ACTIONS OF THE CULTURE COMPASS FOR EUROPE

The list below outlines the actions the Commission will undertake to implement the Culture Compass for Europe.

| No  | Action   | Timeline   |
|---|--|--|
| <b>VISION: Europe for Culture – Culture for Europe</b>        |  |  |
| 1.  | Propose a Joint Declaration of the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission titled “Europe for Culture – Culture for Europe.”  | Q4 2025  |
| 2.  | Report on the State of Culture in the EU and organise an EU structured dialogue with stakeholders.   | Q3 2027 (SoC)<br>Q3 2026 (dialogue)                              |
| 3.  | Establish an EU cultural data hub managed by the European Commission.  | as of Q3 2027  |
| <b>Key Direction 1: VALUES AND RIGHTS</b>                     |  |  |
| 4.  | Propose a new European Prize for Performing Arts.  | Q2 2027  |
| 5.  | Report to support Member States in increasing the participation of and support to persons with disabilities in culture.  | Q1 2028  |
| 6.  | Establish a voluntary framework for the mutual recognition of culture and cultural heritage passes for young people issued at national level, promote the DiscoverEU Culture Route among young people, and increase the cultural offer within the existing EU youth discount card (funded under Erasmus+). | Q4 2027 (passes)<br>Q2 2026 (DiscoverEU)<br>Q2 2026 (Youth card) |
| <b>Key Direction 2: ARTISTS AND PEOPLE</b>                    |  |  |
| 7.  | Propose an EU Artists Charter in consultation with social partners and stakeholders.   | Q2 2027  |
| 8.  | Establish a Youth Cultural Ambassadors network to discuss culture policy matters.  | starting 2026  |
| 9.  | Present EU guidelines on culture, health and well-being.   | 2028   |
| <b>Key Direction 3: COMPETITIVENESS, RESILIENCE, COHESION</b> |  |  |
| 10.   | Present an AI strategy for cultural and creative sectors.  | Q1 2027  |
| 11.   | Develop the Common European Data Space for Cultural Heritage, in the context of the forthcoming deployment strategy 2025-2030 for the data space.  | as from Q4 2025  |
| 12.   | Strengthen the European Heritage Label and the European Capitals of Culture post-2033.   | Q2 2026  |
| 13.   | Adopt a Communication and a proposal for a Council Recommendation on the future of the New European Bauhaus (NEB), that harness the transformative power of arts and culture for creativity and innovation.  | Q4 2025  |
| 14.   | Launch a new European R&I Partnership for Resilient Cultural Heritage.   | Q2 2026  |
| <b>Key Direction 4: INTERNATIONAL</b>                         |  |  |
| 15.   | Together with the HRVP, update the EU Strategy on international cultural relations.  | Q4 2027  |
| 16.   | Together with the HRVP, leverage the Team Europe approach for culture to encourage the pooling of EU and Member States resources in culture and cultural heritage.   | Ongoing  |
| 17.   | Launch a new phase of the EU4Culture Programme in the Eastern Neighbourhood  | Q4 2025  |

| No                 | Action   | Timeline                            |
|--------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| 18.                | Launch a Euro-Med initiative for culture, sport and tourism in the context of the Pact for the Mediterranean   | Q1 2026                             |
| <b>INVESTMENTS</b> |  |                                     |
| 19.                | Simplify access to EU funding for culture and update the CulturEU funding guide.   | ongoing (CE)<br>Q4 2028 (CultureEU) |
| 20.                | Develop EU guidelines on strategic investment in culture, and explore innovative investment tools to attract private capital, including philanthropy, in cooperation with relevant financial institutions. | Q4 2028                             |