European Commission

Research and Innovation

R&I Facts & Figures:

CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

July 2026



Introduction

Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs)[1] are an important component of the EU Single Market, underpinning its productivity and competitiveness. CCIs are among the industrial ecosystems that attract the highest share of digital tech startups, notably AI-based and Big Data-based tech.[2] Additionally, the CCIs are a crucial job creator, especially for young people[3]. However, due to a high share of freelancers and microenterprises, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in this industry are smaller than in other sectors. The CCI market is also fragmented along linguistic lines, hindering the circulation of cultural goods. These characteristics underpin the need to support Research and Innovation (R&I) in the creative field and cross-border collaboration, enabling the emergence of EU-wide CCI innovation ecosystems through concrete projects and partnerships.

Horizon Europe Framework Programme 2021-2027 → **Cluster 2** Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society → Approx. **€M 715** dedicated to **CCIs**

Other parts of Horizon Europe, including Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, the European Research Council, the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, and the New European Bauhaus Facility also fund R&I projects related to CCIs.

Cluster 2 aims to unlock the full potential of CCIs as drivers of competitiveness and creative, sustainable innovation, as well as to foster a European sense of belonging. It also supports the role of CCIs in boosting Europe's appeal both to international stakeholders and global markets, while simultaneously promoting its values internationally.



[1] CCIs encompass a wide variety of sub-sectors: architecture, archives, libraries and museums, artistic crafts, audiovisual (including film, television, video games and multimedia), tangible and intangible cultural heritage, design (including fashion design), festivals, music, literature, performing arts (including theatre and dance), books and publishing, radio, and visual arts.

[2] First annual report on key findings from the European Monitor of Industrial Ecosystems (EMI) accompanying the document "The 2024 Annual Single Market and Competitiveness Report"

[3] Culture statistics - cultural employment

Research and Innovation in Cultural and Creative Industries under Horizon Europe Cluster 2: Key facts and features

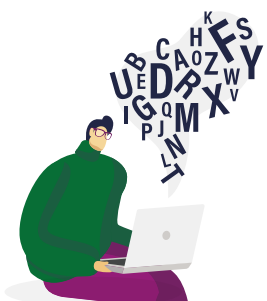


The **projects**. In the period 2021-2025, a total of 130 collaborative R&I projects were selected for funding, amounting to a total net EU contribution of close to **€ 521,5 million**, and representing an average of € 4 million per project. During the last two years of Horizon Europe, close to an additional € 200 million are foreseen to be invested in CCI-related R&I, leading to an expected total of 176 projects being financed in the 2021-2027 period.

The **themes** show **a balanced distribution across creative, cultural and heritage policy objectives and fields.** From the over 100 projects on-going to date, more than half focus on creativity-driven innovation based on digital and new technologies, as well as enabling a clean transition for and through the CCIs.



Source: Elaboration based on Horizon dashboard – Projects self-selected keywords, Net EU contribution (2021-2024 WPs)



The **over 1100 beneficiaries** are education establishments (31.4%), enterprises (20.9%) research organisations (16.9%) and public bodies (9.2%). Civil society organisations and other types of beneficiaries amount to the remaining 21.5%.



Why does Research and Innovation in Cultural and Creative Industries matter?

1 - Boosting competitiveness in and through CCIs

CCIs are knowledge-intensive organisations, leaders in technological adoption and at the forefront of developing new technologies, notably in the digital field[4]. With 2.1 million companies in the EU[5], CCIs are the driving force of the creative economy and show above-average growth and job creation[6].

R&I in this field strengthens the innovative power and growth of the creative economy, including of the audiovisual sector, the videogames industry, and crafts, among others, playing a vital role in Europe's competitiveness, and generating creative jobs.

Projects investigating **new business models and their digital transformation**, empowering creators and small enterprises to build **resilient, fair, and forward-looking cultural ecosystems** across Europe.	Music360, REBOOT, Tracks4Crafts,
Video games are experiencing rapid growth within the CCIs ecosystem, developing cutting-edge **digital technologies and innovative business models**.	GAME-ER, i-Game and GAMEHEARTS contribute to a world-leading European video game innovation system GREAT, EPIC-WE or LoGaCulture explore the interplay between games and culture in shaping our societies
Cultural tourism stimulates local economies and creates jobs and opportunities for small businesses, revitalises regions, and safeguards cultural traditions. Innovation and sustainability are also promoted by fostering socio-economic development in rural areas through cultural tourism. Around 40% of European tourism is driven by culture.	TOURAL, SECreTour, CROCUS and CULTURALITY

In order to **operationalise research findings** and **mobilise stakeholders** to achieve transformational change, projects such as ekip reinforce a **culture and creativity driven innovation ecosystem**.
The competitiveness challenge in the sector is further addressed by the **European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) on Culture and Creativity**.

Thus, through the contribution of Horizon Europe, a strong creativity driven innovation ecosystem is being established.



[4] European monitor of Industrial Ecosystems (2024)

[5] EU had over 2 million cultural enterprises in 2022 - News articles - Eurostat

[6] Cultural and creative sectors - Culture and Creativity



2 - Leveraging Cultural and Creative Industries for a clean transition

CCIs can be true drivers of environmental action, by reducing their own impact through sustainable business models, technologies and value chains, as well as by promoting societal change through new narratives and ideas.

Projects exploring how craftspeople, videogames, fashion, video-on-demand and other CCI actors can transform their own practices, value chains and infrastructures, while **engaging communities in shifting towards low-carbon, less resource intensive and fairer ways of living**.	CRAFT-IT4SD, STRATEGIES, Just Fashion, SIMIACCI, EMCcInno, StreamSCAPES
Project experimenting with **arts-led ways of tackling the climate crisis**, working in co-agency with local communities and testing innovative business models for climate-engaged cultural work.	PACESETTERS
Project where artists are placed in a leading role fostering **art-driven technological innovation** to promote ecologically conscious and human-compatible digital technologies.	STARTS Ec(h)o
The **New European Bauhaus (NEB)** initiative brings together sustainability, inclusion, and aesthetics to transform living spaces and communities for a greener, fairer, and people-centred future. The NEB vision is realised by fostering new circular and participatory approaches, regenerating heritage sites, and connecting creativity with sustainable urban transformation and the European Green Deal's goals.	PALIMPSEST, HERITACT, make-a-thek, CONVIVIUM, STARTUP or Art of Darkness

3 - Innovative solutions for the preservation of Europe's Cultural Heritage

R&I is needed to face the challenge of preserving cultural heritage, while addressing threats like environmental deterioration. A new **European Partnership for Resilient Cultural Heritage** aims to mitigate impacts from climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss, while considering cultural heritage as part of the solution for adaptation and mitigation. The partnership will foster international research collaborations via transnational calls, support innovation in heritage preservation, and integration of cultural heritage into broader climate change adaptation policies.

Cultural goods embody immense societal and economic value. This puts them at **risk of trafficking**, which has a devastating impact, especially in times of **conflict and crises**. Projects are supporting innovative solutions to address **trafficking in cultural goods**, facilitating the detection and identification of cultural goods, fostering international cooperation and strengthening expert networks and the advanced use of AI and digital technologies to counter this crime.	AURORA, ENIGMA, ANCHISE, and RITHMS

The **European Research Infrastructure for Heritage Science (E-RIHS)** focuses on enhancing the understanding, care, and sustainable use of heritage. E-RIHS fosters a deeper comprehension of the origins of heritage and its significance, material change and degradation mechanisms, supporting the development and testing of materials and tools for better conservation and interpretation.



4 - Digital shift in the Cultural and Creative Industries and increasing access to culture

The **European Collaborative Cloud for Cultural Heritage** is a unique framework and **flagship project, funded with € 110 million**, enabling **transdisciplinary collaboration among cultural heritage researchers and other professionals**. It provides advanced tools for digitising artefacts and studying artworks, enhancing preservation, conservation, and restoration efforts, among others, and will enable new scientific breakthroughs in these fields. This initiative also offers new **opportunities for smaller museums and cultural institutions** to advance digitisation and collaborate on joint projects within a secure and highly professional workspace, improving access to and sharing of Europe's cultural content.

The project ECHOES is responsible for the main **Cloud infrastructure**, while 13 projects, such as AUTOMATA, TEXTaiLES and HERITALISE, develop **advanced technological tools** adapted to the Cloud users. It is expected that at the end of the funding period up to 20 projects developing a range of tools and use cases will be supported.

Horizon Europe supports the **digital transition of the CCIs** through a number of projects, focusing on innovative uses of digital technologies for cultural heritage.	SHIFT, MuseIT, PREMIERE, MEMENTOES, MEMORISE or PERCEIVE
Projects dedicated to **deploying digital technologies** help boost the competitiveness of Europe's creative industry.	HAMLET, EXCENTRIC, ELLIE and AMPLIFY
The cultural ecosystem and global cultural markets are experiencing a profound transformation due to the **digital shift** and, in particular, widespread uses of **AI technologies**. R&I becomes crucial to developing fair and adapted answers for the sector; that is, new solutions, infrastructure and norms that reinforce human creativity rather than replacing it.	REEVALUATE, IMPULSE and DIGICHer

5 - Fostering a fair and inclusive society

There is an **increasing integration** of culture and creativity across Horizon Europe, as a primary component to deliver **solutions to complex societal challenges**, for example in the European Research Council (ERC) projects or in the Widening Participation and Spreading Excellence actions (WIDERA).

To tackle the **key societal challenges** of the future, CCIs emerge as key levers for supporting people and strengthening the resilience and cohesion of our societies, by **reinforcing shared values, meaning, and a sense of belonging**. In the current geopolitical landscape, EU culture's role in **combating division and supporting European democracies** is ever more important. R&I initiatives in this domain also explore the role of CCIs and cultural spaces for democratic participation and political expression.	Democracy in Action, DELIAH and Larpocracy.

Lastly, a growing body of research shows that participation in cultural activities across the life course leads to better **health and increased well-being**. **Several Horizon Europe R&I projects** will support this work.

Further information::	Research and innovation for cultural heritage and cultural and creative industries Horizon Dashboard: R&I Projects - Key Figures
Funding opportunities:	Horizon Europe Cluster 2 / Funding Guide - Culture and Creativity / EU Funding & Tenders Portal



Publications Office of the European Union

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2026
© European Union, 2026

Unless otherwise noted, the reuse of this document is authorised under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) licence (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). This means that reuse is allowed, provided appropriate credit is given and any changes are indicated.

The EU does not own the copyright in relation to the following elements: © ivector #235536634, #249868181, #251163013, #266009682, #273480523, #362422833, #241215668, #244690530, #245719946, #251163053, #252508849, © Oksana #224383683, © shooarts #121467308. Source: Stock.Adobe.com

PDF ISBN 978-92-68-33074-6 doi:10.2777/6632547 KI-01-25-216-EN-N