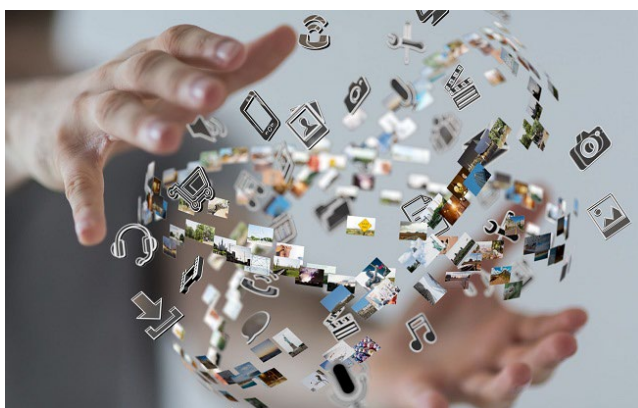# Research for CULT Committee –

EU funding programmes 2021-2027 in culture, media, education, youth and sports: first lessons, challenges and future perspectives: Creative Europe

The Creative Europe programme 2021-2027 has – like its predecessor – three strands: media[1], culture and cross-sectoral. The culture strand is managed by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC); the media strand, which covers the audiovisual sector with its increasingly strong affinity with the digital economy, is managed by the Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CNECT); and the cross-sectoral strand is managed jointly by the two DGs.

The present document is the executive summary of the study on EU funding programmes 2021-2027 in culture, media, education, youth and sports: first lessons, challenges and future perspectives: Creative Europe. The full study, which is available in English can be downloaded at: https://bit.ly/3EsiZNt

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[1] The denomination MEDIA (in capital letters) comes from the previous programmes and has been retained, which differentiates it from news media, but it is also sometimes written as Media.

EN

Compared to the previous programming period, the Creative Europe programme 2021-2027 comprises some specific features:

- The allocated programme budget has been significantly increased;

- New measures have been introduced, such as the MediaInvest platform, together with a simplification of the financial and administrative rules;

- The previous focus areas of economic growth in the Creative Europe programme 2014-2020 have been replaced with new targets emphasising social cohesion, inclusion, gender equality and the European Green Deal; and

- More attention has been given to cross-border activities, mobility and innovation.

Since the European Commission Communication, 'A New European Agenda for Culture', of 22 May 2018, there has been an intention to set out additional objectives for the cultural and creative sectors that formed part of the Creative Europe programme 2021-2027. The aims were to capitalise on the power of culture and cultural diversity to enhance social cohesion and societal well-being. In doing so, the process of fostering the cross-border dimension of cultural and creative sectors and their capacity to encourage culture-based creativity in education and innovation is encouraged. At the same time, it should strengthen international cultural relations.

The budget allocation for the first years of the programme implementation shows a frontloading of the expenditure to help the sector recover from the impact of COVID-19 pandemic that influenced the subjects of calls for proposals and the project implementation procedures.

Since the beginning of the programme a total of 69 calls for proposals have been published. The first three years of implementation have been affected by many external factors that influenced its development. A close scrutiny of the annual work programmes reveals the effects of particular social and political situations on the programme implementation.

The initial implementation phase of the Creative Europe programme appears to have achieved an acceptable level of overall effectiveness. According to the Tenders & Funding portal, the Creative Europe programme to date has funded 1,722 projects. The performance result aligns with the observations made during the transitional year of programme implementation in 2021, as it was the first year of the programme 2021-2027. Indeed, the phasing-in procedures required for making the programme operational took some time and slowed down the implementation process. In comparison, the number of projects funded under calls published in 2022 indicates that the programme is now fully operational. The overall number of projects will in any case be considerable, probably due to the frontloading of the budget in the first two years.

Apart from promoting the uptake of digital innovative solutions within the creative and cultural sector, the Creative Europe programme 2021-2027 adopted new digital tools to streamline the application process for funding and the management of approved project. For grants management, it adopted the eGrant system, which is a fully paperless and interactive tool, with electronic signatures and correspondence that will facilitate and speed up the administrative processes of the grant management. Wider stakeholders were provided with guidance on how to use this new tool.

A key strength of the current programme is the general budget allocation for 2021-2027, which constitutes an increase of 68% in comparison to the programme 2014-2020. This increase has been well received by stakeholders. However, further allocations are needed to strengthen the cultural strand within the programme.

Another identified programme strength is that the transparency on the funding decision and the fairness of the evaluation process are perceived as high.

The Green Deal, digital transformation and gender equality as new focus aims of the programme implementation could be better accounted for during the evaluation phase of applications submitted to the programme.

This study also concludes that many individuals and small organisations greatly rely on support when submitting project proposals. Related to the grant application process, there is also wide recognition that the IT tools used for Creative Europe applications need to be improved.

The explicit recommendations put forward by this study are:

Recommendation 1: National agencies, EACEA and the European Commission may consider organising more frequent Q&As before launching *specific call for proposals* in order to provide prospective applicants with more support and information.

Recommendation 2: National agencies, EACEA and the European Commission may consider organising more frequent Q&As in *other phases of the programme implementation,* such as before introducing new initiatives, examples of successful funding or focused priority elements to be expected in the forthcoming calls.

Recommendation 3: National agencies, EACEA and the European Commission may wish to consider implementing wider support services for individuals and small and medium sized applicant organisations for submitting applications under the Creative Europe programme.

Recommendation 4: EACEA and the European Commission may wish to ensure better clarity with regards to the timetable of the calls for proposals, in particular to mitigate for the low success rates in the culture strand and cross-sectoral strand in the first years of the programme.

Recommendation 5: EACEA and the European Commission may wish to consider assessing whether more support is needed to ensure inclusiveness in the culture strand, specifically in the books, music and architecture sectors, and to ensure that countries with small capacities in the media strand are not left behind.

Recommendation 6: National agencies, EACEA and the European Commission may consider further addressing the impact of the UK's departure from the EU, such as a lack of possibilities for partnership support or examining other informal supportive forms of cooperation between EU Member States and UK organisations.

Recommendation 7: National agencies, EACEA and the European Commission may consider addressing the significant need for additional support for combating economic impacts, such as the rise in energy prices and inflation. This could include specific mitigations against inflation increases in the Member States.

Recommendation 8: EACEA and the European Commission may consider making improvements to the IT tool used for Creative Europe applications in particular to ensure that the system is appropriate for the types of organisations that apply to Creative Europe.

Recommendation 9: EACEA and the European Commission may make available at six-monthly intervals reports on the number of calls, success rate, budgeting expenditure, number of applicants, geographical diversity, novelties in implementing greening and social inclusion criteria, and consider upgrading the Funding & Tender opportunities and Creative Europe portals to allow for more specific and advanced searches, including downloading the available data in an easy to handle database.

Recommendation 10: The European Commission may consider adopting a two-year work programme for Creative Europe, instead of annual work programme, to achieve a greater consistency in project planning and management.

Further information

This executive summary is available in the following languages: English, French, German, Italian and Spanish. The study, which is available in English, and the summaries can be downloaded at: https://bit.ly/3EsiZNt

More information on Policy Department research for CULT: https://research4committees.blog/cult/

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