

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

Creative Europe



RESEARCH FOR CULT COMMITTEE

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Abstract

This study presents an analysis of the implementation of the Creative Europe programme 2021-2027, with a specific focus on cultural diversity, innovation and European cohesion. The paper examines the transition from previous economic growth-centric approach to new objectives encompassing social cohesion, inclusion, gender equality and the potential of green industry. The paper further evaluates the programme's strengths and weaknesses, and provides actionable recommendations for improvement.

This document was requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education.

AUTHORS

VVA Brussels: Kristina BALENOVIĆ, Malin CARLBERG, and Laura TODARO

Research administrator: Katarzyna Anna ISKRA

Project, publication and communication assistance: Anna DEMBEK, Kinga OSTAŃSKA, Stéphanie DUPONT, Olivier RENARD (trainee)

Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, European Parliament

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ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

To contact the Policy Department or to subscribe to updates on our work for the CULT Committee please write to: Poldep-cohesion@ep.europa.eu

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CoE	Council of Europe
CULT	Culture and Education Committee
DG CNECT	Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology
DG EAC	Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
EEA	European Economic Area
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EU	European Union
FLIP	Finance, Learning, Innovation and Intellectual Property Rights
ICOM	International Council of Museums
MAAP	Media and Audiovisual Action Plan
NA	National Agency
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Creative Europe programme 2021-2027 has – like its predecessor – three strands: media¹, 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.

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

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.

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.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Creative Europe programme provides support to Europe's creative and media sector. It also contributes to the cultural diversity management within the EU by promoting this diversity and by building a shared Europe from the bottom up.² Therefore, cultural promotion has the potential to enhance core European values and to promote integration across Europe.

This study presents an analysis of the implementation of the Creative Europe programme 2021-2027. It was produced as part of the research project 'EU funding programmes 2021-2027 in culture, media, education, youth and sports: first lessons, challenges and future perspectives'.

This study is structured as follows: Section 2 provides a descriptive overview of the programme design and background; Section 3 is focused on the early implementation of the Creative Europe programme elements, including a description of some of the barriers identified; Section 4 discusses repercussions of external factors; Section 5 provides an early analysis of some of the strengths and weaknesses of the programme; and Section 6 presents the recommendations.

Annex 1 lists the 37 pan-European networks of culture and creative organisations. Annex 2 presents the study's survey³ results in full.

² Dâmaso, M. and Murray A., 2021, *The EU's Dualistic Regime of Cultural Diversity Management The Concept of Culture in the Creative Europe Programme (2014–2019; 2021–2027) and in the Strategy for International Cultural Relations (2016–)*, Journal of Cultural Management and Cultural Policy, 2021/1, p. 153-184, available at: <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.14361/zkmm-2021-0108/html>;

³ Data was collected for this study through an online survey which targeted national agencies and the other stakeholders, including beneficiaries of Creative Europe grants. The survey received a total of 266 responses.

2. PROGRAMME BACKGROUND

KEY FINDINGS

- The Creative Europe programme has a dual general objective. It supports EU culture, and industrial competitiveness alike.
- Creative Europe 2021-2027, like its predecessor, has three strands: media, culture and cross-sectoral.
- Compared to previous programming period, the Creative Europe programme 2021-2027 presents some specific features. For instance, the allocated programme budget has been significantly increased.
- 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.
- More attention is being given to cross-border activities, mobility and innovation in this programme period.
- Efforts are also being made to ensure that small stakeholders and individuals have improved access to funding.

2.1. Creative Europe structure and main features

In line with Article 2(1) of Regulation (EU) 2021/818 establishing the Creative Europe programme for the period 2021-2027 (hereinafter: Creative Europe Regulation (EU) 2021/818): the term of 'cultural and creative sectors' refers to all sectors whose activities are based on cultural values and artistic and other individual or collective creative expressions, whether those activities are market or non-market-oriented, whatever the type of structure that carries them out and irrespective of how that structure is financed.

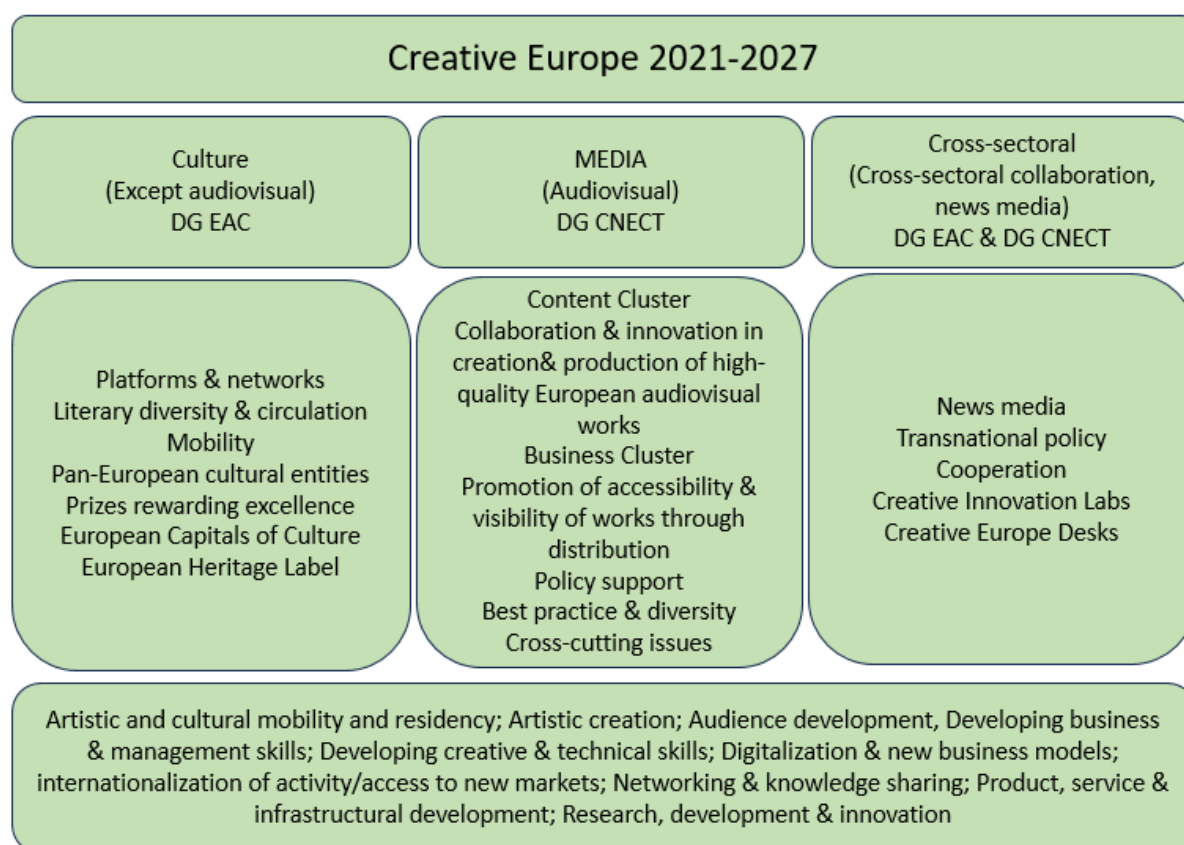
Activities include development, creation, production, dissemination and preservation of goods and services which embody cultural, artistic or other creative expressions, as well as related functions, such as education or management. Many of these abovementioned sectors have the potential to generate innovation and bring new jobs, in particular from the capacity of intellectual property. These sectors include *inter alia* 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.⁴

⁴ 2023 Annual Work Programme for the implementation of the Creative Europe Programme, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-06/2023-creative-europe-annual-work-programme-C%282023%293227.pdf>, p. 6, footnote 1.

Creative Europe 2021-2027, like its predecessor, has three strands: media⁵, culture and cross-sectoral. The culture strand is managed by the 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 Creative Europe Committee supports the work of all three strands.⁶

The structure of the programme is illustrated schematically in Figure 1, which also illustrates that the types of action carried out are essentially common in type to all three strands, although there are very specific types of action for each strand as shown in Figure 2, Figure 3 and Figure 4.

Figure 1: Structure of Creative Europe, 2021-2027



Source: [Creative Europe Regulation \(EU\) 2021/818](#) and Creative Europe Programme Statement⁷

The Creative Europe programme has a dual general objective. It supports EU culture, being in line of the TFEU⁸ aim to contribute to the ‘flowering of the cultures of the EU’, and it enhances industrial competitiveness in line with Article 173⁹. Culture is an area of clear Member State competence, even if

⁵ 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.

⁶ [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/818 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing the Creative Europe Programme \(2021 to 2027\) and repealing Regulation \(EU\) No 1295/2013](#)

⁷ https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-06/ps_db2023_creative_europe_h2.pdf

⁸ [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#).

⁹ [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#).

cooperation has been growing over the past two decades. The open method of coordination approach is used to decide on priorities and roles, and exchange good practices.¹⁰ Since culture and creativity contribute to the Single Market, these sectors are one of 14 industrial ecosystems within the EU's Industrial Strategy.¹¹

The general objectives are to:

- a) Safeguard, develop and promote European cultural and linguistic diversity and heritage; and
- b) Increase the competitiveness and the economic potential of the cultural and creative sectors, in particular the audiovisual sector.¹²

The cross-cutting specific objectives aim to:

- a) Enhance artistic and cultural cooperation at the European level in order to support the creation of European works and strengthen the economic, social and external dimension of and innovation and mobility in Europe's cultural and creative sectors;
- b) Promote competitiveness, scalability, cooperation, innovation and sustainability, including through mobility, in the European audiovisual sector; and
- c) Promote policy cooperation and innovative actions supporting all strands of the programme and to promote a diverse, independent and pluralistic media environment, and media literacy, thereby fostering freedom of artistic expression, intercultural dialogue and social inclusion.¹³

The actions that the programme funds are primarily transnational in character, involve cross-border cooperation, including through mobility of organisations and those working in the cultural and creative sectors, achieve economies of scale based on the concept that this will leverage additional funds, and provide a more level playing field in the audiovisual sector, in particular by improving the position of countries with a lower audiovisual capacity. Specific incentives are to be offered to promote inclusion and diversity, and to foster gender equality.¹⁴

Creative Europe 2021-2027 will fund several activities for the first time, as is explained in more detail subsequently, but a major activity has been moved, namely the **Culture and Creative Sector Guarantee Facility**. This type of funding has been subsumed into funding for culture and creativity, especially SMEs, provided by Invest EU through the European Investment Fund. However, a blended equity financing facility is being set up. Known as **MediaInvest**, it will be co-financed by the Creative Europe programme, the European Investment Fund and private investors to provide equity for audiovisual companies in their start-up, growth and transfer phases.

2.1.1. Priorities and actions by strand

Each strand has priorities and specific action types, and, in the case of culture, predefined sectors, which are illustrated in Figure 2.

¹⁰ [Cultural policy cooperation at the EU level](#).

¹¹ [European industrial strategy](#).

¹² 2022 Annual Work Programme for the implementation of the Creative Europe Programme, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/document/2022-annual-work-programme-creative-europe-programme>, p. 7.

¹³ [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/818 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing the Creative Europe Programme \(2021 to 2027\) and repealing Regulation \(EU\) No 1295/2013](#), Article 3.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, Articles 4 & 5.

a. Culture strand

The culture strand provides grants for¹⁵:

- Four-year **cooperation projects**: small-scale, medium-scale or large-scale, with a minimum of three, five or 10 partners from three, five or 10 eligible countries respectively; the grants amount to EUR 200,000, EUR 1 million or EUR 2 million depending on the project size and meet 60%, 70% or 80% of the cost respectively;
- **European platforms** that foster creator and artist mobility and visibility, stimulate Europe-wide programming of cultural and artistic activities, by facilitating access to non-national European cultural works via international touring, events, exhibitions, festivals, etc., and contribute to audience development and provide visibility to Europe's values and different cultures;
- **37 pan-European Networks** of culture and creative organisations;
- **Translation** of literary works;
- **Culture Moves Europe**, cultural mobility for artists and cultural professionals in architecture, cultural heritage, design and fashion design, literary translation, music, performing arts and visual arts; and
- **Cultural entities** – such as orchestras – with a large geographical reach, whose aim is to offer training, professionalisation and performance opportunities for young, highly talented artists. The European Youth Orchestra is a likely candidate for this funding.

Figure 2: Culture strand – priorities, action types and sectors



¹⁵ Information on the culture strand is available here: <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/creative-europe-culture-strand>; *Creative Europe 2021-2027 Push Boundaries*, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/3986bb70-7358-11ec-9136-01aa75ed71a1>; *The CultureEU funding guide*; *EU Funding Opportunities for the Cultural and Creative Sectors 2021-2027*; <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/funding/cultureu-funding-guide/booklet> and the *Creative Europe Work Programmes 2021, 2022 and 2023*.

Source: [Creative Europe Regulation \(EU\) 2021/818](#)

The mobility grants and grants to culture entities are new features of Creative Europe 2021-2027 compared to the past.

The culture strand also funds a series of awards, including:

- The **European Heritage Label**, which was held by 60 sites as of end of 2021¹⁶
- The **Music Moves Europe Talent Awards** for young pop and contemporary music artists, which were awarded to five artists in 2023¹⁷
- The **European Heritage Awards** which are organised in partnership with Europa Nostra, and have been awarded to almost 600 sites in the past two decades¹⁸
- The **European Union Prize for Literature** which awards emerging authors, with 13 nominated in 2023¹⁹
- The **EU Prize for Contemporary Architecture** (Mies van der Rohe Award) and the Young Talent Architecture Award (YTAA)²⁰
- The **European Capitals of Culture** which in 2023 are Elefsina (Greece), Timișoara (Romania) and Veszprém (Hungary)²¹

Other activities under the culture strand include special provisions for co-operation with Ukraine and to support Ukrainian culture and artists, co-operation with the Council of Europe (CoE) and the International Council of Museums (ICOM), support for European Book Week and the Creative FLIP (Finance, Learning, Innovation and Intellectual Property Rights) project, and the creation of European Spaces of Culture (following up on a preparatory action (2018-2023), which the European Parliament proposed and DG EAC implemented).²²

b. Media strand

As shown in Figure 3, under the **media** strand, the programming of grant funding is categorised in clusters.²³

Content cluster: grants are available for co-development, slate development, mini-slate development, TV and online content, video games and immersive content development. Funding for 'slates' of a portfolio of three to five films, which do not have to be specified in advance are for more established companies. Mini-slates of two-to-three productions are for companies from low-capacity production countries, with a different level of funding available depending on in which of the two categories the country falls.²⁴

¹⁶ [European Heritage Label sites](#)

¹⁷ [MME Awards](#)

¹⁸ <https://www.europeanheritageawards.eu/facts-figures/>; includes 65 to the UK.

¹⁹ [European Union Prize for Literature](#)

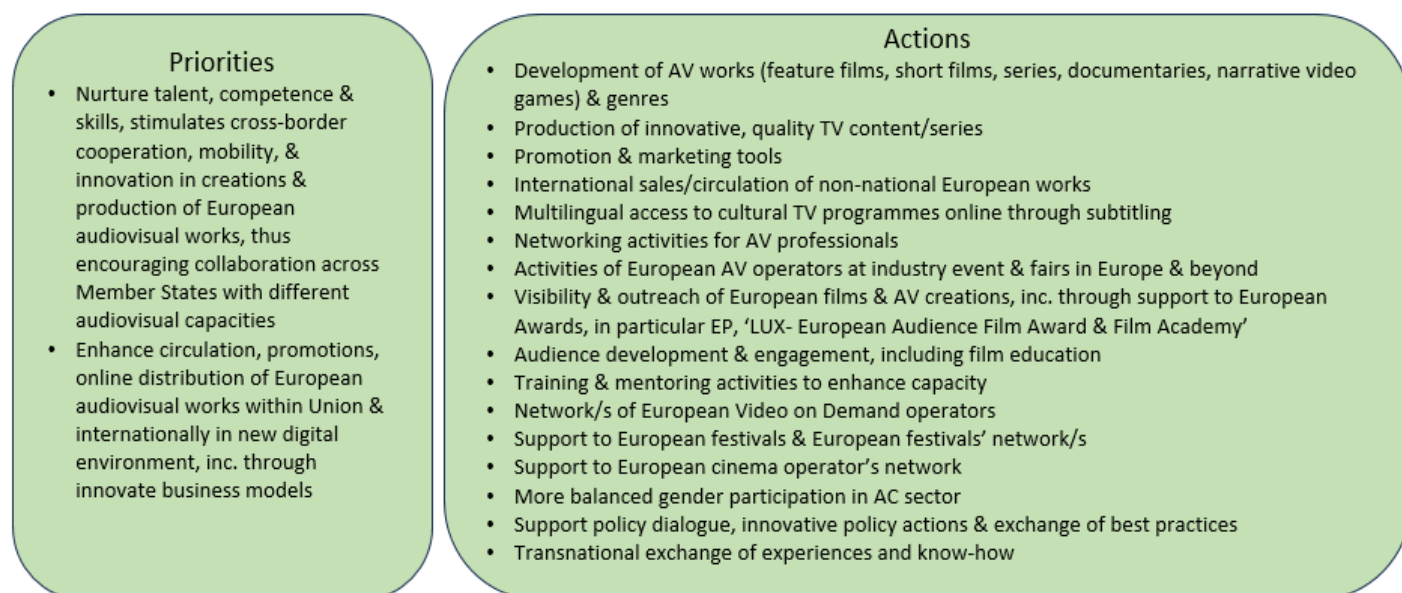
²⁰ <https://www.miesarch.com/>.

²¹ [European Capitals of Culture](#)

²² See in particular the 2023 Annual Work Programme.

²³ Information in this section has been sourced from: https://www.eacea.ec.europa.eu/grants/2021-2027/creative-europe_en, *Creative Europe 2021-2027 Push Boundaries*, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/3986bb70-7358-11ec-9136-01aa75ed71a1>; *The CultureEU funding guide*; *EU Funding Opportunities for the Cultural and Creative Sectors 2021-2027*; <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/funding/cultureu-funding-guide/booklet> and the [Creative Europe Work Programmes 2021, 2022 and 2023](#).

²⁴ Group A: Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Poland, Portugal, Romania. Group B: Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Republic of Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Figure 3: Media strand – Priorities and action type

Source: [Creative Europe Regulation \(EU\) 2021/818](#)

The media programme does not fund the production of films, rather only the development stage – e.g. identifying locations and fine-tuning the script. TV series co-produced for linear and non-linear broadcasting are an exception. The funding is only available to independent European media – i.e. those which are not controlled by non-EU companies. Media-supported films regularly win prizes at international film festivals, including three films at the Berlinale in February 2023.²⁵

Business cluster: there are grants for:

- **Media talents and skills**, which aim to build capacity through training courses, boot-camp courses or mentoring;
- **Markets and networking**, which covers stands at international film fairs in the EU and around the world at which audiovisual professionals and companies can be present and increase their visibility without the cost of having their own stand – part of this activity is covered as part of the programme's **procurement**;
- **Film sales and distribution**, which meet part of the cost of promoting, selling or distributing European audiovisual works in countries where they would otherwise struggle to find an audience;
- **Innovative tools and business models**, which range from rising to the challenge of the Digital Transformation to greening of the industry;
- **MEDIA 360°**, which supports activities to boost cooperation and achieve economies of scale across the value chain, a new form of funding under the 2021-2027 programme.

²⁵ <https://creative-europe-desk.de/artikel/news/drei-preise-fuer-media-filme-bei-der-berlinale>

Audience cluster: there are grants for:

- A **network of European cinemas**, i.e. Europa Cinemas, a network of more than 3,000 screens in more than 700 cities in more than 40 countries;²⁶
- **European** audiovisual **festivals**, which show a high proportion of European works, with a separate new action promoting **networks of festivals** to pool strengths and resources;
- **European video-on-demand operators and networks** in order to build the capacity of the European industry to face the challenge of international streaming services;
- **Films on the Move**, which invests in the distribution and promotion of non-national films;
- **Subtitling of cultural content** in at least three languages, a new feature in the 2021-2027 programme. This will be in the form of a direct grant to **ARTE**, which has since 2014 been offering online content in four additional languages – English, Italian, Polish and Spanish – to French and German. ARTE has received funding from budget lines proposed by the European Parliament for pilot and preparatory projects.
- **Audience development and film education**, innovative audience development or cross-border initiatives.

Policy support

The media strand also fosters dialogue with the industry. In addition, it has for many years provided support to the CoE's European Audiovisual Observatory through membership fees and funding for studies and databases relevant to this strand.

Cross-cutting issues

- **Greening:** A structured cooperation forum is planned with industry and film/audiovisual funds to develop a carbon calculator²⁷.
- **Diversity:** Applicants for funding must provide evidence of having diversity and inclusivity strategies, and a statement of commitment to EU values.

c. Cross-sectoral strand

Grants are available under the cross-sectoral strand for three types of activity:

Creative innovation labs, which are a completely new activity. This funding is designed to incentivise the development and testing of innovative tools, models and methodologies that can apply to the audiovisual sector and at least one other creative or cultural sector. The solution does not need to be immediately applicable but must be replicable in these sectors. In the first call for proposals in 2021, there were no restrictions on topics. Thematic priorities were introduced in the 2022 call: greening and innovative education tools to tackle relevant societal topics such as disinformation.

News media, media literacy, pluralism and media freedom, and activities to help the sector adjust to the structural changes it faces. As the proposal for the Media Freedom Act²⁸ points out, an independent media is critical to a functioning democracy, while digital technologies have created threats and opportunities. More information is, and can be, made available, but this has increased competition while bringing with it the challenges of disinformation and investment challenges to keep

²⁶ <https://www.europa-cinemas.org/en>

²⁷ The awarded project will develop a measurement methodology and set up an online tool with common approach to measure the CO2 emissions of audiovisual productions, based on common data and calculation rules. The calculator will be available free of charge for users across the EU. It is expected to become fully operational by 2027.

²⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_5504

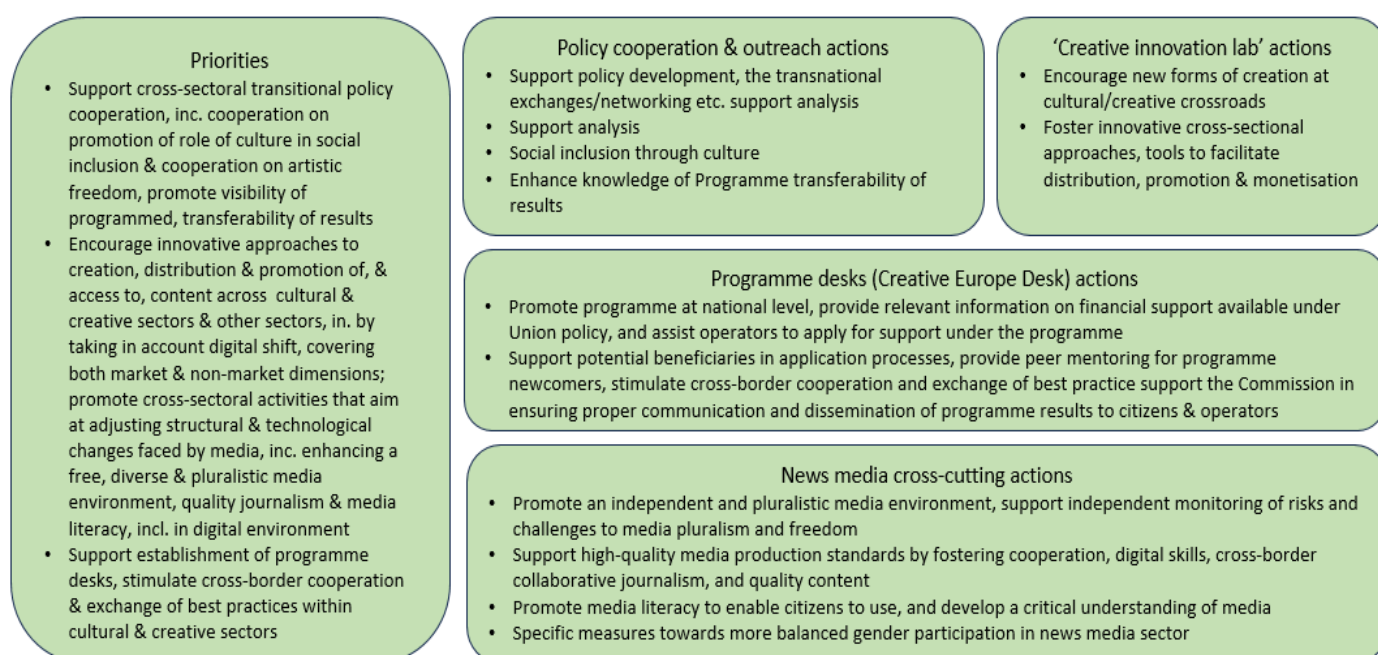
up with the rate of change. Meanwhile, regulation has not caught up, and the Single Market remains fragmented.

DG CNECT has funded a number of preparatory and pilot media and journalism initiatives since 2014, and in particular since 2018. Under the current programme, it has become a fully-fledged activity, with grants for journalism partnerships, for example, to address local and regional news 'deserts', knowledge-sharing on media literacy, rapid response to violations of press and media freedom, support for self-regulation and ethical codes, and monitoring press and media freedom.

Creative Europe Desks (see Figure 4 below).

Policy cooperation and outreach: This includes funding for two conferences on culture and media each year and a news media dialogue. There have been three so far.²⁹

Figure 4: Cross-sectoral strands– priorities and action types



Source: [Creative Europe Regulation \(EU\) 2021/818](#)

²⁹ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/events/european-news-media-forum-innovations-news-media-sector>

Third countries, including EFTA/EEA countries and acceding, candidate, potential candidate countries, also participate in most strands of the Creative Europe programme. The table below provides an overview of the current status of their participation.

Table 1: Participation by third countries

Country group	Country	Culture	Media	Cross-sectoral	As of ³⁰
EFTA/EEA	Iceland	Yes	Yes	Yes	01.01.2021
EFTA/EEA	Liechtenstein	Yes	Yes	Yes	01.01.2021
EFTA/EEA	Norway	Yes	Yes	Yes	01.01.2021
Acceding/candidate/potential candidate	Albania	Yes	Yes	Yes	01.01.2021
Acceding/candidate/potential candidate	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Yes	Yes	Yes	01.01.2021
Acceding/candidate/potential candidate	Kosovo ³¹	Yes	No	Partial ³²	01.01.2021
Acceding/candidate/potential candidate	Montenegro	Yes	Yes	Yes	01.01.2021
Acceding/candidate/potential candidate	North Macedonia	Yes	Yes	Yes	01.01.2021
Acceding/candidate/potential candidate	Serbia	Yes	Yes	Yes	01.01.2021
Acceding/candidate/potential candidate	Turkey	Under negotiation	No	Partial under negotiation ³³	
European Neighbourhood	Armenia	Yes	No	Partial ³⁴	01.01.2021
European Neighbourhood	Georgia	Yes	Partial ³⁵	Yes	01.01.2021
European Neighbourhood	Tunisia	Yes	Partial ³⁶	Yes	01.01.2021
European Neighbourhood	Ukraine	Yes	Partial ³⁷	Yes	01.01.2021

Source: [DG EAC](#)

³⁰ All agreements were negotiated after that date but have been backdated.

³¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

³² Creative Europe Desks only.

³³ Creative Europe Desks only.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Talent & Skills, European Festivals and Festival networks; Audience development and Film education

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

2.2. Main differences of the 2021-2027 Creative Europe programme compared to the previous programme

In a paper from 2020, Ciancio uses the case of Creative Europe programme as a showroom between cultural participation, trust and policy perspectives in the EU. Written during the adoption process of the 2021-2027 EU multiannual financial framework, Ciancio concluded that “from our viewpoint... the culture sector is still not perceived as a strategic place for the implementation of a complex society”.³⁸

It could also be considered that the European identity could incorporate culture in the EU’s supranational governance. From this perspective, culture could be referred to as a key ingredient of the EU integration process as culture acts as a vehicle in creating a Europe of the people.³⁹ However, “coordinated cultural policy requires, first of all, clarity of goals from governments”⁴⁰, while “the multilevel design of the EU makes such coordination impossible”⁴¹. Regardless of the complexity for decision making in the EU, the common goals in the Creative Europe programme 2021-2027 have been agreed upon in the Regulation and the work programmes. They will be examined in this section.

Since the European Commission Communication, ‘A New European Agenda for Culture’, of 22 May 2018⁴², an aim has been 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.⁴³

While the previous programme for the period 2014-2020 was guided by the Europe 2020 agenda, focusing on economic growth and job creation, the current 2021-2027 programme has shifted in line with the European Green Deal and structural challenges regarding gender equality, social inclusion and a stronger international dimension.⁴⁴ Therefore, the Creative Europe Regulation highlights the power of culture to enhance social cohesion, social integration and intercultural dialogue in building bridges between culture and social sectors.⁴⁵

Following an analysis of the Creative Europe Regulation (EU) 2021/818 of the Creative Europe programme 2021-2027⁴⁶ and the Regulation (EU) 1295/2013 of the Creative Europe programme 2014-2020⁴⁷, some of the main differences that distinguish the ongoing programme from the previous one are highlighted below.

³⁸ Ciancio, Giuliana, 2020, *Cultural Policies in Europe: a Participatory Turn? Between cultural participation, trust and policy perspectives: the case of the Creative Europe program*, Éditions de l’Attribut, Toulouse, France, 2020, available at:

<https://www.ub.edu/cultural/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Cultural-Policies-in-Europe-a-Participatory-Turn-2020.pdf>

³⁹ Shore, Cris, 2006, “In uno plures” (?) *EU Cultural Policy and the Governance of Europe*, University of California, Cultural Analysis 5 (2006): 7-26

⁴⁰ Gray, Clive, 2009, *Managing Cultural Policy: Pitfalls and Prospects*, available at: <doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9299.2008.01748.

⁴¹ Dâmaso, M. and Murray A., 2021, *The EU’s Dualistic Regime of Cultural Diversity Management The Concept of Culture in the Creative Europe Programme (2014–2019; 2021–2027)*, available at: <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.14361/zkmm-2021-01>

⁴² A New European Agenda for Culture - SWD(2018) 267 Final, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/node/182>.

⁴³ *Regulation (EU) 2021/818 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing the Creative Europe Programme (2021 to 2027) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1295/2013.*

⁴⁴ <https://www.ietm.org/en/news/creative-europe-2021-2027-whats-new>

⁴⁵ *Regulation (EU) 2021/818 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing the Creative Europe Programme (2021 to 2027) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1295/2013, op.cit.*

⁴⁶ *Regulation (EU) 2021/818 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing the Creative Europe Programme (2021 to 2027) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1295/2013.*

⁴⁷ *Regulation (EU) 1295/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing the Creative Europe (2014 to 2020) and repealing Decisions No 1718/2006/EC, No 1855/2006/EC and No 1041/2009/EC, Official Journal of European Union of 20.12.2013, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R0818>*

The Creative Europe programme for the period 2021-2027 has a budget of EUR 2.44 billion, a significant increase on its predecessor's, the Creative Europe programme 2014-2020, with 68% increase.

The current programme 2021-2027 puts a stronger emphasis on EU added value that can be brought by projects aiming to foster transnational creation and collaboration, and on innovation. Therefore, it becomes one of the main criteria to guarantee the efficient allocation of funds from the general budget of the EU. In order to produce EU added value, project proposals need to complement Member States' activities.

The push towards major cooperation is aimed not only at providing EU added value but it is seen as a strategy that can produce many benefits in the cultural sector, in terms of increasing the quality of products and the possibility of letting them circulate across many Member States. This aspect proves to be particularly relevant for the audiovisual sector, which is the most significant sector in both the 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 programmes.

Another feature that distinguishes the Creative Europe programme 2021-2027 from the previous programme is that funding is available to a wider range of cultural actors, including smaller stakeholders that usually have a limited access to funding. The current programme foresees easier access to funding through higher co-financing rates especially for small-scale projects. The European Commission has implemented a number of measures aimed at simplifying the application process and easing the administrative burden, such as the use of the lump sum system of accounting.

Coherently with the aim of fostering collaboration and cooperation for providing EU added value and higher competitiveness, the Creative Europe programme 2021-2027 also stresses the importance of promoting mobility schemes for artists and professionals.

Finally, greater attention is put on the necessity of proposing actions that are able to respond to the specific needs of the different cultural sectors. The programme recognises each of the specific challenges with regards to both their internal functioning and their target groups. Section 1 of Annex 1 Description of the programme actions in Creative Europe Regulation (EU) 2021/818 identifies a series of sectorial actions that need to be undertaken in the fields of music, architecture and cultural heritage, book and publishing and other cultural sectors.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CREATIVE EUROPE PROGRAMME

KEY FINDINGS

- The policy aspects of the programme are implemented by DG EAC and DG CNECT. The European Education Audiovisual and Cultural Agency (EACEA) is responsible for calls for proposals for grants.
- The year 2021 was a transition year due to the necessity of transforming the programme's legal basis in operational terms. New measures have been introduced, such as the MedialInvest platform, and a simplification of the financial and administrative rules have taken place.
- The budget allocation for the first years of the programme implementation frontloaded expenditure to help the sector recover from the impact of COVID-19.
- Commitment to help the creative and cultural sector face the digital shift is a cross-cutting priority in all annual work programmes and programme strands.
- There are high levels of satisfaction with the budget and the financial management initiatives in the Creative Europe programme 2021-2027. However, stakeholders believe that certain programme actions/activities should receive a higher budget such as music, the Culture Moves Europe mobility scheme and cooperation projects.
- Despite the digitisation efforts at the proposal and grant management stage, there are some issues with the IT tools used by Creative Europe, mainly related to adopting a more user-friendly approach to the IT tools, especially with regards to the application process, and the reporting platform for grant management.
- Initial results from the 2021-2027 programme period indicate that progress has been made on inclusiveness, gender equality and social participation, however progress can be made to better integrate horizontal priorities.
- The initial implementation phase of the Creative Europe programme appears to have achieved an acceptable level of overall effectiveness. Within the culture strand the number of funded projects has been consistent, with 226 projects funded under calls published in 2021 and 214 project funded under calls published in 2022. The media strand saw an increase in the number of funded projects, with 456 funded under calls published in 2021 and 712 funded project under calls published in 2022. A similar 40% increase in the number of projects funded was observed under the cross-sectoral strand, rising from 47 in 2021 to 63 in 2022.

3.1. Launch phase

The policy aspects of the programme are implemented by DG EAC (for the culture strand) and DG CNECT (for the media strand and jointly with DG EAC in the case of cross-sectoral strand, but with DG CNECT leading on the news media segment).

The European Education Audiovisual and Cultural Agency (EACEA) is responsible for calls for proposals for grants (i.e. direct management). The Creative Europe desks provide information and assistance with applications. Specifically, EACEA is responsible in the area of culture for cross-cooperation projects, European networks, European platforms and literary translations; in calls for proposals in the media strand for content, business and audience projects, and in the cross-sectoral area for calls for proposals for creative innovation labs and news media projects.⁴⁸

The EACEA is also responsible for establishing project monitoring and evaluation requirements. Overarching programme indicators are set out in Annex 2 of the Creative Europe Regulation (EU) 2021/818.⁴⁹ These indicators and the milestones established by DG EAC (as the lead DG) are illustrated in the Table below. The data is collected either from the eGrants system for grant management, for information on the number of applications and for the number of successful applications, or from beneficiaries' final reports. Baselines have been set at zero and no data is so far available for 2021-2027.

Table 2 provides an overview of the indicators on which the Commission is to measure the implementation and effectiveness of the programme. They are a mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators. A few of the strand specific indicators also measure the participation of women in the programme.

Table 2: Creative Europe indicators as per the programme Regulation

Strand	Indicators
Common programme indicators	<p>Number and scale of transnational partnerships created with the support of the programme</p> <p>Country of origin of the beneficiary organisations</p> <p>Qualitative evidence of success stories in the artistic, business and technological innovation fields due to programme support</p>
Culture strand	<p>Number and scale of transnational partnerships created with the support of the programme</p> <p>Number of artists and operators in the cultural and creative sectors that have moved beyond national borders due to programme support including the country of origin and the proportion of women</p> <p>Number of people who have accessed European cultural and creative works supported by the programme, including works from countries other than their own</p> <p>Number of projects supported by the programme addressed to socially marginalised groups</p> <p>Number of projects supported by the programme involving organisations from third countries</p>
Media strand	<p>Number of people who have accessed European audiovisual works supported by the programme from countries other than their own</p>

⁴⁸ https://www.eacea.ec.europa.eu/grants/2021-2027/creative-europe_en

⁴⁹ Regulation (EU) 2021/818 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing the Creative Europe Programme (2021 to 2027) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1295/2013

	<p>Number of participants in learning activities supported by the programme who have assessed that they have improved their competences and increased their employability, indicating the proportion of women</p> <p>Number, budget and geographical origins of co-productions developed, created and distributed with the support of the programme and co-productions with partners from countries with different audiovisual capacities</p> <p>Number of audiovisual works in lesser-used languages developed, produced and distributed with the support of the programme</p> <p>Number of people reached by business-to-business promotional activities in major markets</p>
Cross-sectoral strand	<p>Number and scale of transnational partnerships formed</p> <p>Number of events or activities promoting the programme organised by the programme desks</p> <p>Number of participants in the 'creative innovation lab' action and cross-cutting actions that support the news media sector, indicating the proportion of women</p>

Source: [Creative Europe Regulation \(EU\) 2021/818](#)

3.2. Early Implementation

The year 2021 was also a transition year for Creative Europe since the challenge of the integration of the programme's legal basis into operational terms also needed to be met. This phase was particularly lengthy due to the many novelties that were introduced by the 2021 work programme, such as accounting for inclusiveness and sustainability measures and introducing completely new calls for proposals and new support measures of an innovative nature (MedialInvest). Due to the delay in the publication of the work programme, there was also a delay in publishing the 2021 calls for proposals.

Since the beginning of the programme 69 calls for proposals have been published. The total number of calls for proposals published in 2021 amounted to 21, while the number of calls for proposals published in 2022 totalled 46, which is more than the double the previous year (see Table 3 below). In the interpretation of data, it may be taken into account that the implementation of the 2021 calls for proposals presented new challenges and required additional work in light of the first roll-out of the eGrants system. In this regard, 2022 remained a transition year for Creative Europe. In 2023, the ambition is to reach the normal speed of programme implementation.

Table 3: Number of calls for proposals issued within the Creative Europe programme 2021-2027

	2021	2022	June 2023
Project Grant	12	19	0
Lump Sum	9	27	2
Total	21	46	2

Source: Authors elaboration on the basis of data from [DG EAC](#)

Table 3 above shows the type of action promoted by the calls published over the first three years. This data allows the introduction of the abovementioned novelties in the programme implementation measures to be observed. The proportion of the total calls that promoted **lump sum** type of action in 2021, instead of project grants, is quite high at 42.8%. In this way, it shows a positive attitude towards

the introduction of simplified procedures and innovations in the programme. This was more evident in 2022, when the share of calls for proposals adopting the lump sum formula increased to 58.7%. An emerging trend towards lump sum proposals is thus observed. Data are still required for evaluations for 2023.

3.2.1. Implementation by strand

Drawing on data collected from the Tenders & Funding portal⁵⁰, it is possible to observe the Creative Europe performance over the first three years⁵¹ divided by strand.

Table 4: Number of calls for proposals divided by strand within the Creative Europe programme 2021-2027

	2021	2022	June 2023	Total
Culture strand	7	12	1	19
Medial strand	12	25	1	39
Cross-sectoral strand	2	9	0	11
Total	21	46	2	69

Source: [DG EAC](#)

a. Culture strand

Under the culture strand (see Table 4), seven calls for proposals were published in 2021, 12 calls in 2022 and one call in 2023 (data updated on 6 June).

Therefore, the near doubling of calls between 2021 and 2022 confirms the starting point of 2021 as a transition year, with the implementation process slowed down to allow adaptation to ongoing changes.

It is relevant to note that in 2021 the European Platforms scheme, which was successfully introduced in the previous programme to promote emerging artists in Europe, was reinforced to help artists to reconnect with their audience after two years of pandemic-related restrictions.

In 2022, a total of 682 applications were received for European cooperation projects, of which 169 projects were selected, resulting in an overall selection rate of 26%. The number of applications received was up 45% on the 482 applications received in the previous year's call.

Translation and promotion of books and literary works included 45 projects in each of 2021 and 2022 (with 40 projects selected initially each time, and five placed on a reserve list). These projects encompassed the translation of 1,024 books written by 815 authors and translated by 651 translators. The books originated from 40 different languages and were translated into 26 target languages.

By March 2023, 159 grant agreements had been signed between the European Commission and the selected coordinating organisations. These agreements were finalised for 168 of the 169 projects selected. This illustrates the progress made in ensuring the implementation of the chosen projects and the commitment of the European Commission to support initiatives.

⁵⁰ Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/programmes/crea2027>.

⁵¹ Data are uncompleted given that 2023 is not concluded yet. Time of writing June 2023.

Some 46 eligible projects were shortlisted for funding in the 2022 call for literary translation, although one candidate later withdrew. The primary objective of this funding initiative is to facilitate the translation of 496 works authored by 417 individuals from 36 different source languages into 20 target languages.

Nevertheless, as reiterated by project managers from Sweden, funding could be more focused on artistic and innovative production instead of prizes and bureaucratic framework.⁵²

It is also worth noting that the absence of calls published in the first five months of 2023 suggests a slowdown in the implementation process of the Creative Europe programme, at least under the culture strand. This was mentioned during the CULT Committee meeting⁵³ where the EC explained that due to requirements to balance the annual budget for 2023 after an expenditure in previous years due to COVID-19 recovery frontload, the programming period was held back in the first months of 2023.

Under the culture strand the new call on the Support for European Heritage Label was published while the calls on Perform Europe and Music Moves Europe will be published in the second semester of 2023. The high interest in the calls was confirmed, with almost 700 proposals submitted in response to the 2022 call for Support to European Cooperation Projects.

b. Media strand

Under the media strands (see Table 4) 12 calls for proposals were published in 2021, 25 calls in 2022 and one call in 2023 (data updated on 6 June). It is therefore possible to observe the same trends as those identified for the culture strands, with the number of calls increased by almost 50% between 2021 and 2022.

The media strand is the strand which has issued the highest number of calls for proposals, aligned overall with the main objective of the Europe Creative programme of promoting the audiovisual sector.

On the whole, the number of proposals submitted under the 2022 media calls remains stable, with a high level of interest in the new and ambitious MEDIA 360 call. However, the situation is different for distribution actions: a high number of applications in the European film distribution call, but a lower number of applications for Films on the Move.

The calls for the media strand of the Creative Europe programme gained significant attention, with a total of 2,124 applicants expressing their interest during the period, 2021-2023 (including 1,195 in 2022). Among these applicants, the success rate for securing funding was 63% in 2021 and 69% in 2022. Even if the success rate remained quite high, there is still room for improvement in terms of support and clarity in applying to the Creative Europe programme in the audiovisual sector.

The slightly lower success rate observed in 2021 can be attributed to a couple of factors. First, the launch of the calls for proposals that year were delayed due to the late finalising of the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework. This longer gap between the calls may have impacted the overall competition and success rates. Second, the audiovisual sector was particularly in need of financial assistance in 2021 due to the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. The industry faced disruptions and uncertainties, and many audiovisual professionals sought funding support to sustain their projects and initiatives during this difficult period. This would have increased competition for grants.

⁵² Zillmer Dr. et al, 2023, *The early implementation of the 2021-2027 EU Programmes Erasmus+, Creative Europe, European Solidarity Corps and the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (Strand 3)*.

⁵³ European Parliament, CULT Committee 17 July 2023, Exchange of views with EC on the 2023 Annual Work Programmes (Erasmus+, Creative Europe, European Solidarity Corps and Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme), streaming available at: https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/webstreaming/cult-committee-meeting_20230717-1500-COMMITTEE-CULT

Overall, the high demand for the media strand of the Creative Europe programme, as evidenced by the large number of applicants, underlines the significance of the programme in supporting and nurturing the audiovisual sector. The programme continues to play a crucial role in providing vital funding and resources to empower the audiovisual community and foster its growth and resilience.

However, as outlined in the culture strand, there are some concerns regarding country specific challenges. Smaller Member States such as Estonia and Croatia have reported the specific challenges that prospective applicant organisations face in their countries. In particular, the Creative Europe programme does not offer optimal funding conditions and the selection criteria do not fully account for the institutions with limited capacity. They also need the support of the programme in order to further advance segments of their audiovisual sectors that have the potential to develop.⁵⁴

The Creative Europe programme should be equally accessible for all geographic areas. This would have beneficial effects on innovation and on the diversity of views and institutions covered.

c. Cross-sectoral strand

Under the cross-sectoral strand (see Table 4) two calls for proposals were published in 2021, nine calls in 2022 and no calls in 2023 (data updated on 6 June). This data shows significant investment in this strand, which added a new focus within its scope: journalism partnerships.

The first grant agreements were signed under the journalism partnerships call launched in 2021. The new calls on media literacy and media freedom and pluralism were also published during the reporting period. The calls attracted much interest from new applicants.⁵⁵

Indeed, the calls published in 2021 and 2022 garnered a total of 243 applications, requesting a total of EUR 210 million funding. Notably, in 2022 alone, the applications amounted to EUR 159 million. The success rates for these calls, particularly those aimed at the news media sector, were relatively low. Only 23% of applicants received a grant in 2021, increasing slightly to 24% in 2022. Given these lower success rates, the sector(s) that apply under this strand may benefit from increased guidance.

In 2022, the cross-sectoral strand introduced new calls for media literacy for the first time. Six grants were awarded for projects in this field, although one proposal was turned down due to budget limitations. Additionally, calls were made to defend media freedom and pluralism, resulting in two grants being awarded.

By the start of February 2022, the evaluation process for the second edition of journalism partnerships was near completion. The popularity of this call is particularly visible, with a total of 54 consortia submitting diverse projects for consideration. This marked a significant increase in comparison with the 30 applications received in 2021.

These developments underline the importance of the cross-sectoral strand in addressing critical areas such as media literacy, media freedom and journalism partnerships. The strong response from applicants shows a recognition of the programme calls potential to support and strengthen the European media landscape in these vital aspects.

⁵⁴ Zillmer Dr. et al, 2023, *The early implementation of the 2021-2027 EU Programmes Erasmus+, Creative Europe, European Solidarity Corps and the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (Strand 3)*.

⁵⁵ 2023 Annual Work Programme for the implementation of the Creative Europe Programme, available at:

<https://culture.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-06/2023-creative-europe-annual-work-programme-C%282023%293227.pdf>

3.3. Budget and resources

The budget allocated in the Creative Europe Regulation (EU) 2021/818 for the period 2021-2027 is shown in the Table 5 below. The table also indicates a 'top-up' at 2018 prices from fines raised by the European Commission. The budget allocated to the Creative Europe programme is stated in current prices and will be subject to inflation adjustments over time.

Table 5: Budget allocation 2021-2027

	in million EUR ⁵⁶	% of total	'Top-up'(*)
Culture	607.9	33	198.0
MEDIA	1 068.4	58	348.0
Cross-sectoral	165.8	9	54.0
Total	1 842.0	100	600.0

(*) at 2018 prices

Source: Programme Statement and own elaboration

The figures provided for the years 2021-2023 (as shown in Table 6), which also include minor contributions from the participating EFTA countries, are sourced from the annual work programmes. These amounts are indicative in nature. The use of funds in 2021 proved to be challenging due to the delayed adoption of the programme until May 2021. The figures illustrate, compared to the total amount available, a decision to frontload the expenditure to help the sector recover from the impact of COVID-19.⁵⁷

Table 6: Budget allocations in draft budgets 2021-2023 in EUR

	2021 Draft Budget	2022 Draft Budget	2023 Draft Budget
Culture	97,347,415	134,388,138	102,972,077
Media	172,609,161	226,053,216	180,808,719
Cross-sectoral	27,732,649	34,891,634	27,920,185
Total	297,689,225	395,332,989	311,700,980

Source: [2021, 2022, 2023 annual work programmes Creative Europe](#)

Further elaboration of specific details in different strands will be provided in subsequent subchapters.

3.3.1. Culture strand

The work programme 2021 allocated EUR 97,347,415 to the culture strand. This marked an impressive increase of nearly 30% compared to 2020⁵⁸. The additional budget was utilised to enhance existing support measures and introduce new initiatives.

⁵⁶ Rounded figures are used for easier comprehension.

⁵⁷ See [Updating the 2020 New Industrial Strategy: Building a stronger Single Market for Europe's recovery](#)

⁵⁸ 2021 Annual work programme for the implementation of the Creative Europe Programme, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/document/2021-annual-work-programme-for-the-implementation-of-the-creative-europe-programme>, p. 15.

According to the Creative Europe – Performance Report for year 2021⁵⁹, one type of project that benefited from the increased budget was cooperation projects. More funds were allocated to facilitate the co-financing of a wider number of projects. Additionally, the co-financing rates were raised, allowing for up to 80% funding support for small-scale partnerships. This adjustment aimed to make funding more accessible to micro and small cultural organisations, which were particularly affected by the challenges brought on by the pandemic.

In 2022, the work programme allocated EUR 134,388,138 to this sector, which was dedicated to providing support for various initiatives within the cultural and creative sectors. This financial support aimed to foster the recovery and resilience of these sectors. The allocated funds were specifically designated to bolster cooperation projects, facilitate the circulation of literary works, strengthen cultural platforms, and support pan-European cultural entities and networks.

Of the total funding, a record EUR 69 million was allocated to cooperation projects. This significant investment allowed a considerable number of projects to contribute to the overarching goals of the Creative Europe initiative. These objectives included fostering gender equality, promoting environmentally sustainable practices and driving digitalisation initiatives within the cultural and creative sectors.

3.3.2. Media strand

Within the media strand of work programme 2021, a substantial amount of the budget of EUR 172,609,161 was allocated to open calls for proposals in the 2021 budget. This was a significant increase on EUR 125 million in the previous year's budget.

The largest share of the budget of 2022 work programme was allocated to the most strategic actions in relation to the priorities identified by the programme, namely post-COVID-19 resilience and recovery and digitalisation of the creative and cultural sector – i.e. MediaInvest - investment platform to foster European audio visual productions and distribution, Films on the move, European film distribution, and TV and online content. These trends were maintained in the provisions of the 2023 work programme.

3.3.3. Cross-sectoral strand

According to the 2021 Creative Europe programme – Performance Report, the cross-sectoral strand saw a substantial increase in the budget allocated for open calls for proposals. In 2020, the budget stood at EUR 3 million, increasing to EUR 13.9 million in 2021. This increase helped introduce a focus on journalism partnerships. Consequently, the programme opened up opportunities for a previously untapped group of beneficiaries: news media organisations.

3.3.4. Stakeholder response to the Creative Europe budget

A survey⁶⁰ carried out as part of this study asked the national agencies (NAs) and the wider Creative Europe stakeholders about their overall satisfaction with the allocated budget. Most NA representatives responded that they were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied (76.6% combined) with the overall budget available for their countries. The same results were provided by the wider stakeholder respondents, with 62.9% saying that they were very or to a large extent satisfied with the overall budget available. In terms of budget distribution and financial management, most of the wider

⁵⁹ Creative Europe Programme Statement, available at https://wayback.archive-it.org/12090/20230331172627/https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-06/ps_db2023_creative_europe_h2.pdf

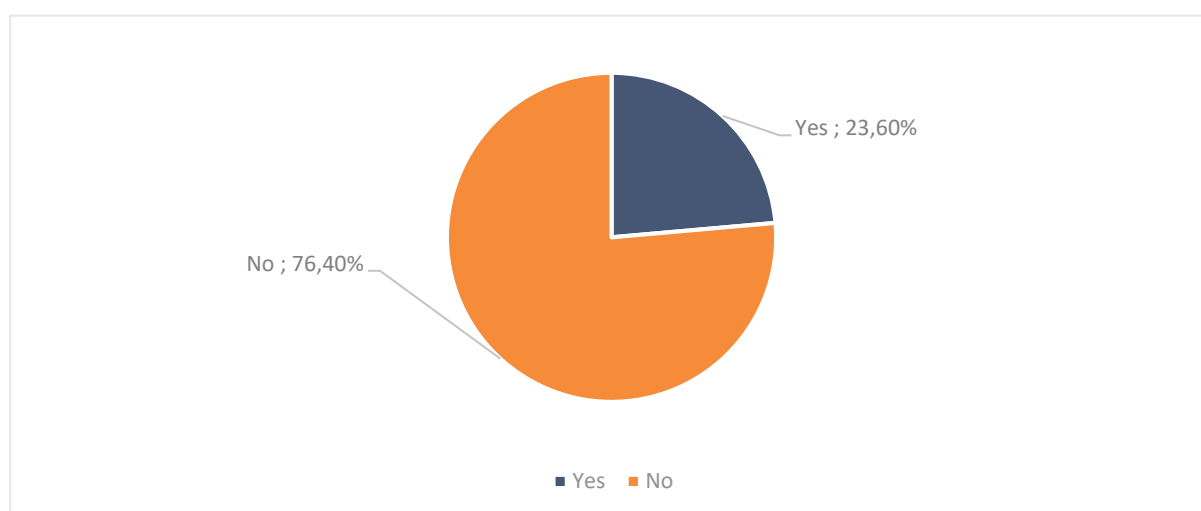
⁶⁰ See Annex 2.

stakeholders (76.8%) were very or somewhat satisfied. This indicates high levels of satisfaction with the budget and the financial management initiatives in the Creative Europe programme 2021-2027.

However, most NAs (75.9%) do not believe that there are current programme actions that are overfunded, although they consider that certain programme actions/activities should receive a higher budget such as music, the Culture Moves Europe mobility scheme and cooperation projects.

Some wider stakeholders have commented that the new lump sum system is more flexible and easier to manage than the previous one. However, regardless of the high level of satisfaction, some wider stakeholders said that the budget is not in any way flexible to accommodate prices that have drastically changed due to inflation and the impact of the pandemic. Indeed, most wider stakeholders believe that adequate measures to cope with the current economic situation and inflation were not put in place (76.4%).

Figure 5: To your knowledge, were specific measures to cope with the current economic situation and inflation incorporated by the European Commission and/or executive agencies and/or national agencies? (N=165) - wider stakeholders



Source: VVA online survey

3.4. IT tools

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. This management system is a fully paperless and interactive tool, with electronic signatures, and correspondence that facilitates and speeds up the administrative processes of the grant management. Beneficiaries and Creative Europe desks are provided with hands-on guidance on how to use this new tool.

Applications submitted in response to Creative Europe calls are sent electronically via the Funding & Tender opportunities portal, which provides instructions for submission. Newcomers need to register for an EU login⁶¹ before applying.

⁶¹ <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/cas/about.html>

Despite the digitisation efforts at the proposal and grant management stage, there are issues with the IT tools used by Creative Europe.

This study's survey findings found that most of the survey respondents advocated for a more user-friendly approach to the IT tools, especially with regards to the application process, and the reporting platform for grant management.

Table 7: To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (N=143-149) - wider stakeholders

Value	The IT tools are in my preferred language	The reporting requirements for the project management/ monitoring are proportionate	The IT tools make it easy to apply	The IT tools for the application process are user-friendly	The IT tools used in the application process helped with the administrative tasks	The reporting platforms are user-friendly
Fully agree	50.7%	28.4%	23.0%	19.5%	16.9%	18.4%
Partly agree	22.3%	37.8%	34.5%	34.9%	37.2%	34.7%
Neither agree nor disagree	9.5%	7.4%	12.8%	7.4%	12.8%	9.5%
Partly disagree	4.7%	14.9%	16.2%	22.1%	22.3%	20.4%
Fully disagree	9.5%	6.8%	11.5%	14.8%	9.5%	11.6%
Don't know	3.4%	4.7%	2.0%	1.3%	1.4%	5.4%

The Creative Europe Desks also recommended a better user experience by ensuring that the IT tools were simplified, and that better preparation was made before the start of the programme period. This preparation should be done by conducting appropriate tests and offering guidance materials to its users.

3.5. Inclusion measures

The aim of pursuing social inclusion is one of the main objectives outlined in the Creative Europe Regulation (EU) 2021/818. In particular, it is cited as a feature that all the projects and initiatives falling under the programme need to pay attention to. Moreover, it also encourages the adoption of incentives that “(a) ensure that people with disabilities, people belonging to minorities and people belonging to socially marginalised groups have access to the cultural and creative sectors and that encourage their active participation in those sectors, including in both the creative process and audience development; and (b) foster gender equality, in particular as a driver of creativity, economic growth and innovation”⁶².

The requirement to facilitate access to the programme of micro- and small organisations with limited access to public funding and the commitment in fostering accessibility, streamlining and administrative simplification is explicitly stated in the three work programmes. In this context, the following simplification measures were introduced:

- Wider application of lump sums to simplify the management and reporting for beneficiaries and the monitoring of projects. The project evaluation is therefore based on quality of deliverables and results;
- The use of budgetary commitments in multiannual instalments to reduce administrative burden when providing long-term support to beneficiaries;
- Simplified verification of financial capacity; and
- The use of the corporate eGrant system, described in section 3.4.

The 2021 work programme introduces the promotion of social inclusion, gender equality and diversity as a horizontal priority regarding all the Creative Europe strands. The work programme of 2023 encompasses inclusion among the key challenges on which the programme intends to intervene.

According to the Creative Europe programme Performance report 2022⁶³, the strategic approach to the audiovisual sector in the 2021-2027 period includes the integration of gender activities across all European initiatives related to this sector. The focus has expanded from solely addressing gender-related issues to embracing the wider concept of diversity.

Considering the complexity involved in evaluating the societal impact of projects and the relatively recent activation of the programme, it is necessary to allocate additional time to finalise the assessment of programmes funded in 2021. This will enable a more thorough observation and understanding of how the programme functions in relation to these specific aspects.

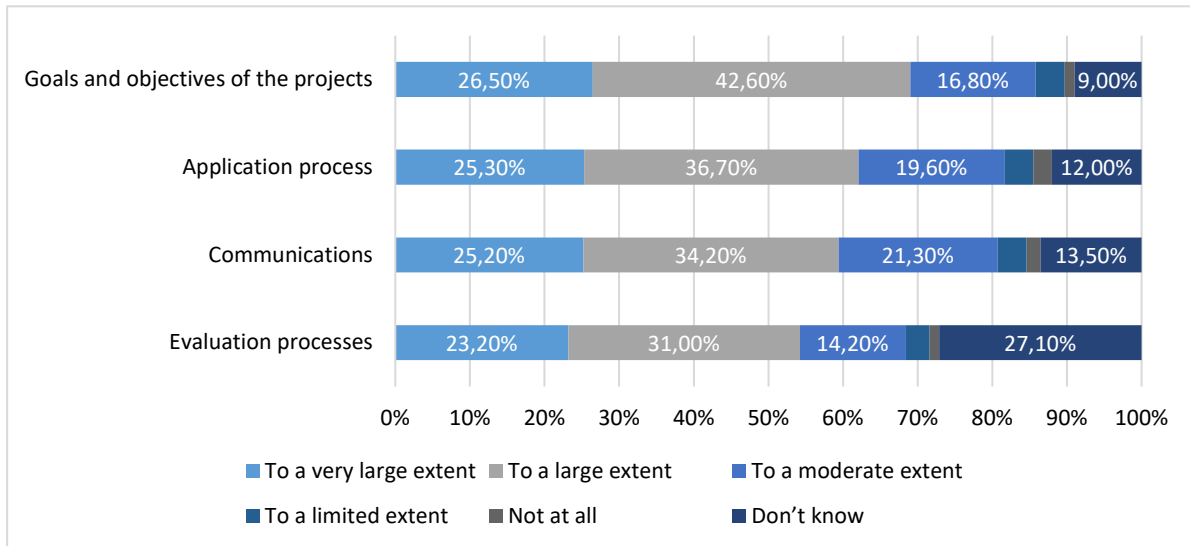
However, some results obtained from the online survey carried out for this study⁶⁴ indicate that progress has been made on inclusiveness, gender equality and social participation. Some 69.1% of survey respondents agreed ‘to a very large extent’ or ‘to a large extent’, together with an additional 16.8% agreeing ‘to a moderate extent’ that the Creative Europe programme is meeting gender equality priorities. On the other hand, a total of 54.2% of wider stakeholder’s agree with the presence of gender equality priorities in the evaluation process (to a large or very large extent) which highlights areas for improvement.

⁶² Regulation (EU) 2021/818 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing the Creative Europe Programme (2021 to 2027) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1295/2013, Article 3.

⁶³ Information provided by the Europe Creative Programme – Performance, available at: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/programme-performance-statements/creative-europe-programme-performance_en#budget-performance-outcomes.

⁶⁴ See Annex 2 for the full Survey Briefing.

Figure 6: To what extent do you agree gender equality priorities were present in each of the following aspects of the programme? (N=155-158) – wider stakeholders



Source: VVA online survey

3.6. Digital transition

Digitalisation is a major topic in the Creative Europe programme 2021-2027 and is mentioned and pursued through all the relative programme documents. In fact, the Creative Europe Regulation (EU) 2021/818 highlights that the digital shift in the creative and cultural sector has brought about many changes to different levels of the cultural production and distribution. In terms of cultural production, the market has undergone a deep transformation that raised the levels of competition among the cultural industries, while in terms of cultural consumption, audiences are shifting towards online content. Businesses are therefore adjusting their cultural production and distribution.

These were accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic that highlighted the challenges facing the creative and cultural sector. The Creative Europe Regulation underlines its commitment to support the sector during this period of change and recovery by drawing attention to the opportunities that digitalisation can bring. The adoption of digital technologies can facilitate product distribution, facilitate the production of innovative content and allow for the creation of new transnational collaborations and cooperation initiatives.

In accordance with the programme's legal basis, all annual work programmes reaffirm the abovementioned purposes by highlighting the coherence with other European Commission programmatic documents, such as Europe's Digital Decade⁶⁵ that outlines the vision and goals for Europe's digital transformation over the next 10 years. It aims to shape Europe's digital future by setting ambitious targets and priorities in various areas of digital technology and innovation. The Europe's Digital Decade is an overarching strategy that aligns with other policy initiatives, such as the European Digital Strategy and the Digital Single Market.⁶⁶

For example, the European Film Forum, which was established in 2015 within the framework of the Creative Europe programme 2014-2020 by the European Commission to help the European audiovisual

⁶⁵ European Commission, 2021, Communication from the Commission on the 2030 Digital Compass, Brussels, 9.3.2021 COM (2021) 118 final: the European way for the Digital Decade, available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:12e835e2-81af-11eb-9ac9-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF.

⁶⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018SC0159>.

sector to adapt to the digital shift, has been supported in the first three annual programmes of the 2021-2017 period. It serves as a platform for discussions, policy debates, and knowledge sharing among industry professionals, policymakers and other stakeholders in the film sector. Its aim is to address the challenges and opportunities in the European film landscape and contribute to the growth and development of the industry.

In addition to such continuity with the previous programming period, the first three work programmes of the Creative Europe programme 2021-2027 introduce new tools and actions aimed at supporting the creative and cultural sector's development during the digital transition. One of the most relevant outcomes has been the implementation of the MAAP, whose objective is to enhance the European media industry and ensure Europe's cultural and technological independence in an era of rapid digital progress. The plan seeks to strengthen the media sector within Europe, promoting its growth and resilience while safeguarding European cultural diversity and technological capabilities during the Digital Decade. Although the MAAP is a separate but aligned initiative of the European Commission, certain actions are taken jointly through the Creative Europe programme, such as environmental sustainability in the media strand.

In the work programmes for 2021 and 2022 some grants are reserved to fostering European media talent and skills. The primary goal of the skills and talent development support is to nurture and enhance the abilities and expertise of professionals working in the audiovisual sector. It aims to empower these professionals to adapt effectively to new creative processes and business models, enabling them to fully leverage the opportunities presented by digital innovation across the entire value chain. The initiatives under this support will focus on strengthening the capacity to fully harness the creative and commercial potential of the digital transition across various formats and platforms. Emphasis will be placed on acquiring entrepreneurial skills, staying up to date on market and digital technology progress, utilising data analytics, establishing sustainable business models, expanding an international presence, implementing effective marketing and promotion strategies, driving audience development, preserving and restoring film heritage, and embracing environmentally friendly practices in the industry.

In the 2021, 2022 and 2023 annual work programmes for the Creative Europe programme, some resources were allocated to promote TV productions, the creation of online content, and to support creative markets and networking. The objective of the support to TV productions and online content is to increase the capacity of European audiovisual producers to develop and produce strong projects with significant potential for circulation across Europe and beyond, and to facilitate European and international co-productions within the television and online sector.

For grants addressing markets and networking, the aim is to foster business-to-business opportunities and facilitate co-productions, increasing the visibility and exposure of European works in international markets, and enabling the acquisition of these works. Funding is allocated for industry events, fairs and promotional activities that facilitate business exchanges, whether in person or digitally, and enable the sale of European content in global markets. Moreover, the scope of business-to-business exchanges will be expanded to include creators and scriptwriters, recognising their crucial role in fostering collaboration within the industry.

Within the cross-sectoral strand, the programme's support to the cultural and creative sector to embrace the digital transition follows several priorities. These encourage, on the one hand, innovative approaches to content creation, access, distribution and promotion across cultural and creative sectors, while, on the other hand, support adjustments to the structural and technological changes faced by

the news media, including enhancing a free, diverse and pluralistic media environment, quality journalism and media literacy, including in the digital environment.

Among the measures introduced by the work programmes to achieve these goals is the establishment of the Creative Innovation Lab with the cross-sectoral strand of the programme. This lab aims to motivate individuals from various cultural and creative fields to develop and experiment with ground-breaking digital solutions that can bring about positive, lasting effects across multiple sectors. The lab will facilitate the creation of innovative solutions, such as tools, models and methodologies that can be implemented in the audiovisual sector as well as in another creative or cultural sector. These solutions should be easily reproducible and possess the potential to gain significant market traction. It is important to note that while the digital project does not need to be immediately applicable to the audiovisual sector, it should be effortlessly adaptable and implementable within this particular industry.

Finally, other grants aimed at supporting and encouraging digital transition are issued in the framework of journalism partnerships and defending media freedom and pluralism. In both cases, funding is allocated to actions that address imbalance and the challenge of the digitalisation of the news world, in particular the spread of online newspapers and other media, and the faster circulation of news with a consequent lowering of quality and reliability.

3.7. Effectiveness and EU added value

The initial implementation phase of the Creative Europe programme appears to have achieved an acceptable level of overall effectiveness. According to the Tenders & Funding portal⁶⁷, the Creative Europe programme to date has funded 1,722 projects. Table 8 shows that 729 projects were funded under calls published in 2021, while 989 projects were granted under calls issued in 2022 and four projects were funded under calls published in 2023.

Table 8: Number of projects funded by the Creative Europe programme under calls for proposals published during the period, 2021-2023

	2021	2022	2023
Crea cult	226	214	3
Crea media	456	712	1
Crea cross	47	63	0
Total projects	729	989	4

Source: Own elaboration on data acquired from European Commission, Funding & Tender opportunities⁶⁸

The performance result aligns with the observations made during the transitional year of programme implementation in 2021, 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 abovementioned frontloading of the budget in the first two years.

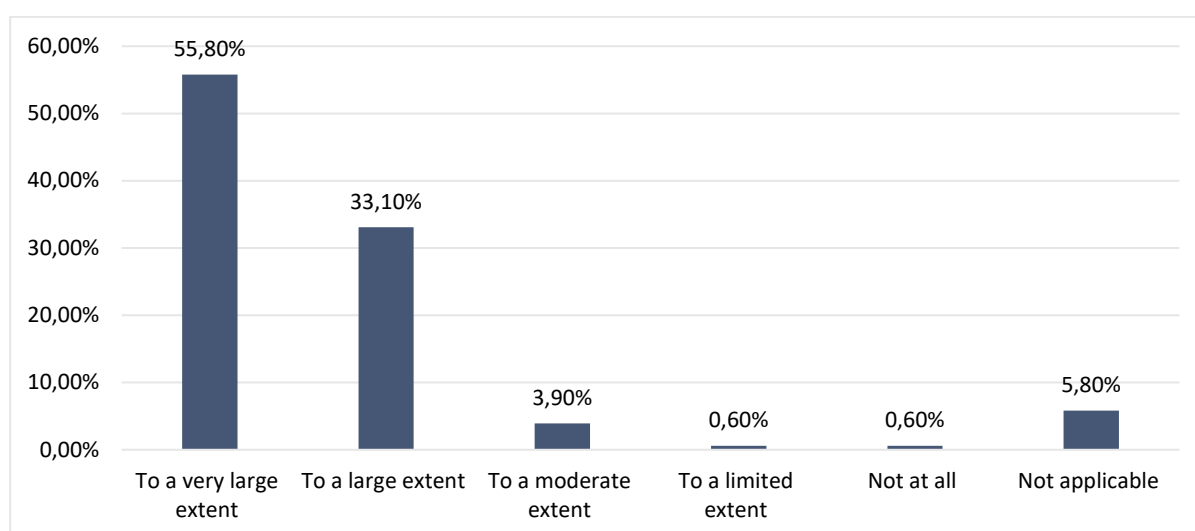
⁶⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/projects-results;programCode=CREA2027>.

⁶⁸ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/projects-results;programCode=CREA2027>.

The above table shows the number of projects funded for each strand and their variations over time. Within the culture strand the number of funded projects remains stable, with 226 projects funded under calls published in 2021 and 214 project funded under calls published in 2022. However, the media strand saw an increase in the number of funded projects, with 456 funded under calls published in 2021 and 712 funded project under calls published in 2022. A similar 40% increase in the number of projects funded was observed under the cross-sectoral strand, rising from 47 in 2021 to 63 in 2022.

The survey conducted for this study found that 88.9% of the wider stakeholders say that their projects are on track to deliver their objectives, while only 0.6% considered this not to be the case.

Figure 7: If applicable, to what extent would you agree your project is on track to deliver your objectives? (N=154)- wider stakeholders



Source: VVA online survey

Other notable survey findings include: 42.4% of wider stakeholders say that it took them more than 30 person-days to develop an application, while 28.5% say that it took 20-30 person-days, 21.9% say 15-20 person-days and 7.3% fewer than 15 person-days. Furthermore, 61.3% of the small-scale organisations, declared they required support to apply. Focusing on providing initial support and familiarising smaller stakeholders with the programme could therefore prove highly beneficial in the future to address this issue.

The survey also shows that 20.4% of wider stakeholder respondents have not taken part in the Creative Europe programme. In an open question to explore the reason why not, common reasons for not participating included: the complex application process for coordinating consortia; preference for local/national initiatives; the limited size and resources to apply; the lack of eligibility requirements/coherent projects; and a lack of awareness of the funding scheme. This highlights the need for procedural simplification, further support and awareness raising on the potential benefits and uses of the programme.

In relation to the EU added value produced by the first years of implementation of the Creative Europe programme, it is important to note that the Creative Europe Regulation (EU) 2021/818 mentions this feature as a priority to pursue through the actions implemented by the programme. Therefore, the Regulation includes the provision of European added value among its priorities and also explicitly indicates the programme intends to ensure it. According to the same Regulation, it is guaranteed by

the transnational character of actions and activities, which complement regional, national, international and other Union programmes and policies, thereby promoting European common roots and cultural diversity; cross-border cooperation, aimed at organisations and professionals in the cultural and creative sectors; and the economies of scale and growth and jobs that Union support fosters, creating a leverage effect for additional funds and actions implemented within the media strand.

The impact of external social, economic and political events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK's exit from the EU and the war in Ukraine, make it difficult to evaluate the market trends of low-, medium- and high-capacity countries. However, some points were raised, such as the need to adapt the geographic context in terms of strengthening rural and remote areas and organisations outside the metropolis.⁶⁹

The Parliament's request that the programme provides support to young artists⁷⁰ and creators has been addressed to an extent. For example, European Platforms established to promote emerging artists received above 10% of expenditure under the culture strand budget for 2021 and slightly below 10% in 2022⁷¹. A second example of support to young artist under the media strand is the Fostering European media talents and skills projects.

On the other hand, no significant data was available on other specific European Parliament requests such as support to mental health⁷². Furthermore, some requests involve the demand to address higher causes in ensuring artists' and creators' social protection, including social security contributions⁷³ at national levels.

⁶⁹ Zillmer Dr. et al, 2023, *The early implementation of the 2021-2027 EU Programmes Erasmus+, Creative Europe, European Solidarity Corps and the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (Strand 3)*.

⁷⁰ European Parliament legislative resolution of 28 March 2019 on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Creative Europe programme (2021 to 2027) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1295/2013 (COM(2018)0366 — C8-0237/2018 — 2018/0190(COD)), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52019AP0323>.

⁷¹ Data from EC include approx. expenditure of EUR 11 million for both years of the programme out of EUR 98 million budget for 2021 and out of EUR 128 million budget for 2022.

⁷² *The impact of COVID-19 closures of educational, cultural, youth and sports activities on children and young people in the EU*, European Parliament resolution of 13 September 2022 on the impact of COVID-19 closures of educational, cultural, youth and sports activities on children and young people in the EU (2022/2004(INI)), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022IP0314>.

⁷³ *Ibid*, footnote 82, reference 12a.

4. REPERCUSSIONS OF EXTERNAL FACTORS

KEY FINDINGS

- The work programmes for 2021 and 2022 indicate a strong commitment to try to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Creative Europe sector.
- All 2023 work programme strands make a reference to supporting Ukraine's cultural and creative sector. In particular, the culture strand work programme offers two specific grants dedicated to supporting Ukrainian refugees and Ukrainian cultural and creative sectors.
- Following the UK's exit from the EU the country decided not take part in the 2021-2027 programming period, and the Creative Europe Desk in UK has been closed. Numerous culture and creative organisations, both in the EU and the UK, have called for the UK to rejoin the Creative Europe programme.

The first three years of implementation have been affected by many external factors that influenced its development. Close scrutiny of the annual work programmes reveals the effects of particular social and political situations on the programme implementation.

4.1. The COVID-19 pandemic and recovery

The recovery of the cultural and creative sector after the COVID-19 pandemic has been one of the main challenges for the work programmes in 2021 and 2022. Both documents detail the severity of the damage caused by the pandemic to the cultural sector. Activities in the arts, entertainment and recreational sectors fell by 14% year on year in gross value added in 2020.⁷⁴

In this regard, the two work programmes highlight the programme's commitment to try to mitigate the consequences of the pandemic and promote projects and initiatives that are able to support those professionals and cultural operators that have been profoundly affected by lockdown and social-distancing measures.

In line with this purpose, the overall budget was frontloaded, with a third of the Creative Europe budget committed in the first two years of the programme. According to the work programme for the year 2023, budget allocations should be reduced for the following years to pre-pandemic levels. The 2022 Creative Europe annual work programme, adopted in January 2022, allocates around EUR 400 million to the promotion of the diversity and competitiveness of the cultural and creative sectors across Europe, contributing to recovery and resilience in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and in the context of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its consequences on the European economy.⁷⁵

In the annual work programmes, the COVID-19 pandemic related measures are linked to the resilience and recovery of the cultural sector, with a particular focus on the challenge related to digital transition. Since there has been unexpected time elapse with restrictions on live performances and the

⁷⁴ Commission staff working document Annual Single Market Report 2021 Accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Updating the 2020 New Industrial Strategy: Building a stronger Single Market for Europe's recovery, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021SC0351>, Figure 4.

⁷⁵ [Creative Europe programme statement](#).

organisation of in-person events, focus has shifted to vital digital use of resources. Therefore, the COVID-19 crisis accelerated and revealed certain ongoing trends, facilitating the digital distribution of cultural and creative content and services.

Resilience and recovery are indicated in the work programmes of 2021 and 2022 as a priority both on the cultural and media strand.

Within the media strand, great emphasis is put on supporting the recovery of the audiovisual industry and, in particular, cinema distribution, and film and TV series production.⁷⁶

According to the annual work programmes, the audiovisual sector will also be supported through the activation of the MediaInvest equity investment platform and the creation of a European virtual and augmented reality industrial coalition that fosters dialogue with the industry, especially on the aim of climate neutrality by 2050. Other measures are activated through the audience cluster, where funds are allocated to foster the recovery of festival and cinema attendance. These support measures aim to address any adverse impact from the trend towards online cultural activity.

The work programme 2023 proposes to once more support COVID-19 recovery as a priority, explicitly referring to National Recovery Plans⁷⁷ and their cultural dimension. This effort is visible both in the cultural and media strands, although with the aim of giving continuity to the interventions started on the previous years. In particular, the need to advance implementation of the Media and Audiovisual Action Plan is a focus, along with developing the MediaInvest equity investment platform and taking forward the European virtual and augmented reality industrial coalition.

Moreover, the work programme for the year 2023 emphasises various initiatives aimed at streamlining the management of the programme and improving the implementation of projects. This is a response to the insights gained from the challenging years of the pandemic. The introduction of increased co-financing rates for culture cooperation projects and certain media actions remains pertinent, as it addresses the ongoing financial struggles faced by beneficiaries in light of the long-lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sector.

Survey results were obtained by this study on the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic was perceived to have influenced the Creative Europe programme to date. These indicate that wider stakeholders believe that the pandemic had a significant impact on the programme. This impact is reflected in the delays to publishing calls, among other things.

⁷⁶ 2022 Annual Work Programme for the implementation of the Creative Europe Programme, available at: https://culture.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-01/creative-europe-2022-work-programme-c_2022_36_f1.pdf

⁷⁷ More information at: [European Commission, 'Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard. Thematic Analysis – Culture and Creative Industries' \(Brussels, 2022\).](#)

Table 9: Extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic was perceived to impact on the programme

In your view, to what extent has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the implementation of the programme	
To a very large extent	17.2%
To a large extent	28.3%
To a moderate extent	26.7%
To a limited extent	16.1%
Not at all	7.8%
Not applicable	3.9%

4.2. Russia's war against Ukraine

Efforts to support Ukraine following Russia's invasion started in 2022 and were included in the programme's key challenges in work programme 2023. The Creative Europe programme commits to help the Ukrainian creative and cultural sector and its professionals to recover from the war's intangible consequences, given the high value of culture in building inclusive and cohesive societies, where rights and freedom of expression are respected.⁷⁸ The work programme also highlights the specific support that it intends to provide to artists, journalists and cultural and media professionals, acknowledging circumstances reported by the EU Ministers of Culture and Media in March 2022.⁷⁹

With the aim of supporting Ukrainian artists and cultural sectors, the annual work programme foresees a special call of EUR 5 million in 2023. Moreover, for the maintenance of the Europe Creative Desk in Ukraine, it foresees an amount of EUR 103,970 in order to guarantee a funding rate of 100% of eligible costs.

Although a reference to the necessity of providing support to Ukraine's cultural and creative sector is present in all the 2023 work programme's strands, the one that addresses the cause in the most meaningful way is the culture strand. Within it, support to Ukraine is included among the main strand's priorities. The document particularly refers to the importance of helping Ukrainian refugees to adjust and integrate to their new community, while still enabling them to consume their home culture. Furthermore, the aim is to encourage professionals from Ukraine to take part in training to acquire skills that will be useful in the post-war reconstruction of the country's national heritage.

In this respect, two specific grants are included in the 2023 annual work programme. The first one provides support to the Ukrainian refugees and Ukrainian cultural and creative sectors. The call aims to promote cooperation projects that are organised in partnerships of at least one Ukrainian organisation and one organisation based in another Creative Europe country. The cooperation initiatives are called to promote the circulation of art and works in Ukraine and across Europe and in participating countries or to facilitate displaced people's access to culture and their reciprocal integration into their new communities.

⁷⁸ Amending Implementing Decision C(2021) 3563 on the financing of the Creative Europe Programme for 2021-2025 and the adoption of the work programmes for 2021, 2022 and 2023, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-06/2023-creative-europe-annual-work-programme-C%282023%293227.pdf>, p. 13.

⁷⁹ Statement by EU Ministers of Culture and Media on the situation in Ukraine, 7-8 March 2022, <https://www.culture.gouv.fr/en/Press/Press-releases2/Statement-by-EU-Ministers-of-Culture-and-Media-on-the-situation-in-Ukraine>.

The second grant included in the 2023 annual programme foresees the implementation of training for cultural heritage professionals in Ukraine. The aim of this initiative is to provide Ukrainian professionals with contemporary and high-quality approaches and techniques to protect their cultural heritage, which is facing significant risks due to the ongoing conflict. The support provided may involve various actions, such as digitising heritage materials like museum artefacts, archival records and library collections. It could also include emergency measures to evacuate and safely store cultural artefacts, documenting and establishing or updating databases of cultural assets, and introducing additional tools and strategies for managing the risks faced by endangered heritage. EUR 5 million is allocated for the first grant and EUR 100,000 for the second.⁸⁰

According to the survey results, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has been an external factor that has had impact on the programme implementation, albeit a more moderate impact.

Table 10: Perceived impact of Russia's war of aggression on the programme

In your view, to what extent has Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine impacted the implementation of the programme	
To a very large extent	8.3%
To a large extent	19.4%
To a moderate extent	30%
To a limited extent	20%
Not at all	14.4%
Not applicable	7.8%

4.3. The UK's exit from the European Union (Brexit)

In the framework of Creative Europe programme 2014-2020, the UK beneficiaries were engaged in 609 projects, which received around EUR 203 million from the programme, of which EUR 68 million was directly received by UK companies and organisations. Overall, the UK was a major beneficiary of EU funding.⁸¹

With its official exit from the EU on January 31, 2020, the UK has become ineligible to participate in EU funding programmes such as the Creative Europe programme. However, the country could have chosen to establish separate agreements or programmes to support its cultural and creative sectors in collaboration with the Creative Europe programme 2021-2027 and participate in it as non-EU partner. Nonetheless, the UK decided not take part in the new programming period, and the Creative Europe Desk in UK has been closed.

⁸⁰ In addition to the actions described in this section, the 2023 annual work programme for the implementation of pilot projects and preparatory actions in education, youth, sport and culture allocates further resources that address, among others, the provision of support to the Ukrainian cultural and creative sector.⁸⁰ This includes the establishment of a European Heritage Hub to support a holistic follow-up of the European Year of Cultural Heritage. The primary goal of the hub is to bring together various stakeholders, including both public and private entities, in order to promote a comprehensive and interconnected approach to cultural heritage policies. The hub is also expected to address the situation of cultural heritage in Ukraine, thus complementing the measures already provided by the 2023 Creative Europe work programme.

⁸¹ Creatives Industries Federation (2016) [Brexit Report](#).

This decision has provoked a reaction from the Committee on Culture and Education in its draft opinion⁸² on an EP own-initiative report related to the implementation of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement, wherein the Rapporteur for opinion expressed her regret about the unilateral, political decision of the UK government not to participate in the Erasmus+, Creative Europe and European Solidarity Corps programmes, despite the openness shown by the EU negotiating team. The Committee is convinced that this decision leads to a lose-lose outcome, depriving people and organisations in the EU and in the UK of life-changing opportunities through exchange and cooperation projects.

Following the decision of the UK government to not participate in the Creative Europe programme, the UK's creative and cultural sector seems to have become at risk. The Second Report of Session 2022–23 of the Communications and Digital Committee of the House of Lords⁸³ describes the challenging situation of the organisations within the creative sector that receive public funding. The report explains how the rapid pace of technological advancements poses difficulties, and the sector struggles to adapt accordingly. The funding landscape is fragmented and complex, making it challenging to integrate best practices. Additionally, the intermittent nature of grants makes it difficult to support collaborative efforts across different disciplines or transition business models towards long-term financial sustainability. To ensure their long-term success, it is crucial for these organisations to place a greater emphasis on innovation, collaboration and sustainability. According to the House of Lords committee, the need to support the creative and cultural sector in facing this challenge contrasts the decrease in ministerial engagement with international opportunities. The government's presence at significant global events, such as the World Conference on the Creative Economy, is reportedly lacking. Budget cuts to institutions such as the British Council also hinder the potential for building profitable networks overseas. Witnesses providing evidence to the UK House of Lords have shared that the UK was once a pioneer in defining the concept of the creative industries more than two decades ago, but now other nations are taking the lead in this area.

Given the present situation, numerous culture and creative organisations, both in the EU and the UK, have called⁸⁴ for the UK to rejoin the Creative Europe programme. This call recognises the benefits gained from the Creative Europe programme 2014-2020 in terms of financial support and European added value.

From the survey carried out for this study, it is clear that the UK's decision to leave the EU has had an external impact to a large or moderate extent.

⁸² Draft Opinion of the Committee on Culture and Education for the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on International Trade on [the implementation report on the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement \(2022/2188\(INI\)\)](#)

⁸³ House of Lords (2023) [At risk: our creative Future](#)

⁸⁴ [Brexit and a cultural way forward, together](#)

Table 11: Perceived impact of the UK's exit from the EU on the programme

In your view, to what extent has the UK's exit from the European Union (Brexit) impacted the implementation of the programme	
To a very large extent	17.2%
To a large extent	28.3%
To a moderate extent	26.7%
To a limited extent	16.1%
Not at all	7.8%
Not applicable	3.9%

5. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

KEY FINDINGS

- The substantial increase in the programme budget is welcomed; however, further allocations are needed to strengthen the cultural strand within the programme.
- Transparency on the funding decision and fairness of the evaluation process are perceived as high.
- Low success rates in the culture strand and cross-sectoral strand in the first years of new Creative Europe programme 2021-2027 highlight the need for more decisive and a better specified structure of calls for proposals.
- Individuals and small organisations greatly rely on support when submitting project proposals. There are also indications that some potential applicants are discouraged from applying due to the complexity of the programme.
- The IT tools used for applications need to be improved since it is not sufficiently user friendly.
- Some of the initiatives such as media networks support in 2021 or 2022 were postponed due to external factors (COVID-19). With regards to the economic crisis, there are indications from stakeholders that the European Commission can provide more support and act quicker to provide support.
- There is a general lack of clear information on the implementation of the programme and on the project portfolio funded by Creative Europe.

5.1. Budget increase and internal allocation of budget

The significant increase of 68% in budget resources, in comparison to the previous programme 2014-2020, represents a valid starting point. In particular, past concerns⁸⁵ especially relating to media funding being spread too thinly has been addressed by the significant budget increase in the new programme.

Some essential sectors, such as music, publishing and architecture, were not adequately catered for in the past programme. These have been taken into account in the new programme. However, some sectors are still considered to lack adequate support, such as authorship(s) in literacy, where the programme involves literacy translations only.

The survey results indicate that most NA representatives were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied (76.6% combined) with the overall budget available for their countries. The same result can be

⁸⁵ Draft Report on the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Creative Europe Programme (2021 to 2027) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1295/2013, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CULT-PR-625219_EN.pdf?redirect, footnote 93.

found from the wider stakeholder respondents, with 62.9% saying that they are very or to a large extent satisfied with the overall budget available. In terms of budget distribution and financial management, most wider stakeholders (76.8%) were very or somewhat satisfied.

This indicates **high levels of satisfaction with the budget and financial management** initiatives in the Creative Europe programme 2021-2027 and follows the path of the draft report of the European Parliament on the proposal for the programme,⁸⁶ which described the programme as “seriously underfunded”. However, the final budget still fell short of the EUR 2.81 billion that the Parliament was seeking.⁸⁷

In addition to the smaller budget of the 2014-2020 programme, past assessments also found **the programme to be fragmented**, with 14 different schemes addressing different parts of the value chain.⁸⁸ This issue was not addressed in the 2021-2027 programme since the structure of the media strand grant types is the same as under the previous programme. What’s more, additional schemes have been added.

5.2. Proposal evaluation process and success rates

The Creative Europe programme’s evaluation process is considered fair and transparent. Some 85.3% of representatives of national agencies had a positive view of the fairness of the evaluation process, with 73.4% saying that funding decisions are transparent. This shows that the Creative Europe programme has strong foundations. Furthermore, wider stakeholders say that the aims and objectives of the calls are clear (81.3%) and that the evaluation process is fair (75.8%).

However, **low success rates in the culture strand (30%) and cross-sectoral strand (27%)** in the first years of new Creative Europe programme 2021-2027 highlight the need for more decisive and a better specified structure of calls for proposals. The risk of discouragement for potential new applicants must be considered in future planning.

5.3. Visibility and accessibility of the programme

In addition to the low success rates and access to funding for small and medium-sized organisations (including independent artists and creators), the survey also shows that 20.4% of wider stakeholder respondents have not taken part in the Creative Europe programme. Common reasons given include: the complex application process for coordinating consortia; preference for local/national initiatives; the limited size and resources to apply; the lack of eligibility requirements/coherent projects; and a lack of awareness of the funding scheme. This highlights the **need for procedural simplification, further support and awareness raising on the potential benefits and uses of the programme.**

⁸⁶ Draft Report on the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Creative Europe Programme (2021 to 2027) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1295/2013, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CULT-PR-625219_EN.pdf?redirect.

⁸⁷ European Parliament legislative resolution of 28 March 2019 on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Creative Europe programme (2021 to 2027) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1295/2013 (COM(2018)0366 — C8-0237/2018 — 2018/0190(COD)), available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52019AP0323>.

⁸⁸ Draft Report on the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Creative Europe Programme (2021 to 2027) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1295/2013, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CULT-PR-625219_EN.pdf?redirect, footnote 93.

5.4. Complexity of digital tool for application

Related to the above point on complexity of the programme, some 44.4% NAs fully or partly agree with the statement that ‘the IT tool makes it easy to apply’, compared to 57.7% of wider stakeholders⁸⁹. **The IT tool could be improved, in particular be made more user-friendly**, given that the current portal is adapted from the Horizon Europe programme and does not always reflect the specificities of the Creative Europe programme, making the reporting requirements sometimes disproportionate to the nature of the funded project.

5.5. Capacity to overcome challenges

Some of the **initiatives such as media networks support in 2021 or 2022 were postponed due to external factors**. As regards all three external reasons (post COVID-19 pandemic recovery, Brexit and Russia’s war against Ukraine) more than half of NA respondents in the survey said it had impacted the implementation of the programme to a large extent. In addition, 37.5% of NAs said that their country did not have a satisfactory response to Brexit. Furthermore, 69% of NAs and 76.4% of wider stakeholders remarked that there were specific measures to cope with the current economic situation and inflation, which could be taken up by the European Commission, the executive agencies and national agencies.

There is therefore the risk that the EU’s response to significant challenges, such as inflation and rising energy prices, is perceived to be slow.

5.6. Availability of programme and project level data

There is **a general lack of information on the implementation of the programme and on the project portfolio funded by Creative Europe**. The online portal of the European Commission, called Tenders & Funding opportunities does not allow for substantive searches except for the overall number of projects funded. The Creative Europe portal provides some additional data, but the existence of several databases increases the risk of discrepancies when carrying out analyses. This makes it a challenge to analyse the programme implementation and indicates a certain lack of transparency.

⁸⁹ Annex 2 Survey.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 6 presents the recommendations developed for the Creative Europe study based on the analysis presented in Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5.

The recommendations are as follows:

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.

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ANNEX 1: 37-PAN EUROPEAN NETWORKS OF CULTURE AND CREATIVE ORGANISATIONS

Network	Name of organisation	Description	URL
Architecture	European Council of Interior Architect (ECIA)	ECIA is a European platform that represents and promotes qualified interior architects/designers.	https://ecia.net/
	The Architects' Council of Europe (ACE)	ACE is the representative organisation for architectural professionals at the European level, speaking on their behalf with a single voice.	https://www.ace-cae.eu/
Book and publishing	European and International Booksellers Federation (EIBF)	EIBF is a non-commercial European and international umbrella organisation representing national bookseller associations and booksellers from around the world.	https://europeanbooksellers.eu/
Cross-sectoral	Culture Action Europe (CAE)	CAE is the major European network of cultural networks, organisations, artists, activists, academics and policymakers.	https://cultureactioneurope.org/
	Trans Europe Halles (TEH)	TEH is a European network of cultural centres initiated by citizens and artists.	Trans Europe Halles (teh.net)
	European Network of Cultural Centres (ENCC)	ENCC unites socio-cultural centres and their network across Europe and beyond.	http://encc.eu/
	European Festivals Association (EFA)	The European Festivals Association (EFA) has united distinguished music, dance, theatre and multidisciplinary arts festivals from Europe and beyond since 1952.	Home - European Festivals Association (efa-aef.eu)
	Euro-Mediterranean Network for the professional development of young artists (BJCEM)	BJCEM is a network, which ranges from cultural institutions to independent organisations, with partnerships throughout Europe, the Middle East and Africa.	https://www.bjcem.org/
	European Union National Institutes of Culture (EUNIC)	EUNIC is the network of European national institutes of culture and national bodies engaged in cultural and related activities beyond their national borders.	https://www.eunicglobal.eu/
	European Creative Hubs Network (ECHN)	ECHN is a peer-led network with a mission to enhance the creative, economic and social impact of hubs around Europe and neighbouring countries.	https://creativehubs.net/

	European Network on Cultural Management and Policy (ENCATC)	ENCATC is a European network focused on cultural management and policy that stimulates the development of cultural management and cultural policy education.	https://www.encatc.org/
	On-The-Move	On the Move is an international information network dedicated to artistic and cultural mobility, gathering 67 members from 26 countries.	https://on-the-move.org/
	We are Europe	We are Europe is a network coordinated by Arty Farty, an association that places itself at the service of young people, innovative cultures, democratic renewal and the general interest.	https://weare-europe.eu/
	Culture Next (CN)	CN is a European network made up of current and former candidates for the European Capital of Culture, which helps cities to implement culture-led urban development programmes and policies.	https://culturenext.eu/
	International Music and Media Centre (IMZ)	IMZ is dedicated to the preservation and promotion of the performing arts through audiovisual media.	https://www.imz.at/
Cultural heritage	Europa Nostra	Europa Nostra is the pan-European federation of heritage NGOs supported by a wide network of public and private stakeholders, including private individuals and companies.	https://www.europanostra.org/
	European Route of Industrial Heritage (ERIH)	ERIH showcases Europe's industrial heritage among a network of cultural and heritage centres.	https://www.erih.net/
	Network of European Museum Organisations (NEMO)	NEMO is a network of national museum organisations and similar bodies representing the museum community of the Member States of the Council of Europe.	https://www.ne-mo.org/
	Future for Religious Heritage (FRH)	FRH is the only European network bringing people and organisations together that wish to save, protect and promote Europe's religious heritage.	https://www.frh-europe.org/
	World Crafts Council (WCC) Europe	WCC-Europe is the representative organisation of the crafts sector in Europe, with 34 members from 21 European countries; its main statutory mission is to promote crafts in Europe by increasing the awareness and appreciation of crafts as an integral part of the cultural, social and economic well-being of society.	https://wcc-europe.org/

Music	Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC)	AEC is a European cultural and educational network with around 300 member institutions offering professional music training in 57 countries.	https://aec-music.eu/
	European Music Exporters Exchange (EMEE)	EMEE is a non-profit association, which pulls together a mix of public and private funding to support European musicians, music companies and music professionals in their export strategies.	https://www.europeanmusic.eu/
	European Early Music Network (REMA)	REMA is the only representative network for early music in Europe which encourages the exchange of knowledge, information and co-operation in the field of early music.	https://www.rema-eemn.net/
	Europea Jazz Network (EJN)	EJN is a Europe-wide association of promoters specialising in creative music, contemporary jazz and improvised music.	https://www.europejazz.net/
	Jeunesses Musicales International (JMI)	JMI is a global network of NGOs that provides opportunities for young people and children to develop through music across all boundaries.	https://jmi.net/
	European Composer and Songwriter Alliance (ECSA)	ECSA is a network representing over 30,000 composers and songwriters across and beyond Europe, speaking for the rights of creators in popular, art and classical, as well as film and audiovisual music.	https://composeralliance.org/
	European Choral Association (ECA-EC)	The European Choral Association is a network of organisations in the field of collective singing in Europe. Through its members and Friends' association also reaches choirs and individuals across Europe and beyond.	https://europeanchoralassociation.org/
	European Network for Live Music Associations	Live DMA is a European non-governmental network working to support and promote good conditions for the live music sector.	https://www.live-dma.eu/
	Independent Music Publishers International Forum (IMPF)	Representing the interests of the independent music publishing community internationally, IMPF is the network and meeting place for independent music publishers globally.	https://www.impforum.org/
	European Music Council (EMC)	EMC is the broadest network for music organisations across Europe. It is dedicated to the development and promotion of all genres and types of music.	https://www.emc-imc.org/

	YOUROPE	YOUROPE is the most important association of European popular music festivals, representing 112 festivals and associated members from 26 European countries.	https://yourope.org/
	The European Music Managers Alliance (EMMA)	EMMA brings together Music Managers Forums across and beyond Europe, representing more than 3,600 music managers worldwide and the commercial and professional interests of tens of thousands of artists, songwriters, producers and DJs.	https://emma.community/
Performing arts	International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People (ASSITEJ)	ASSITEJ International is a network unifying artists and organisations across 75 countries and six continents that are dedicated to the right of every child and young person to access the arts – especially live performance – from the earliest possible age.	https://assitej-international.org/
	International network for contemporary performing arts (IETM)	IETM is one of the oldest and largest international cultural networks, representing the voice of more than 530 performing arts organisations and professionals working in the contemporary performing arts worldwide.	https://www.ietm.org/en
	European Network Circus and Street Arts (Circostrada)	Circostrada has been working to support, develop and structure the field of circus and street arts in Europe and beyond.	https://www.circostrada.org/en
	European Dancehouse Network (EDN)	EDN is a network for trust and collaboration between European dance houses sharing a common vision for the development of dance art across borders.	https://www.ednetwork.eu/

ANNEX 2: SURVEY BRIEFING

KEY FINDINGS

- The overall indication is that NAs and wider stakeholders are satisfied with many aspects of the 2021-2027 programme. Most NAs and wider stakeholders responded favourably on aspects such as the transparency and fairness of the evaluation process, clarity of the award criteria, and the quality of the Commission's communication activities on the 2021-2027 programme.
- However a majority seemed to consider the 2014-2020 programme simpler and timelier in comparison to the 2021-2027 programme in terms of grant preparation and 'time-to-grant'.
- The proposal preparation and submission was considered to be simpler during the 2021-2027 programme. However, the opinion of wider stakeholders was more positive compared to that of NAs.
- Both stakeholder groups (NAs and wider stakeholders) commented that the programme's implementation had been adjusted in light of EU-wide challenges (i.e. the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's war against Ukraine and Brexit). However, Brexit limited drastically cooperation opportunities with the UK partners and Russia's war against Ukraine has caused a steep increase in several areas of expenditure, particularly travel and accommodation.
- The majority of the NAs and wider stakeholders said that they were satisfied to a very large extent by the overall budget available under Creative Europe and some wider stakeholders have also commented that the new lump sum system is more flexible and easier to manage than previous one.
- In terms of shortcomings, most respondents declared that Creative Europe does not have any shortcomings compared to other EU funding and the priorities of the Green Deal, digital transformation and gender equality are present to a large extent within the aspects of Creative Europe.
- The IT tools seem to be overall faulty, and the majority of stakeholders consider the IT tools used for the application process of the programme to be not user-friendly.

Introduction

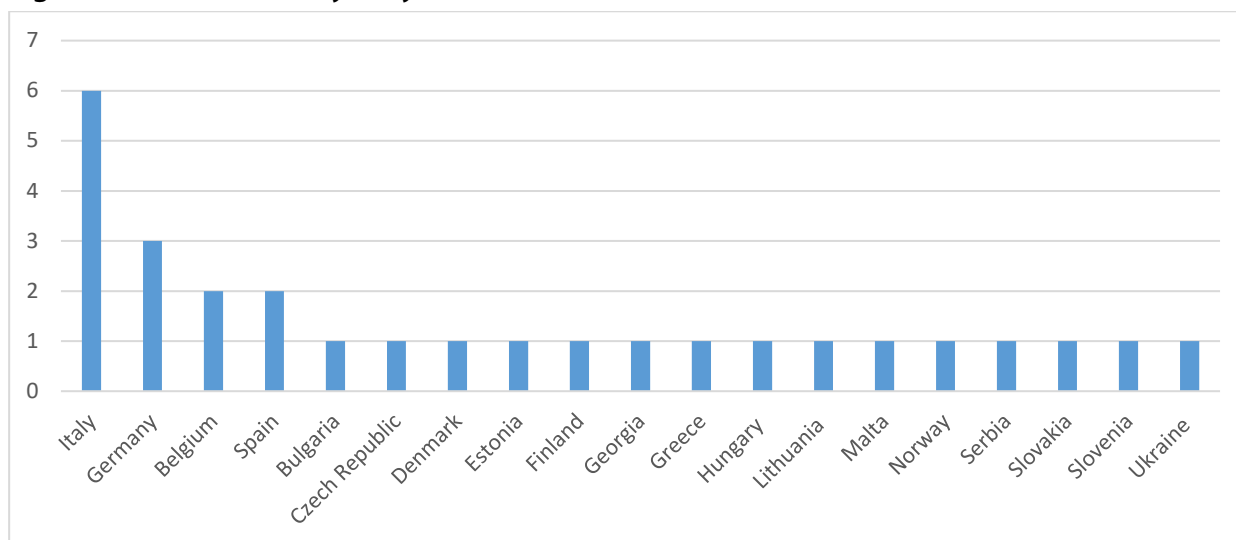
Annex 2 presents the results of two surveys, one disseminated to the national agencies (NAs) and the other to wider stakeholders (including beneficiaries and other stakeholders) who were involved directly or indirectly in the current Creative Europe programme. The survey aims to complement the Creative Europe report and final recommendations. The objective is to identify and confirm the strengths and weaknesses of the Creative Europe programme in its early phase.

Background

National Agencies

The survey received responses from 38 individuals representing various NAs for Creative Europe. Most of the respondents were based in Italy (6), followed by Germany (3), Belgium (2) and Spain (2).

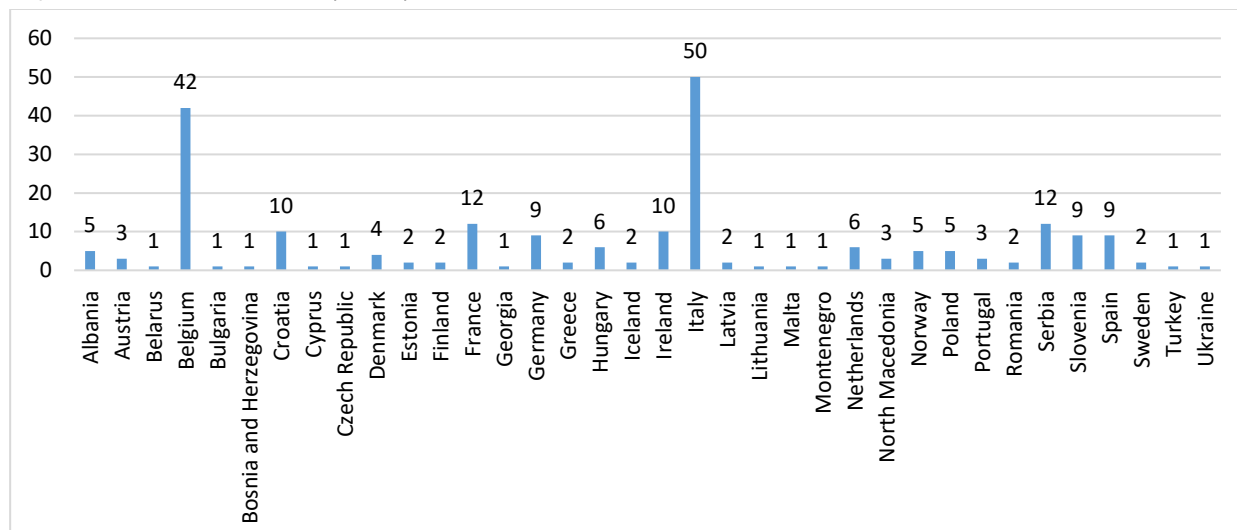
Figure 8: In which country are you located? (N=28) – NAs



Wider stakeholders

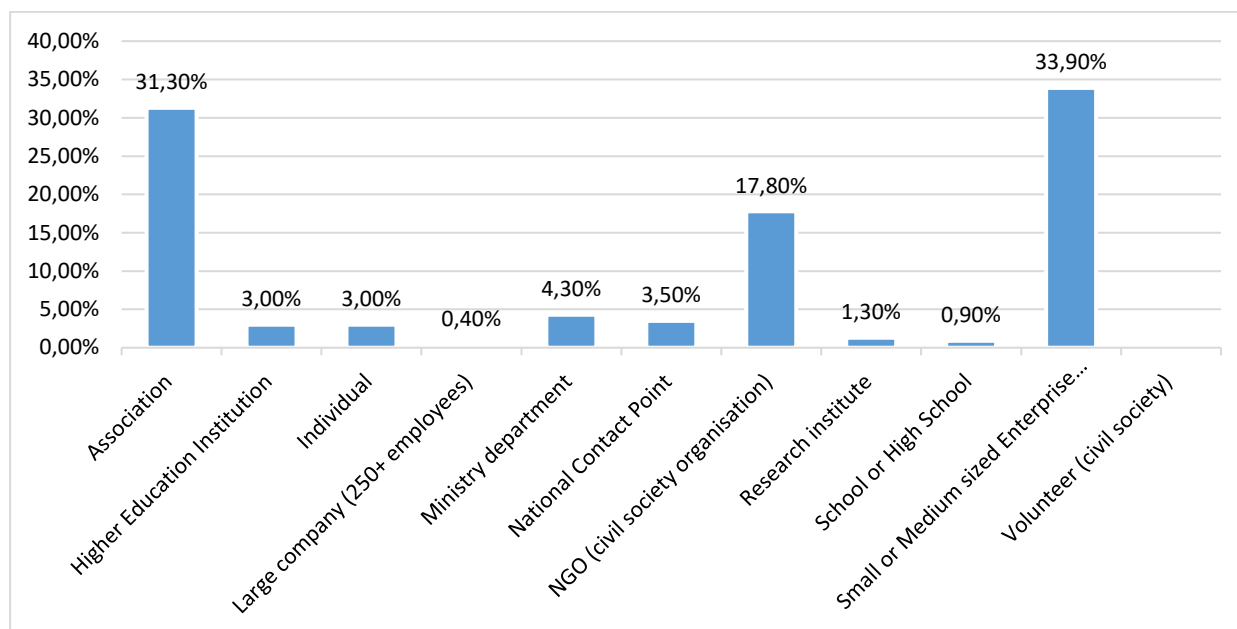
The survey received responses from 228 individuals and most of the respondents were based in Italy (50), followed by Belgium (42), France and Serbia (12 for each).

Figure 9: In which country are you located? (N=228) – wider stakeholders



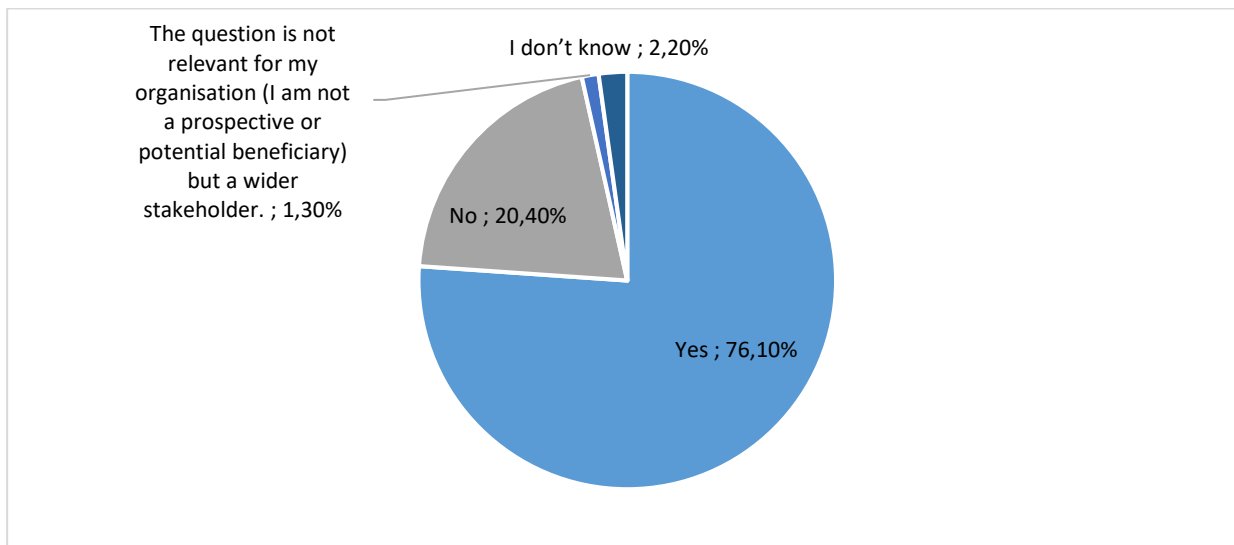
As shown in Figure 10, most of the respondents have categorised themselves as SME (33.9%), followed by associations (31.3%) and NGOs (17.8%).

Figure 10: Which of the following best describes you or your organisation? (N=228) - wider stakeholders



As shown in Figure 11, most participants (76.10%) are recurring applicants under Creative Europe.

Figure 11: To the best of your knowledge, have you or your organisation ever applied for or participated in a project funded under any of these other programmes? (N=228) – wider stakeholders

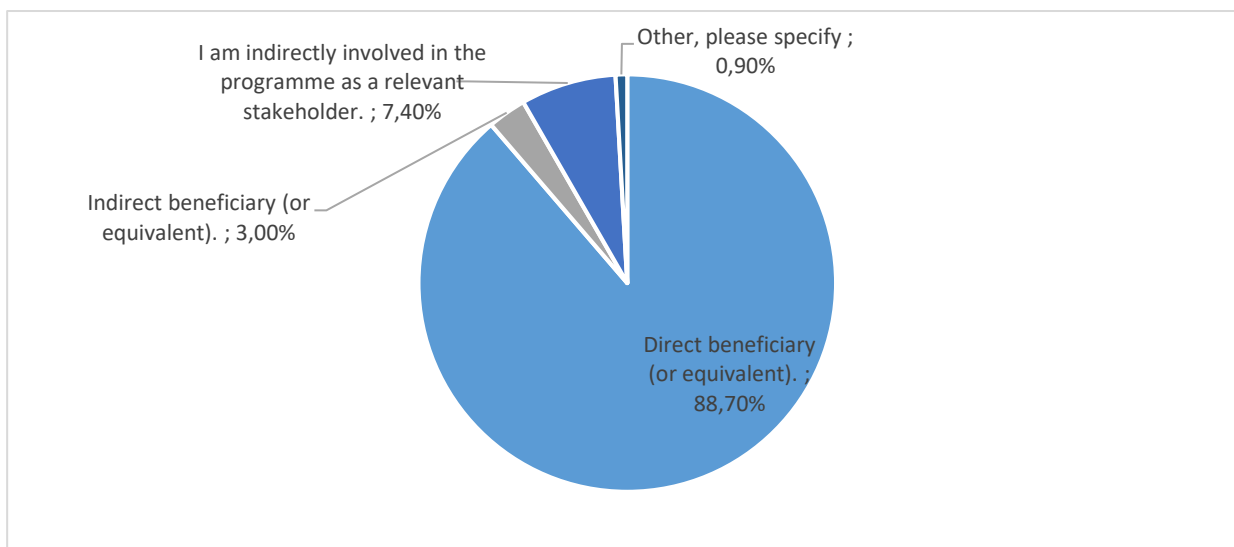


The following reasons were given by respondents for replying 'No':

- Limited size and resources to apply (4)
- Lack of eligibility requirements/coherent projects (2)
- Complexity for coordinating consortia for applying to calls (1)
- Preference for local/national initiatives (1)
- Unaware of the existence of the funding scheme (1)

As depicted in Figure 12, most of the respondents represent 'direct wider beneficiaries' (88.7%), most of which described themselves as project coordinator/leader. Only 10.4% of the respondents were indirect wider stakeholders/other stakeholders.

Figure 12: Please describe the capacity in which you reply to this survey (N=228) – wider stakeholders



Early implementation

National agencies

This section describes the results obtained for the evaluation of the early implementation of Creative Europe from the point of view of NAs.

When consulted about their overall satisfaction with the 2021-2027 programme, most NAs responded favourably (i.e. they agree to a very large extent or to a large extent) to almost all aspects under investigation.

When consulted about the **quality of the Commission's communication activities** on the 2021-2027 programme, the largest proportion of NAs responded favourably, with 76.5% answering to a large or very large extent.

When consulted on the **quality of their own communication activities**, 61.8% of NAs answered they were satisfied with it to a large or very large extent. This question contains a degree of subjectivity as the NAs assess their own communications activities. However, this result indicates a slight recognition that there is room for improvement in their communication activities since 8.8% of respondents indicated a limited or moderate extent. 14.7% chose not applicable (N/A) on the quality of the NAs' communication activities.

Regarding the **clarity of the programme announcements and calls**, 53% of NAs responded that announcements were to a large or very large extent clear, 32.4% answered they were clear to a moderate extent, and 14.8% were less positive (to a limited extent or not at all clear). Regarding the **clarity of the aims and objectives of the calls**, the positive perception rises to 73.5% among the NAs.

67.6% of NA respondents thought the **relevant funding opportunities over different programmes** were clear to a large or very large extent, 20.6% responded they were clear to a moderate extent, and 11.8% answered that they were not clear.

When asked about the **clarity of administrative requirements**, 52.9% of NAs responded positively. In contrast, 11.7% of NA respondents were pessimistic about the clarity of administrative requirements for CE.

58.8% of responding NAs and wider stakeholders thought that the **information required in the administrative proposal** was proportional to a very large or large extent. A third (32.4%) responded that it was proportional to a moderate extent, and only 8.8% responded negatively.

Concerning the **evaluation process**, 75.8% expressed that **the clarity of the information** on the process was satisfactory to a large or very large extent. A large proportion of NAs (79.4%) also indicated that the **clarity of the award criteria described in the work programmes** was satisfactory to a large or very large extent. Moreover, they were very positive about the **fairness of the evaluation process**, with 85.3% responding they were satisfactory to a large or very large extent. The **transparency on the funding decisions** was also well-received by NAs, with 73.6% of NAs responding positively.

Both the **timeliness of the decision-making process** and the **completeness of the evaluation reports** were regarded as satisfactory to a large or very large extent by 70.6% of the respondents.

Regarding the adequacy of **the length of CE proposals**, 50% responded that it was adequate to a large or very large extent, 29.4% responded to a moderate extent, and 20.6% responded not at all or to a limited or moderate extent.

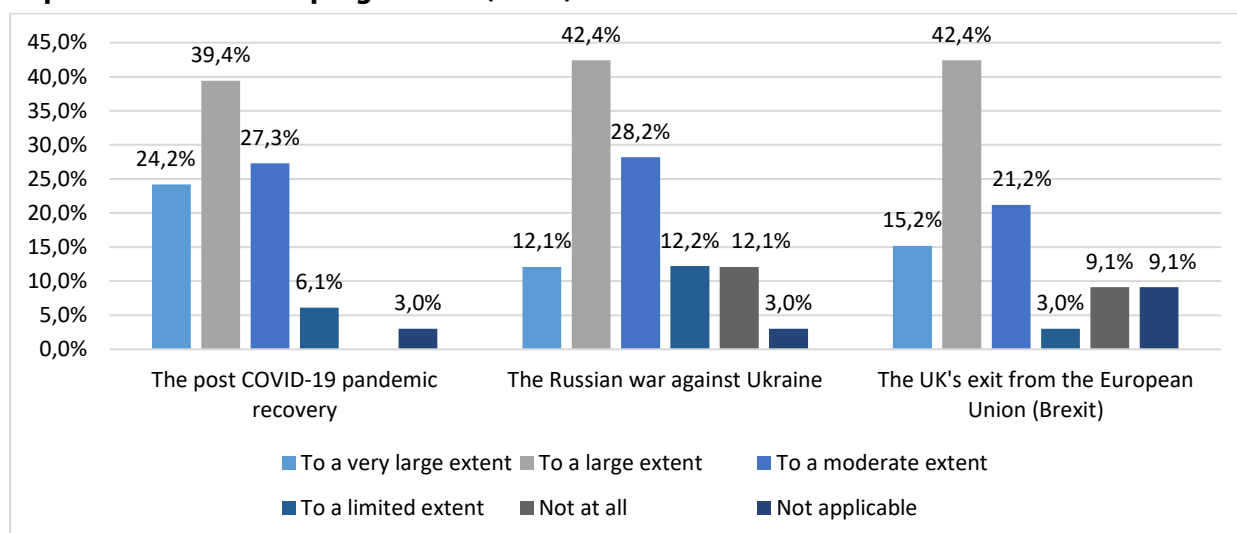
Lastly, NAs' view was more negative regarding the user-friendliness of the proposal template, with 47.1% of them answering that it was limited or not at all friendly. However, 38.3% responded that user-friendliness was high to a large or very large extent.

When investigating about the implementation of the overall programme and which aspects could be improved, the most common answers were:

- The application process and its documents are not user friendly. The amount of work that organisations have to put in is not proportional to the budget received, significantly burdening organisations that don't have structural funding (6);
- The increase in Creative Europe funding by 50% made it possible to support more projects that are very much needed (2);
- The timetable of calls is still vulnerable since it is only published officially very late (September/October) and applicants can be informed only a few weeks before the opening of calls that they are about to be published. This creates uncertainty among all parties involved (2);
- The years 2021 and 2022 were very challenging due to the late start of the programme and major changes to the application system (FTOP, lump sum funding), but after two years many aspects have become familiar and easier to handle (1).

For this section, NAs were asked to determine to what extent have the following external factors impacted the implementation of the programme, as observed in the figure below.

Figure 13: In your view, to what extent have the following external factors impacted the implementation of the programme? (N=33) – NAs

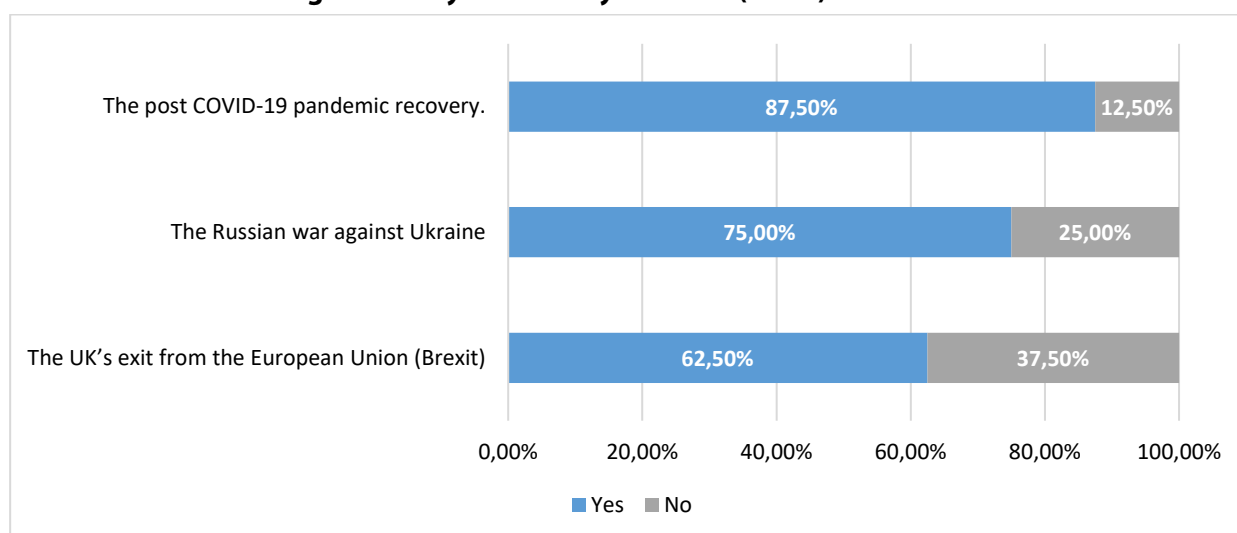


The post COVID-19 pandemic recovery had the greatest impact on the programmes (63.6%).

Other issues NAs highlighted as having a significant impact on the implementation of the programme are the current energy crisis and environmental concerns.

When asked if the programme had been modified to address their country's specific needs in light of EU-wide challenges, 87.5% answered 'Yes' to the COVID-19 pandemic, 75% to the Russia invasion of Ukraine and 62.5% to Brexit.

Figure 14: In your view, has the implementation of the programme been adjusted in light of the above EU-wide challenges to suit your country's needs? (N=32) – NAs



When asked to elaborate more on their positions, the most common answers were:

- Multiple delays to projects related to the pandemic, combined with an increased workload to digitalise events (5);
- Russia's war against Ukraine influenced the rise of all the prices, and no clear/official position from the Commission was provided on whether or not to boycott Russian works and guests (2);
- The Brexit limited drastically cooperation opportunities with UK partners (3).

Wider stakeholders

This section describes the results obtained for the evaluation of the early implementation of Creative Europe from the point of view of wider stakeholders.

When consulted about their overall satisfaction with the 2021-2027 programme, wider stakeholders responded favourably (i.e. agree to a very large extent or to a large extent) to almost all aspects under investigation.

When consulted about the **quality of the Commission's communication activities** on the 2021-2027 programme, the largest proportion of wider stakeholders responded favourably, with 61.5% answering to a large or very large extent.

When consulted on the **quality of the NAs' communication activities**, 69.9% of wider stakeholders answered they were satisfied with it to a large or very large extent.

Regarding the **clarity of the programme announcements and calls**, 71.7% of wider stakeholders responded that announcements were clear to a large or very large extent, and 18.9% answered they were clear to a moderate extent. In terms of the **clarity of the aims and objectives of the calls**, the positive perception rises to 81.3% among the wider stakeholders.

67.6% of respondents thought the relevant **funding opportunities over different programmes** were clear to a large or very large extent, 25.1% responded they were clear to a moderate extent, and 11.2% responded that they were not clear.

When asked about the **clarity of administrative requirements**, 55.6% of wider stakeholders responded positively. In contrast, 15.2% of respondents had a negative view of the clarity of administrative requirements for CE.

Concerning the **evaluation process**, 58.2% expressed that the **clarity of the information on the process** was satisfactory to a large or very large extent. Regarding the **completeness of the evaluation reports**, it was regarded as satisfactory to a large or very large extent by 59.2% of the respondents. A large proportion of wider stakeholders (68.7%) also indicated that **the clarity of the award criteria described in the work programmes** was satisfactory to a large or very large extent. Moreover, they were very positive about the **fairness of the evaluation process**, with 75.8% responding they were satisfactory to a large or very large extent. The **transparency on the funding decisions** was also well-received by wider stakeholders, with 63.5% responding positively.

Regarding the **adequacy of the length of CE proposals**, 52.5% responded that it was adequate to a large or very large extent, and 22.9% responded it was adequate to a moderate extent.

However, the **timeliness of the decision-making process** had a less positive view, as 21.5% answered that it was not at all or, to a limited extent, satisfactory. Wider stakeholders' view was also rather negative regarding the **user-friendliness of the proposal template**, with 26.9% of them answering that it was limited or not at all friendly. However, 40.5% responded that user-friendliness was high to a large or very large extent. Furthermore, 47.1% of wider stakeholders thought that the **information required in the administrative proposal** was proportional to a very large or large extent. A third (31.5%) responded that it was proportional to a moderate extent. There was, however, a rise in negative views (19.1%).

For this section, wider stakeholders were asked to determine to what extent the following external factors have impacted the implementation of the programme, as observed in the figure below.

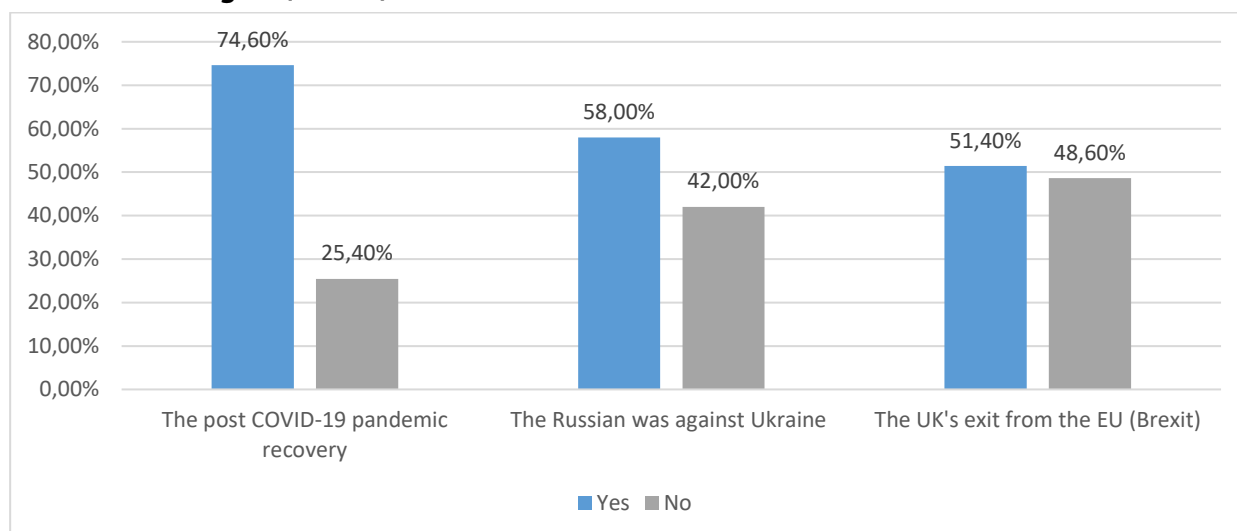
Figure 15: In your view, to what extent have the following external factors impacted the implementation of the programme? (N=180) – wider stakeholders



It can be seen that wider stakeholders view is similar to NAs, as they agree that the post COVID-19 pandemic recovery had the greatest impact on the programme. Moreover, some wider stakeholders commented that the current inflation stemming from Russia's invasion of Ukraine has affected the implementation since the previously foreseen budget did not account for this.

When investigating about the implementation of the programme being adjusted in light of the above EU-wide challenges, the answers are generally positive.

Figure 16: In your view, has the implementation of the programme been adjusted in light of the EU-wide challenges? (N=177) – wider stakeholders



Some wider stakeholders commented that the exclusion of the UK from the programme has been challenging as British players were key partners in several projects and Russia's war against Ukraine has caused a steep increase in a number of areas of expenditure, particularly travel and accommodation.

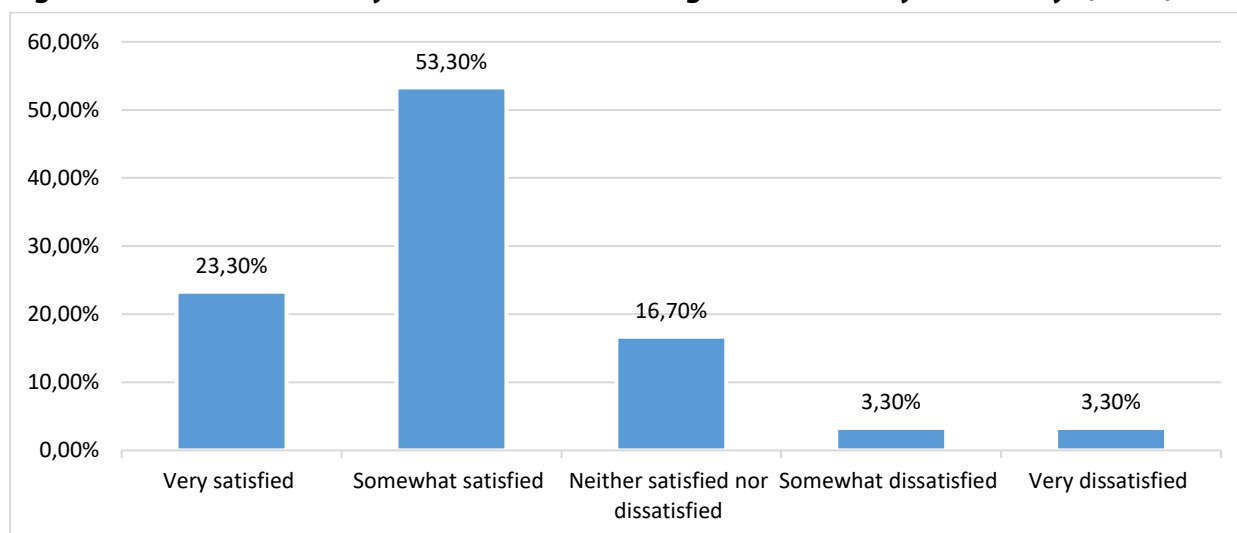
Budget and resources

National agencies

This section describes the results obtained for the evaluation of the budget and resources of Creative Europe from the point of view of NAs.

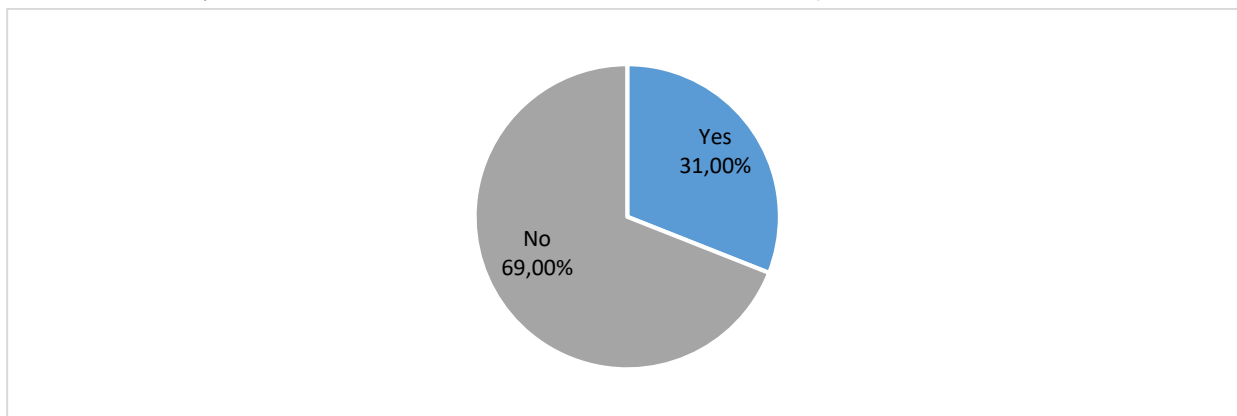
When consulted about their overall satisfaction with the 2021-2027 programme, most NAs responded favourably, with 76.6% saying that they were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied.

Figure 17: How satisfied are you with the overall budget available for your country? (N=30) – NAs



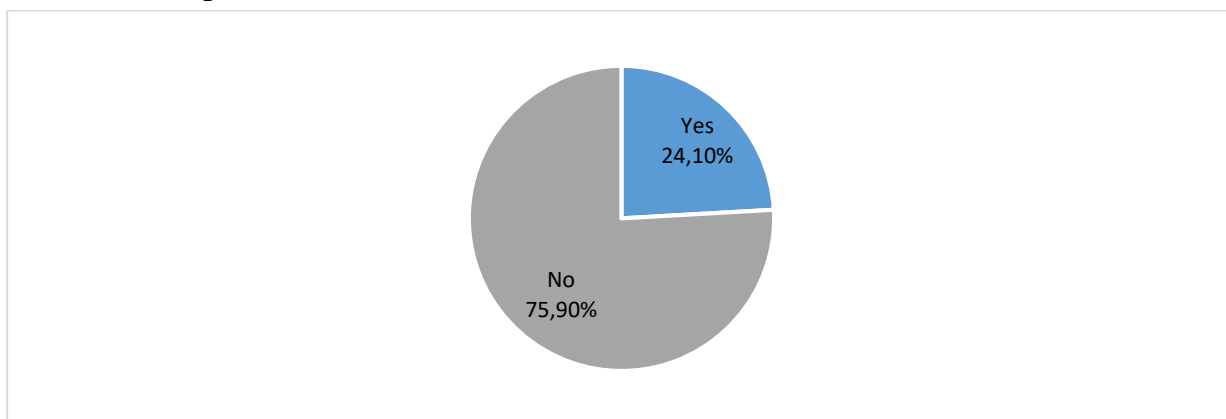
However, 69% of them commented that no specific measures to cope with the current economic situation and inflation were taken.

Figure 18: Were specific measures to cope with the current economic situation and inflation incorporated by the European Commission and/or Executive agencies and/or NAs? (N=28) – NAs



Most of the NAs (75.9%) do not believe there are current programme actions which are overfunded or in need of additional budget and actually believe that certain programme actions/activities should receive a higher budget: music, Culture Moves Europe mobility scheme and cooperation projects.

Figure 19: In your view, are there currently programme actions/activities that do not require any additional budget or are even overfunded? (N=28) NDA



NAs were additionally asked to determine to what extent they considered 2021 processes to be simpler (in terms of proposal and grant preparation) and timelier (in terms of grant) than previous programmes.

Table 12: Based on your overall experience, to what extent do you agree with the following statements on the 2021-2027 processes compared to previous programmes? (N=28)

Value	The processes of grant preparation in 2021-2027 are simpler than those in 2014-2020	The time from submitting the application to receiving the grant has substantially improved compared to the 2014-2020	The processes to conduct the proposal preparation and submission in 2021-2027 are simpler than those in 2014-2020
Fully agree	17.9%	14.3%	21.4%
Partly agree	17.9%	10.7%	17.9%
Neither agree nor disagree.	3.6%	21.4%	10.7%
Partly disagree	21.4%	25.0%	14.3%
Fully disagree	21.4%	7.1%	17.9%
Don't know	17.9%	21.4%	17.9%

As shown in the table above, the majority seemed to consider the 2014-2020 simpler and timelier than the 2021-2027 programme. Around 42.8% of the NAs partly disagreed or fully disagreed that the grant preparation was simpler during the 2014-2020 programme, while 35.8% partly agree or fully agree that it is simpler under the 2021-2027 programme.

A similar pattern applies to time-to-grant: 32.1% of the NAs deemed the 2021-2027 to have worsened in comparison to the 2014-2020 programme. This was followed by 21.4% of the NAs who neither agreed nor disagreed.

By contrast, 39.3% of the NAs viewed the proposal preparation and submission to be simpler during the 2021-2027 programme compared to 32.2% which considered it to be simpler in 2014-2020.

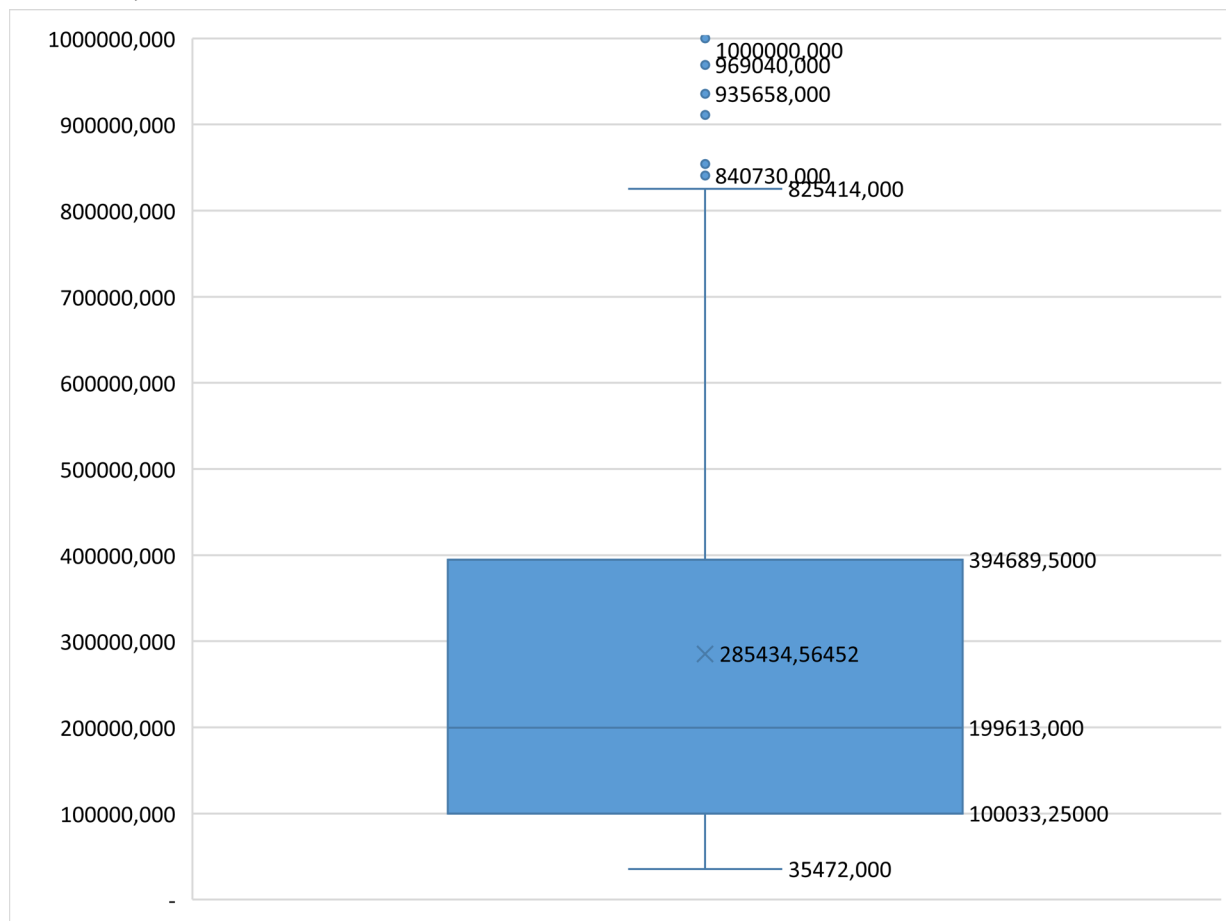
Wider stakeholders

This section describes the results obtained for the evaluation of the budget and resources of Creative Europe from the point of view of wider stakeholders.

The whisker boxplot below represents the responses for size of the total requested EU contribution for the proposal. The chart summarises five metrics: minimum (0th percentile, the lowest data point in the data set), first quartile (25th percentile, median of the lower half of the dataset), median (50th percentile, the middle value in the data set), third quartile (75th percentile, the median of the upper half of the dataset), and maximum (100th percentile, the highest data point in the dataset). The box represents the interquartile range, which indicates 50% of data points lying above the first quartile and below the third quartile.

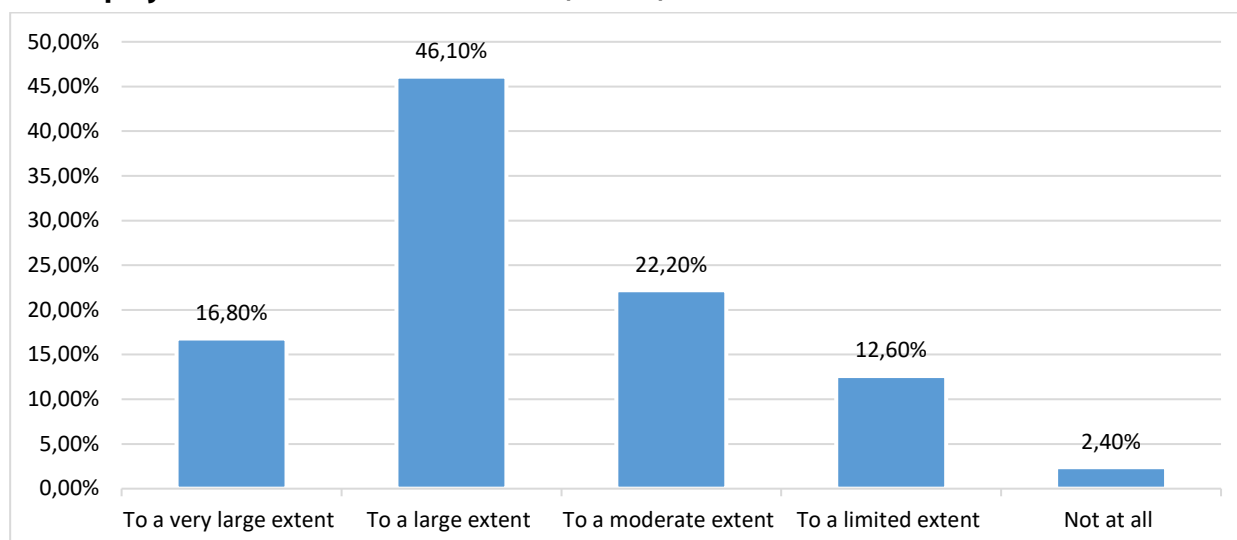
Hence, the chart shows that 50% of wider stakeholders requested a sum between EUR 100,033.25 and EUR 394,689.5. The median value is EUR 199,613.00. Outlier requests range from a maximum value between EUR 800,000 to EUR 1,000,000 and a minimum value of EUR 35,472.

Figure 20: If applicable, what was the size of the total requested EU contribution for the proposal? If you have been involved in multiple proposals, please respond for the most recent proposal you are familiar with (N=154) – wider stakeholders



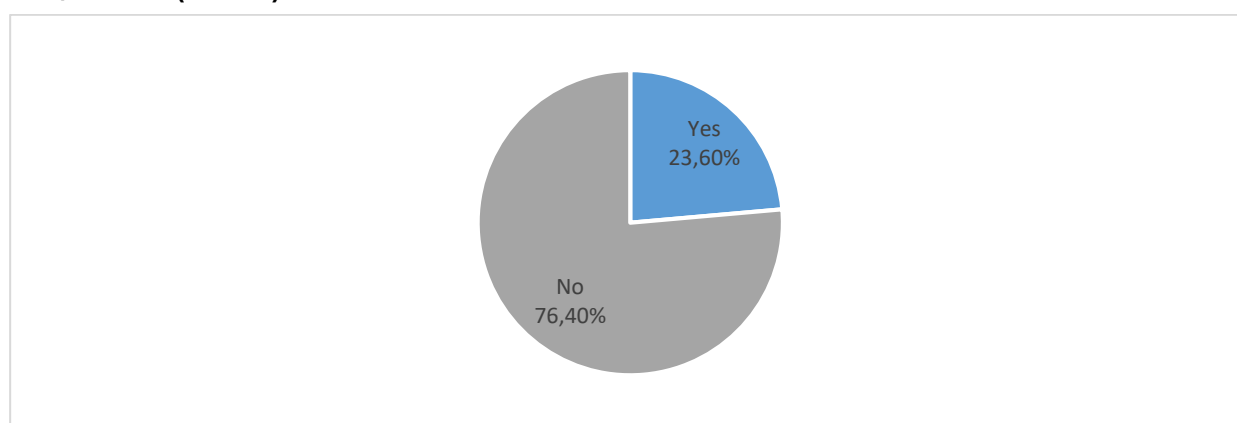
Most of the wider stakeholders (62.9%) said that they were satisfied to a very large extent by the overall budget available, while just 2.4% were dissatisfied.

Figure 21: To what extent would you agree the funding available is sufficiently flexible to allow for the project activities to be carried out? (N=167) – wider stakeholders



Some wider stakeholders have also commented that the new lump sum system is more flexible and easier to manage than the previous one. However, regardless of the high level of satisfaction, some wider stakeholders said that the budget is not in any way flexible to accommodate prices that have drastically changed due to inflation and post-pandemic effects. Indeed, most wider stakeholders believe that no sufficient measures to cope with the current economic situation and inflation were put in place (76.4%).

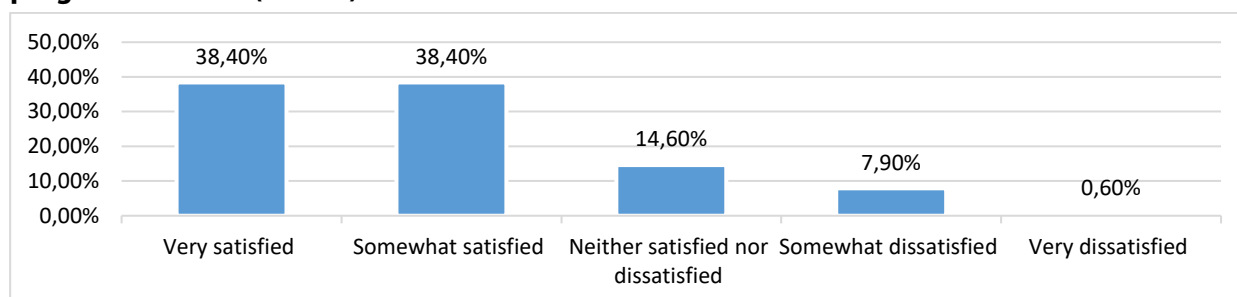
Figure 22: To your knowledge, were specific measures to cope with the current economic situation and inflation incorporated by the European Commission and/or executive agencies and/or NAs? (N=165) – wider stakeholders



In this context, some wider stakeholders mentioned that the grant amount allocated to projects remained fixed despite an increase of costs related to projects due to the economic situation and inflation. This meant that stakeholders had to readjust the budget and shift some project activities accordingly.

In terms of budget distribution and financial management, most of the wider stakeholders (76.8%) were very or somewhat satisfied.

Figure 23: How satisfied are you with the budget distribution and financial management at the programme level? (N=164) – wider stakeholders



Wider stakeholders were also questioned on the extent to which they considered 2021 processes to be simpler (in terms of proposal and grant preparation) and timelier (in terms of grant) than previous programmes.

Table 13: Based on your overall experience, to what extent do you agree with the following statements on the 2021-2027 processes compared to previous programmes? (N=159-164)

Value	The processes to conduct the proposal preparation and submission in 2021-2027 are simpler than those in 2014-2020	The processes of grant preparation in 2021-2027 are simpler than those in 2014-2020	The time from submitting the application to receiving the grant has substantially improved compared to the 2014-2020
Fully agree	26.8%	18.9%	18.1%
Partly agree	18.3%	20.1%	18.1%
Neither agree nor disagree.	11.6%	13.8%	20.0%
Partly disagree	5.5%	9.4%	5.6%
Fully disagree	12.2%	10.1%	9.4%
Don't know	25.6%	27.7%	28.8%

Even though around 25-30% of the respondents were not in a position to comment on these matters, the majority of those who answered seemed to consider the 2021-2027 programme simpler (for proposal preparation and submission and grant preparation) and timelier (regarding time-to grant) than the 2014-2020 programme.

Some wider stakeholders commented that improvements are due to the lump sum nature of the grant, which has significantly reduced the implementation costs compared to the previous system. To improve the administrative and financial programme requirements, some wider stakeholders advocate a clearer and more concise finance administration manual that clarifies the exact finance reporting requirements for the project and increasing the user-friendliness of the portal. As the current portal is

adapted from the Horizon Europe programme and does not always reflect the specificities of the Creative Europe programme, this makes the reporting requirements very demanding and sometimes disproportionate to the nature of the funded project.

EU priorities

National agencies

This section describes the results obtained for evaluating the presence of the EU priorities (the Green Deal, digital transformation, and gender equality) within Creative Europe from the point of view of NAs.

At a general level, NAs were asked to consider the extent to which the priorities of the Green Deal, digital transformation, and gender equality were present within the aspects of Creative Europe. As can be seen in Table 14, in general, the inclusion of these measures was perceived to a large extent to be present.

Most of the NAs (74%) considered that the priorities of these three policy areas were included within the goals and objectives of the programme. According to 74% of the NAs, priorities of the policy areas were well communicated within the programme, while 7.4% of them disagreed. Furthermore, 71.5% of the NAs agreed that the priorities of the three policy areas were taken into account in the application process and 70.4% that they were taken into account in the evaluation process.

Table 14: To what extent do you agree the EU priorities (Green Deal, Digital Transformation, Gender Equality) are present in each of the following aspects of the programme? (N=27) NAs

Value	Evaluation process	Application process	Communications	Goals and objectives of the projects
To a very large extent	18.5%	28.6%	33.3%	25.9%
To a large extent	51.9%	42.9%	40.7%	48.1%
To a moderate extent	3.7%	17.9%	18.5%	22.2%
To a limited extent	7.4%	3.6%	7.4%	0%
Not at all	0%	0%	0%	3.7%
Don't know	18.5%	7.10%	0%	0%

As part of this section, the NAs were asked to describe how the EU priorities could be more concretely integrated within the Creative Europe programme. The following points were identified by the survey respondents:

- Improving communication with relevant examples of good practice among the supported projects (e.g. (1) highlighting completed projects in respective fields on the platform of supported projects; (2) providing relevant data on such projects to Creative Europe Desks in order to amplify communication efforts and facilitate sharing (and reuse) of results; (3) EC/EACEA

organising annual international conference/event dedicated to these measures and highlighting relevant supported projects/initiatives...);

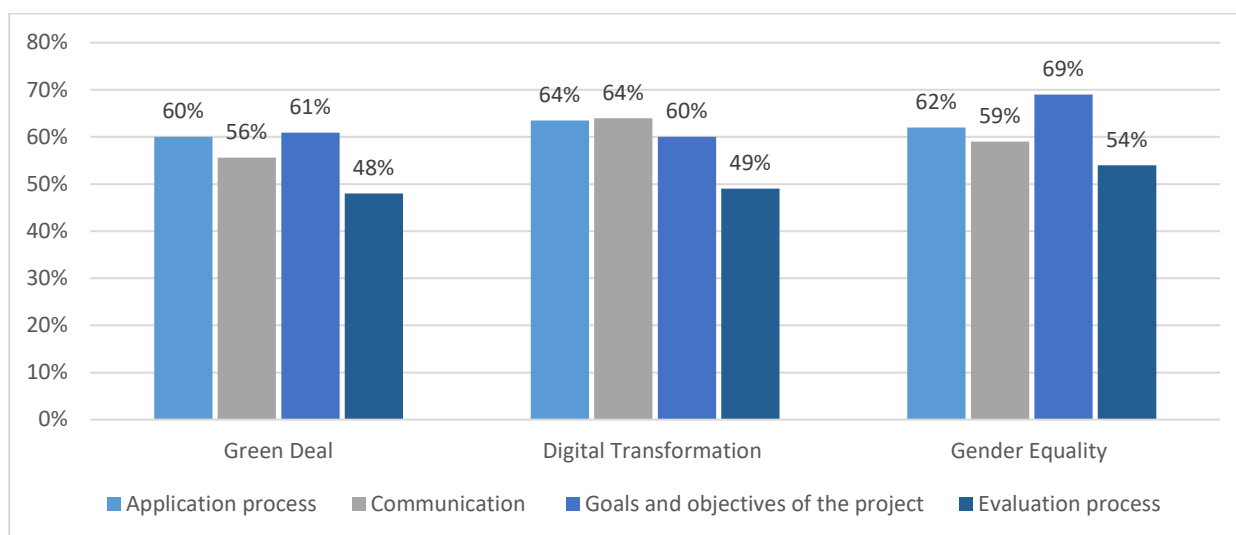
- Creation of an integrated platform to gather all research and studies done on those topics which would serve as a useful resource tool and step-by-step guidelines on how to measure these inclusion indicators.

Wider stakeholders

This section describes the results obtained for evaluating the presence of the EU priorities (i.e. the Green Deal, digital transformation, gender equality) within Creative Europe from the point of view of wider stakeholders.

At a general level, wider stakeholders were asked to consider the extent to which the priorities of the Green Deal, digital transformation and gender equality were present within the aspects of Creative Europe. As can be seen from the figure below, in general, wider stakeholders considered the priorities were present to a large or very large extent (Figure 24).

Figure 24: To what extent do you agree the EU priorities were present in each of the following aspects of the programme? (N=153-158) – wider stakeholders



When wider stakeholders were asked how EU priorities (Green Deal, Digital Transformation, Gender Equality) could be more concretely integrated into the programme:

- The current approach of incorporating these priorities into the application calls, such as including them as cross-cutting priorities, is highly pertinent and flexible. It allows project stakeholders to carefully consider how to best address these priorities. However, some individuals have suggested that it might be beneficial to provide the option to concentrate efforts on a single inclusion measure as a top priority rather than distributing efforts across all these priorities with potentially reduced efficiency; and
- By giving concrete best practices, with the EC taking the lead by explaining how an open call for artists should be shaped by providing more guidance, providing implementation examples and/or webinars.

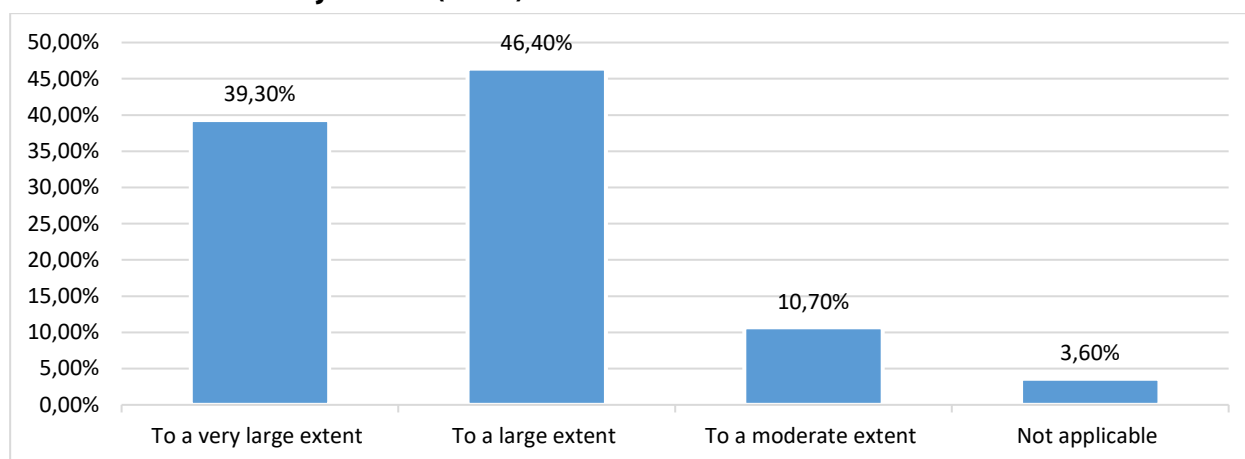
Effectiveness & added value

National agencies

This section describes the results obtained on evaluating the effectiveness and added value of Creative Europe from the point of view of NAs.

Around 85.7% of the NAs argued that their country's projects were on track to deliver their objectives.

Figure 25: To what extent would you agree that projects implemented in your country are on track to deliver their objectives? (N=28) – NAs



Two elements were particularly deemed to be successful within the NA's country:

- Innovative Tools & Business Models; and
- Promotion & Distribution on VoD platforms.

Apart from the heavy administrative burdens and the ineffective IT tools, which were identified in the early implementation chapter of this study, the NAs highlighted some shortcomings within the Creative Europe programme:

- Culture Moves Europe doesn't have sufficient budget;
- The EC should plan to publish the large-scale cooperation projects only on a biannual basis, thus minimising the amount of projects with a large impact and making it less attractive to apply for a large-scale project; and
- The annual work programme should be replaced with a two-year work programme, which is already the case with Horizon Europe. This would limit the funding gaps, improve the transparency and accessibility of the programme. More reliable timetable for calls is needed.

Wider stakeholders

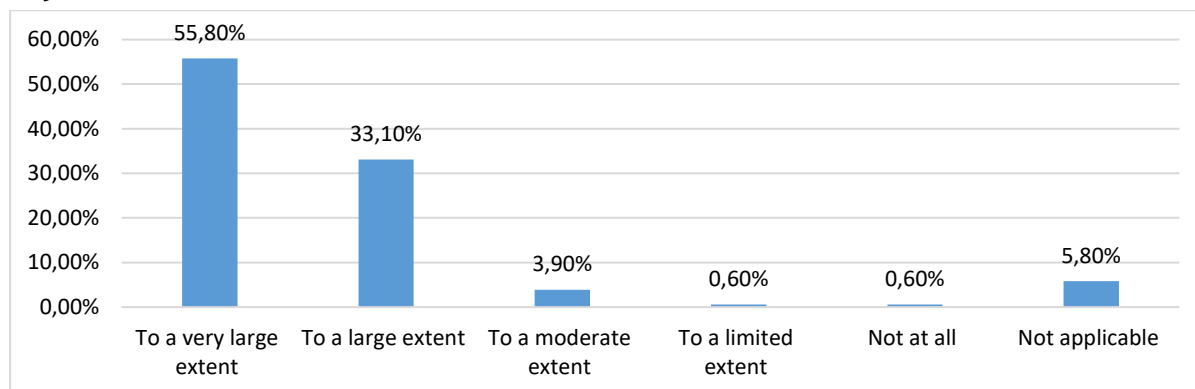
This section describes the results obtained on evaluating the effectiveness and added value of Creative Europe from the point of view of wider stakeholders.

Most of the wider stakeholders agree with the statement that their projects "positively developed European cultural, linguistic diversity and heritage" (78.7%), "promoted inclusion and diversity" (73.9%) and "increased competitiveness and economic potential of the cultural and creative sectors, particularly the audiovisual sector" (60.1%). Just 25.3%, however, said that the projects "improved the collective memory of defining moments in modern European history, such as the coming to power of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes", with only 7.9% agreeing that they promoted sport and physical

activity, identified and implemented innovative activities in the field of sport, and managed not-for-profit events to increase participation in sports” and 6.1% saying that they “increased learning mobility of sports staff”.

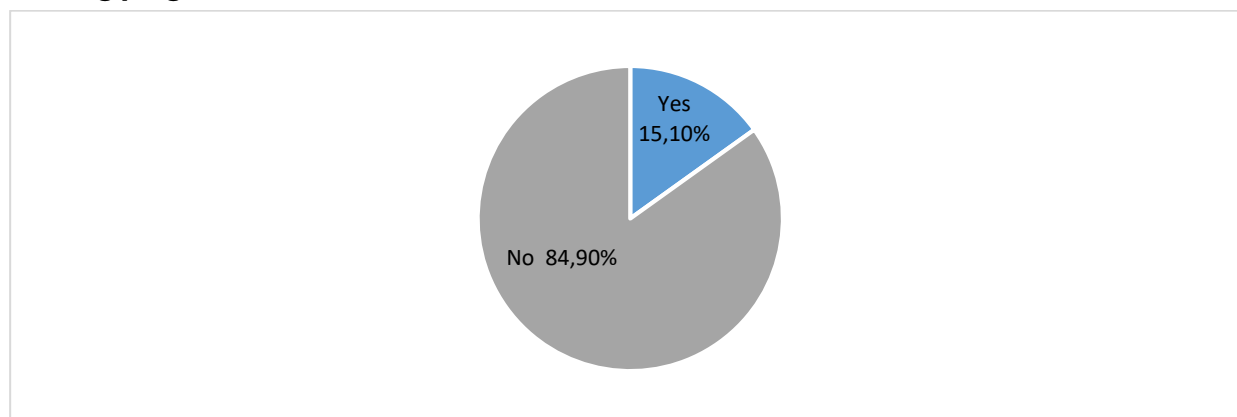
Around 88.9% of the wider stakeholders argued that their projects were on track to deliver their objectives, while only 0.6% considered this not to be the case.

Figure 26: If applicable, to what extent would you agree your project is on track to deliver your objectives? (N=154) – wider stakeholders



Some 84.9% of the respondents believed that Creative Europe doesn’t have any shortcomings compared to other EU funding programmes. Among those who had the opposite view, 15.1% on considered that the co-financing rate is too high, especially for small-scale NGOs and cultural groups or not enough budget for culture sector (music, performing arts, literature, heritage, etc.) is available compared to funds dedicated to audiovisual projects.

Figure 27: Are there any aspects that you consider to be a shortcoming compared to other EU funding programmes? (N=152) – wider stakeholders



Application process

Wider stakeholders

This section describes the results obtained on evaluating the application process of Creative Europe from the point of view of wider stakeholders.

Wider stakeholders were asked to what extent they agree with the aspects presented in the Table below. Wider stakeholders' views are especially in favour of these three following aspects (top three):

- The project duration was sufficient (85%);
- The size of the project funding was adequate (83.8%); and
- The funding schemes were clear (83.2%).

However, there is an overall favourable view of all these aspects.

Table 15: Extent to which the funding designs are appropriate (N=161-164) – wider stakeholders

Value	The funding schemes were clear	The funding schemes were adequate for the needs of my project	The size of the project funding was adequate	The project duration was sufficient	It was sufficiently flexible in adapting the project objectives because of changed circumstances	It was sufficiently flexible with respect to changes in the project consortium
Fully agree	47.8%	46.3%	47.5%	68.9%	41.4%	30%
Partly agree	35.4%	34.6%	36.3%	16.1%	20.4%	16.3%
Neither agree nor disagree	5.6%	7.4%	7.5%	6.8%	16.7%	15.6%
Partly disagree	9.3%	8.60%	6.3%	1.3%	2.5%	1.9%
Fully disagree	0%	1.2%	1.3%	0.6%	6.2%	3.1%
Don't know	1.9%	1.9%	1.3%	4.3%	13.0%	33.1%

When investigating the reasons for those who had negative views, some wider stakeholders commented that these were linked to complex administrative requirements and that the funding scheme tool is not user-friendly, difficult to navigate and not adapted to the reporting of cultural and creative industries.

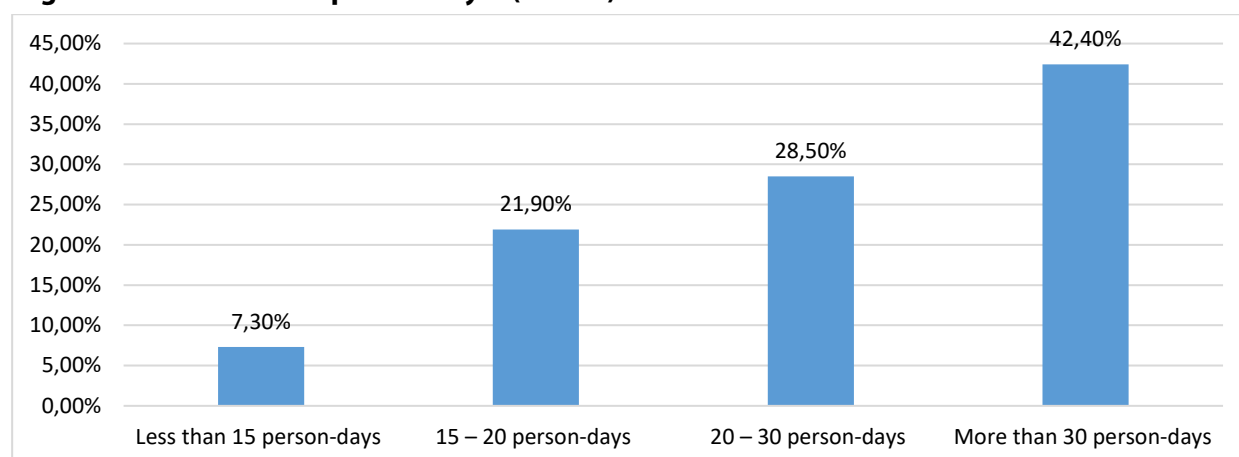
Table 16 displays the wider stakeholder perspectives on contracting and administrative designs. Among these aspects, the user-friendliness of the contracting procedures and tools appears to be the least favourably perceived. It exhibits the most significant negative views, with 31.1% of wider stakeholders expressing partial or full disagreement regarding the user-friendliness of these procedures and tools. On the other hand, the timeliness and appropriateness of administrative and legal requirements generally received more positive evaluations, indicating that these facets are comparatively well-handled.

Table 16: Extent to which the contracting and administrative designs are appropriate (N=161-164) – wider stakeholders

Value	The contracting procedures and tools were user-friendly	The contracting procedures were managed in a timely manner	The administrative and legal requirements were proportionate to the time needed for complying with them
Fully agree	22.6%	40.1%	37.9%
Partly agree	38.4%	31.5%	32.9%
Neither agree nor disagree	6.7%	11.7%	9.9%
Partly disagree	16.5%	11.7%	9.9%
Fully disagree	14.6%	3.1%	6.8%
Don't know	1.2%	1.9%	2.5%

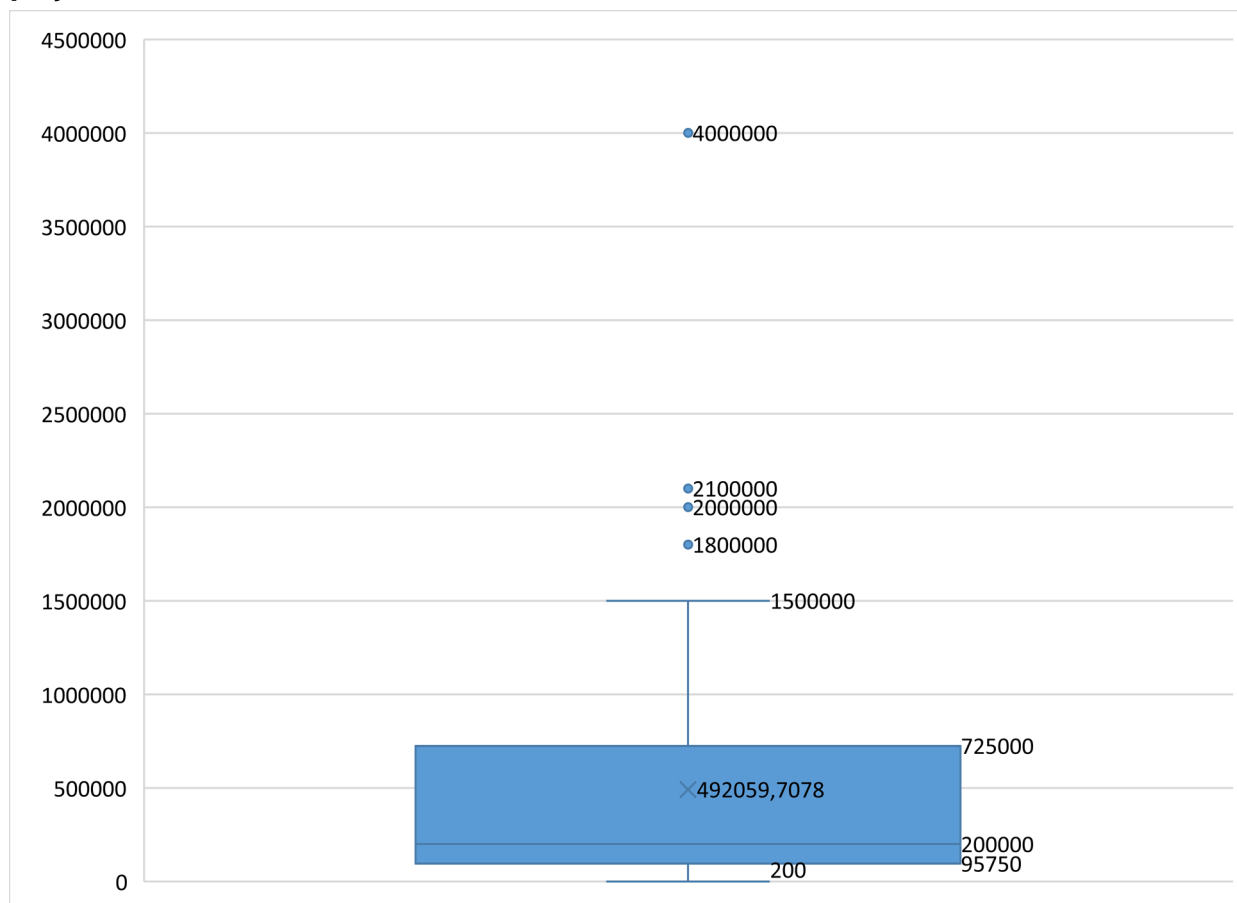
When asked about the effort required in submitting their proposal to Creative Europe, 42.4% commented that it took more than 30 person-days, followed by 20-30 person-days (28.5%), 15-20 person-days (21.9%) and fewer than 15 person-days (7.3%).

Figure 28: In your estimation, how much effort does the proposal require from an applicant organisation in terms of person-days? (N=151) – wider stakeholders



When asked about the size of the total requested EU contribution for the proposal, as per the whisker boxplot below, 75% of wider stakeholders requested a sum less than EUR 725,00 and 50% of them requested a sum between EUR 95,750 and EUR 725,000 with a median value of EUR 200,000. Outlier requests ranged from a maximum value of EUR 4,000,000 and a minimum value of EUR 200.

Figure 29: What was the amount of EUR requested in the funding application for the whole project? (N=87) – wider stakeholders



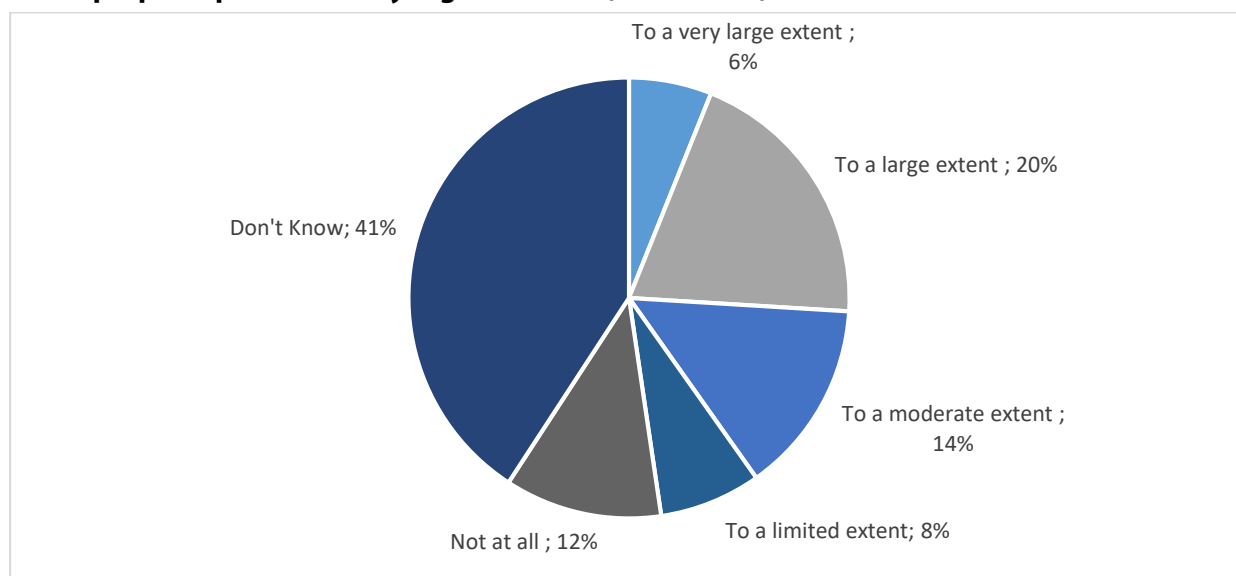
In addition, wider stakeholders were consulted about the effort required to submit a proposal. As it is possible to notice from Table 17 below, most of the respondents agree with the statement that “the efforts needed were proportionate to the complexity of the proposed project” (60.3%), “the efforts needed were proportionate to the strategic relevance/ interest in the topic/research” (60%) and “the efforts needed were proportionate to the volume of funding requested” (53%). These results are also confirmed by the fact that a low percentage of respondents agreed that “the efforts needed were not in proportion with the low chances of funding” (41.5%).

Table 17: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements in relation to the efforts needed for a proposal submission? (N=147-150) – wider stakeholders

Value	The efforts needed were proportionate to the volume of funding requested	The efforts needed were proportionate to the complexity of the proposed project	The efforts needed were proportionate taking into consideration the number of partners involved	The efforts needed were proportionate to the strategic relevance/ interest in the topic/research	The efforts needed were not in proportion with the low chances of funding
To a very large extent	19.9%	19.9%	16.7%	21.3%	14.5%
To a large extent	33.1%	40.4%	36.0%	38.7%	27.0%
To a moderate extent	23.8%	20.5%	22.0%	21.3%	20.4%
To a limited extent	15.9%	11.9%	11.3%	9.3%	10.5%
Not at all	6.6%	6.0%	8.7%	5.3%	15.8%
Don't know	0.7%	1.3%	5.3%	4.0%	11.8%

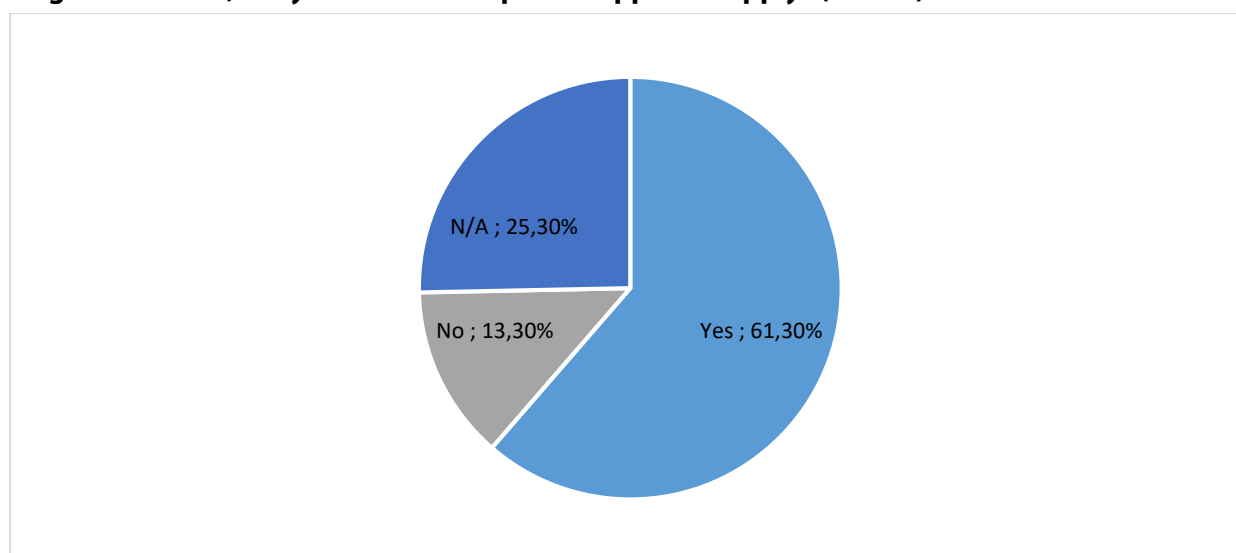
Wider stakeholders were also asked about the extent to which the two-stage proposal process substantially improved the efficiency of the proposal process for their organisation. The feedback is somewhat negative, where only 26% of the respondents agree with this statement. Said that, this result is also influenced by the fact that 41% of the respondents were not in a position to provide any view on this question.

Figure 30: Extent to which the two-stage proposal process substantially improved the efficiency of the proposal process for my organisation – (N=147-150) wider stakeholders



On the effort spent on proposal submission, 61.3% of the small-scale organisation who responded to the survey said that they have made use of external advisors in their applications.

Figure 31: If you are an individual or a small-scale organisation (less than 20 individuals) or a single individual, did you have the required support to apply? (N=150) – wider stakeholders



When asked about which improvement in project application requirements would be most likely to reduce the projects application preparations costs, some wider stakeholders commented that:

- The agency had organised a meeting with a Q&A session which was considered very helpful in preparing, and it would be great to have more of such meetings specifically dedicated to one call for applications;
- There is less administrative work related to filling out forms for small-scale projects. For larger projects the amount of administrative work is reasonable, because larger amounts of funding are in question;

- Reducing information needed in Part 5 of the application form. Work packages and deliverables are challenging enough, the rest of Part 5 doesn't provide any essential information that has not been already asked elsewhere.

Digitalisation and IT tools

National agencies

This section describes the results obtained in relation to the digitalisation and IT tools used by applicants of Creative Europe from the point of view of NAs.

The table below presents in summary the effectiveness of IT tools in the application of Creative Europe programme:

Table 18: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Value	The IT tools for the application process are user-friendly	The reporting platforms are user-friendly	The IT tools make it easy to apply	The IT tools used in the application process helped with the administrative tasks	The reporting requirements for the project management/monitoring are proportionate	The IT tools are in the preferred language of the applicants
Fully agree	7.1%	14.3%	18.5%	14.3%	17.9%	35.7%
Partly agree	35.7%	28.0%	25.9%	35.7%	32.1%	17.9%
Neither agree nor disagree	0%	7.1%	0%	14.30%	7.1%	17.9%
Partly disagree	32.1%	17.9%	33.3%	17.9%	17.9%	10.7%
Fully disagree	25.0%	32.1%	22.2%	17.9%	25.0%	10.7%
Don't know	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	7.1%

As shown from the table above, IT tools seem to be overall faulty. Around 55% of the NAs partially and fully disagree that the IT tools used for the application process of the programme are user-friendly ("the IT tools make it easy to apply", "the reporting platforms are user-friendly", "the IT tools make it easy to apply"). However, authorities expressed more positive views towards the language availability, the reporting requirements and the use of the IT tools for administrative tasks.

Some NAs recommended a better user experience by ensuring that the IT tools were simplified, and that better preparation was made before the start of the programme period. This preparation should be done by conducting appropriate tests and offering guidance materials to its users.

Wider stakeholders

This section describes the results obtained in relation to the digitalisation and IT tools used by applicants of Creative Europe from the point of view of wider stakeholders.

Table 19: To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (N=143-149) – wider stakeholders

Value	The IT tools are in my preferred language	The reporting requirements for the project management/ monitoring are proportionate	The IT tools make it easy to apply	The IT tools for the application process are user-friendly	The IT tools used in the application process helped with the administrative tasks	The reporting platforms are user-friendly
Fully agree	50.7%	28.4%	23.0%	19.5%	16.9%	18.4%
Partly agree	22.3%	37.8%	34.5%	34.9%	37.2%	34.7%
Neither agree nor disagree	9.5%	7.4%	12.8%	7.4%	12.8%	9.5%
Partly disagree	4.7%	14.9%	16.2%	22.1%	22.3%	20.4%
Fully disagree	9.5%	6.8%	11.5%	14.8%	9.5%	11.6%
Don't know	3.4%	4.7%	2.0%	1.3%	1.4%	5.4%

As shown from the table above, compared to the views of NAs, wider stakeholders are more positive about the IT tools, with a majority of respondents fully/partially agreeing with the above statements. Nevertheless, most of the survey respondents advocated for a more user-friendliness approach to the IT tools.

The participants were asked to share their opinions on the four IT tools available as part of the wider stakeholder survey questionnaire. These are the Online language support (OLS), Quality Support (QS), the Beneficiary Module (BM), and the Project Management Module (PMM).

Concerning the OLS tool, most stakeholders (66.2%) did not know whether the tool improves language knowledge. Of those who responded, 11.7% were overall dissatisfied with the effectiveness of this IT tool, while 21.3% fully or partly agreed that the tool is effective. A similar conclusion can also be made

on the interactivity and design of the OLS courses offered. While 72.5% did not have an opinion on the matter, 12.7% were overall dissatisfied with the quality of the course.

Similar results were obtained for the Quality Label application process, with 70.2% of the wider stakeholders responding that they did not know whether the process was clear and straightforward. Of those with an opinion, 13.4% had negative views, while 15.6% had a positive outlook on the process.

On the one hand, 35.7% of the wider stakeholder group considered that the BM tool effectively supports monitoring a project's progress and budget, with 13.3% of the participants believing that the tool was partly or fully ineffective. Wider stakeholders also had a positive view regarding the BM's user experience, with 32.6% of the stakeholders finding the tool user-friendly, while 9.7% considered the tool inconvenient. However, around 48% of respondents had no knowledge regarding the previous questions.

Regarding the PMM tool, excluding 41% of participants who did not have the necessary knowledge of the tool to reply, 35.8% considered it effective, and 36.3% agreed it was user-friendly.

When consulted about the tools in an open question, respondents explained that they do not make use of these tools and were not informed about them.

Conclusions

Early implementation of the Creative Europe programme

Both NAs and wider stakeholders generally hold favourable opinions about the 2021-2027 programme. However, there are nuanced differences in their assessments, with NAs finding certain aspects of the previous programme more favourable (grant preparation and time-to-grant), while stakeholders see improvements in the simplicity of proposal preparation and submission, the simplicity of grant preparation, and the time-to-grant. A notable proportion of wider stakeholders are unable to comment on specific programme implementation issues, suggests a lack of clarity or understanding on certain topics. Additionally, there are specific areas of concern, primarily related to the timeliness of decision-making, administrative proposal requirements and the user-friendliness of proposal templates.

When consulted if the programme's implementation had been adjusted in light of EU-wide challenges, wider stakeholders responded favourably for the COVID-19 pandemic, Brexit and the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Even though the post-COVID-19 pandemic recovery is considered the most impactful factor on the programme, Brexit drastically limited cooperation opportunities with UK partners. Some wider stakeholders commented that the exclusion of the UK from the programme has been challenging as British players were key partners in several projects, and Russia's war against Ukraine has contributed towards the economic crisis and consequently to a steep increase in several areas of expenditure, particularly travel and accommodation.

Budget and resources

The majority of the NAs do not believe there are current programme actions that are over-funded or in need of additional budget. This indicates a generally balanced resource allocation within the programme.

In general, most of the wider stakeholders are satisfied with the overall budget. Some wider stakeholders commented that the new lump sum system is more flexible and easier to manage than the previous one.

However, regardless of the high level of satisfaction, some wider stakeholders commented that the budget is not flexible enough to accommodate prices that have drastically changed due to inflation and post-pandemic factors. Indeed, most wider stakeholders believe that no sufficient measures to cope with the current economic situation and inflation were implemented.

Also, among those stakeholders which had a negative view, it is claimed that the co-financing rate is too high, especially for small-scale NGOs and cultural groups or not enough budget for the culture sector (music, performing arts, literature, heritage, etc.) is available compared to funds dedicated to audiovisual projects.

EU priorities

The majority of both NAs and wider stakeholders claimed that the priorities of the Green Deal, digital transformation, and gender equality are present to a large extent within the aspects of Creative Europe. This implies that the programme effectively addresses key EU policy objectives in these areas.

Application process and IT tools

Some wider stakeholders advocate a clearer and more concise finance administration manual that clarifies the exact finance reporting requirements for the project and improvement of the user-friendliness of the portal. As the current portal is adapted from the Horizon Europe programme and does not always reflect the specificities of the Creative Europe programme, this makes the reporting requirements very demanding and sometimes disproportionate to the nature of the funded project.

Overall, NAs considered the IT tools used for the programme's application process not user-friendly. Some NAs recommended a better user experience by simplifying IT tools and better preparation before the commencement of the programme period. This preparation should be done by conducting appropriate tests and offering guidance materials to its users.

Wider stakeholders were more positive about the IT tools than NAs. That said, most survey respondents advocated for a more user-friendly approach.

This study presents an analysis of the implementation of the Creative Europe programme 2021-2027, with a specific focus on cultural diversity, innovation, and European cohesion. The paper examines the transition from previous economic growth-centric approach to new objectives encompassing social cohesion, inclusion, gender equality and the potential of green industry. The paper further evaluates the programme's strengths and weaknesses, and provides actionable recommendations for improvement.
