

Research for CULT Committee – EU culture and creative sectors policy - overview and future perspectives

EU policy framework in the fields of culture, audiovisual, and media



While legislative competences for cultural and creative sectors (CCS) policies lie primarily with Member States, the EU plays an important supportive and complementary role. The EU promotes cooperation among Member States and supports actions in artistic and literary creation, including the audiovisual sector, under the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

The EU's cultural policy framework is implemented through several strategic documents, including the New European Agenda for Culture, Work Plans for Culture, and the European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage. In the field of audiovisual and media, the EU ensures the smooth functioning of the internal market, promotes cultural diversity, and supports the competitiveness of the European audiovisual industry. The audiovisual and media sectors are notably covered by the European Democracy Action Plan (EDAP) and the European Media and Audiovisual Action Plan (MAAP).

The present document is the executive summary of the study on “EU culture and creative sectors policy - overview and future perspectives”. The full study, which is available in English can be downloaded at: <https://bit.ly/4cnfOFg>.

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PE 752.453 - July 2024

The European Parliament, together with the Council of the EU and the European Commission, are core actors in shaping CCS-related policies and initiatives within the EU. They do this in close connection with various other relevant institutions, (international) organisations, and EU bodies involved in CCS policy development in Europe.

2019-2024: major emergencies and structural challenges

During the European Parliament's 2019 to 2024 legislative term, **significant systemic transformations and crises within European societies profoundly impacted both the CCS and responsible policymakers**. Key challenges included the COVID-19 crisis and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine which required urgent support for Ukraine's CCS amidst warfare. Simultaneously, long-term structural issues like precarious working conditions within the CCS, the digital environment regulation, and the green transition required significant policy attention. EU responses were guided by (CCS) policy priorities emphasising sustainability, climate neutrality, inclusiveness, and affordability as crucial elements for the digital and green transition.

Key policy instruments such as the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD), the Digital Services Act (DSA), and the Digital Markets Act (DMA) have been crucial in **creating a fairer digital market and protecting media pluralism**. The European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) and the anti-SLAPP Directive were adopted to safeguard media independence and protect journalists from legal harassment.

The CCS have been increasingly recognised for their **role in promoting well-being, innovation and sustainable development**. The New European Agenda for Culture and other strategic frameworks have highlighted the importance of **culture in driving positive societal change**. Multiple initiatives have been taken to support the CCS in exploring and experimenting with new practices and (cross-sectoral) collaborations in this transformative era.

Substantial changes in geopolitical contexts led policymakers to initiate **debates on updating the approaches to cultural diplomacy and international cultural relations** as well as related multilevel governance.

Weights of the past hold back the CCS from being transversally embedded in the European project

Despite evidence of the CCS's significant role in societal transformation, **current EU policy frameworks fail to fully integrate and support these sectors**. Beyond emphasising the importance of free and pluralistic media, the EU strategic agenda for 2024-2029 largely overlooks the role that the CCS can play in realising its priorities. From the analysis in this study, this can be considered as a serious shortcoming and a missed opportunity to strategically embed the CCS within the European project.

Several **obstacles (weights of the past) hold back the CCS from becoming mainstream partners in the European project**. These obstacles include the dominance of short-term project funding, precarious economic conditions for many CCS actors, innovation systems that are often non-inclusive to the CCS, the lack of spaces that facilitate cross-sectoral collaboration, and technological developments that critically affect the way artistic creation and cultural interactions are organised. These vulnerabilities **hinder CCS actors from engaging in cross-sectoral collaborations and arts-driven transformation processes**. Additionally, these structural deficits impede the full realisation of the CCS's potential to create cultural spaces of interaction for inclusive societies (pushes of the present).

Looking forward, it is important to **continue addressing these structural challenges** with EU CCS policies while **also seizing new opportunities for the CCS** to contribute to the vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable European future that the EU has been working towards (pulls of the future). This requires maintaining current support mechanisms, enhancing cross-sectoral cooperation, fostering innovation, and adequately preparing the CCS for future crises and systemic transformation.

-2029: EU CCS policy options for the 10th parliamentary term

While the EU's policy framework includes some crucial legal frameworks to regulate the digital sphere and other areas, it lacks a comprehensive and holistic approach to fully support the CCS. The study highlights four main policy areas that need strategic attention in the coming years to further unlock the CCS' potential:

- **Support for the CCS is an investment in creating better futures:** Integrating the CCS into transformation policies that contribute to building better futures is needed. This involves recognising the power of storytelling and artistic expression in driving societal change and embedding these elements into broader transformation agendas. Improving cross-sectoral cooperation capacities within the CCS and other sectors is essential to harness their full potential.
- **Updated CCS ecosystems build sustainable ground:** Updating the CCS ecosystems to be more sustainable and resilient is critical. Addressing structural deficits and ensuring that CCS professionals can work under fair conditions with access to sustainable funding and proper recognition is paramount.
- **Safe spaces nourish cultural interaction and cohesion:** Providing safe spaces (physical, digital and hybrid) for artistic creation and cultures of dialogue is necessary to foster a healthy cultural environment. With the rise of digital and hybrid spaces, there is an urgent need to address access barriers and prevent aggression and harm. Such safe spaces are also critical nodes when further leveraging the role of culture for health and well-being.

Cooperative governance options for the CULT committee: Making better use of cooperative governance opportunities is essential to improve the effectiveness of EU CCS policymaking. This involves enhancing horizontal governance between EU institutions and fostering multilevel governance with strategic partners. Better coordination and cooperation can overcome policy silos, optimise the use of financial resources, and increase the visibility and impact of EU CCS policies.

Further information

This executive summary is available in the following languages: English, French, German, Italian and Spanish. The study, which is available in English, and the summaries can be downloaded at: <https://bit.ly/4cnfOFg>.

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

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