

THEMATIC IMPACT PAPER - CULTURE

CENTRAL EUROPE – RICH IN DIVERSITY, ABUNDANT IN CULTURE

Central Europe has a great diversity of cultures, ethnicities and languages. It is rich in cultural heritage, historical sites, documentary heritage such as archives and libraries, artefacts, traditions, traditional skills and knowledge or cultural landscapes including more than ten UNESCO heritage sites. All this makes Central Europe an interesting location and contributes to its attractiveness for both, the people living inside Central Europe and those coming from the outside.

This cultural richness is often not adequately valorised and sometimes even threatened. Its potentials are not sufficiently used, due to low management and preservation skills, lack of coordination, or the exposure to unsustainable mass tourism. Additionally, climate change endangers the cultural assets and potentially limits their future use, while digitalisation brings major changes in the way culture is created, consumed, and makes cultural products available and accessible for the public and experts alike.

Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE – CULTURAL HERITAGE

24 projects to focus on the CE cultural and creative sector

245 project partners engaging in cultural cooperation

9 countries covered by transnational cultural activities

40.5 million Euro from the ERDF to support CE cultural heritage

The programme's contribution to CE culture

The programme's impact on the CE cultural sector



154 strategies and action plans to exploit the benefits from cultural heritage



92 million Euro of additional investment in the cultural sector



102 tools to better coordinate cultural activities



272 CE institutions adopted the new or improved **strategies**



184 pilot actions to demonstrate the benefits of supporting CE culture



387 CE institutions applied the **new tools**



265 trainings to enhance skills for the cultural and creative sector



6,800 persons received training to improve cultural skills



70 new jobs were created

THE PROGRAMME'S FOCUS ON CULTURE

The Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE (CE) Programme 2014-2020, a European Union funding programme that supports transnational cooperation in Austria, Croatia, Czechia, several regions in Germany, Hungary, Northern Italy, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia, addressed these challenges by promoting the protection and valorisation of cultural heritage,

including the restoration and preservation of historic buildings and monuments, and supporting cultural tourism, and local cultural initiatives.

Through this, the Programme enhanced the region's identity and its cultural and social cohesion, inclusion and equality, contributed to relevant cultural policies, such as the European Agenda for Culture, the European framework for action on cultural heritage, the Workplan for Culture of the

Council for EU or the New European Agenda for Culture. With that it also supported Central Europe’s cultural and creative industries, strengthening innovation entrepreneurship and cooperation in the region.

THE PROGRAMME STRONGLY CONTRIBUTED TO IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENT FOR THE CULTURAL AND CREATIVE SECTORS IN CE

The Interreg CE Programme 2014-2020 produced significant and wide ranging positive effects for the cultural and creative sector in the Central Europe region.

The Programme strongly contributed to improving the **capacities of the public and private sector** to manage, preserve and valorise the Central Europe’s cultural heritage and resources. This is illustrated by projects such as COME-IN!, RESTAURA, and Inducult2.0. While COME-IN! was focussing on making museums and cultural sites more accessible to people with disabilities, RESTAURA established Public-Private Partnership approaches in cultural heritage revitalisation projects.

By increasing the **knowledge** as well as management and preservation **skills** of the involved actors, the Interreg CE projects supported the sustainable use of the region’s cultural assets, thereby promoting sustainable tourism and cultural industries alike.

Enhanced **policy learning** led to the development of various transnational strategies, plans, and instruments. These contributed to enhancing **cooperation, networking** and the exchange of good practices across borders and sectors. They also helped improving the cultural and creative sector’s overall performance and capacity, resulting in long-term benefits in the Central Europe region.

The strengthened cooperation and networking are inter alia showcased by two projects: ARTISTIC and CULTURECOVERY. ARTISTIC improved the cooperation between cultural operators, citizens and financial operators and supported them in valorising intangible cultural heritage and in searching for solutions on how to make local cultural projects sustainable. The project helped to create synergies of local actions from a content-related and financial point of view, particularly focusing on crowdfunding options. CULTURECOVERY developed an extensive transnational network of organizations to exchange knowledge and best practices in the cultural sector and build awareness in relation to the preservation and management of intangible cultural resources.

The Programme helped **building trust** across and beyond CE borders and successfully raised the public and private sectors **awareness** of the socio-economic potential of the cultural and creative industries. As an effect, transnational linkages and coordination between cultural heritage sites in CE were improved. This, too, had positive impacts on the sustainable use of the CE’s cultural assets.

The projects financed by the Interreg CE Programme contributed to developing economically and environmentally sustainable solutions for managing and using cultural heritage resources. Projects like Protecht2save and SACHE are important examples. Protecht2save contributed to improving the public and private capacities to mitigate the impacts of climate change and natural hazards on cultural heritage sites, structures and artefacts. SACHE, in turn, developed integrated local development strategies to accelerate creative entrepreneurship within and around cultural heritage. As part of the project, museums, galleries, theatres and festivals were “transformed” into “Smart Accelerators of Creative Heritage Entrepreneurship” based on a newly developed central European model. This strengthened their role as cultural engines to mobilise and nurture small creative businesses, thus laying the foundation for an economically

Interreg CE 2014-2020 programme effects to strengthen Central Europe’s cultural identity

- 1 Improved capacities of the public and private sector...**
...to manage, preserve and valorise the CE cultural heritage and resources.
- 2 Increased knowledge and skills...**
...for the sustainable use of the CE’s cultural assets.
- 3 Enhanced policy learning, cooperation, networking...**
...for improving the cultural and creative sector’s performance and capacity.
- 4 Higher trust and awareness...**
...to improve transnational linkages of the cultural and creative industries in Central Europe.

sustainable development of the cultural and creative industries in the CE regions.

At an individual basis, the entities and persons involved in Interreg CE projects transnational cooperation has provided the framework for gaining **access** to first-hand **knowledge** and **experience**, to a vast range of contexts, practices and solutions. These would have been difficult to access, otherwise.

From the onset, transnational cooperation in Central Europe was regarded as *“the **catalyst**, leading to the creation of an enabling environment, fostering the implementation of smart solutions answering to regional challenges, and triggering economic opportunities and employment at regional level.”* In this respect, the Programme effectively contributed to making the cities and regions of Interreg CE better places to live and work.

THE PROGRAMME CONTRIBUTED TO EXPLOITING THE ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF THE CE CULTURAL HERITAGE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Programme effectively contributed to making use of the cultural and creative sector’s economic potential. Inter alia, this included the support of innovation and creativity in CE, for instance through developing new ways of using **digital technologies** to preserve and showcase cultural heritage or through promoting traditional and sustainable crafts and consumption practices in a modern world.

Also, the Interreg CE projects improved **business and entrepreneurial skills** of cultural and creative actors by introducing a wide range of tools and techniques including mentoring systems, IT-based networking solutions, installing a fast-prototyping & user-testing facility or creating a dedicated CCI Marketplace.

Besides the economic potential, the Programme enhanced the **environmental sustainability** and resilience of the CE’s cultural heritage, by supporting the mitigation of the climate change impacts on cultural heritage sites, structures and artefacts.

Exploiting the economic potential of the cultural and creative sector



Improving business and entrepreneurial skills



Support of innovation and creativity in CE / introducing new ways of using digital technologies



Enhancing the environmental sustainability and resilience



Strengthening the collaboration between businesses and creative sectors

The Programme has significantly contributed to strengthening the **collaboration between businesses and creative sectors**, as shown by the results of the COCO4CCI project. By providing a platform for co-creation and co-design processes, the project enabled the development of partnerships between businesses and creatives to explore new opportunities for innovation and sustainability. The project’s sustainability was particularly remarkable, with its final conference being linked with the New European Bauhaus initiative launched by the European Commission in 2020. This helped to connect the project results with a broader European initiative focused on creating sustainable and inclusive living spaces. As one interviewee noted *“COCO4CCI opened the door for this whole new world [...] as project partners used techniques for tandem and facilitation between advanced manufacturing firms and creatives, they were able to create a brain like collaborative strategy that was able to bridge the gap between sectors and industries that were inherently distinct, separate and independent.”*

Overall, the Interreg CE projects **helped to stimulate innovation, cooperation, and entrepreneurship** in the cultural and creative sector and contributed to the development of sustainable and attractive cultural destinations. Complementary, project such as STIMULART improved the business skills of creative SMEs, in particular in smaller cities and towns. Thereby it also contributed to their longer run economic development. They fostered the exchange of good practices and ideas, encouraged networking and collaboration between cultural actors, and provided training and capacity building opportunities. Thus, the projects had a **positive impact on the**

competitiveness, sustainability, and resilience of the cultural and creative sector in the Central Europe region.

THE PROGRAMME PROVIDES A LONG RUN BOOST TO CE AND EU CULTURE

While focussing on their originally intended tasks the Programme and the projects produced a significant value added for many other areas.

Inter alia this includes **synergetic and multiplication** effects, as many projects produced transferable solutions that can be adapted to a variety of local contexts. Successful examples include interventions in relation to managing historical built areas, increasing the accessibility of museums, developing and managing thematic/historical routes, valorising material and immaterial heritage. Most of the tools – guidelines, toolkits, training materials, apps – developed in this context are easily transferable and adaptable to a variety of contexts, making them highly relevant for target groups and users beyond the projects and even the Programme area.

In many cases projects succeeded in securing **additional funding**. This ensured the continuation of activities, the expansion of the work to other regions, reaching new target groups or applying the results in related topics. Projects were also successful in generating **other partnerships, synergies or cooperation** contexts. To illustrate, the guidelines and handbook developed in the COME-IN! project was used as a base for increasing accessibility of UNESCO sites (USEFALL project, Italy-Croatia Cross Border Cooperation Programme). Also, the COME-IN! partnership coordinated with the European Disability Forum to developed inputs for the European Disability Strategy 2020-2030. Additionally, the project results were capitalised in the EU-Horizon project ARCHES.

The Programme’s activities contributed to improve **governance** and the **coordination** among various actors, particularly horizontally at local and regional levels, but also vertically between the same levels of governance. The projects financed under the Programme promoted the development of new policies, and strategies and action plans for cultural and creative industries, as well as their implementation. They also supported the establishment of **new partnerships and networks**

between different stakeholders, such as businesses, local authorities, and organizations from the cultural and creative sectors. The projects enhanced the capacity of public authorities and other actors to engage in **evidence-based policy-making**, and to monitor and evaluate the impact of their interventions.

**The Interreg CE 2014-2020
cultural value added**

-  **Synergetic and multiplication effects**
-  **Secured additional funding for cultural activities**
-  **Generated other partnerships, synergies or cooperation to promote the cultural and creative sector**
-  **Improved governance and coordination of cultural heritage**
-  **Supported major EU cultural policies**
-  **Supported wide variety of target groups**
-  **Supported a wide range of territories to exploit their cultural potential**

In addition, the 24 Interreg CE cultural projects successfully addressed **strategically important issues at the EU level**, such as enabling the implementation of Macro-Regional Strategies or contributing to the EU's 2020 strategy, as well as to the digitalization and sustainability agendas. Also, the projects were well aligned with the European Green Deal objectives and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, as many of them focussed on sustainable tourism, heritage preservation, and the reduction of waste.

The 24 cultural projects developed the capacity of both the public and private sector with respect to supporting the sustainable use of cultural heritage and resources. As such, a **wide variety of target groups** were engaged, from local, regional and national public authorities to cultural and tourism operators, businesses, special interest groups, education and research institutions. In particular, the 24 projects contributed to improving the capacity of small and medium-sized entities such as museums, SMEs, and municipalities.

Equally, the projects supported a **wide range of territories**, from big, medium and smaller cities to

rural areas, from geographically more remote to more central regions.

CHALLENGES REMAIN DESPITE THE PROGRAMME'S SUCCESS

Despite the Programme's achievements, many challenges persist for the cultural and creative sector in Central Europe. As a result of the **COVID-19 pandemic** and of the recent **energy crisis**, the level of interest and funding for culture-related topics has generally stalled – mainly because many stakeholders, including authorities at local and regional level, perceive these policies as something special, and not something being part of their daily life. Importantly, the cultural and creative industries were one of the hardest hit sectors from the pandemic. This materialised in **major disruptions all along the sectoral value chain**, which in any case has small, localized markets. Some industries underwent significant structural changes, and the sector suffers from labour shortages. Even though, the funding has stalled, the Interreg CE Programme provided a stable support to cultural projects. Thus, the successful completion of projects is undeniable. In the future, it is important that the sustainability and uptake of the projects' results could be affected by the recent contextual developments. Therefore, **further investments and support** for the cultural and creative industries are crucial to ensure their continued long-term viability.

SUMMARY

Overall, the Interreg CE Culture programme has demonstrated the importance and potential of culture and creativity as drivers of social and economic development in the EU. Summarising the findings:

The Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme 2014-2020 had a **positive impact** on the cultural and creative sector in the CE region. It contributed to improving the **capacity of public authorities and stakeholders** to manage cultural heritage and resources for social and economic development purposes, strengthened the foundations for preserving and promoting cultural heritage, and enhanced the capacity of local authorities and stakeholders to develop and implement strategies for cultural heritage management.

The programme supported projects that effectively contributed to improving the **management and**

valorisation of cultural heritage, promoting sustainable tourism and cultural industries, and raising awareness of the importance of cooperation between culture and entrepreneurship.

The programme achieved **sustainable results**, fostering innovation, cooperation, and entrepreneurship in the cultural and creative sector, providing training and capacity building opportunities, encouraging networking and collaboration between cultural actors, and contributing to the development of sustainable and attractive cultural destinations.

Projects supported under the programme have provided a **wide range of tools** on topics such as improving the management of cultural assets, developing private-public partnerships, risk-management and making cultural products and services more accessible. They also contributed to enhancing **coordination and policymaking**, at local and regional, but also at transnational level. In addition, they played a substantial role in improving **knowledge and skills** for the various private and public stakeholders, through the trainings, exchange of experience and guidelines developed.

While challenges persist, the Interreg CE programme provides successful examples of effectively and sustainably **valorising cultural heritage and exploiting potentials of the cultural and creative industries**, for generating new economic opportunities. Moreover, the projects have managed to create awareness, build trust and reduce the fragmentation in the creative ecosystems, particularly at local level.